

DANCING IN THE CITY: SCENES FROM THE WORKS OF
ENDELL, RILKE, DÖBLIN AND LASKER-SCHÜLER

By

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Für Sebastian

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INTRODUCTION

“On or about December 1910, human character changed.” Virginia Woolf’s retrospective remark—published in her 1924 essay “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown”—culminates in her demand to abandon the 19th century conventions of writing in favor of literary experiments that would develop new form and style.¹ In 1910 she had attended a Post-Impressionist Exhibit at the London Grafton Galleries that featured the works of Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, and Vincent van Gogh. By attending and noticing the significance of these exhibitions, Woolf clearly demonstrated her astute consciousness of the changing aesthetic tide and rupture in modern thought.² Around the same time German and Austrian writers such as Rainer Maria Rilke, Alfred Döblin, Else Lasker-Schüler and August Endell were also keenly aware of the revolutionary, modern ideas seeping into not only literary circles but into the performing and visual arts and architecture. Many artists, writers and intellectuals were attracted to growing metropolises such as Berlin, Paris and Vienna and were profoundly influenced in their writing by the dynamic, urban atmosphere. The process of industrialization incited vast city expansion, increased population, and created a perpetual feeling of activity in the urban space. Stefan Zweig in his book *Die Welt von Gestern* comments on this growth:

ein Aufschwung begann, der in allen Ländern unseres Europa fast gleichmäßig zu fühlen war. Die Städte wurden schöner und volkreicher von Jahr zu Jahr, das Berlin von 1905 glich nicht mehr jenem, das ich 1901 gekannt, aus der Residenzstadt war eine Weltstadt geworden von 1910 [...] Breiter, prunkvoller wurden die Straßen, machtvoller die öffentlichen Bauten, luxuriöser und

¹ Virginia Woolf, “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” in *Collected Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967), 320.

² Matthew Bolton, *Critical Insights: Charles Dickens, Charles Dickens, James Joyce, and the Origins of Modernism*, ed. Eugene Goodheart (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2010).

geschmackvoller die Geschäfte. [...] Überall entstanden neue Theater, Bibliotheken, Museen. [...] Das Fahrrad, das Automobil, die elektrischen Bahnen hatten die Distanzen zerkleinert und der Welt ein neues Raumgefühl gegeben.³

While authors and intellectuals flocked to cities, dancers as well from all over the world began seeking opportunities to perform. Similar to the revolution occurring in the aesthetics of literature, the institution of dance also sought drastic reform. By rebelling against the 19th century tradition of ballet, pioneers like Loïe Fuller captivated audiences with her degendered and abstracted dances and radically altered the aesthetic possibilities in which modern dance would develop. The combination of the dynamic city space and live modern dance also impacted the authors' literary depictions.

In this study, I focus on literary scenes that engage with dance, dance-like, or pedestrian movement from Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910), Döblin's short story "Die Tänzerin und der Leib" (1910), Lasker-Schüler's novel in letters *Mein Herz* (1912), and Endell's small book *Die Schönheit der großen Stadt* (1908). As a former dancer, I am particularly interested in both literary depictions of dance as well as theoretical texts on dance. These writings allow me to conceive of dance in a different way: instead of a live, ephemeral phenomenon resisting discussion, these texts were a means to document, aestheticize and to critically engage with movement. The aspects that fascinated me about these dance scenes were (1) their depiction of dance, dance-like, or pedestrian movement which retained a great sense of experimentation and rebellious reaction to the institution of bourgeois ballet and balls, (2) the unconventional use of space outside of the theater and within the urban streets and structures, and (3) how the scenes—through their language—seemed to sensually awaken

³ Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von gestern: Erinnerungen eines Europäers* (Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer Verlag, 1944), 225-227.

the readers so that they almost become live witnesses to the dance. While some of the scenes are similar by depicting single bodies doing fragmented movements, others are completely different by using space and urban structures that perform engaging, smooth, sweeping gestures. These stark differences demonstrate a reform in the ballet aesthetics while also providing a space to explore and to search for new forms and styles as Woolf had demanded. The phrase “Aufbruch in die Moderne,” therefore, also characterizes the different styles of movements portrayed in these texts because they remain fragmentary and lack a unified aesthetic. Although modern developments associated with 1910 were new and fascinating, they were also plagued by the unknown and filled with a desire for discovery so as to push society into a different dimension. Marshall Berman comments on the paradoxical nature of modernity:

To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. [...] [Modernity] is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, ‘all that is solid melts into air.’⁴

Berman’s depiction features the dichotomy of freedom in realizing the old and the new resulting in a state of constant transformation. As soon as a concept has been developed, it becomes analyzed and criticized and undergoes a process of renewal, and therefore never remains stagnant. In the dance scenes I have chosen, it will become apparent that the authors were intrigued by experimenting in this newer realm of writing particularly in their representation of movement. However, they also still maintained the depiction of

⁴ Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin, 1988), 15.

older bourgeois ways of thinking—not only as a point of reference but also for their social critique—and the process of breaking away from it.

Central to the concept of modernity is the lack of a static “state” which implies a “process” and the notion of elapsing time. Christoph Asendorf discusses Claude Monet’s series of impressionistic paintings “Haystacks” in which the artist attempted to paint at different times of the day and year to capture the changing colors and atmosphere of similar, inanimate objects.⁵ Asendorf problematizes Monet’s situation: “Die potentiell unendliche (Bild-)Folge von Zuständen verweist auf etwas mit den Mitteln der Malerei nicht Darstellbares: die ständige Änderung der Erscheinung der Dinge.”⁶ This example points to two aspects which also challenged the modes of representations for Endell, Rilke, Döblin, and Lasker-Schüler: first, the realization that even objects which do not appear to move still appear dynamic and enlivened because of the natural atmosphere. Second, and more importantly—as the example of Monet shows—the attempt to capture the lapsing time which Asendorf thinks is not possible for paintings. The crafting of words into specific rhythms creating images would provide a more fruitful depiction of a dynamic event such as dance whether it involves an architectural structure or a moving body. As the reader reads the text, time elapses in a “nacheinander” form as the body and movement unfold unlike a painting that assumes a “nebeneinander” construction.

Besides retaining Berman’s notion of a transforming experimental manner and Asendorf’s concern with the representation of elapsing time, the authors also depicted their moving bodies in the streets and among urban architectural structures to aestheticise

⁵ Christoph Asendorf, *Ströme und Strahlen: Das langsame Verschwinden der Materie um 1900* (Gießen: Anabas, 1989), 5-7.

⁶ Asendorf, *Ströme und Strahlen*, 7.

their surroundings and to bring dance to the everyday man instead of only the privileged aristocrat or bourgeoisie. The retroactive look that Woolf formulated in 1924 to the year 1910 can also similarly be connected with the period of the 1960s and 1970s which witnessed the emergence of postmodern dance. During these decades Merce Cunningham was noted as being the “bridge” between the normalized modern dance and the avant-garde movers. He still utilized a recognizable movement style but coupled it with postmodern choreographic techniques like chance studies. Chance studies were dances based on the notion of “chance,” and utilized preconceived choreography. They played with order by using dice or other random measurements to dictate the sequencing of movement. Although dancers and choreographers like Yvonne Rainer followed Cunningham’s techniques, she and others also developed their own style which included: using pedestrian movement, aesthetizing the use of everyday objects and conceptualizing dance in different spaces outside of the theater.⁷ These techniques gave rise to the notion of a “happening” in which occurrences were performed spontaneously so as to blend in with the everyday surroundings. A critical and retrospective look, similar to Woolf’s, allows one to see the revolutionary postmodern thought already imbedded in a modern society and demonstrates society’s tendency and need to undergo reform and experimentation in order to be artistically creative.

Along similar lines of postmodern thought August Endell’s “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt” from 1908⁸ focuses his attention on the movement and liveliness of

⁷ Sally Banes, *Terpischore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), xv-xxii.

⁸ August Endell, “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt.” In *August Endell: der Architekt des Photoateliers Elvira 1871 – 1925*, ed. Klaus-Jürgen Sembach (München: Stuck-Jugendstil-Verein, 1977), 87- 120.

pedestrians in an unnamed square in Berlin. Endell was born in 1871 in Berlin and studied philosophy in Berlin beginning in 1890 and later Tübingen where he attended the lectures of psychologist Theodor Lipps. Lipps was responsible for developing a theory of empathy. After having moved to Munich in 1892, Endell stayed until 1901 and underwent his transformation from philosophy to applied art and architecture while entering into the avant-garde and artistic circles. His best known work—the Fotoatelier Elvira in Munich from 1897—featured a large, highly-ornamented dragon in Jugendstil. While he concentrated on ornamentation and the finer details in his work in Munich, his move back to Berlin in 1901 marked a change in his aesthetics by focusing on larger architectural structures like theater spaces and villas with the goal of representing a unified theme. His philosophical background combined with his knowledge of architecture and modern aesthetic allowed him to create both a theoretically sound and yet beautifully-written, impressionistic text: “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt.”

In the first part of “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt,” Endell outlines his own aesthetics and his desire for all individuals—not just the intellectual—to recognize color and form. Endell wanted them to enjoy the beauty in Berlin’s urban landscape, which was generally considered a dirty, industrial city. He pulls from his own knowledge of French Impressionism as well as Lipps’ empathy theory. In the second part of the text he utilizes the natural elements such as the sun and fog to color the different urban structures as he moves to various areas of Berlin. In one particular scene entitled “Vor dem Café,” the narrator seats himself in a café as he often does to watch the colorful display of people moving around in a square. The narrator describes that as the pattern of the moving individuals change in intensity, the space between them becomes a tangible, monstrous,

living body. The aesthetization of an every day occurrence in a public square is reminiscent of the 60s and 70s, postmodern dance aesthetics of observing movement simply as movement without eliciting any preconceived or desired emotion. Although Endell's text assumes a practical structure, he depicts the urban space with an artistic view—similar to viewing an impressionistic painting—which tones down the fragmentations and allows for a smooth, pleasurable reading. Although Endell's text is able to softly evolve into a more modern aesthetic, he does not become more experimental in his style, form or depiction.

Rainer Maria Rilke, born in the developing urban space of Prague in 1875, emerged as an author keenly aware of the changing aesthetic. After moving to Munich in 1896, he befriended the writer Lou Andreas-Salomé, with whom he would have an intense letter correspondence for much of his life. She not only acculturated him in terms of his taste in food and clothing, but also introduced him to many prominent figures in Munich and Berlin's literary scene such as the publisher Samuel Fischer and the poet Stefan George.⁹ Berlin also exposed Rilke to the sociologist Georg Simmel who taught the young poet to “perceive objects as meaningful entities containing not only matter but shape and time.”¹⁰ Rilke developed into a writer who appreciated a change of scenery and was, at the same time, greatly influenced by people and his current environment. While Rilke was in Florence in April of 1898, he became acquainted with the Jugendstil artist Heinrich Vogeler. Later that year in Berlin, Vogeler invited him to take part in the artist

⁹ Gunter Martens and Annemarie Post-Martens, *Rainer Maria Rilke* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2008), 28-30.

¹⁰ Rüdiger Görner, “A Biographical Exploration,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Rilke*, ed. Karen Leeder and Robert Vilain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 12.

colony in Worpswede: synthesizing both art and life.¹¹ There he met the painter and sculptor Clara Westhoff, who would become his wife in the spring of 1901, and, at the same time, was commissioned to write a monograph entitled “Worpswede” about five core artists at the commune—Fritz Mackensen, Otto Modersohn, Fritz Overbeck, Hans am Ende and Heinrich Vogeler. The Worpswede essays focused on “the tendency to see statically displayed spatial objects and landscapes through temporal music and language.”¹² In the summer of 1902 Rilke left for Paris to work on a monograph of the sculptor Auguste Rodin and, in the course of their work together, would become his private secretary.¹³ Through intense observation, he would learn about the tenacity, tirelessness and detailed artistic process which Rodin assumed. At the center of his Paris experience, Rilke also began writing *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*. Central to his novel is the idea of “sehen lernen” involving the act of aesthetically judging one’s own everyday surroundings. The publication of the book in 1910 demonstrates an eight year time span in which he would not only move back and forth between Paris and the countryside to escape the busy city life, but also reflects his experience with how Rodin and Cézanne’s artistic processes influenced his writing. In *Briefe über Cézanne*, Rilke accounts in daily letters to his wife Clara about his experience attending the memorial exhibition—held for the late Cézanne, who had died in 1900 in Aix—in the Pariser Salon d'Automne in 1907. Rilke recognized his own artistic development reflected in the paintings: “Es ist gar nicht die Malerei, die ich studiere [...]”

¹¹ Martens, *Rainer Maria Rilke*, 42.

¹² Ralph Freedman, *Life of a Poet: Rainer Maria Rilke* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 158.

¹³ Martens, *Rainer Maria Rilke*, 53.

Es ist die Wendung in dieser Malerei, die ich erkannte, weil ich sie selbst eben in meiner Arbeit erreicht hatte [...].¹⁴

In *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* Rilke depicts the young protagonist Malte as a frightened figure in the menacing throngs of an unexplored, urban environment. In one particular scene Malte is walking through the streets and notices an afflicted man with a strange gait. He is fascinated by the man's angular and jerky movements as they intensify, quicken and become uncontrollable. Overwhelmed and at the end of his tolerance the man falls to the ground. This mysterious scene portrays and maintains an aesthetized view of a fragmented dance woven into the fabric of the public, dynamic city setting.

At the same time Rilke published his novel, Alfred Döblin's "Die Tänzerin und der Leib" appeared in 1910 in the literary magazine *Der Sturm*. Like Rilke and Woolf, Döblin too was aware of changing aesthetics as attested in his first essay entitled "Modern" (1896), which is considered a central text in his development toward a modernist style.¹⁵ "Modern" brings up issues such as defending socialism, equality rights for women, and recognition of natural sexual desire; some of these issues are addressed in "Die Tänzerin und der Leib." Although born in Stettin in 1878, Döblin grew up for much of his life in Berlin. In the bustling metropolis he attended medical school, visited lectures and seminars in literature and philosophy, and delved into the Berliner Bohème where he met writers—such as Else Lasker-Schüler and Gottfried Benn—and wrote. His

¹⁴ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe über Cézanne*. ed. Clara Rilke (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1952), 48-49.

¹⁵ Heidi Thomann Tewarson, "Döblin's Early Collection of Stories, *Die Ermordung einer Butterblume: Toward a Modernist Aesthetic*," in *A Companion to the Works of Alfred Döblin*, ed. Roland Dollinger, Wulf Koepke and Heidi Thomann Tewarson (Rochester: Camden House, 2004), 25.

further medical studies would take him to Freiburg to specialize in psychiatry and later to Regensburg to work at a mental institution, but he would always return to Berlin to engage and socialize with the artistic circles. His training as a doctor lent him an aesthetic related to his clinical perspective by thematisizing the body through a pathological and psychiatric lens.

In “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” Döblin depicts a ballerina’s plight and antagonistic relationship with her own diseased body. Her condition worsens to the point that she can no longer control her body and is forced to live in a hospital room; there she is constantly observed by doctors and nurses who protocol and document her symptoms. At the end of the story the dancer can no longer withstand her dueling existence with her body: she draws a prophetic picture depicting a girl stabbing an amorphous body. Döblin’s story assumes a more clinical depiction of the tormented body which can no longer dance ballet but must experiment with the new modern dance.

In 1869 Else Lasker-Schüler was born in Elberfeld, which today is part of the city Wuppertal in the Rhineland. Her father Aron Schüler—a banker who had attained a steady wealth—loved the theater and would invite actors to their home to perform dramatic readings thus demonstrating her early exposure to the arts.¹⁶ After her mother’s death, Lasker-Schüler married the Jewish doctor Berthold Lasker; on Jan. 15, 1894 she followed her also newly married sister to Berlin—the city with which she is most connected. Lasker-Schüler rented an atelier near the Tiergarten, took painting and drawing classes and slowly became immersed in the Berliner Bohème. In 1899 she published her own poetry and befriended Peter Hille, a vagabond poet, who introduced

¹⁶ Sigrid Bauschinger, "Else Lasker-Schuler (1869-1954): 'Vollige Gehirnerweichung.'" *Wahnsinnsfrauen*. Vol. 2. ed. Sibylle Duda and Luise F. Pusch (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1996), 88.

her to the “Neue Gemeinschaft”—an alternative anarchist commune which met in Friedrichshagen. There she met her future husband Herwarth Walden, the founder and editor of the literary magazine “Der Sturm.” Her intense involvement with the intellectual and literary circles in Berlin provided her with an avenue to experiment in her own literary depictions of urban structures—such as cafes and foreign exhibitions—and dance. Lasker-Schüler’s illustrations demonstrate her affinity toward life in the coffee houses of Berlin where writers and intellectuals would congregate to not only discuss but also to “perform” their work through live readings.

Throughout her Briefroman *Mein Herz*¹⁷ published in 1912, Lasker-Schüler demonstrates her fascination with exoticism of the Middle East. Although having never visited the Middle East, she could have been in attendance at various anthropological showings in 1911 in Berlin. In my reading, I focus on the first dance scene in her Briefroman which opens with the narrator visiting the Lunapark. She then becomes part of the Islambühne exhibit and begins dancing with Minn, the son of the Moroccan sultan. The narrator is unexpectedly pulled up out of her position as an observer and onto a stage where she performs an ecstatic dance. In the second scene the narrator describes how the Café Kurfürstendamm becomes an oriental dancer who consoles and calms her, and meanwhile billows liveliness into the entire space. Instead of resisting modernity, these two scenes celebrate the joy of being freed from conventions and enjoy the new transcendental possibilities that their dancing and writing can reach. These two dance sequences stretch beyond the realm of the solo dancer, incorporate urban architectural

¹⁷ Else Lasker-Schüler, *Mein Herz: Ein Liebesroman mit Bildern und wirklich lebenden Menschen. Mit Zeichnungen der Autorin aus der Ausgabe von 1912* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1989)

structures as its moving body and further problematize the possibilities of a finite depiction.

Chapter I—“CITY AS STAGE AND PERFORMER”—provides a historical perspective of journalists and critics characterizing Berlin around 1900. Critic and journalist Max Osborn, for example, maintained a bird’s-eye-view of Berlin and described the lively city as a “Stadtorganismus.”¹⁸ Anselm Heine (1908), a pseudonym for Anselma or Selma Heine, assumed a similar perch of observing from above as she described the sounds of the cars, the spidery network of the street cars and the aimless wandering of pedestrians.¹⁹ These and countless other depictions provide aestheticized images of numerous agents in continual movement within the developing, urban space. Based on these representations of Berlin, I argue that the city space, essentially, could be viewed as a “stage” with the moving bodies, architectural structures and objects—like modes of transportation—as the “dancers.” In order to complete this notion of a performance, observers like Osborn and Heine function as the audience members, who, of course in the end, write about their own experiences. Observing the urban space in a more aesthetic light brought on a discourse concerning the flâneur²⁰—a term used to describe a well-dressed, affluent man with a developed aesthetic acuity who would

¹⁸ Max Osborn, *Berlin 1870-1929* (Berlin: Mann Verlag, 1994), 151.

¹⁹ Anselm Heine, “Berlins Physiognomie,” in *Ich weiß Bescheid in Berlin*, (Berlin: Behr, 1908) cited by Fritzsche, 55-56.

²⁰ Keith Tester, introduction to *The Flâneur*. ed. Keith Tester (London: Routledge, 1994), 2. Charles Baudelaire, *Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, trans. and ed. P.E. Chavet (Harmndsworth: Penguin, 1972), 400.

traverse the streets “reading” the urban phenomena—and the modern individual²¹ both of whom had to come to grips with living in the growing, anonymous metropolis. These citizens began to observe their surroundings as an aesthetization of common, everyday occurrences. Given these illustrations of the space, the literary depictions of Endell, Rilke, Döblin, and Lasker-Schüler also reflect not only the “dancers” on a “stage” but also the reception by an audience embodied by a narrator or a protagonist: a relationship that creates a space for the notion of a performance to take place.

In chapter II—“FROM BALLET AND BALLS TO MODERN DANCE: HARRY GRAF KESSLER AS REPRESENTATIVE OF A NEW GENERATION”—I trace the origins of modern dance as a reaction to the nineteenth century bourgeois balls and ballets. Harry Graf Kessler’s detailed diaries provide an intimate look at a representative of a generation fascinated with new forms of dance and movement. Having always struggled with the stifling bourgeois, Prussian traditions of his German father, Kessler was eager to dabble in the art scene in Berlin, Paris and London. As a finely-dressed noble, he garnered the attention of many prominent artists and intellectuals and became instrumental in supporting and introducing younger, modern artists through the magazine publication *Pan*. He would embody the term “Übergangsmensch” in regard to his perpetual advancement toward a goal.²² His first encounter with dance began circumstantially as a result of his social stature as a count. Kessler’s journal accounts the balls and salons that he frequented in the 1890s—including visits by Kaiser Wilhelm II—

²¹ Georg Simmel, “Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben,” in *Die Berliner Moderne 1885-1914*. ed. Jürgen Schutte and Peter Sprengel (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1987), 125.

²² Günter Riederer, “Der Übergangsmensch – Kessler als Student, Untertan und Weltbürger,” in *Das Tagebuch Zweiter Band 1892-1897*, eds. Günter Riederer and Jörg Schuster (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2004), 13.

which detailed the attire and a who's who of the upper class. During these rather short entries, he seemed less concerned about dancing at the balls and more fascinated by the human, everyday interaction and abstraction from it, thus demonstrating signs of becoming a flâneur. As Kessler was becoming engaged in the art scene in Berlin, three prime early modern dance movers—Loie Fuller, Ruth St. Denis and Isadora Duncan—began touring Europe with their new, freer dance that rebelled against the stifling conventions of the nineteenth-century, academic ballet. Accompanied one night by the prominent Belgian Jugendstil architect Henry van de Velde, both attended a performance of Fuller's "Serpentintanz" in 1901 and commented how the plotless dance resembled neo-impressionism. Later Kessler attended Duncan's performances and visited her and her sister Elizabeth Duncan's dance school in Grunewald. His relationship with St. Denis was stronger than with the other two as he and St. Denis personally became acquainted with each other while she was performing in Berlin, and he inquired about her dancing. After having gained experience in collaborating with Hugo von Hofmannsthal on *Rosenkavalier*, Kessler did not remain a quiet, objective observer of dance. He himself proactively sought out the help of Sergei Diaghilev, the famed and first director of the Ballet Russes, the legendary ballet star Vaslav Nijinski, Diaghilev's muse and lover, and finally the composer Richard Strauss in order to produce the ballet *Josephslegende* in 1914. Kessler's exposure to dance certainly challenged him intellectually and inspired him to experiment artistically with the medium of modern dance.

Chapter III—"WRITING THE URBAN SPACE"—introduces the literary dance scenes from Endell, Rilke, Döblin, and Lasker-Schüler. Similarly to how Kessler became fascinated with dance and later staged his own, these four authors lived in the same

drastically changing environment and were searching for new modes of expression and representation that would encapsulate the modern individual's daily experiences and particularly those involving the body and movement. To a certain extent their writing style began to resemble what Andreas Huyssen calls a modern miniature:

[an] antiform [that] resists the laws of genre as much as a systemic philosophy or urban sociology, [and] cross[es] the boundaries between poetry, fiction, and philosophy, between commentary and interpretation, between language and the visual. But as form it is firmly grounded in the micrological observation of metropolitan space, time, and life at the earlier stage of modernization.²³

In this chapter, I argue that the authors' background and relationship to their respective city—Berlin or Paris—had a significant impact on how they depicted urban phenomena—and more specifically dance and the body—by using a literary language that sensually and visually recreates the presentness of the phenomena for the reader. First, Endell's depiction of the lively square abstracts from the daily duties of the individuals and focuses on the dynamic energy of the whole. With lyrical and connective language he creates a beautiful image out of a mundane, everyday situation. Although Rilke had a difficult time initially coping with the disease and decay of Paris, he learned to aestheticize his surroundings by seeing the beauty in the traditionally ugly. While choosing to depict a man afflicted with a nerve disorder called *Veitstanz*—which causes involuntary and jerky movement, Rilke's prose creates a stirring, yet beautiful depiction through his mixture of both concise, visual description as well as “commentary and interpretation” in regards to the man's movement and perceived feelings. Döblin's training as a psychiatrist and strong interest in literature and philosophy led the depiction of his ballerina's physiological movements to be a reflection of her inner turmoil of

²³ Andreas Huyssen, "Modernist Miniatures: Literary Snapshots of Urban Spaces," *PMLA* 122.1 (Jan. 2007): 27

battling her modern body. He concentrates his attention on precise and crisp bodily description in a clinical fashion and creates an alienating environment in the hospital where the dancer cannot escape. Lasker-Schüler's interest after having moved to Berlin has always remained in the world beyond: the Middle East. While she did deeply engage in the Berliner Bohème, her depictions of dance have always been brought to a transcendental level and resist visual representation. Endell, Rilke, Döblin, and Lasker-Schüler's use of language aimed at recreating a visual depiction with a presentness as if the reader could feel with all his or her senses.

In chapter IV—"THE WRITER AS CHOREOGRAPHER"—I trace a dance performance that Rilke encountered and which likely inspired and informed his literary representations of modern dance. For instance, in 1906 in Paris, Rilke encountered a Spanish dancer surrounded by a hoard of people watching her in a Montmartre atelier. A few months later he wrote the poem "Spanische Tänzerin." I argue that because of the influence that this live scene had on Rilke's writing, Rilke and the other authors essentially became experimental "choreographers" who were conscious of the body, its movement possibilities, and its relation to space and who attempted to sensually recreate the depiction they saw through language. Keeping this idea in mind, I read the literary dance scenes using Susan Leigh Foster's theoretical dance text²⁴—initially developed to analyze the work of dance choreographers. Foster attempts to semiotically deconstruct choreographic works into frames, modes of representation, style, vocabulary and syntax. These tools lead one to realize how important not only the "dancer" and body movements were in understanding the dance but also in interpreting the space as a dynamic entity.

²⁴ Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dancing. Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (Berkeley / Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986)

The dance depictions were also revolutionary in regard to their not being set in a static, traditional theater, —also called the proscenium theater²⁵—but rather in a perpetually changing urban space. Endell, Rilke, Döblin, and Lasker-Schüler’s dance texts demand that the protagonist, narrator and reader be constantly monitoring the space in which the dancers and objects move. These four scenes are representative of the flâneur and the modern individual’s experience in the city due to the author’s ability to seamlessly weave the dances into the city setting. Although dances by the early modern dancers such as Loïe Fuller, Isadora Duncan, and Ruth St. Denis had been performed in other non-traditional venues like gardens and museum, these four texts utilize their urban surroundings to create an experimental dance through language and attempt to sensually relay the experience for the reader.

In chapter V—“KINESTHESIA, EMPATHY, AND EMOTIONS: REACTING TO “DANCE” IN THE URBAN SPACE” —I complete the reading of the dance texts as an experimental “performance” by focusing on the remarks, thoughts and feelings of either the narrators or the protagonists. The term empathy arose at the end of the nineteenth century to generally mean one’s embodiment of an action being performed by someone else, or stepping into another dancer’s shoes. In the 1930s the dance critic John Martin introduced the thought that as audience members watch a dance, they also begin dancing along even in their seats. He argued further that when modern dancers perform movements, the audience can translate this into distinct emotions. However, in the 1960s James J. Gibson argued that audience members are not passive but rather active observers who perpetually need to analyze both the dancers and space. They also do not necessarily feel an emotion but instead interpret a multiplicity of meanings. Building on Gibson’s

²⁵ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 60

research in the 1990s, Alain Berthoz argues that observers do not necessarily share the same environment because they all perceive of space differently based on their *habitus*. In this chapter, I argue that by chronologically using the kinesthetic and empathy theories by Martin, Gibson, and Berthoz—as presented by Foster²⁶—their thoughts pull the dance scenes into the emotional realm similar to modern dance and at the same time deeply exude an underlying lack of feeling reminiscent of post modern dance of the 60s and 70s. This paradoxical notion exists after having read or experienced the dance scenes with some critical distance. While the reader, narrator or protagonist may be swept into an emotional whirlwind during the dance, it is not until later that he or she realizes the choreographic structure. The dichotomy of these scenes perpetuates the developing experimentation in their writing by combining both emotionally and sensually rich depictions which later demand analysis.

In this dissertation I argue that the dance scenes of Endell, Rilke, Döblin, and Lasker-Schüler demonstrate their aesthetic reactions in dealing with modernity. While in Rilke and Döblin's scenes both the diseased man and the ballerina's dances symbolize the aesthetically jarring and fragmentary perception of the individual moving into modernity, Lasker-Schüler's dancing café and Endell's pedestrians in the square symbolize a smoother enjoyment related to his or her progression into modernity. These writers act as experimental "choreographers" profoundly influenced by not only their perpetually changing, metropolitan surroundings but also by urban phenomena and dance. Through their experience they have learned a tremendous amount about not only how the body and urban structures work and interact but also about the extremes that

²⁶ Susan Foster, "Movement's Contagion: The Kinesthetic Impact of Performance," in *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, ed. Tracy C. Davis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 46–59.

both can endure. In their literary representations they attempt to sensually recreate not only the movements of the body in the lively, city setting and to demand a new kind of aesthetic seeing, but also to involve the emotions, and kinesthetic awareness on part of the protagonist, narrator and finally the reader. Not only should these texts be recognized as documents of their time—in depicting their transitioning from 19th bourgeois mentalities into the wide, unbounded modernity—but also as experimental and literary dance texts that rival live dance and arguably bring a more imaginary and critical dimension by combining depictions of dance with commentary.

CHAPTER I

CITY AS STAGE AND PERFORMER

1. Introduction

Der Strom eines täglich heftiger zirkulierenden Blutumlaufs befruchtete das Gemeinwesen in allen Äußerungen, und wenn er in seinem Gefälle manche Reste des behaglicheren Befehl, der ihn zum Ziel eines vorerst noch nicht deutlich empfundenen neuen Stadtorganismus hintrieb. Tag um Tag schob Berlin seine Vorposten abermals ein Stück weiter vor. Tag um Tag schwoll das Brausen seiner Straßenmusik starker an, blitzen die Lichter neuer Ideen auf. Das Tempo der Entwicklung wurde so schnell, daß die Wege der früheren, bedächtig vorgehenden Logik meist verlassen wurden und jene Sprunghaftigkeit einsetzte, die oft schwierige Probleme heraufbeschwor.²⁷

Around 1910 Max Osborn, a critic and journalist for the *Vossische Zeitung*, characterized Berlin as a living organism or body (“Stadtorganismus”) using images of circulating blood not only to imply the constant development and interconnectedness of a metropolis but also to demonstrate a working system whose various parts contribute substantially to Berlin’s changing existence. All components are taken into consideration in obtaining a complete picture of the city. Osborn’s word usage, particularly with “Straßenmusik,” “Lichter,” “Tempo,” and “Sprunghaftigkeit,” conjure up images of lively, (un)choreographed movement being performed by the city itself. The street music accompanies the piece while the lights illuminate the set, and the tempo continues to change erratically and unpredictably. Such a performance scene could likely have been seen not only on a theatrical stage but also in the urban space of Berlin. This poetization of daily activity and movement is brought on by the booming industry causing even more

²⁷ Max Osborn, *Berlin 1870-1929* (Berlin: Mann Verlag, 1994), 151.

people to move into the city for work and results in large urban expansion. Although Berlin was known more for its factories and commerce, it also introduced the commercial department store, and entertainment districts such as Friedrichstraße. City dwellers were also frequently on the go throughout the city by walking or taking the growing lines of public transportation. This bustle served as not only the dynamic backdrop but also incited many journalists and writers to observe Berlin not only more pragmatically but also more aesthetically as a spectacle.

Osborn's aestheticized depiction of Berlin is maintained even a century later. In 2007 Matthias Bauer illustrates the performative, urban space when he describes the modern city as:

Ein Ort, auf den sich die gemeinsame Aufmerksamkeit von Beobachtern fokussiert, weil an diesem Ort etwas Neues geschieht bzw. zur Anschauung gelangt. Von Szenen gemeinsamer Aufmerksamkeit zu reden, impliziert freilich nicht nur, dass es in der Regel mehr als einen Beobachter gibt, weil das beobachtete Geschehen in einem öffentlich zugänglichen Raum vor sich geht. Vielmehr schließt eine solche Szene die Koordination von Blicken und Gesten, Aktionen und Reaktionen ein, so dass ihr eine *performative Dimension* zukommt. Weil das, was man tut, gleichsam auf einer Bühne geschieht, wird es in dem Bewusstsein vollzogen, dass man als Handelnder – ja sogar als teilnahmsloser Zuschauer – unter Beobachtung steht. Umgekehrt wissen die Beobachter, dass sie einer Aufführung, einem Rollenspiel, einer Inszenierung beiwohnen, die über sich hinausweist, die etwas demonstriert, exemplifiziert, manifestiert.²⁸

Bauer brings out the modern tendency of being acutely aware of one's surroundings and observing that what could appear on stage could also happen literally anyplace in the city making it a veritable "Schauplatz" at all times. His observations address the performative aspects of the citizen's environment because the observer often has a vested interest in all the events and phenomena around him. Unlike a typical performance in which the line

²⁸ Matthias Bauer, "Berlin ist eine ausführliche Stadt": Einleitende Bemerkungen zur Berliner Stadt-, Kultur- und Mediengeschichte," in *Berlin: Medien- und Kulturgeschichte einer Hauptstadt im 20. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2007), 15.

between the audience and those on stage is clearly drawn, the modern individual takes part in the action and becomes a performer by default. Bauer's concept of the urban space also conceives of the actors mainly as people while Osborn considered the architectural structures and ambience as the prime movers. However, I acknowledge the validity of both objects and people as dynamic beings in a highly performative space.

This chapter aims to trace not only the development of Berlin into an industrial metropolis with its growing population, expanding city landscape, constant movement and pace, but also to follow the emergence of the modern individual and more specifically the flâneur, both of whom would have to come to grips with the perpetually changing, fragmented environment on a daily basis. I argue, first, that newspapers and journalistic texts depicted the rapid growth of Berlin's cityscape—often from a bird's eye view—as a dynamic “performer” which embodied the urban architecture, lights, transportation and moving citizens. Second, I characterize and situate the new, developing perception of the “observer.” I argue that the modern individual and flâneur expanded his/her discriminating perception and developed a personal aesthetic by watching, perceiving and interacting thoroughly in the “performances” put on by the entire city. More specifically it is the flâneur, intellectual and journalist who developed a correspondingly succinct writing style aesthetically reflected in their experiences.

2. Berlin Cityscape

According to Max Osborn before Berlin became an industrial “Weltstadt,” the important buildings in past decades had been castles, palaces and churches: symbols of

ruling authorities.²⁹ The 19th century would prove itself as a marker for the increasing bourgeoisie that placed great importance on: parliament and administrative buildings, universities, educational and research institutes, and museums.³⁰ The following century turned to architecture that at first seemed secondary but came nevertheless to the forefront: train stations, industrial buildings, office buildings and department stores.³¹ The progression seen here points to the significant increase in population, the rising amount of daily traffic in comparison to the past and commercialization. This influx caused everyday buildings to be more commonly identified with dynamic movement while more and more structures were being erected to fit modern, industrial needs.

Osborn continues by describing Berlin's mass expansion:

Überall beobachten wir nun Vergrößerung, Erweiterung, Ausbreitung der geschäftlichen Betriebe. Die alten Läden genügen nicht mehr, sie gehen auf in ganze Ladengeschosse. [...] Die Industrie beginnt ihre 'Randwanderung', wie der Architekt Martin Mächler diese Dezentralisationsbewegung genannt hat, die mit der Konzentrierung und Konsolidierung des Handels im Stadttinnern Hand in Hand geht, um langsam Ordnung und Übersicht in die drohende Verwirrung der immer weiter anwachsenden Stadt zu bringen.³²

Berlin was not only expanding upwards and outwards but also inwards to take into account the booming industry and need for space. Osborn's depiction creates the image of a small city topographical map which continues to grow up, out and in as if it were observable from afar. It seems that the city was evolving at such great proportions that there was little one could do to logistically plan where buildings were to be established as implied by Osborn when he calls the growth a threatening, ominous confusion. The

²⁹ Osborn, *Berlin 1870-1929*, 162.

³⁰ Osborn, *Berlin 1870-1929*, 162.

³¹ Osborn, *Berlin 1870-1929*, 163.

³² Osborn, *Berlin 1870-1929*, 149.

perspective of someone from the outside looking on Berlin as a whole also invites reading the growing structures and organic body of Berlin aesthetically like a performance because of the abstracted perspective and the emphasis on a constant, driving movement.

The expansion wasn't just happening with businesses but also with factories which had come to number around 16,000.³³ Berlin was the leader in machine building with 430 factories and employing 60,000 workers in 1902 surpassing that of Chemnitz.³⁴ In his book *Berliner Leben 1900-1914* from 1986, Dieter Glatzer characterizes a mass building of factories as "ein Wald von Fabrikschornsteinen,"³⁵ which implies a comprehensive view of Berlin's cityscape similar to Osborn's depiction of the city. The smokestacks rise out from the factories expelling exhaust at their highest point, thus implying a view from up above. Glatzer's immediate image connects with nature by calling the phenomenon a "forest" in respects to the vast number of smokestacks being erected. However, a forest is generally considered a natural beauty while the smokestacks play the opposite role: they were produced for economic reasons and pollute the air to no end. Glatzer's coupling of two seemingly juxtaposing ideas together form an aesthetization of the industry. Whereas nature was to be historically considered beautiful, now the city and factories can assume similar traits.

Berlin was not only a place where the machine industry proliferated and pedestrians strolled the streets but also where experimentation could take place particularly with the electric current. Whereas before gas was used as a means of energy,

³³ Dieter und Ruth Glatzer, *Berliner Leben 1900-1914*. in 2 Bänden (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1986), 94.

³⁴ Glatzer, *Berliner Leben 1900-1914*, 94.

³⁵ Glatzer, *Berliner Leben 1900-1914*, 94.

electricity would take over lamps and the large signs surrounding areas such as Friedrichstraße as described by the *Vossische Zeitung* from 1900:

Jede viertel Minute rast aus dem Dunkel da oben eine Flamme und schreibt einen Namen in grell roten oder weißen Buchstaben, die in der nächsten Viertelminute wieder von der Finsternis verschlungen werden [...] Diese im vollsten Sinne des Wortes in die Augen springende Reklameart pflanzt sich zusehends auf der ganzen Strecke der großen Promenade, über die Leipziger, Friedrichsstraße und die Linden fort. In diesem fortwährenden und unerbittlichen Wechsel zwischen Tag und Nacht liegt unleugbar eine suggestive Kraft, die auf die Dauer selbst den Weltstädter, den nichts mehr wundert, endlich mürbe macht.³⁶

This description encompasses again like Osborn's expanding city and Glatzer's forest of smokestacks not only the prevalence of electricity helping with the signage and advertising but also the playful movement of the lights. The illuminations are not static entities but are rather timed to flash bright colors as part of a working system against the darkness. The poeticizing of the radiance is brought forth by its springing and planting nature, which once again emphasizes the "dancing" light's dynamic, organic movement similar to a performer. Just as Variété dancers leap into the air and create motion in flashy costumes, the bright lights assume a similar role. Not simply depicted as staying in one space, the brilliance travels along a promenade elongating the movement and making the street its stage. The *Vossische Zeitung* begins similarly like Osborn's depiction by first detailing the play between light and darkness then subsequently zooms out to incorporate the space in which the movement of the illumination takes place as if the author is watching a light show from afar.

While the Innenstadt took on the character less of a living area, the outskirts of Berlin were growing as described in the *Berliner Tageblatt* in 1903:

³⁶ *Vossische Zeitung*, October 7, 1900. - Cited from Glatzer, *Berliner Leben 1900-1914*, 99.

Berlins Weichbild ist in wenigen Jahren bebaut. Im Nordwesten, Westen, Süden und Südosten ist bis auf wenige Baustellen schon jetzt das Weichbild, an Plötzensee, Charlottenburg, Schöneberg, Tempelhof, Rixdorf und Treptow, mit neuen Häusern in großen Straßenzügen besetzt. [...] Immer kleiner wird der Abstand, und immer schwerer wird es werden, die Grenzen zwischen Berlin und seinen Vororten zu finden.³⁷

Berlin's form and shape as a city was being directed by the industrial and commercial city centers causing more and more to live at the periphery while accordingly widening the reaches of the urban cityscape. The wealthier who led management careers in banking, industry and commerce tended to live in the west in areas such as Grunewald, Zehlendorf and Nicolasee while the working class likely lived in the east in neighborhoods such as Prenzlauerberg and Neukölln.³⁸

Walter Rathenau poetically commented on the reaches of workers' quarters:

“Nach Norden, Süden und Osten streckt die Arbeiterstadt ihre schwarze Polypenarme; sie umklammert das schwächliche Westviertel mit Eisensehnen [...]”³⁹ He characterizes the expanding areas of Berlin as octopus tentacles associated both with dynamic movement and an organic body. In order for the sea creature to survive, it has to swim and search for food, while similarly Berlin continues to grow in population causing families to move farther into the outskirts of the city, increasing its size consequently, and implying constant activity. Berlin is related again to a living body whose city center functions as the industrial and entertainment center and whose outskirts act as the elongating extremities. The octopus' invertebrate body allows for it to assume many flexible, dynamic formation which can be read synonymously with Berlin's perpetually changing

³⁷ Berliner Tageblatt, October, 14 1903. – Cited from Glatzer, *Berliner Leben 1900-1914*, 74.

³⁸ Glatzer, *Berliner Leben 1900-1914*, 75.

³⁹ Walter Rathenau, “Die schönste Stadt der Welt,” in *Die Berliner Moderne 1885-1914*, ed. Jürgen Schütte and Peter Sprengel (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1987), 100-104.

landscape. With its black ink—symbolizing the smog originated from the factory smokestacks—and powerful suction cups, the threatening creature embodies the unknown magnitude of modern industrialization. Rathenau's both foreboding and organic illustration attempts to encapsulate Berlin in a whole form while holding a view from above as an observer of the city activity.

The incessant changing of lights in Friedrichstraße and the establishment of new factories and urban expansion remarkably changed the cityscape on a large scale. The Danish author Martin Andersen Nexö, who regularly came to Berlin, notes that every visit was a surprise: “Von Jahr zu Jahr mußte man seine Vorstellung von der Stadt revidieren, so irrsinning rasch war das Tempo, womit sie sich nach innen wie nach außen entwickelte....”⁴⁰ He also notices rapid modernization during every stay and must change his preconceptions of the city. Andersen Nexö embodies the prime example of an outsider looking at the performance of Berlin as slower changes tends to be more evident to someone who hasn't been constantly watching it such as a native Berliner. The areas which Andersen Nexö observes are the same, however, the cityscape is what has transformed. In 1996 Peter Fritzsche in his book *Reading Berlin 1900* notes: “Cities have been built on land wrestled from nature; their manufactured forms and designs still retain the unfinished, mutable aspects of something made and remade on the changing landscape.”⁴¹ Unlike reading a book or looking at a painting both of whose forms stay static, the city as a performance involves transient happenings as its medium and undergo perpetual modernization. Although Andersen Nexö observes the same land, the structures

⁴⁰ Martin Andersen Nexö, “Deutschlandbriefe,” in *Reiseschilderungen* (Berlin: Dietz, 1956). Cited from Glatzer, *Berliner Leben 1900-1914*, 21.

⁴¹ Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1996), 6.

and people on that land are forever changing. The “Tempo” of the advancements happens before the observers eyes implying a presentness of movement.

Andersen Nexö continues by describing the maximizing size of Berlin:

Wahrscheinlich weil die Stadt in einem Zug auf seinen eigenen Beinen zu durchwandern unmöglich ist, steht sie einem so formlos, so unüberschaubar vor dem Bewußtsein. [...] Wie ein Weltlager kam einem die Stadt vor; jedesmal, wenn ein neues Volk in die Weltkonkurrenz eintrat oder sich auch bloß der modernen Entwicklung öffnete, wuchs Berlin um neue Hunderttausende und vermehrte sich das Gewimmel auf den Hauptstraßen um neue Repräsentanten der fernsten Winkel der Erde.⁴²

His comment considers the city’s great size and inability to be imagined in a static state. By using the word “formlos” he implies a morphing quality lacking any kind of concept and clarity. In order to capture the active movement within the city, Nexö, like Osborn and Glatzer, take a view from above by relating Berlin’s increasing population using the image of a swarm of people of different nationalities filling the streets. This peering from above sets Berlin up as being a mass stage with its people and structures moving about the city.

Fritzsche characterizes the metropolis similarly to Andersen Nexö: “Again and again in the history of modern thought, cities have been a challenge to clarity of vision: the details, in themselves decipherable, do not come together to make a full picture.”⁴³ In trying to encompass an entire view of the city, it is the details which get in the way. Modernity has caused life to become so fragmented and specialized that it becomes nearly impossible to keep everything in focus. The growing population and erected buildings have physically changed the cityscape, allowed for more anonymity and created surprises for the citizens.

⁴² Glatzer, *Berliner Leben 1900-1914*, 21.

⁴³ Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 3.

Fritzsche calls Berlin and other metropolises “an incalculable, ongoing process” filled with “unfamiliarity and flux.”⁴⁴ If Berlin is viewed as constantly evolving, then it likens a performance involving the elapsing time and the presence of an audience. Although most dance performances at the time were choreographed, they involved movement vocabulary and themes that had not yet been addressed reflecting the “unfamiliarity” that Fritzsche uses to describe Berlin. Movement improvisation is a phenomenon that did not appear until the 1960 and 1970s in the USA, and yet shades of this appear in the process of building Berlin and watching people move in the streets. Just like Obsorn’s suggestion on the numerous factories being unlogistically erected, there was little in way of formal planning when trying to expand and incorporate buildings. This lack of design resembles the process of improvisation in which movements are performed within given parameters but are nevertheless spontaneous. The building of structures cannot be completely impulsive, however, a pedestrian scurrying off to a rendezvous could entail a bit of surprise. Fritzsche’s observations imply an outsider view of these processes while they are happening as if they are on a stage being aestheticized.

Karl Scheffler, author of the most famous survey of the city, *Berlin. Ein Stadtschicksal* (1910) says that the fate of Berlin was “always to become and never to be.”⁴⁵ He also claims that Berlin lacks a cultural urbanity and is the “capital of all modern ugliness.”⁴⁶ His rather negative depiction seems to point to a frustration not only in the inability to pin point Berlin in a concept but also demonstrates a pessimistic attitude of the future and what modernity was to bring. Although Berlin may not have the

⁴⁴ Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 3.

⁴⁵ Karl Scheffler, *Berlin. Ein Stadtschicksal* (Berlin: E. Reiss, 1910), 267.

⁴⁶ Scheffler, *Berlin. Ein Stadtschicksal*, 200.

comparable, long-withstanding landmarks like in Vienna, Paris or London, however, one could argue that Berlin as an eternally evolving process would be its most redeeming factor. Besides the many positive views that a metropolis provided a variety of activities and outlets for its citizens, it also inculcated them with information, created an even larger gap between social classes and caused suffering from a lack of space forcing as many as six to eight families to live in one apartment. Lothar Müller from 1990 summarizes some of the common viewpoints of Berlin in comparison to other capital cities in Europe:

Measured against London, a classical industrial metropolis with a sense of tradition, Berlin seemed an economic-industrial center brutal and uncultivated in the American style. Measured against Paris, the organically beautiful city, Berlin appeared artificial and ugly. The contrast was between an urban culture of poetry and one of prose – Paris, even as a modern metropolis, was capable of poetry; Berlin was hopelessly prosaic.⁴⁷

Despite many of the negative conceptions with which Berlin was associated, it was also the breeding ground for experimental, literary production and modern dance both of which were immensely influential in the arts of the time. If Berlin is a process involving perpetual change, then it likens to a performance as both deal greatly with the transient existence of a phenomenon.

Like Scheffler's characterization of Berlin as always becoming, Gabriele Klein in 2008 correspondingly asserts the city's artistic disposition as being a process:

Städte sind Kunstwerke, vielleicht die größten Kunstwerke der Menschheit überhaupt. Städte sind dynamische Kunstwerke, also nicht nur Objekte, reine Materialitäten oder unbewegliche Figuren, sondern Prozesse; Städte sind

⁴⁷ Lothar Müller, "The Beauty of the Metropolis: Towards an Aesthetic Urbanism in Turn-of-the-Century Berlin," in *Berlin: Culture and Metropolis*, ed. Charles W. Haxthausen and Heidrun Suhr (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 41.

Skulpturen, die leben, die sich bewegen und [...] von Menschen in Bewegung gehalten werden.⁴⁸

Her inherently loaded symbolism takes on striking claims in calling cities works of art. If artists of all kinds are able to create paintings, sculptures, music, buildings and dances, then the collection of their work should constitute art on a large scale. She also states that cities are dynamic works of art implying movement, life, continuation and transience. In the city one would not only be admiring paintings in a museum or dance performances in the theater, but also the architecture in the streets. Nearly every facet whether beautiful or ugly could be aestheticized even sports.⁴⁹ Klein creates the metaphor of a city being a sculpture thus portraying it as a pliable and rather slow process which sometimes tends to imitate the human form. She alludes not just to sculptures but to bodies moving in space shaping a performance while creating a work of art. Without giving designation to an inner or an outer space in her definition, the city belies these boundaries of where a performance could take place, thus essentially suggesting that it could happen anywhere. With people, objects and structures assuming positions within the urban expanses, not only is the cityscape part of the stage, but it is also part of the performance.

⁴⁸ Gabriele Klein, "Urbane Bewegungskulturen. Zum Verhältnis von Sport, Stadt und Kultur," in *Bewegungsraum und Stadtkultur: Sozial – und kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven*, (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2008), 13.

⁴⁹ Although for the purposes of this paper, I make the argument more in regards to the city performing or dancing, Klein's book deals with spectator sports to a large degree. In one section she characterizes Milton Singer, a cultural anthropologist, by stating: "Als Cultural Performance, [...] wird Sport zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts allmählich zum Bestandteil der städtischen Alltagskultur. Er wird – vor allem als kommerzieller Zuschauersport – theatralisiert; zugleich wird es kulturalisiert, indem Konventionen, Werte, Rituale und Inszenierungspraktiken, also die kulturellen Praktiken dafür sorgen, dass die einzelnen Sportarten sozial unterscheidbar bleiben" in Milton Singer, *Traditional India – Structure and Change* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979) – Here the process of aesthetization of sports is depicted as being a product of the city and are strongly linked with performance.

In order for journalists to gain a better understanding of their surroundings, they would provide “typologies and tables of contrast”⁵⁰ in trying to decipher and categorize their encounters, yet much of the time their experiences were so unique that finding another similar incident seemed nearly impossible. Urban tours were given around the city in great detail, however, they were not able to give an “authoritative map of the city,” but rather “alerted readers to detail and fluctuation” preparing them for the unexpected.⁵¹ The analytical side of the journalist attempted to factually describe new and interesting surroundings in his writings. At the same time he wanted to categorize these encounters in order for them to be developed into solid, applicable concepts. The “map” encapsulating the city space was essentially deemed useless because of it was only able to capture one moment with lack of specificity and dynamic movement. The static nature of a map makes it seem like a tangible concept; however, in reality the map is unsuccessful in trying to capture space and time. The only way to see this fluctuation and detail is to actually be in the city exploring and discovering either by way of urban tours or one’s own wanderings and later selecting precise wording to describe the experiences in text. By being attune to everyday happenings and exploring new areas of Berlin, the modern individual begins to see more with his senses than ever before. The unexpectedness of his encounters taught him to view the city and to reevaluate his previous notions. Just like the urban observer Harry Graf Kessler was thoroughly captivated by the unique movement and portrayal of American modern dancer Ruth St. Dennis, he was unable to express his feelings in written form; the modern individual is also in a learning process of understanding his own surroundings and taking in the constant movement around him.

⁵⁰ Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 93.

⁵¹ Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 94

Unlike Kessler who sits in a dark theater watching a stage in front of him, the individual is looking all around him engaging all his senses while also being on the same stage as the “performers” he sees.

Fritzsche further describes the city:

Although the industrial city had been fabricated and designed piece by piece, it had taken on fantastic proportions. [...] Local guides offered to lead newcomers through a virtual labyrinth of city ways.⁵² [...] The urban setting was regarded as largely unknown territory. This was not because technical handicaps or inadequate knowledge or even social disdain had left parts of the city unexplored, like the blank spaces on a European’s nineteenth-century map of Africa, but rather because the industrial city was such a brand new conglomeration. Its mystery lay in its perpetual newness and in the fleeting and abrupt nature of its movement.⁵³

Fritzsche views the city similarly to an explorer discovering a new world and who must map out the new land to lay claim to his knowledge of it. And like the example that he uses concerning Africa, city space is not a natural space which has the propensity to stay relatively unchanged by the hands of humans. As soon as the analytical and enlightened man thinks about using the space to his own advantage industrially, the space is completely changed. It becomes a “conglomeration” of industry, capitalism, buildings, stores, and entertainment, thus revamping the natural landscape and turning it into cityscape. The movement that one sees within the urban space is not only that of pedestrians, streetcars and automobiles, but also embodied in the creation, tearing down and rebuilding of structures ranging from apartments to advertisements. This fleetingness and modernization trained the “urban explorers” to treat experiences in a fleeting manner and helped them to reevaluate the new space in which they lived.

⁵² Hans Ostwald, *Dunkle Winkel in Berlin* (Berlin: Hermann Seemann Nachfolger, 1905), ii.

⁵³ Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 97.

2.1 Perpetual Motion: Transportation and Traffic

In 1900 roughly 1.9 million people lived in Berlin, and between 1904 and 1905 the number had reached over 2 million.⁵⁴ The focal point of the city center's traffic was on Potsdamer Platz, Leipziger Straße and Alexanderplatz. On a day in October in 1900, 146,000 pedestrians and 27,412 vehicles passed through Alexanderplatz during a sixteen hour period.⁵⁵ By 1908, the number of daily pedestrians on the square had reached some 174,000.⁵⁶ In 1913, each citizen in Berlin rode on streetcars around 306 times, riding three times more often than others had done in 1890.⁵⁷ Thousands more rode buses and subways making a daily average of close to 2 million who were regularly moved around the city.⁵⁸ This increased need to take public transportation not only expanded the number of lines being built, but also enhanced the anonymity associated with the city. Fritzsche notes: "With the increasing specialization of labor, the growing distance between workplace and home, and the everyday use of mass transit, strangers met and interacted all the time: they crossed paths, walked the same way for a bit, separated, and perhaps

⁵⁴ Glatzer, *Berliner Leben 1900-1914*, 109.

⁵⁵ Glatzer, *Berliner Leben 1900-1914*, 110.

⁵⁶ *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, no. 350, 20 July 1905 and Thomas Lindenberger, *Strassenpolitik: Zur Sozialgeschichte der öffentlichen Ordnung in Berlin, 1900-1914* (Berlin: Dietz, 1999), 45.

⁵⁷ Erich Giese and H. Paetsc, *Polizei und Verkehr* (Berlin: Gersbach, 1926), 26 and Erich Giese. *Das zukünftige Schnellbahnnetz für Gross-Berlin* (Berlin: Moeser, 1919), 32.

⁵⁸ *Berliner Tageblatt*, no. 77, 12 Feb. 1907, reported that the single busiest day on 1906 was Sunday, 17 June, with 1,188,773 riders; the least busy was Friday, 20 July, with 716,756. According to the *Berliner Morgenpost*, no 53, 3. Mar. 1904, 1.6 million commuters used all types of public transportation each day in 1903, a figure which certainly reached 2 million by 1914.

met again.”⁵⁹ The chance involved in seeing not only the same but also different people enhanced the adventurous aspects of living in a large urban environment.

Riders of public transportation and pedestrians, however, were not the only ones experiencing Berlin from their perspective, urban physiognomists like Anselm Heine—in her essay *Berlins Physiognomie* (1908)—reveled as well in observing the cityscape from a more objective view in their writing creating a panorama of daily city scenes:

Donnernd überqueren die Züge der Stadtbahn die überfüllten Straßen mit ihrem Gewimmel von elektrischen Bahnen, Omnibussen, großen Geschäftsautomobilen, Handwagen, Frachtwagen, Bäcker-, Bier und Milchwagen, Geschäftsomnibussen und Postfahrrädern, dazwischen die Weißhüte der Taxameterdroschken und die kanariengelben alten Postwagen, dann ein Trupp mittelalterlich kostümierter Postillone; daneben jagt eine ganze Kolonne von Wagen mit Warenfrachten, die den Güterverkehr zwischen dem Osten und dem Zentrum vermitteln [...] Diese restlose Eile bleibt auch denen noch in den Gliedern, die sich für einige Zeit in körperliche Ruhe versetzt haben: den Menschen in den elektrischen Bahnen. Nur für ‘unterdessen’ sitzen sie da, wie auf jeden Anruf bereit. Fast alle lesen, ‘Morgenpost’, ‘Lokal-Anzeiger’, ‘Berliner Tageblatt’, Fachzeitungen; die Schulkinder lernen noch rasch an ihren Aufgaben. Sie reden wie die Alten von Versetzungen, Zensuren, Markenbörse und guten Fahrtverbindungen.[...] Vorwärts, vorwärts.⁶⁰

Heine’s depiction tries to captures a wide array of vehicles and means of transportations featured in her direct vicinity. The long list of multiple types of transportation relay the dizzying amount of objects to perceive and are expressed in her terse writing style. Her viewing perspective ranges from thundering trains moving people across the city to bikes traveling with the mail and to carts selling goods. All these modes have strict, directed goals implying urgency in their movement. Yet while they are all moving for their specific aims, Heine observes from afar with her aesthetic reasons in

⁵⁹ Cord Meckseper and Elisabeth Schraut, eds. *Die Stadt in der Literatur* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 36.

⁶⁰ Anselm Heine, “Berlins Physiognomie,” in *Ich weiß Bescheid in Berlin* (Berlin: Behr, 1908), 1-25. – Cited from Glatzer, *Berliner Leben 1900-1914*, 111.

trying to capture the panorama with picturesque detailing. The long, bewildering list of objects in view is meant to recreate her overwhelmed perception as if she is watching a “Schauplatz” of constant activity coming from all directions. The text aims to convey stylistically an attack as well on the reader’s perception. With all modes of transportation running at varying speeds with different trajectories and with distinct goals, the system of the city is observed through its dynamic, efficient movement.

She continues by describing how the hurriedness in the limbs of the citizens begins to subside as they enter the train as if being affected by the bustle of the city. The industry and increased population has created an atmosphere in which the escalated urgency in both public transportation—which has been created by humans—and Berlin’s own citizens are placed on a similar level making them both products of the underlying forces of modernization.

Heine’s view begins focusing first on the biggest element such as the trains and then gradually moves toward smaller vehicles and subsequently to the adult city dwellers. Lastly she looks at newspapers and the children demonstrating at first a wide lens that slower focuses on the single “performers” in the piece. On a very large scale Heine sees all the vehicles and people not necessarily in their normal function but rather as artistic players who unknowingly are performing for her. On an abstract level, all objects in her view possibly lose their cultural connotations and simply become moving aesthetic bodies interested in their propulsion: “Vorwärts.” The inherent and perpetual motion instilled particularly with the vehicles creates a fleeting environment in which the objects do not stay very long in view. The simultaneous passing of numerous objects all at different speeds makes it even harder for Heine to keep everything in her mind and to put

onto paper. Such a problem occurs in trying to properly express a transient performance in which not all aspects can be notably cited, accurately remembered and transformed into words.

The reading of newspapers in the streets cars creates another layer to be read in regards to forward motion. On the one hand city dwellers are in a vehicle that was invented for transportation from one point to another in a timely fashion thereby meeting the daily demands of a modern society, while the newspapers were written to keep citizens updated on events occurring in the metropolis. Keeping all its residents abreast on the news would allow them to be at the forefront of any kind of change thus thrusting



Figure 1 - Berlin Alexanderplatz 1903, Photographer unknown

them more so into modernity.

The photograph (Figure 1)⁶¹ corresponds similarly to a daily scene of pedestrians, streetcars, carriages and buildings which not only Heine, but other modern observers witnessed and described in writing. Since the picture is presumably taken from a higher perch in a neighboring building, the photographer is concerned with being able to capture a wide, dynamic urban scene.

In contrast to the picture (Figure 1) and Heine's first depiction of an array of public transportation, she also appreciates the slower pedestrian promenade of Unter den Linden. Heine captures Berlin's foot traffic as a dynamic performance from a wide, birds-eye view:

Es fahren keine elektrischen Bahnen hier, denen die Menschen eilig mit unschönen Laufbewegungen nachjagen. Keine eisernen Spinnennetze begrenzen den Straßenhimmel, keine klappernden Stadtbahnwagen donnern über unsern Köpfen dahin, nur die Autos pusten, rasen und dünsten, und es scheint hier sogar – ein Wunder in Berlin – Leute zu geben, die nicht rasch einem Ziele zustreben, sondern die sich Zeit nehmen unterwegs. Leute, die die Straße als Aufenthalt, nicht nur als Weg benutzen.⁶²

In contrast to other bustling areas of Berlin which allow for numerous streetcar lines and scurrying pedestrians like Potsdamer Platz, Unter den Linden has a slower pace. The promenade allows for citizens to stroll, wander and “live” instead of to simply pass through. By saying what this area *wasn't*, Heine inadvertently describes the busy areas of Berlin. The “unschönen Laufbewegungen” of the pedestrians in Heine's eyes could on the other hand be aestheticized and seen as beautiful. The legs propel one into space

⁶¹ http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Berlin_Alexanderplatz_1903.JPG – Cited from Klaus Joachim Lemmer, *Alexanderplatz, ein Ort deutscher Geschichte: hundert Bilder aus zweihundert Jahren* (Stuttgart: Parkland, 1991)

⁶² Anselm Heine, “Berlins Physiognomie,” in *Ich weiß Bescheid in Berlin* (Berlin: Behr, 1908), 1-25. - Cited from Glatzer, *Berliner Leben 1900-1914*, 55-56.

allowing for movement from one point to another representing, and the observer basks in watching this everyday occurrence. Again the view comes from up above looking down as Heine creates another image by denoting the lack of an iron spider web that represents power lines for the street cars. In contrast to the people who would be running to their next appointment, Unter den Linden functions as a quieter more meditative area in which pedestrians can meander. The streets become an area where one can stay and also be observed by such onlookers—like Heine—who watch the pedestrians from a distance and write about their experience. Her precise language such as “nur die Autos pusten, rasen und dünsten“ creates not only brief illustrations but audible fragments that succinctly depict the action in the area.

2.2 Active Bodies: The *Litfassäule*

The ubiquitous presence of cafes, display windows, advertisements and *Litfasssäulen* (advertising pillars) were placed strategically to be seen by city dwellers. If parks, gardens and kiosks were supposed to invite people to linger, then the hoards of people rushing onto the bus and streetcars caused them to hurry. The green, two-meter tall *Litfasssäule* with their decorative wrought-iron crown displaying colorful art nouveau images were meant to attract people while their roundness added to their ease of readability. (Figure 2)⁶³ The curved, bowing nature of the *Litfasssäule* itself combined with the highly ornamented and organic depictions of women in print complemented each other and fit naturally well with the other larger buildings being erected in Jugendstil style. Metropolises like Berlin, Paris, Vienna and Brussels aimed at creating entire

⁶³ <http://de.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Datei:Litfass.jpg&filetimestamp=20050320051933> – Cited from Osborn, *Berlin 1870-1929*, 60.

cityscapes laden with this particularly organic, architectural style: department stores, metro stations, façades of homes, home furnishings and even silverware and glass pieces.

The tall structures were first conceived by Ernst Litfass, a Berliner printer, who was permitted to erect the structures in the 1850s, and were designed to neatly organize posters, advertisements and notices.⁶⁴ His death in 1874 marked his legacy of 150 pillars which turned into 1,500 around the turn of the century.⁶⁵ One short vignette describes people from all class levels perusing the same *Litfasssäule*: upper class women looking at the opera and theater program, a petty bourgeois family also looking at a theater program and a group of workers looking at training courses for carpentry and bricklaying.⁶⁶ The pillars were accessible and catered to all kinds of people each being served for different purposes, yet they united all in regards to space. One feuilletonist said that the *Litfasssäule* collected “the debris that otherwise floated aimlessly in the ocean of the street.”⁶⁷ Not only were the citizens of Berlin reading the texts and gleaning information, but they also could read the *Litfasssäule* as a living, architectural body within the urban space.

The *Litfasssäule*, however, became a symbol of disorder as well as a medium through which artists experimented with new fonts, bright colors and flashy layouts.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 150.

⁶⁵ “Mehr Litfassäulen,” *Berliner Tageblatt*, no. 609, 29 Sept. 1912.

⁶⁶ Oscar Justinus, “Zettel.” *Berliner Pflaster*, eds. Moritz Reymond and Ludwig Manzel (Berlin: W. Pauli, 1891), 66-68.

⁶⁷ Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 150.

⁶⁸ Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 150.

They began looking like giant exclamation points⁶⁹ and they “screamed,” their “thick



Figure 2 – The first *Litfasssäule* in the courtyard of Litfass’ printing shop, Adlerstraße.

Lithograph, 1855

letters” and danced a “never-ending Cancan.”⁷⁰ As soon as *Litfasssäule* were not only being used as simple conveyance of information but as an artistic medium, their size seemed to associate them with bodies in the urban cityscape. Their loud colors and flashy fonts allowed them to assume even more expressive, human-like attributes. Although the

⁶⁹ “Die Litfasssäule als Jubilarin.” *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, no. 315, 1 July 1905.

⁷⁰ Edmund Edel, “Der Schrei der Litfassäule,” in *Berliner Tageblatt*, no. 481, 21 Sept. 1908.

pillars contained seemingly static posters and ads, their art nouveau style and vibrant colors added immensely to their organic movement and ability to dance. At times they were being interpreted as an annoying eye sore among a sea of other visual stimuli, but others read them as the incarnation of perpetual dance-like dynamism.

Max Osborn notes the importance of the poster as a medium for the *Litfasssäule*:

Ihr Exponent wurde vor allem das Plakat. [...] Jetzt erst erkannte man, daß hier willkommene Möglichkeiten lagen, vielfache dekorative Wirkungen zu entfalten. Die verfeinerte Farbdrucktechnik – denn künstlerischer und technischer Fortschritt verbanden sich hier wie in der Baukunst – drückte den älteren, süßlichen und kitschigen Buntdruck an die Wand. Die Maler fanden einen Weg, ihr Talent in den Dienst der Praxis zu stellen; die Kunstfreude begrüßten die Aussicht, guter Kunst Verbreitung zu geben und dadurch die Menge zu erziehen. Man erkannte die Aufgabe: der Fernwirkung zuliebe mit großen Linien und energischen Farbflächen einen einfachen, summarischen Ausdruck für einen leicht faßbaren Bildgedanken zu finden.⁷¹

By combining the general need in distributing information with an artistic expression, the two were fused to not only communicate knowledge but to enlighten and teach the public about art and to fit in with the other Jugendstil architectural bodies in their vicinity like the metro stations and homes.

Osborn's description brings one to think about the American modern dancer Loïe Fuller who was known for her serpent dance. In the dance she used long drapes extended by bamboo poles and would rotate her body and arms to create the impression of perpetual movement. Given her performance's likeness to art nouveau and her countless depictions in posters of this same style, she was also called "Getanzter Jugendstil."⁷²

⁷¹ Osborn, *Berlin 1870-1929*, 186.

⁷² Gabriele Brandstetter, "Die Tänzerin der Metamorphosen" in *Loïe Fuller: Getanzter Jugendstil* (München: Prestel, 1996) 25-38.

These posters—affectionately called “Bewegungsbilder”⁷³—captured only one moment in time, however, nonetheless communicated the illusion of successive movement through color and body positioning. The function of these posters seemed to be two-fold: first to serve as a means of advertising encouraging spectators to see her performance, second to marvel at the beauty of the artistic poster as if the representation of Fuller were actually dancing. Yet this poster is not the only object that can be regarded as moving; the entire *Litfasssäule* with its loud fonts and designs, and on an even larger scale: all architectural forms—particularly those done in Jugendstil—within the entire cityscape of Berlin are moving and performing.

3. Berlin City Dwellers as Observers

3.1 The Modern Individual

In order for Berlin to be characterized as a stage with its many citizens, buildings, vehicles and streets that represent the performers, there must also be spectators in order to complete this notion of a performance. This section aims at depicting different views on the condition of the modern individual who has to learn about his/her new urban surroundings. It will demonstrate how the changing cityscape affected the Fin de Siecle observers, who were inundated with numerous stimuli, by shaping their minds to become attuned to and aestheticized their environment. Journalists and writers at the time were interested in experiencing this vast change and developing a succinct style of writing to clearly depict their experience.

⁷³ Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, “Plakatkunst und Skulptur um die Jahrhundertwende: Loie Fuller als Modell,” in *Loie Fuller: Getanzter Jugendstil* (München: Prestel, 1996), 61.

Georg Simmel in his essay *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben* from 1903

delved into the sociology of the modern citizen:

Die psychologische Grundlage, auf der der Typus großstädtischer Individualitäten sich erhebt, ist die *Steigerung des Nervenlebens*, die aus dem raschen und ununterbrochenen Wechsel äußerer und innerer Eindrücke hervorgeht. Der Mensch ist ein Unterschiedswesen, d. h. sein Bewusstsein wird durch den Unterschied des augenblicklichen Eindrucks gegen den vorhergehenden angeregt; [...] gewohnte Regelmäßigkeit ihres Ablaufs und ihrer Gegensätze verbrauchen sozusagen weniger Bewusstsein, als die rasche Zusammendrängung wechselnder Bilder, der schroffe Abstand innerhalb dessen, was man mit einem Blick umfasst, die Unerwartetheit sich aufdrängender Impressionen.⁷⁴

Simmel starts with one of the greatest challenges in regard to the modern individual: the heightened sensitivity to his surroundings. The citizen is being constantly bombarded by stimuli that overload his or her senses yet after a certain point the brain grows accustomed to this activity. Soon, however, the repetitiveness bores and over stimulates him and only something new will be able to catch the individual's attention and take him out of the blasé attitude. This desensitized state helps the citizen cope in a dizzying world of agitation, yet may unfortunately dull his senses to the everyday. The writings of journalists at the time seemed to stylistically reflect the bewildering and overstimulated perception. The fact that these specific moments were selected from likely many others and captured in word demonstrates the importance to the writer.

Richard Hamann, in his study of modern life from 1907, arrived at conclusions that illustrate Simmel's observations:

Crossing Potsdamer Platz or even walking through Friedrichstrasse on a busy day requires that presence of mind which makes do with only imprecise impressions and vaguely seen pictures to make adjustments. Those who need to look around and take their bearings would be lost in this commotion. The prerequisite to

⁷⁴ Georg Simmel, "Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben," in *Die Berliner Moderne 1885-1914*. ed. Jürgen Schutte and Peter Sprengel (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1987), 125.

walking across a busy metropolitan street is the ability to make quick judgments on the basis of minimal signals.⁷⁵

The individual walking across both of these high traffic areas would need to quickly acquire the blasé attitude or forever be lost in the maze of overwhelming modern stimuli. The “imprecise impressions” relate to the senses filtering out and rejecting what it deems unnecessary so that the citizen can focus on his or her own goals.

Simmel connects how the urban space with its increased tempo in business and population has impacted the perception of the individual creating an actual “city type” in deep contrast to those in the country.⁷⁶ The “intellektualistische Charakter,” who is Simmel’s city type, has two layers to his perception: one is the outer, conscious “Ort des Verstandes,” which can withstand and even thrive in the constantly changing stimuli of the urban environment as it is the “anpassungsfähigste unserer inneren Kräfte”; the other is the inner, unconscious “konservativere Gemüt,” similar to the country type which remains in the background protected by the outer layer as the “Ort des Verstandes” is bombarded by action.⁷⁷ Those living in the country would thus be less exposed to the excitement of the city and would not have the similar developed, outer layer as a metropolitan citizen. While the city would be filled with a quick tempo and transient experiences, the country would be characterized as slower paced with fewer distractions. In this picturesque model the minute differences in the stimuli capable of penetrating the outer layer of the modern individual slowly make changes in his or her perception and aesthetics. Simmel comments that the “Ort des Verstandes” undergoes thousands of

⁷⁵ Richard Hamann, *Der Impressionismus in Leben und Kunst* (Köln: M. Dumont-Schaubergschen 1907), 204.

⁷⁶ Simmel, “Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben,” 125.

⁷⁷ Simmel, “Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben,” 125 – 126.

individual modifications,⁷⁸ thus implying that just as his surroundings are changing constantly, his own thinking is developing as well. The dynamically changing dimensions of the city's physical structures reflect the refinement in the individual's perception through daily experiences. The journalist would belong to the city type as he would constantly be in the dynamic urban space navigating through the sea of stimuli. Because of his numerous, unique experiences, his perception would be constantly changing, and he would be refining his skill of capturing events into a succinct written language.

Interestingly Simmel calls the outer layer the "Ort des Verstandes" implying an objective nature in the perception's ability to differentiate between stimuli. In a city in which precise timing, punctuality and calculation are needed in order to have prime functionality, the growing objectivity would seem to point more toward quantity rather than quality. His designation of the term "Ort des Verstandes" does not recognize the work of the aesthetic senses in enjoying and growing from the experience of these stimuli. Simmel does mention the idea of subjectivity in the sense that the modern citizen can develop his own individuality, but he doesn't discuss the possible refinement of his theory by recognizing the city dweller's aesthetic experience as being vital to his success in urban living. Perhaps expanding the outer layer "Ort des Verstandes und des Sinnes" would better encapsulate the individual's experience as being a combination of objective calculation, sensual enjoyment and intellectual development.

Simmel continues by recognizing both the advantages and disadvantages of the citizen's experience in the city:

Das Leben wird ihr einerseits unendlich leicht gemacht, indem Anregungen, Interessen, Ausfüllungen von Zeit und Bewusstsein sich ihr von allen Seiten anbieten und sie wie in einem Strome tragen, in dem es kaum noch eigener

⁷⁸ Simmel, "Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben," 126.

Schwimmbewegungen bedarf. Andererseits aber setzt sich das Leben doch mehr und mehr aus diesen unpersönlichen Inhalten und Darbietungen zusammen, die die eigentlich persönlichen Färbungen und Unvergleichlichkeiten verdrängen wollen.⁷⁹

His positive characterizations of the urban experience as being swept away in a stream swarmed with excitement is counter pointed by the lack of individuality, which he tries to weave together in reconciling both extremes: “Es ist die Funktion der Großstädte, den Platz für den Streit und für die Einigungsversuche der beider herzugeben, indem ihre eigentümlichen Bedingungen sich uns als Gelegenheiten und Reize für die Entwicklung beider offenbart haben.”⁸⁰ Yet it seems that the triumphant citizen would be able not only to find a harmonious medium between the objectivity and the subjective individuality, but more specifically the aesthetic: first in developing the blasé attitude in order to filter out the repetitive yet not remaining completely objective in the act of differentiating, and secondly cultivating a personal aesthetic sense while growing intellectually and not giving in exclusively to only seeking pleasure. It seems that the intellectual would be able to successfully strike a balance between both the objective and subjective and rise to a more abstract level by not necessarily judging his surroundings simply as others might view them.

To the intellectual the urban space becomes a visceral work of art not created simply by one artist but rather a massive project adopting contributions from all walks of life. While the journalist would be interested in capturing unique and exciting phenomena for a newspaper, the intellectual would be wandering around the city until a certain event would “select” him or her, and then he or she would depict it in writing. Since the style in

⁷⁹ Simmel, “Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben,” 128.

⁸⁰ Simmel, “Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben,” 129.

which the intellectual and the journalist would write would arguably be quite similar in regards to precise illustration and rhythm, the lines between genre become blurred as both kinds of styles reflect a major reform that accounts for the modern individual's dynamic perception.

Simmel's *Die Grosstädte und das Geistesleben* may be one of his best known essays, however his theorizing about the modern individual's condition began earlier in the essay "Über Kunstausstellungen" from 1890.⁸¹ In 2001 sociologist David Frisby recounts how Simmel generally regarded such art exhibits as "symbolic representations of the modern metropolis."⁸²

The specialization of our times produces the rush from one impression to the other, the impatience for enjoyment, the problematical strivings to compress together in the shortest possible time the largest possible sum of acquisitions, interests and enjoyments. The colourfulness of metropolitan life, both on the street and in the drawing room, is both the cause and the consequence of this continuous striving, and art exhibitions encapsulate this symbolically in a restricted space.⁸³

The efficiency and calculating mind of the modern individual forces him to pack in as much into his perception as possible which relates for example to the promiscuous sampling that happens while reading the newspaper. A metropolis like Berlin with its growing population and cultural activities presents itself as a quintessential city to appropriately host exhibitions. Both the city and the expo hold almost innumerable points of interests that cannot completely be absorbed by the city dweller. However "restrictive" the area may be in size, digesting everything would be nearly impossible. Frisby,

⁸¹ Georg Simmel, "Über Kunstausstellungen," in *Unsere Zeit*, 26 Feb. 1890, 474-80.

⁸² David Frisby, "The City Interpreted: Georg Simmel's Metropolis," in *Cityscapes of Modernity*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 100.

⁸³ Simmel, "Über Kunstausstellungen," 475.

following Simmel, beholds art exhibitions as “a symbolic fragment whose exploration reveals the effect of the totality of metropolitan life.”⁸⁴ He essentially sees the expos as a small piece of the urban experience. Just as a novella encapsulates a small “Lebenausschnitt” of characters, in contrast to a novel, Frisby’s observation makes one also think of a “snapshot” that captures only one moment in time lacking the dynamic quality associated with film or a real city experience, yet it mirrors it to a great extent.

Simmel characterizes the citizen’s experience in the art exhibition similarly to the one in the actual metropolis by saying that the pure, vast array of different objects and merchandise in such close proximity daunts the senses and overwhelms the individual.⁸⁵ These exhibitions not only recreate the perceptual confusion associated with the urban space, but the city dwellers also literally see pieces of their own metropolis immobilized and featured. Frisby notes that people were not just looking at commodities; they were also looking at representations of the modern metropolis itself as “such exhibitions form a momentary centre of world civilization through the concentration of the world of things in a restricted place.”⁸⁶ Referring back to the snapshot metaphor, the individual only sees a display: a static representation or perhaps even the actualization of what they would encounter in the street. One aspect missing from the exhibitions would be the dynamic movement and size of the city adding to the visceral feeling of being among the swimming stimuli of a metropolis. Despite this, the close proximity of the stimuli and the

⁸⁴ Frisby, “The City Interpreted,” 103.

⁸⁵ Georg Simmel, “The Berlin Trade Exhibition,” in *Simmel on Culture*, eds. D. Frisby and M. Featherstone (London: Sage, 1997), 255.

⁸⁶ Frisby, “The City Interpreted,” 111.

pathways leading to other displays creates the feeling of walking through busy city streets while negotiating space with not only objects but people.

This claustrophobic feeling of dense stimuli is maintained by Frisby who claims that it is difficult for the individual to concentrate on just one work without being aware of others in the surroundings causing an overloading of the senses.⁸⁷ In such a situation according to Simmel's "Ort des Verstandes," this outer layer will grow accustomed to this stimulation and be able to filter and process the information important and interesting to him. In Simmel's eyes the art exhibitions demonstrate the entire spirit of the modern life whose features include:

the specialization of achievements, the concentration of the most diverse forces in the narrowest space, the fleeting haste and excited hunt for impressions, the lack of sharply formed personalities, compensated for by a great wealth of strivings, tasks, stylistic genre that are carried by whole groups.⁸⁸

Frisby responds to this by saying: "In this respect, then, art exhibitions form a miniature image of our intellectual currents in modern society."⁸⁹ These exhibitions and world expos, in theory, show the most cutting edge technologies and representations extracted from the real world and are put into a narrower and more concise concept so that it can be more digestible for the viewer. These "intellectual currents" are not only there to educate and enlighten, but also to incite the observers to grow intellectually and engage their thinking making their lives part of these displays. Much like the individual who could be excited by the stimuli that he sees in the metropolis everyday, the exhibitions would serve a similar role.

⁸⁷ Frisby, "The City Interpreted," 113.

⁸⁸ Simmel, "Über Kunstausstellungen," 479.

⁸⁹ Frisby, "The City Interpreted," 113.

Along similar lines of the art exhibition as being a “symbolic fragment” of metropolitan life, a “Lebensausschnitt,” or a “snapshot,” journalistic writing as well as literature began to also assume laconic, picturesque depictions by creating “Momentbilder.” While exhibitions showed authentic, tangible, observable objects and phenomena on a smaller scale, writers used precise language hoping to create a correspondingly pictorial image and to aesthetically recreate the atmosphere so that the reader feels he or she is present. If the art exhibits represent a microcosm of urban life, then the journalist and intellectual must enter the space with a discerning eye. On the one hand they might be scouring for an amazingly unique display or, on the other, a more everyday depiction. Their minds will have to fight off the multitude of other stimuli in the exhibit in order to hone in on one specific display whose existence they would have to quickly note and later try to capture in writing.

3.2 Fragmented Perception

The explosion of new industry and inventions caused the knowledge of the workers and citizens to become more refined in order to fulfill a greater number of specific duties. The increase in knowledge thus created more industry calling on a larger and more specific workforce. With an increased population and a need for more buildings, the urban landscape grew consequently which propelled even more stimuli into the city engulfing the individual. The greater need to specialize also formed a more fragmented individual in that by gaining depth and not breadth, he or she became even more out of touch with the general population. But while the city dweller became less familiar with the masses, he could also seek others with special interests. In 1929 R. E.

Parks argued that the city can provide an atmosphere in which human peculiarities can be praised:

Another thing that makes the city an advantageous place to study social life and gives it the character of a social laboratory is the fact that in the city every characteristic of human nature is not only visible but is magnified. In the freedom of the city every individual, no matter how eccentric, finds somewhere an environment in which he can expand and bring what is peculiar in his nature to some sort of expression. A smaller community sometimes tolerates eccentricity, but the city often rewards it. Certainly one of the attractions of a city is that somewhere every type of individual – the criminal, the beggar, as well as the man of genius – may find congenial company and the vice or the talent which was suppressed in the more intimate circle of the family or in the narrow limits of a small community, discovers here a moral climate in which it flourishes. The result is that in the city all the secret ambitions and all the suppressed desires find somewhere an expression. The city magnifies, spreads out, and advertises human nature in all its various manifestation. It is this that makes the city interesting, even fascinating. It is this, however, that makes it of all places the one in which to discover the secrets of human hearts, and to study human nature and society.”⁹⁰

Park’s depiction paints a rather positive picture of the city in which modern individuals can find their own niches, develop their own specialties and engage their own subjectivity. However, modernity has caused such varied interests to emerge and be “magnified” that the general and common seem to get lost while the specificity could prove to be too much for the individual to handle. Those, nonetheless, who can thrive in keeping a balance between keeping a larger view while still being able to delve into individual interests, will be able to succeed in the metropolis.

The city dweller’s experience is not only shaped by people with whom he or she shares similar interests but also by all the stimuli in the urban area. The metropolis is composed of “Einzelstücken [...] [die] aber oft nur fragmentarisch wahrgenommen [sind][...]” and is “eine Riesenmontage aus Stein und Stahl, aus Gebäuden und

⁹⁰ Robert E. Park, “The City as a Social Laboratory,” in *Chicago. An Experiment in Social Science Research*, eds. T.V. Smith and L.D. White (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1929), 19.

Verkehrswagen, aus dramatischen Begebenheiten oder routinierten Abläufen.”⁹¹ The image of a montage brings detailed, fragmented stimuli together consisting both of objects and happenings from the urban space. The city dweller becomes a “neue soziale Gestalt”⁹² and has to develop new ways of perceiving. The individual grows accustomed to the new, multi-faceted city, which he or she himself created out of invention, production and commerce. As a result of the disconnected city space and society, the individual was also more fragmented in his perception as Fritzsche states:

While it was easy to participate in their new urban world of flickering images and circulating things, it was much harder to find one’s way or retain a sense of permanence of stability [...] This uncertainty about the possibility of seeing clearly or representing authoritatively is the foundation of modernism.⁹³

Unlike living in the country in which it was possible to know almost everyone and to lead a basically predictable life, modernity would throw in the act of unexpectedness and arbitrariness. Donald Lowe (1982) suggests in his study of bourgeois perception that the linear development of a plot or an argument in a book seemed to be missing from the fragmented perception of the modern individual.⁹⁴ For instance, publications like newspapers would report on a potpourri of unrelated events. This suggests that the

⁹¹ Bauer, “Berlin ist eine ausführliche Stadt,” 7 – The notion of a montage also relates directly to the invention of the film as it was able to transport the viewer into a different world by isolating just the visual and aural senses. The black box was to filter out other external stimuli in order for the observer to focus his or her attention on the screen. Film also seemed to parallel the modern individual’s daily experiences because it created a much more visceral feeling perhaps more than two-dimensional pictures or art. The emerging media of film didn’t necessarily focus on a plot line, but rather concentrated its efforts on short vignettes of real, daily experiences. Much like newspapers stories and narratives, early films focused on specifics instead of obtaining a global view. The Lumiere brothers, who incidentally shot some films of Loie Fuller during her Serpent Dance, began their career filming such scenes of people swimming or street scenes. Film was still a highly experimental medium at the time and often mimicked the urban experience.

⁹² Ilja Sruhar, “Zur Formierung des soziologischen Blickes durch die Großstadtswahrnehmung,” in *Die Großstadt als >Text<*, ed. Manfred Smuda, (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1992), 37.

⁹³ Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 174.

⁹⁴ Donald M. Lowe, *History of Bourgeois Perception* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1982), 38.

journalist writing with disconnected views relays these fragmented reportages to the reader who then acquires this perspective.

Therefore, it might not be surprising that at the turn of the century writers, critics and intellectuals preferred to write short essays of impressions with a variety of viewpoints. While stating possibilities and posing questions, they avoided any distinct conclusion.⁹⁵ Writing at the time was taking on attributes similar to the perceptions of its citizens with their lack of attention. It seemed that the individual could only focus on certain stimuli before being distracted only to move on to the next without any kind of logical continuity. While the urban space influenced the form of the writer's work, their essays affected the perception of their readers: "[...] city people began to read less attentively and more promiscuously, moving quickly from one article to the next, riffing through the pages, merely glancing at the paper on the streetcar."⁹⁶ Having acquired the blasé attitude that Simmel theorizes, the individual has to be selective about what stimuli he or she allows into his "Ort des Verstandes." In the process of scanning the material in a newspaper, the modern citizen is appropriately on the go with little time to devote to his surroundings.

Besides the short journalistic texts, the perceived fragments of modern society were also influencing the way in which intellectuals and authors were writing. Similar to the journalists, they created fragmented texts based on their impressions of their daily experiences. These texts differed from journalistic ones in regard to the implied fictionality of the narrative and were desired to be read more as artistic texts to ponder

⁹⁵ Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 181.

⁹⁶ Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 184.

and not simply to inform. I will discuss the situation surrounding Rilke, Endell, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler in depth in chapter three.

Although the city dweller might be distracted by the agitation of the urban space, he or she could also be thoroughly intrigued by one single object or scene calling for a deeper analytical investigation. It is one of these tiny, seemingly insignificant fragments that can incite a slew of exploration. According to Graeme Gilloch (1996), Walter Benjamin was such an inquisitor who would look at buildings and particularly interior spaces in which:

human subjects leave ‘traces’, signs of their passing, markers or clues to their mode of existence, and these traces left behind by the modern city dweller must be carefully preserved by the urban physiognomist, and their meaning deciphered. For Benjamin, the urban physiognomist is part archaeologist, part collector and part detective.⁹⁷

By searching for remains of human existence, not only does he excavate the past but in a sense he is not only trying to reestablish it but also to recreate specific dynamic events. Although the individual’s fragmentary perception has learned to filter out stimuli, it does not necessarily mean that he has lost his ability to analyze. In fact it would imply the opposite is true as his mental acuity now has sharpened through the process of discrimination. Instead of having seen actual performances or displays on the streets and relaying his experiences through writing, Benjamin is looking at just the space and the traces that he can collect in hopes of recreating the activity.

Simmel’s “Ort des Verstandes” in Benjamin’s case has allowed one stimulus to enter the individual’s mind and has literally opened up room for interpreting and pondering the fragment. The physiognomist’s gaze “brings to light the true character of

⁹⁷ Graeme Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 6.

the city” and “is an act of critical unmasking.”⁹⁸ From one piece of evidence he will go backwards piecing together a scene. Gilloch argues that the monad is an important notion in Benjamin’s work as it signifies how the fragments belong and illuminate the whole: “traces of the general (the social totality) are discernable within the particular (the mundane and trivial).”⁹⁹ Instead of losing oneself in the specificities, these parts elucidate the bigger picture causing the citizen to see both thereby gaining a new perspective. Although much as the perception of the individual is disconnected and distracted, Benjamin seems to prevail and grow from these experiences instead of being a victim of modernity.

Simmel’s essay “Philosophie der Landschaft” demonstrates the modern individual’s emphasis on specificity and difficulty in maintaining a general view.¹⁰⁰ He implies that the city dweller’s perception in the urban space is less like the one he has when observing a landscape. Even when observing open nature, the senses are drawn to certain features. In continuing Simmel states that the consciousness must possess a new totality above its elements, that is not bound by their special significance and not mechanically constituted from them—only this is a landscape.¹⁰¹ Pulling away from realism’s *Bildbeschreibungen* and the impressionistic paintings of the late 19th century, Simmel considers the effects of the city in particular on the urban individual. Surprisingly his critique also considers one’s perception in a landscape as being focused on specificities. One would think that with fewer points of interests in nature that developing

⁹⁸ Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis*, 170.

⁹⁹ Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis*, 6.

¹⁰⁰ Georg Simmel, “Philosophie der Landschaft.” in *Brücke und Tür* (Stuttgart: Köhler, 1995), 141-152.

¹⁰¹ Simmel, “Philosophie der Landschaft” 141.

a total picture would be simpler than for example a bustling street scene. Yet even despite the city, the human mind seems to still need to focus on the smaller fragmented details. Simmel seems to imply, however, the value of being able to “see” the entire landscape and not just its parts. His argument can be paralleled with Benjamin who believes that the physiognomist tries to also gain totality in his view by seeing only its fragments. Both agree on the difficulty in obtaining such a perspective in the fragmented modernity and praise those who can attain this.

As mentioned before the physiognomist’s gaze focuses on the fragments but also tries to keep a larger perspective as Osborn and Heine. Throughout the process of watching and analyzing, the individual is not necessarily concerned with the content of the scene but rather concentrating on it more abstractly. Mattenklott remarks that:

Simmel did not inquire as to the content of activities or things, of domination or exploitation, but rather as to the functional connections [...] In order that the physiognomical gaze – which accordingly should perceive society as an organic body – should not be continually caught up in individual contents, it must immunize itself against sympathy or aversion: a cold eye.¹⁰²

Viewing street scenes as an “organic body” would seem to involve both the objective and subjective observations and result in the aesthetization of everyday occurrences.

Although Mattenklott is accurate in discerning that the objective eye lacks sympathy from the plot of the scene, however, he doesn’t mention that in becoming more abstract the physiognomist’s subjective view attributes different traits to the setting creating a world with his own rules. It is with this aesthetic sense that simple movements and exchanges between people within space become actual performances. Observing that

¹⁰² Gerd Mattenklott, “Der mystische Leib: Physiognomisches Denken bei Nietzsche, Simmel und Kassner,” in *Mythos und Moderne*, ed. Karl Heinz Bohrer (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983), 147.

their activities constitute an “organic body” leads back to the idea of the entire Berlin as a well-functioning system with each seemingly insignificant detail affecting all its parts.

3.3 The Flâneur

The physiognomist gaze can be linked to a more particular sociological type that emerged as a result of the modern city: the *flâneur*. This well-dressed bachelor or widow was typically suspended from social obligation.¹⁰³ He engaged in the activity known as *Flânerie*, which consists of strolling around usually in an urban environment without a plan or purpose observing his surroundings (Figure 3).¹⁰⁴ The *flâneur* is most noted in the works of Charles Baudelaire particularly in the *Paris Spleen* collection from 1869 which instills the work of the poet portraying his vision of the public sphere and spaces of Paris. Keith Tester argues that for Baudelaire there is no mistaking the poet as being a man who can collect aesthetic meaning and maintain an individual, existential security from the brimming hoards of people—the visible public—of the metropolitan environment of the city of Paris.¹⁰⁵

During the poet’s search for meaning, the metropolitan spaces serve as the area for art and existence in which the *flâneur* thrives while the privacy of his home bores

¹⁰³ Pricilla Parkhurt Ferguson, “The flaneur on and off the streets of Paris,” in *The Flâneur*, ed. Keith Tester (London: Routledge, 1994), 26.

¹⁰⁴ <http://sketchbloom.wordpress.com/2011/02/26/the-flaneur-a-radical-chic-icon/>

¹⁰⁵ Keith Tester, Introduction to *The Flâneur*, ed. Keith Tester (London: Routledge, 1994), 2.



Figure 3 – “Historical evidence of The Flâneur? Or just man waiting for his wife?” –

Photographer unknown

him.¹⁰⁶ Baudelaire notes the poet is able to be away from home and yet feel *at home* anywhere; he is at the very center of the world, and yet is not seen by the world.¹⁰⁷ His home is then in the city as it is the only place that would critically engage his psyche and continue his livelihood. Tester asserts:

The poet is the sovereign in control of a world of his definition; he defines the order of things for himself rather than allowing things or appearances to be defining of themselves. [...] And because he can or does look like anyone else, nowhere is forbidden to him; spatially, morally and culturally the public holds no mysteries for the man who is proud of the mystery of himself. The poet can put on whatever mask will gain him access to otherwise secret and mysterious places.¹⁰⁸

Since the poet is at the center, he creates his own world and surroundings by abstracting and aestheticizing his environment. Everyday objects that have a certain general meaning

¹⁰⁶ Tester, Introduction to *The Flâneur*, 2.

¹⁰⁷ Charles Baudelaire, *Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, trans. and ed. P.E. Chavet (Harmndsworth: Penguin, 1972), 400.

¹⁰⁸ Tester, Introduction to *The Flâneur*, 4.

for the masses suddenly take on new meanings in the poet's mind. In fact his own definitions of these new concepts are continually changing just like his metropolitan surroundings. Keeping his anonymity while observing people and structures is key as it allows him to analyze them in their natural state unbeknownst to them. He can go almost anywhere in the cityscape under the guise as a passerby but his head is usually spinning with intrigue from the everyday. An aestheticizing of the moving, interacting bodies in space, therefore, creates the notion of a performance.

Tester continues his characterization of the *flâneur*: “Defining [...] the meaning and [...] order of things [...] implies a connection between the intuited fluidity of things in the environment of the city and the physical negotiations of the space and other bodies carried out by the poet during his walks in crowds.”¹⁰⁹ The fluidity of his experiences causes him to think even more quickly not only because of the dynamic bodies and objects he is watching but also because the *flâneur* is moving in the same space as the performers he is watching. Unlike a poster on a *Litfassäule* that can create the illusion of movement despite remaining in one place, the pedestrians and objects in the city space are constantly moving. He not only has to rely on the action on the streets for him to glean information about the scenes the *flâneur* sees, but also is responsible for himself because of his ability to choose what he observes by way of moving his own body through space.

Tester conceives that Baudelaire's poet “is the man *of* the crowd as opposed to the man *in* the crowd” although “he appears to be just one constituent part of the

¹⁰⁹ Tester, Introduction to *The Flâneur*, 4-5.

metropolitan flux.”¹¹⁰ The poet’s ability to blend in hides his developed intellect and makes him nearly impossible to spot: a feeling that he savors. “The observer is a prince enjoying his incognito wherever he goes.”¹¹¹ Although the poet has a higher position than the other pedestrians, he is also vulnerable to the eyes of *other* poets in the city. He occupies the same stage that everyone else shares.

The *flâneur*’s observations do not consist of simply looking, but studying and analyzing his surroundings.¹¹² Although his environment is familiar, he is able to read scenes differently each time and reap new meaning. Bruce Mazlich from 1994 suggests that “[...] while the *flâneur* is presented as a native of his locality, he is actually an individual caught in the act of attempting to regain and keep his native’s mastery of his environment.”¹¹³ Since his knowledge of the area is also perpetually changing, he too must continue to read his surroundings on a daily basis to keep abreast on its newness. Mazlich writes that the *flâneur* is like an explorer who has to claim his territory and “transform the display of empire into a spectacle which can be mastered.”¹¹⁴ One problem with Mazlich’s depiction is the use of the word “mastered” implying a finished, dominating state which is not necessarily the case. Since the environment and stimuli in the city are constantly undergoing changes, marking a “territory” in the land is important,

¹¹⁰ Tester, Introduction to *The Flâneur*, 3.

¹¹¹ Baudelaire, *Selected Writings*, 400.

¹¹² Ferguson, “The flâneur on and off the streets of Paris,” 28-29.

¹¹³ Bruce Mazlich, “The *flâneur*: from spectator to representation,” in *The Flâneur*, ed. Keith Tester (London: Routledge, 1994), 78.

¹¹⁴ Mazlich, “The *flâneur*: from spectator to representation,” 75.

however, not only is the land changing but the meaning that the *flâneur* has adopted is also in flux. The area which he explores will forever need to be “remapped.”

Pricilla Parkhurt Ferguson too notes the abstraction with which the *flâneur* reads his surroundings: “The flaneur is entertained, not distressed, by the ever changing urban spectacle. [...] He reads the city as he would read a text – from a distance.”¹¹⁵ The spectacle is a dynamic process within the city consisting of a multitude of stimuli inundating the *flâneur*’s faculties. By keeping his distance he stays less emotionally involved and remains objective in his experiences. This level of abstraction allows him to pull away from “plot” and to observe his surroundings aesthetically. Although he could be concentrating on a small detail in the city, he would also pull back and try to create a bigger picture allowing the performance to take place.

Not only does the *flâneur* need the metropolitan space, but he also needs to generally be outside in order to conduct his analysis. *Flânerie* loses its distinction in the second half of the 19th century as it moves toward the interior space. However, Ferguson also states: “If, by chance, the *flâneur* turns up at the theatre, it will not be for the drama on stage but for the crowded, bustling ‘street scene’ in the corridors where the real drama takes place. With the shift to the interior the *flâneur* is on his way from public to a private personage.”¹¹⁶ Seemingly it is not the complete dying out of his type as he has other spaces at his disposal. This role is taken on for example by Harry Graf Kessler, a well-connected intellectual who wrote an exhaustive and detailed diary about his daily experiences which included going to balls and social events. In his entries he described

¹¹⁵ Ferguson, “The flaneur on and off the streets of Paris,” 31.

¹¹⁶ Ferguson, “The flaneur on and off the streets of Paris,” 32.

not only who was there but also gave his own commentary on situations with a critical distance.

The city space is vital for the life of the *flâneur* as it provides a place for him to analyze; but with the advent of the department store and the commoditization of goods, his ability to stay objective begins to slip as he succumbs to the pressure of consumerism.¹¹⁷ He no longer creates meaning in his own world, but falls victim to the conventions in front of him by adopting them. Although this definition seems to be tied deeply with the 19th century Parisian *flâneur*, the term can also be used in other cultures and for later time periods. Berlin does not seem to be very different if one, for instance, looks at Franz Hessel's *Ein Flaneur in Berlin* from 1929 in which he describes *Flânerie* as:

Eine Art Lektüre der Straße, wobei, Menschengesichter, Auslagen, Schaufenster, Café-Terrassen, Bahnen, Autos, Bäume zu lauter gleichberechtigten Buchstaben werden, die zusammen Worte, Sätze und Seiten eines immer neuen Buches ergeben. Um richtig zu flanieren, darf man nichts allzu Bestimmtes vorhaben.¹¹⁸

Most importantly Hessel uses the same word "*Flânerie*" to depict his experience in Berlin which also described the 19th century Parisian phenomenon. He links the everyday objects within his perception to words that turn into sentences and books, thus conveying the idea that they can be interpreted for more than just regular objects. To a *flâneur* a shop window is more than just a domain displaying the goods offered by a store, and a café is more than just a place where people eat and drink outside. These places are the texts filled with both static and moving bodies that the *flâneur* reads and interprets seemingly only once given the transience of each experience. However, unlike a written

¹¹⁷ Ferguson, "The flaneur on and off the streets of Paris," 35 .

¹¹⁸ Franz Hessel, *Ein Flaneur in Berlin* (Berlin: Das Arsenal, 1984), 145.

text in which the words are placed on a static page, the objects in the cityscape are less affixed to a page but are rather dynamic. As the *flâneur* passes by these objects, he is able to study them from different angles and watch them develop.

David Frisby identifies moments in Walter Benjamin's writing which characterize the *flâneur* as a modern individual who studied people, social types and constellations and who also not only read the city's architecture and spatial configurations, but also the city as a text much like Hessel.¹¹⁹ Frisby continues by illuminating another aspect of the *flâneur*'s activities:

The *flâneur*, and the activity of *flânerie*, is also associated in Benjamin's work not merely with observation and reading but also with *production* – the production of distinctive kinds of texts. [...] the *flâneur* can also be a producer, a producer of literary texts (including lyrical and prose poetry as in the case of Baudelaire), a producer of illustrative texts (including painting), a producer of narratives and reports, a producer of journalistic texts, a producer of sociological texts.¹²⁰

Frisby's insight reveals one of the greatest and yet provocative problems for the *flâneur* and the modern individual in the metropolis at the turn of the century: namely the desire to capture an experience through the medium of texts. Trying to capture every minute detail in a lived event could prove to be a daunting task given the number of facets associated even with a small, fragmentary experience.

One can deduce from Frisby's interpretation that almost any writer or journalist who wrote about his/her surroundings could have been a *flâneur*. Baudelaire was not the only one, however, producing literary texts based from his experience in the metropolitan area; others such as Kessler, Rilke, Döblin, Lasker-Schüler and Endell, just to name a

¹¹⁹ David Frisby, "The Flâneur in Social Theory" in *The Flâneur*, ed. Keith Tester (London: Routledge, 1994), 82.

¹²⁰ Frisby, "The Flâneur in Social Theory," 83.

few, were also highly influenced and inspired by the dynamic urban spaces and constant movement enveloping them.

Besides literary text production, the form of the newspaper and reportage reached even more of the city dwellers and were being read on a daily basis.¹²¹ They trained readers on how to navigate in their own city and guided them to sensational sights.¹²² The writings of the journalist and *flâneur*—as Frisby suggests these character types can be one in the same—provide not only a certain perspective but also an attempt at recreating the experience in hopes that their knowledge of the city could be spread among others citizens. Fritzsche notes the uniqueness about each report:

The attention to, and even celebration of, diversity and difference tended to undermine a coherent vision of the city. On-site reports, behind-the-scene investigations, and portraits of specific places and passing events put the accent on the singular and did so at the expense of more generic patterns. What physiognomies lost in universality they gained in detail: *Skizzen*, *Momentbilder*, and other snapshots of city places and city people over the course of a single day collected little more than moments and incidents.¹²³

These collections of unique experiences characterize the multifaceted experience of the *flâneur* in the metropolitan space. These “Momentbilder” seem to imply certain moments in time like pictures being tied together creating the illusion of dynamic movement as in a film. In synthesizing their own experience within the space, the journalist or *flâneur* must first be able to remember the scene as best as he/she can, interpret his/her own senses and be able to recreate in writing not only the content but also the feeling during the experience.

¹²¹ Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 15.

¹²² Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 16.

¹²³ Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 94.

Hans Ostwald, who from 1904-1908, was in charge of over fifty pamphlets about Berlin and other metropolises proposed a new type of literary form characterized by its shortness and succinctness.¹²⁴ The writing would be able to capture the fluctuation and fragmentation of modern society. One student of the subject compared this way of writing to a journal entry, which doesn't address a set of specific questions or report the major event like a biography but simply unsystematically records immediate and often digressive impressions.¹²⁵ Media scholar Wilmont Haacke (1951) later summarized that the feuilletonist should "go out on the street, encounter life, capture it on the spot, and interrogate it for the newspaper."¹²⁶ In a sense the *flâneur*'s perception would have to quickly and accurately interpret and document his surroundings as what he is experiencing cannot be relived and replayed. It is this attempt at capturing a moment that relates their activity to a transient performance. What the *flâneur* will encounter is relatively unknown and each new experience plays to the excitement and adventure.

As Berlin experienced a rapid growth in population and industry in a very short period of time, the city responded by erecting buildings and furthering its cityscape. Newspapers and essays depicted and aestheticized these advancements by holding a bird's eye-view of the activity and also illustrated the perpetual change involving all facets of the city likening Berlin to more of a process than a static urban space. Soon it was not simply a city but became a work of art whose creators and performers included not only its citizens but also its architecture and streets. Berlin would become

¹²⁴ Hans Ostwald, *Dunkle Winkel in Berlin* (Berlin: Hermann Seemann Nachfolger, 1905), ii. – Cited in Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, 98.

¹²⁵ Robert Prutz cited from Hermann Haufler, *Kunstformen des feuilletonistischen Stils* (Stuttgart: Württemberger Zeitung 1929), 11.

¹²⁶ Wilmont Haacke, *Handbuch des Feuilletons* (Emsdetten: Lechte, 1951), 312.

synonymous with perpetual movement. In order for objects such as the urban traffic and *Litfasssäule* to take on aesthetic qualities and to be considered art, the modern individual—intellectuals, journalists, and flâneurs included—played a key role in that process of creation. Through experience the city dweller learned to filter out the external, unimportant stimuli of his dizzying metropolis and was also able to attune his senses and aesthetics to specific fragments and details. When the citizens walked in the streets, they were not only battling with the constant influx of stimulations, but when successful, could also enjoy and grow intellectually by “reading” the objects in their vicinity. By abstracting from the everyday purposes of events and phenomena like the physiognomist, the modern observer could begin to aestheticize his surroundings and create his or her own meaning. The transient experiences in the urban space related similarly to, for example, dance performances. After having witnessed these phenomena the intellectual, journalist or flâneur would need to find a precise language and style to capture the event in words and also to evoke a similar aesthetic on the reader that the writer felt.

CHAPTER II

FROM BALLET AND BALLS TO MODERN DANCE: HARRY GRAF KESSLER AS REPRESENTATIVE OF A NEW GENERATION

1. Introduction

The growing metropolises of Europe around 1900 served as cultural centers and attracted many performers and groups from neighboring and distant countries. Berlin—like Paris, London and Munich—hosted performances by many of the pioneers of American modern dance—Loïe Fuller, Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis—as well as the Ballets Russes. In this chapter, I first situate the diplomat, critic and intellectual Harry Graf Kessler as a prime observer and representative of the *Übergangsmenschen*. Kessler's exposure to art, philosophy and dance greatly influenced and shaped his perception. Secondly, I present the various kinds of dance performances existing in Berlin and then trace the origins of the emerging, modern dance out of the nineteenth century bourgeois ballets as depicted by journalists and writers but primarily through Kessler's diaries. His detailed journals allow us to follow the progression not only of his growing interest in dance, but also his personal contacts with dancers and artists with whom he would collaborate later in his life. Like other intellectuals of the time, Kessler was aware keenly of the shift away from the stifling, bourgeois traditions and into a modern aesthetic in terms of art, literature and dance.

This chapter focuses on four styles of dance—balls, ballets, the Variété, and modern dance—by situating their function within Berlin society and highlighting the breakdown of the older, bourgeois forms and the development of a newer, modern aesthetic. Balls created space for both those belonging to the nobility—like Kessler—and the bourgeoisie to not only socialize, but also to watch and be observed by others. The

social dances taking place here were seen less as critically-engaging works of art and more as a means of ascertaining whom one knew. Ballets, like balls, belonged to the older form of dance and maintained a hierarchy of dancers similar to social rank. The ballet company would be comprised first of its faculty: an artistic director, rehearsal directors, ballet masters and mistresses and second of its dancers: the principals, soloists and corps de ballet. While ballets involved storytelling and choreographed movement according to codified rules, they were also supposed to be enjoyable performances not necessarily worthy of analysis on the part of the audience. With the rapid development of the metropolis and industry, the Variété emerged with short, eye-catching acts which demanded little analytical engagement and turned the performances into a place of consumption and social gathering. However, some argue that it provided some dancers with a platform to display and develop their experimental performances.

Dance, until this stage, largely played an entertaining role in which artistic production was not the goal. However, with the ushering in of the early modern dancers such as Loïe Fuller, Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis—all of whom Kessler watched and or with whom he socialized, dance turned inward and feelings became expressed in movement vocabulary that had not been previously witnessed. This resulted in experimental dances that were at first regarded as abstract and strange but later lauded for their artistic worth and modern aesthetic. Alternatively, the Ballets Russes from Russia offered what seemed to be considered a more avant-garde version of ballet, yet in some regard may not have been as bold as the early modern dancers. In 1914 Kessler also created his own modern ballet *Josephslegende* by collaborating with Sergei Diaghilev,

the director of the Ballet Russes, the legendary ballet dancer Vaslav Nijinsky, Diahilev's muse and lover, and the modern composer Richard Strauss.

2. "You will write the memoirs of our time:" Kessler as the Prime Observer

On September 5, 1901 the poet Richard Dehmel wrote to his friend Harry Graf Kessler, "You will write the memoirs of our time. It therefore behooves you to meet everybody who is important in all walks of life. I envy our grandchildren who will be able to read this."¹²⁷ Dehmel's comment essentially encapsulates Kessler's lifelong occupation as a diplomat and quintessential cosmopolitan gentleman. In his obituary from the 1938 émigré journal *Maß und Wert*—founded by Thomas Mann and published in Switzerland—Annette Kolb depicted Kessler as the ultimate "European" because of his German, French and English ancestry and influences. She praised not only "the sharpness and delicacy of his artistic sensitivity" but also his personality that magnetically attracted the best and brightest—the intellectual elite—who would always form his company wherever he went.¹²⁸ He indeed was a well-connected individual and "probably the most cosmopolitan man who ever lived," according to W.H. Auden.¹²⁹ Kessler documented his life experiences and encounters in his meticulously recorded diaries on over fifteen thousand pages and spanning over a fifty-seven year period.¹³⁰ His comprehensive journals provide a rich source of information about twentieth-century thought for scholars

¹²⁷ Laird McLeod Easton, *The Red Count. The Life and Times of Harry Graf Kessler* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 1.

¹²⁸ Annette Kolb, *Maß und Wert 4* (1938): 630-631. Cited by Easton, 1-2.

¹²⁹ "A Saint-Simon of Our Times," *New York Times Review of Books*, August 31, 1972. Cited by Easton, 3.

¹³⁰ Harry Graf Kessler, *Das Tagebuch 1880-1937*, eds. Roland S. Kamzelak und Ulrich Ott, vols. 2-9 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2004-2009)

of art, literature and politics by virtue not only of his intelligence but also because of his connections with a vast number of prominent people—estimated at more than forty thousand.¹³¹

Harry Clement Ulrich Kessler was born in Paris at the corner of rue de Luxembourg and rue du Mont Thabor on May 23, 1868.¹³² His father Adolf Wilhelm Kessler (1838-1895) was the founder of the family fortune originating from a Hamburg banking family on his mother's side. "He [Adolf] was passionately fond of hunting, riding and dancing: 'movement in itself gave him joy,'" ¹³³ thus perhaps foreshadowing his son's affinity toward dance. The father is described as a "dynamic, self-confident empire builder, robustly optimistic, [...] self-disciplined" and an ambiguous role model for his son. Kessler wanted to liberate himself from the "relentless [...] bourgeois ethos bequeathed to him, an ethos he experienced as sterile and confining."¹³⁴ While Kessler's birth in France and German ancestry through his father's side are reflected from the opening characterizations in his obituary by Kolb, his mother completes the English side. Kessler's mother Alice Countess Kessler—who was known for her beauty—captured the attention of Kaiser Wilhelm I, who became the godfather of Kessler's only sibling, sister Wilma. The mother was also the daughter of Henry Blosse Lynch, a man who: "helped lay the foundations of the British Empire in the first part of the nineteenth century" and displayed a talent for languages and an allegiance to the Indian navy.¹³⁵ Kessler's

¹³¹ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch 1880-1937*, vols. 2-9.

¹³² Easton, *The Red Count*, 22.

¹³³ Easton, *The Red Count*, 14.

¹³⁴ Easton, *The Red Count*, 14-15.

¹³⁵ Easton, *The Red Count*, 15.

associations with these three cultures would be representative of his own connections and social circles later on when he would travel frequently between Berlin, Paris and London.

In 1880 he entered the St. George's School in Ascot, England. Given the schools exclusive and elite stature, he would acquire many of the customs and manners of a young English gentleman.¹³⁶ But in 1882 Kessler's father moved him to Hamburg's "Gelehrtenschule des Johanneums" as he had always wanted his son to finish school in the German system.¹³⁷ During his time in Hamburg, Kessler joined a discussion group called the "Wissenschaftlicher Verein von 1817" and became interested in and began reading about politics.¹³⁸ After finishing his Abitur in 1888, he arrived in Bonn to study law at Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, and subsequently his "social whirlpool" began there.¹³⁹ Although he did not join Corps Borussia, he did socialize with their members. Their cosmopolitan manners primed them for work in the army, administration and foreign services.¹⁴⁰ While studying in Leipzig from 1889 until 1891, Kessler was able to take classes from the art historian Anton Springer and the psychologist Wilhelm Wundt who offered Kessler "a way to theorize about the psychological reception of art that avoided, as much as possible, discussion of the 'idea,' 'content,' or 'meaning,' concentrating instead on the way in which an artwork's sensuous form evokes an

¹³⁶ Easton, *The Red Count*, 23.

¹³⁷ Easton, *The Red Count*, 26.

¹³⁸ Burkhard Stenzel, *Harry Graf Kessler: Ein Leben zwischen Kultur und Politik* (Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1995), 30.

¹³⁹ Easton, *The Red Count*, 33.

¹⁴⁰ Easton, *The Red Count*, 34.

emotional response.”¹⁴¹ Wundt’s approach resonated with Kessler’s interpretation of all kinds of performance art such as dance.

Kessler and his generation also became deeply influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche as Kessler writes in *Gesichter und Zeiten*: “In uns entstand ein geheimer Messianismus. Die Wüste, die zu jedem Messias gehört, war in unseren Herzen; und plötzlich erschien über ihr wie ein Meteor Nietzsche.”¹⁴² Nietzsche’s ideas were to revolutionize Kessler’s bourgeois morals—inherited from his Prussian father—and forever create a permanent rupture in Kessler’s developing intellectual thought. Kessler poetically depicts this drastic change:

Unsere Generation war wohl die erste, die von Nietzsche tief beeinflußt wurde. Zu Anfang war unser Gefühl eine Mischung von angenehmem Gruseln und staunender Bewunderung vor dem Monsterfeuerwerk seines Geistes, in dem ein Stück nach dem anderen unseres moralischen Rüstzeugs in Rauch aufging. [...] Das rauhe Klima des Jahrhundertendes erforderte eine andere Gesundheit und Härte der Seele [...] als das weiche und romantische deutsche Biedermeier. [...] Das Gleichgewicht zwischen Mensch und Milieu, das die Umwälzungen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts gestört hatte, mußte durch eine Anpassung des Menschen an die neue Welt, die die alte immer radikaler verdrängte, wiederhergestellt werden, [...]¹⁴³

In a series of picturesque images, Kessler depicts the transformation from the older into the newer generation as their weapons and protective armament go up in smoke. They leave behind their contentment with the past and become enthusiastic for the changes of the future. Nietzsche seemed to cast a spell on Kessler and his generation who were tired of their stifling bourgeois traditions and wanted to be able to feel again.

¹⁴¹ Easton, *The Red Count*, 40.

¹⁴² Harry Graf Kessler, “Lehrjahre,” in *Gesichter und Zeiten. Erinnerungen*, eds. Cornelia Blasberg and Gerhard Schuster (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988), 199.

¹⁴³ Kessler, “Lehrjahre,” in *Gesichter und Zeiten*, 209-210.

The words of Nietzsche had set off a fire in Kessler's psyche by inspiring him to a life of perpetual travel, meeting new people and cultivating his relationships. For Kessler and his generation, modernity provided an unknown adventure to which Kessler alluded by citing Fragment 405 from Nietzsche's "Wille zur Macht:"

Wir wissen das ,Wohin?' noch nicht, zu dem wir getrieben werden, nachdem wir uns dergestalt von unsrem alten Boden abgelöst haben. Aber dieser Boden selbst hat uns die Kraft angezuchtet, die uns jetzt hinaustreibt in die Ferne, ins Abendteuer, durch die wir ins Uferlose, Unerprobte, Unentdeckte hinausgestoßen werden, - es bleibt uns keine Wahl, wir müssen Eroberer sein, nachdem wir kein Land mehr haben, wo wir heimisch sind, [...]¹⁴⁴

Nietzsche's depiction resonates with Kessler by illustrating the count's need to constantly be moving, having new experiences and essentially having no fixed home. As if by mystic force, Kessler would fulfill Nietzsche's demand by becoming a "Weltbürger" and travel around the world. Journeying first to North America on December 1891, he subsequently made stops in Indochina, India, and Egypt before returning to Leipzig in July the following year.¹⁴⁵

Besides his developing intellect through reading Nietzsche and traveling, Kessler was also known as a highly fashion-conscious individual. Edvard Munch's famous full-length portrait from 1907 shows the dandy Kessler in a suit wearing a hat and carrying a cane.

¹⁴⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, Fragment 2[207] from *Nachgelassene Fragmente Herbst 1885 bis Herbst 1887* in *Nietzsches Werke: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe. Electronic edition*, – Cited in Kessler, *Gesichter und Zeiten*, 211.

¹⁴⁵ Günter Riederer, "Der Übergangsmensch – Kessler als Student, Untertan und Weltbürger," in *Das Tagebuch Zweiter Band 1892-1897*, eds. Günter Riederer and Jörg Schuster (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2004), 14.

(Figure 4)¹⁴⁶ Along with his dapper appearance, he had the impeccable manners of a



Figure 4 – *Harry Graf Kessler* by Edvard Munch, 1907

¹⁴⁶ <http://weimarart.blogspot.com/2010/08/edvard-munch-in-germany.html>

distinguished English gentleman.¹⁴⁷ In 1891 he went to work as an unpaid assistant at a New York law firm and was ushered into high society based on his title, looks and urbane manners.¹⁴⁸ In 1893 he started his apprenticeship as a law clerk in Spandau and delved into the Berlin salons where he attended balls and social events. Originally taken from the eighteenth century French model, Wilhelmine Germany had established its own form. Unable to maintain itself due to not only the war but also the advent of other forms of entertainment like the cinema, cafes and nightclubs, the salons would vanish.¹⁴⁹ They were still, however, at the time the quickest way for a young, sociable gentleman to make a name for himself and establish contact with others in diplomatic, political and artistic arenas.¹⁵⁰ With his attractive appearance, cosmopolitan aura and excellent connections, Kessler was able to attend many salons and “had the ability to view social events as a detached observer whose sensitive eye could make fine distinctions in gestures and costumes and whose imagination could provide the smallest nuance with an abstract meaning.”¹⁵¹ With the objectification of his surroundings in the salon, Kessler began to obtain the aptitude of the flâneur who would be able to create his own unique meaning by observing moving bodies in everyday situations.

¹⁴⁷ Easton, *The Red Count*, 50.

¹⁴⁸ Easton, *The Red Count*, 48.

¹⁴⁹ Easton, *The Red Count*, 60.

¹⁵⁰ Easton, *The Red Count*, 60-61.

¹⁵¹ Easton, *The Red Count*, 61.

Kessler also became instrumental in developing the modern art scene in Berlin through his work with establishing the magazine *Pan*.¹⁵² First conceptualized by Richard Dehmel, Otto Julius Bierbaum and Julius Meier-Graefe, who met in a two-room wine tavern on the corner of Unter den Linden and Wilhelmstraße at “Zum Schwarzen Ferkel,” the magazine was devoted to literature and art for the elite appearing between 1885 and 1900. As a consequence of being printed on fine paper and attracting an intellectual audience, the publication could not survive on subscription alone and demanded financial help from wealthy patrons who would serve as the board of directors.¹⁵³ Although Kessler did not immerse himself in bohemian life, he went to the ateliers of young artists and either bought their work or commissioned new ones.¹⁵⁴

Besides working in Berlin, Kessler was engaged in creating a new culture in Weimar—following the death of Nietzsche—which would serve as an entrance into modernity. After having read two articles by the architect Henry van de Velde in *Pan*, Kessler not only hired him to make furniture for the count’s home in Berlin¹⁵⁵ but also appointed van de Velde as head of the arts and crafts school in Weimar on Dec. 21, 1901.¹⁵⁶ In 1902 Kessler himself took over the “Vorsitz des Kuratoriums zur Kunst und Kunstgewere. Auf dem Program steht die Reorganisation der privaten Permanenten

¹⁵² Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Dritter Band 1897-1905*, eds. Carina Schäfer and Grariele Biedermann (Suttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2004), 1073.

¹⁵³ Easton, *The Red Count*, 66.

¹⁵⁴ Easton, *The Red Count*, 67.

¹⁵⁵ Carina Schäfer, “‘Unsere Heimat ist die Gegenwart...’ – Von Berlin nach Weimar,” in *Das Tagebuch Dritter Band 1897-1905*, eds. Carina Schäfer and Grariele Biedermann (Suttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2004), 37.

¹⁵⁶ Easton, *The Red Count*, 95.

Kunstaussstellung und deren Umwandlung in ein staatliches Museum.”¹⁵⁷ Their goal was to create a new Weimar by instilling a modern “Ästhetik unserer Zeit,” which would begin with the aristocracy and then subsequently trickle down to all levels of society.¹⁵⁸ For the main exhibit room Kessler selected not only German modernist but mainly French impressionist and post-impressionist works because they would not have been seen by a German public. He wanted “to legitimize modern art [...] by placing it squarely within a recognized tradition.”¹⁵⁹

The Kaiser and state’s artistic direction, however, was against Kessler’s work forcing the diplomat to found the *Deutscher Künstlerbund*. The state’s program remained full of mediocre work that did not support individual talent but simply allowed for a majority rule to emerge. The goal of the nonpartisan *Künstlerbund* was to be open to all kinds of talent and wanted “dem Künstler seine Freiheit sichern.”¹⁶⁰ In maintaining his receptive world view, he continued to shuttle between Berlin, London and Paris in the art scenes, building his connections from his days of working on *Pan* and became personal friends with leading French and English artists.¹⁶¹ Although the production of *Pan* became too expensive to continue and the exhibitions in Weimar did not attain his vision because of reactionary conservatives, Kessler was still able to provide a venue for

¹⁵⁷ Schäfer, “Unsere Heimat ist die Gegenwart...,” 32.

¹⁵⁸ Henry van de Velde, *Geschichte meines Lebens* (Munich: Piper, 1962), 196.

¹⁵⁹ Easton, *The Red Count*, 103.

¹⁶⁰ Harry Graf Kessler, “Der Deutsche Künstlerband,” in *Künstler und Nationen. Aufsätze und Reden 1899-1933*, eds. Cornelia Blasberg and Gerhard Schuster (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988), 66.

¹⁶¹ Easton, *The Red Count*, 116.

budding artists to express a new kind of art and his network of connections continued to grow vastly.

Kessler was not only involved in the administration and politics of art but also, to a large degree, in creating and collaborating in works that pertained to performance. Despite his contributions to Hofmannsthal's comedic play *Der Rosenkavalier*, Hofmannsthal, who refused to list him as a co-author, instead wanted to name Kessler as the "verborgende[r] Helfer" in the dedication.¹⁶² According to Kessler's diaries at times it remained unclear who had created certain parts of the play as they would brainstorm together.¹⁶³ Kessler felt he didn't receive the recognition he deserved even though Hofmannsthal mentioned the count's help and nothing more in the dedication.¹⁶⁴ It was clear, however, as Kessler states, that while Hofmannsthal could enliven a scene poetically from already existing dramatic material—such as the material taken from *Der Rosenkavalier* based on an eighteenth century erotic novel,¹⁶⁵ Kessler could "invent and order dramatic plot."¹⁶⁶ These skills would inevitably help him later on when he would undertake his own libretto for *Josephslegende*.

3. Balls and Ballets: Kessler's Boredom

¹⁶² Brief von Hofmannsthal an seine Frau vom 27.1. 1910. Hofmannsthal-Depositum des Landes Baden-Württemberg, Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach. Cited in Jörg Schuster, "Eine sonderbare Art von Liebe": Harry Graf Kessler und Hugo von Hofmannsthal," in *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, ed. Jörg Schuster (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2005), 18.

¹⁶³ Harry Graf Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, ed. Jörg Schuster (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2005), 560-561. – Feb, 12, 1909 in Weimar.

¹⁶⁴ Schuster, "Eine sonderbare Art von Liebe," 19.

¹⁶⁵ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band*, 557-558. – Feb. 9, 1909 in Weimar

¹⁶⁶ Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Harry Graf Kessler, *Briefwechsel, 1898-1929*, ed. Hilde Burger (Frankfurt a.M., 1968), 94 – March 24, 1912.

In his book *Berlin und der Tanz*, Georg Zivier notes that Berlin was historically never a city like Paris that was able to attract ballet stars.¹⁶⁷ Companies would come for a couple weeks, while the educated bourgeoisie, aristocrats and intellectuals would flock to see them dance.¹⁶⁸ The more conventional Berlin remained happy with the tradition of its forefathers by dancing in Polkas, Mazurkas, Polonaises and attending balls.¹⁶⁹ The kinds of dance that Zivier mentions have been those that Harry Graf Kessler had seen performed or taken part in on a regular basis during the 1890s.

On Sunday February 4, 1894 Kessler described how he had dinner at the Savoy in Berlin and later attended a masked ball in the Palast Hotel:

Ich [war] zuerst als schwarz und weisser Pierrot [und] nachher im roten Frack mit weissen Escarpins bis um fünf Uhr getanzt. [...] hübsche Kostüme: Frau v. Mutzenbecher als schwarzweisse Pierrette, die Greindl Dame Marie Antoinette, der alte Fürst Radziwill als Beduine, Koscielski schwarzer Frack, Escarpins, rote Strümpfe u. Krawatte, die Peñalver als Zigeunerin, Loën als Pharao, Michel Königsmarck, Lafaille u Winterfeldts als Köche mit elektrisch-glühenden Nasen.¹⁷⁰

His emphasis at these events is to describe the elaborate costumes of the guests and the society of the upper class. The luxury of Kessler is noted by his superfluous need to have two costumes and yet the description of his and others' sumptuous outfits is deemed important in his journal. The physical act of dancing in costume brings an air of sophistication, anonymity, and playfulness. Kessler's journal is littered with brief entries describing his experience at balls especially on weekends. These events played a large

¹⁶⁷ Georg Zivier, *Berlin und der Tanz* (Berlin: Haude & Spenersche, 1968), 36.

¹⁶⁸ Zivier, *Berlin und der Tanz*, 42.

¹⁶⁹ Zivier, *Berlin und der Tanz*, 43.

¹⁷⁰ Harry Graf Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Zweiter Band 1892-1897*, ed. Günter Riederer and Jörg Schuster (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2004), 244. – Berlin 4. Feb 1894.

roll in not only his enjoyment but his social life, where he could talk with people, watch others and be observed himself. A later entry reflects this social atmosphere when Kessler writes: “Kleiner Hofball; immerhin noch 800 Menschen. Es gibt noch mehr Platz zum Tanzen. Der Kaiser sieht frisch aus und war offenbar gut gelaunt; er gieng herum und unterhielt sich lächend mit Diesen und Jenen.”¹⁷¹ While this description demonstrates the social event’s elevation and hierarchical structure because of the Kaiser’s attendance, his contact with others seems to be rather superficial and assumes an acquired, performative role. The ball seems to be a mixture of business and pleasure where one could enjoy oneself, but could also possibly have serious discussion. The dance aspect seems to mostly take on a playful, light character, and the Kaiser’s smiling attests to the jovial environment. Besides the social exchange, there is little in terms of intellectual conversation. One went to the ball to see friends, perhaps meet someone new, but almost never to engage in critical analysis of people or dance as an art form. Kessler grew tired of these traditional balls and required a different intellectual outlet. While observing people, he acquired an aesthetic eye by abstracting from the guests’ socializing and dancing. Kessler describes a friend of his who likes dancing for others:

Sie [Pachelbel] tanzt seit 15 Jahren so oft sie kann, scheut keine Strapezen; Sucht zweifellos schöner Frauen, sich bewundern zu lassen; vielleicht, um ihren Mann durch Eifersucht festzuhalten, vielleicht auch, um sich selber immer wieder ihre Schönheit, an der sie dunkel zweifelt, durch Courmacher bestätigen zu lassen [...]

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One could subsume from these observations that the audience and dancer are not at a formal ball. Kessler’s depiction clearly demonstrates the dance’s performative aspects

¹⁷¹ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch. Zweiter Band 1892-1897*, 323. – Berlin 6. Feb 1895.

¹⁷² Harry Graf Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Dritter Band 1897-1905*, ed. Carina Schäfer und Gabriele Biedermann. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2004), 103. – Berlin 26. Nov. 26 1887.

based on the woman's demeanor and movements, which are fueled solely by the reaction and interaction with her audience. The single female, who not only uses her movement to make her own husband jealous but also to affirm her beauty as an exhibitionist, reminds one of the solitary and emancipatory dances of Isadora Duncan who rebelled against academic ballet and bourgeois traditions. Pachelbel's action could be considered a precursor to the inundating wave of modern movement that was to come. Nevertheless, Kessler's reading of her utilizes his analytical abilities which he did not bring to bear in the earlier instances. The masked ball and *Kleiner Hofball* seemed merely to describe who was at the engagement, what people wore and the kind of dancing taking place. In Pachelbel's dance, Kessler presents his own reading regarding the purpose of dance—however, still within the social context—and demonstrates that his interests are awakened by, at the time, such an unconventional dance by a woman in the public sphere.

The masked ball and *kleiner Hofball* are representative of Kessler's experience at events in which mostly those from the upper class gathered in fine attire to enjoy themselves. At these social gatherings people could watch each others and put themselves on display while dancing or talking. Depending on whom one spoke with, others could ascertain whom one knew as exhibited by the Kaiser. Pachelbel's dance, however, departs from the traditional ball setting and demonstrates Kessler's penchant for a less conventional dance.

Even before seeing Pachelbel's dance, Kessler's thoughts had entered the aesthetic realm similar to the flâneur and urban physiognomist who could abstract from the utility of everyday movement and create his or her own meaning:

[...] man wollte die rohen und charkterlosen Bewegungen der Schauspieler oder die Bocksprünge des Ballets hierher und zur Kunst rechnen. Mir für meinen Teil

bereitet oft die Art, wie ein Mädchen die Füße beim Tanze setzt oder wie ein junger Offizier sein Pferd zwischen den Schenkeln hält, eine Freude, die mir in der Art keins von den orthodox sogenannten Kunstwerken gewährt oder gewähren kann. Ich finde im Ganzen solcher Bewegungen, von denen die Zeichnung z.B., selbst die japanische nur einen Augenblick, ein Fragment, bieten kann, und in ihrer Harmonie mit der Persönlichkeit eine heimliche Schönheit, einen unbewussten Stil, die mich mehr entzückt, wie alle Vollendung der festen Form.¹⁷³

Kessler's description focuses on bringing together traditional dance and theater but applies a different lens by looking at pure movement devoid of any traditional emotion and affect. Kessler begins with traditional aestheticized forms of movement like ballet but moves into the everyday realm by reflecting on a girl's feet while dancing and an officer clutching a horse between his legs. His two depictions focus less on the entire human body but concentrate more on pure, momentary movement of the extremities and abstract from the utility of the event. What can be observed here is another echo of Wilhelm Wundt's theory on Kessler's way of seeing: Kessler avoids the situational plot and emphasizes the enjoyment of simple, banal depictions while considering them works of art. In fact, such everyday movements seem to resonate more with Kessler than the more traditional forms of dance. His curiosity and ability to express himself in writing demonstrate his desire to see more. Despite being captivated by his new mode of perception, Kessler struggles with his "orthodox" bourgeois aesthetics by being afraid of what others would think. As if on the brink of discovering a new aesthetic current that few have recognized thus far, he will continue to push the tide even further through his social interactions with dancers and artists and later through his own production.

¹⁷³ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch. Zweiter Band 1892-1897*, 327. – Berlin 15. Feb 1895.

Kessler's affinity to bodies and movement in the public sphere coupled with his desire to see less traditional dance manifested itself on February 8, 1898 when the count attended a "grosser Hofball" in Berlin:

Die Grossherzogin von Hessen steckte wieder pervers schön in einer goldgewirkten mit violetten Jettperlen dicht bestickten Brokatscheide; sie gleicht darin einer Bayadere. Suggestive Art, den Kopf und den Oberkörper zurückzuwerfen, wenn sie aufhört zu tanzen; dabei wirkt sie selbst in der äussersten Lascivität ihrer Bewegungen nie unvornehm. Sie ist wirklich ein bezauberndes Geschöpf.¹⁷⁴

Apparently the grand duchess of Hessen is notorious for her flashy attire as Kessler notes her resemblance to an exotic, Indian temple dancer. Like Pachelbel, the duchess moves with freeness devoid of any rigidity, thus implying an eroticism as demonstrated by her throwing her head and upper body back as she dances. Dance scholar Gabriele Brandstetter—recognizing this bending backwards or "Cambrure"—traces its origins to the dancing maenads, the female followers of Dionysus.¹⁷⁵ On ancient Greek vases the maenads were often depicted in a similar backbend position—as the grand duchess—and were representative of an irrational, uncontrollable hysteria. Brandstetter has noted a corresponding development concerning solo female dancers at the turn of the century—and later on—who also performed variations on the "Cambrure" during their dances: Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, Grete Wiesenthal, and Mary Wigman.¹⁷⁶ It seems that the grand duchess has become aware of her free, natural body and desires to emancipate herself from the stifling corset. In releasing her body from imposed nineteenth century confines, Kessler becomes enchanted by the duchess' attire and particularly her seductive

¹⁷⁴ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Dritter Band 1897-1905*, 119.

¹⁷⁵ Gabriele Brandstetter, *Tanz Lektüren. Körperbilder und Raumfiguren der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1995), 188.

¹⁷⁶ Brandstetter, *Tanz Lektüren*, 192-195.

and ecstatic movements. The juxtaposition of the traditional ball setting and the duchess' flamboyant dress and seductive movement intensifies Kessler's fascination all the more and increases his appetite for more dance.

4. Varieté Dance: Entertainment or Bridge to Modern Dance?

Many consider the dances of Varieté performers to be trivial, frivolous and purely for entertainment.¹⁷⁷ But as Claudia Balk and others argued in 1998, Varieté dancers lead the path to what has become modern dance. Yet the argument seems to be marginalized.¹⁷⁸ In his book *Das Varieté* Wolfgang Jansen refers to Arthur Kahane who said in 1928 that it was not the performances of the Wiesenthal sisters who began the rebirth of dance out of ballet but others like the fire dance of Loïe Fuller, or those of Isadora Duncan.¹⁷⁹ Jansen, however, thinks differently, that: "die Wiedergeburt des Tanzes nicht von den überlieferten Aufführungsstätten ausging, sondern zu einem wesentlichen Teil von jenen Bühnen, die gemeinhin als triviale Unterhaltungsstätten angesehen werden."¹⁸⁰

Gunhild Oberzaucher-Schüller (1992) has coined the American group of Loïe Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Maud Allen, and Ruth St. Denis as the "prime movers" who

¹⁷⁷ Brygida Ochaim and Claudia Balk, *Variete-Tänzerinnen um 1900: Vom Sinnenrausch zur Tanzmoderne* (Frankfurt am Main und Basel: Stroemfeld, 1998), 7.

¹⁷⁸ Ochaim and Balk, *Variete-Tänzerinnen*, 8.

¹⁷⁹ Arthur Kahane, *Tagebuch des Dramaturgen* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1928), 207 – Cited by Jansen 119.

¹⁸⁰ Wolfgang Jansen, *Das Varieté. Die glanzvolle Geschichte einer unterhaltenden Kunst* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1990/1991), 20.

began the modern dance movement in middle Europe.¹⁸¹ She claims the aesthetic of the Varieté to be the actual characteristic of the early European phase of Ruth St. Denis.¹⁸² Oberzaucher-Schüller problematizes the situation by asking: “Waren Tänze wie *Radha*, *Cobras*, *Incense*, *Nautch*, oder *Yogi* nicht bloß Varietérouline, deren choreographischer Wert auch nicht durch die künstlerische Aura der Amerikanerin aufgewertet wurde?” This question blurs the line between what constitutes a Varieté performance and the new modern dance. Oberzaucher-Schüller thinks St. Denis’ dances have been “upgraded,” but could one also not judge her dances as simply being a mix that bridges the two kinds of dance? Instead of categorizing the dances of St. Denis as purely Varieté or modern dance, the experimentations of the early modern dancers should be observed by deemphasizing the continuously changing boundaries.

Critics have also had problems in defining what the Varieté was, and its reception.¹⁸³ Arthur Moeller-Bruck (or Moeller van den Bruck) (1902) calls it a “prostituierte Kunst. [...] Varieté ist alles, was Dionysos den Menschen antreibt zu tun und das noch nicht Kunst geworden oder überhaupt nicht Kunst zu werden zu vermag.”¹⁸⁴ And Ernst Günther (1978) goes further in claiming:

Varieté ist eine Kunstform zur Unterhaltung auf Massenbasis, besser vielleicht: Massenpublikum. Sie ist in ihrer Genealogie ebenso verwandt mit dem Theater wie mit dem Zirkus, ohne mit einem von beiden identisch zu sein. Gewiß, Varieté ist wie das Theater an die Bühne gebunden. Doch im Gegensatz zum Theater

¹⁸¹ Gunhild Oberzaucher-Schüller, “Vorbilder und Wegbreiter. Über den Einfluß der >>prime movers<< des amerikanischen Modern Dance auf das Werden des Freien Tanzes in Mitteleuropa,” in *Ausdruckstanz: Eine mitteleuropäische Bewegung der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Gunhild Oberzaucher-Schüller (Wilhelmshaven: Heinrichhofen-Bücher, 1992), 347-366.

¹⁸² Oberzaucher-Schüller, “Vorbilder und Wegbreiter,” 347.

¹⁸³ Ochaim and Balk, *Variete-Tänzerinnen*, 10.

¹⁸⁴ Arthur Moeller-Bruck, *Das Varieté* (Berlin: Julius Bard, 1902), 4.

bedarf es keiner wohlorganisierten dramatischen Handlung, in der der einzelne nur dazu da ist, das Ganze zu verdeutlichen.¹⁸⁵

One of the main differences in these characterizations is deciding whether the Varieté has any artistic value as both Moeller-Bruck and Günther do not agree. The entertainment value of the Varieté seems to place itself lower in rank to an artistic dance, yet Günther implies that it has artistic value as he calls it a “Kunstform.” Oberzaucher- Schüller characterizes St. Denis by saying that the dancer almost always performed in Varietés, yet she “wolle zeigen, daß Tanz Kunst sei, weihevoll sein könne, beinahe eine religiöse Übung und schließlich, daß der Rhythmus der Sinn des Tanzes sei.”¹⁸⁶ St. Denis’ costumes also reflected what was often worn by dancers in the Varieté: skin-baring, colorful, glittering, over-the-top outfits. It could be that she used the Varieté as an avenue first simply to perform, and to be seen in order to develop herself as an artist. The performance opportunities during her time were limited to the Varieté, opera and ballet which were still considered relatively popular to the unheard of modern dance.

The Varieté resembles the circus as they both have particular moments of interest, yet differ because the events of a Varieté take place on a stage. The acts remain short in order to sustain the fleeting attention of the audience, and are so multifarious that there is no unified theme.¹⁸⁷ The different, visually-appealing acts also switch very quickly to the next with little transition time. The Varieté could be captured in the image of the kaleidoscope: “ein permanent wechselndes, farbiges Spiel.”¹⁸⁸ Similarly, Simmel’s art

¹⁸⁵ Ernst Günther, *Geschichte des Varieté* (Berlin: Taschenbuch der Künste, 1978), 11.

¹⁸⁶ Ernst Schur, *Der moderne Tanz* (München: Lammers, 1910), 88. – Cited in Oberzaucher- Schüller, 358.

¹⁸⁷ Ochaim and Balk, *Variete-Tänzerinnen*, 11.

¹⁸⁸ Ochaim and Balk, *Variete-Tänzerinnen*, 11.

exhibitions as well as—on a grand scale—the urban landscape with its perpetual change and movement also symbolize the Varieté. With freer production guidelines, the Varieté allowed other kinds of dance to emerge outside of the theater such as: skirt dance, serpent dance, cakewalk, Cancan, Fandango, Polkas und Walzer, Gymnastik, erotic dances, juggling, and sketches.¹⁸⁹ Many of the trailblazers of early modern dance like Loïe Fuller, Ruth St. Denis and Isadora Duncan began their careers in Varieté.¹⁹⁰ One could argue that because of the more open performance standards that there are more experimental pieces could be performed under the guise of Varieté.

These spectacular displays often presented women wearing exotic costumes and performing oriental-inspired dances, which led to a large male following.¹⁹¹ Influences from other countries and cultures were a product of colonization. Europeans became fascinated with distant lands depicted in travel literature, world exhibitions and archeological digs.¹⁹² The accessibility and objectification of women linked them to the emerging “Konsumgesellschaft” in Berlin.¹⁹³ The Varieté like a “Warenhaus” offered a place where one could observe and quickly survey displayed items, thus leading to the idea of buying and consuming products. Much like the bustling city that was experiencing drastic advancements in technology, an influx of immigrants and changes in city landscapes, the modern individual was also becoming an observer and a consumer developing just like the city itself.

¹⁸⁹ Ochaim and Balk, *Variete-Tänzerinnen*, 70.

¹⁹⁰ Ochaim and Balk, *Variete-Tänzerinnen*, 69.

¹⁹¹ Ochaim and Balk, *Variete-Tänzerinnen*, 14.

¹⁹² Ochaim and Balk, *Variete-Tänzerinnen*, 69.

¹⁹³ Ochaim and Balk, *Variete-Tänzerinnen*, 15.

While relaxing, drinking and eating at the Varieté, one usually wasn't involved in analytical or intellectual work, but was simply amused by the various acts.¹⁹⁴ The performers were not necessarily the main attraction and were sometimes pushed off into the periphery while the audience themselves could assume more of the attention. The shifting emphasis from the stage performers to the audience reminds one of the social dances and balls that Kessler often attended. Varietés created a similar environment in which the dancing—although trying to stay spectacular and maintain the focus of the audience—might not have been the most important aspect of the event in comparison to the socializing. At both balls and Varietés everyone played the role of the observer and the performer within a social space whether one wanted to or not. With its beginnings outside the realm of the bourgeois middle class and being deemed as immoral, the Varieté eventually belonged less to a subculture and eventually became a celebrated part of popular entertainment.¹⁹⁵

From Kessler's diary entries from 1890 to around 1900, it remains unclear whether he frequented the Varieté; however, he often described performances he had attended either in a bar or theater. After having dinner in Berlin on January 2, 1894, he and his friends went into a bar where he experienced "Tanzvergnügungen der kleinen polnischen Kolonie [...] im engsten Kreise, wobei Mazurka bis zur Erschöpfung getanzt wird."¹⁹⁶ And on a previous evening he went to the Adolf Ernst Theater "wo eine Posse: Ein Fideles Corps: englische Tänzerin, entfernt an die pompejanischen Wandgemälde

¹⁹⁴ Ochaim and Balk, *Variete-Tänzerinnen*, 27.

¹⁹⁵ Ochaim and Balk, *Variete-Tänzerinnen*, 71.

¹⁹⁶ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch. Zweiter Band 1892-1897*, 237. – Berlin 2. Jan 1894.

erinnert.¹⁹⁷ These examples of rather traditional dances remain but brief accounts that neither detail the costumes and movement qualities of the dancers nor, and more particularly, depict Kessler's own or others' reaction to the events. This lack of enthusiasm and detail may be attributed to the smaller significance such scenes played in Kessler's overall impressions of these dance forms.

5. Loïe Fuller: Kessler's Intellectual Abstraction

Although Loïe Fuller may be one of the lesser well-known founders of the modern dance movement—often being over shadowed by the better known Isadora Duncan—she and others such as Duncan and Ruth St. Denis began the movement away from the ballet aesthetic of the nineteenth century and into the “free dance” of the twentieth century. This free dance, which would later be called modern dance in America and “Ausdruckstanz” in Germany, has similar roots but deviated from its origins creating a separate American and German style. The general term “free dance” refers mainly to the breaking away from ballet's codified conventions and listening to how the body would naturally move. Appearing in both Berlin and Paris about ten years before Duncan and St. Denis, Fuller was known for her performances involving large draping material which she maneuvered in patterns resulting in the illusion of her body's disappearance.¹⁹⁸ (Figure 5)¹⁹⁹.

¹⁹⁷ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch. Zweiter Band 1892-1897*, 308. – Berlin 27. Dec. 1894.

¹⁹⁸ Gabriele Brandstetter, “Die Tänzerin der Metamorphosen,” in *Loie Fuller: Getanzter Jugendstil* (München: Prestel, 1996), 25.

¹⁹⁹

http://www.metmuseum.org/works_of_art/collection_database/photographs/loie_fuller_dancing_samuel_jo_shua_beckett/objectview_enlarge.aspx?page=721&sort=1&sortdir=desc&keyword=&fp=721&dd1=19&dd2=0&vw=1&collID=19&OID=190041580&vT=1&hi=1&ov=0

The American-born Fuller began her musical and theatrical training in Vaudeville: a US venue comparable to the European Varietés, in which a number of unrelated acts were performed. Her success there may have helped her obtain contracts for the Berlin and Paris Varietés. Her most memorable *Serpent Dance* involved a large



Figure 5 – *Loie Fuller Dancing* by Samuel Joshua Beckett, ca. 1900

amount of silk, diaphanous material from India reminiscent of exotic dances of Salomé. However, according to Gabriele Brandstetter: “für sie [Fuller] ist die Seide nicht als erotischer Schleier des Körpers, sondern als ‘Materiel’ des Raumes ein Medium, Bewegung als solche, losgelöst von aller Betonung des Tänzerinnenkörpers, zu inszenieren.”²⁰⁰ It seems Fuller wanted to change the traditional sexual connotations of the “Schleier,” and her attempt was intensified all the more by covering most of her body

²⁰⁰ Brandstetter, “Die Tänzerin der Metamorphosen,” 27.

except her head. By losing the erotic nature of the draping fabric, the female body becomes degendered and transforms into an abstract material. Fuller's dance embodies similar ideas followed by Duncan who argued against the tight ballet corsets in favor for a looser tunic. But Fuller's idea of dance seems to be even more drastic by moving even farther away from Duncan's proposed female form. In fact, her *Serpent Dance* reminds one of the experience of the modern individual in the metropolis who walks around in the industrial Berlin experiencing a myriad of stimuli. The individual's experience of watching Fuller's dance would pull them into the abstract realm of simple movement removed from a gendered spectacle.

Arthur Moeller-Bruck in his book *Das Varieté* from 1902 wrote similar commentary regarding Fuller's dancing: "Intellektuelle, moralische Beziehungen lassen sich bei der Loie Fuller so gut wie gar nicht mehr finden. Man könnte noch unterscheiden, ... dass sie die vollständige Entäusserung des Frauenleibes durch die Kunst ist und nur als herrlich bewegte farbige Fläche reizt."²⁰¹ He points out that Fuller is the person behind the material, but the mesmerizing quality about the colored fabric makes one lose oneself in the performance forgetting that she is the one creating the movement. By including her dance in his book on Variété, he lumps her style into that of the Variété because the idea of "modern dance" had not yet emerged, and it is not until later that her dances become better periodized.

Some critics even question whether Fuller is actually dancing or if she is even a dancer. Brandstetter observes: "daß sie Tanz und tänzerische Bewegung sehr viel weiter faßte, als es der landläufige Begriff zuließ.[...] In ihrem Tanz sind Motion und Emotion eng aufeinander bezogen[...] Nicht nur die menschliche Empfindung, vielmehr alle

²⁰¹ Bruck, *Das Varieté*, 195.

Elemente der Natur sollen im Tanz dargestellt werden.”²⁰² As Moeller-Bruck as pointed out Fuller’s dances were more characteristic of Impressionism instead of the expressionistic Ausdruckstanz.²⁰³ Brandstetter widens the scope of possibilities in deeming Fuller’s performance as still dance movement. Moving away from the plot of ballets into the abstraction of emotions certainly gives the audience a representation they have never seen before, thus forcing them to question what actually takes place on stage. As Brandstetter notes how the *Serpent Dance* is in correspondence with nature, the material and patterns suggest a moving and living organism amongst changing lights. The title of Brandstetter’s essay “Die Tänzerin der Metamorphosen” also implies not only the continual change of the dancer’s positions and movements but the development of something organic and living like the butterflies on her drape material.

The reviewer for the *Illustrierte Zeitung* described Fuller’s *Serpent Dance* with enthusiasm and admiration:

Was die Zuschauer in ihren Darstellungen überrascht, ist weniger die Kunst des Tanzens selbst als die Inszenesetzung der ganzen >Nummer<, die sie vorführt, und die bewundernswürdige Geschicklichkeit und Geschwindigkeit ihrer Bewegungen, mit denen sie den Schlangenlinientanz ausführt. Ehe sie ihre Vorstellung beginnt, werden Saal und Bühne in undurchdringliche Finsterniß gehüllt. Die Bühne stellt eine phantastisch ausgestattete Höhle vor, und durch eine Felsspalte betritt Miß Fuller die Scene. Plötzlich bestrahlt elektrisches Licht ihre schöne Gestalt. Sie beginnt sich wie ein Kreisel zu drehen, die Falten ihres langen weißen, mit Schlangen und Schmetterlingen bestrickten Seidenkleides heben sich und bilden im Wirbel des Tanzes Figuren, wie unsere Zeichnungen deren etliche darstellen. Die stets wechselnden Reflexe und Farben des elektrischen Lichtes tragen wesentlich dazu bei, den Effect der ganzen Vorführung derartig zu erhöhen, daß die Zuschauer sich in den Glauben versetzt fühlen könnte, Miß Fuller in einer

²⁰² Brandstetter, “Die Tänzerin der Metamorphosen,” 27.

²⁰³ Bruck, *Das Varieté*, 27.

diamantenen Atmosphäre tanzen zu sehen, sodaß auch in dieser Hinsicht die Bezeichnung Serpentin tänzerin vollkommen gerechtfertigt erscheint.²⁰⁴

The reviewer notices—like Brandstetter—that Fuller doesn't “dance” in the conventional sense but rather provides a complete impression through her sweeping motions and draping costume. The snake-formed patterns that she makes with her arms create the illusion of continual movement in many directions not simply linearly with a beginning and an end. The eye would seem to not focus simply on one moving object like a hand but rather on the entire dynamic movement caused only by her rotating herself around and the movements of her arms. The turning of her body gives her more freedom than to move her arms in order to create more patterns. The reviewer seems most impressed by the speed, dynamics and continual development of the movement.

Kessler and his friend Henry van de Velde, a prominent Belgian Jugendstilarchitect, were also struck by Fuller's dancing when she was performing in Berlin. On December 7, 1901 Kessler wrote in his journal about Fuller and Sada Yacco, a Japanese actress and dancer:

Abends mit VandeVelde Sada Yacco und Loie Fuller sehen. VandeVelde sagte sehr richtig von der Loie Fuller: C'est là la réalisation de tout ce que nous avons cherché avec le Néo Impressionisme. Im Zusammenhang mit der kleinen Handlung, die dem einen Tanz zu grunde liegt (Verbrennen der Frau im Sonnenlicht): Je voudrais bien savoir si c'est là la fin ou le commencement d'un Art. En somme, c'est complet, et cependant il me semble qu'il y aurait encore la possibilité de developper ça. Die Sado Yacco spielte die Geisha und Kesa wieder mit aller Zärtlichkeit und Übergewalt ihrer Kunst.²⁰⁵

Van de Velde's observation implies that the notion of new impressionism is already a concept for him, which seeks actualization. Fuller's dance, therefore, seems to be the first

²⁰⁴ (Gez.:) E.R., “Serpentintanz,” *Illustrierte Zeitung*, 99/2580 (10. Dezember 1892): 684.

²⁰⁵ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Dritter Band 1897-1905*, 448.

embodiment and fulfillment of his imagination's wish. However, his and Kessler's agreement on misnaming her realization of the emerging "Neoimpressionism," is a sign not only of their inexperience in watching this new, abstract form of dance, but also their ubiquitous desire to analyze and to match a concept with a live instance. The pointillism technique—developed by Georges Seurat and considered a direct reaction to the mixture of colors and undefined figures and impressionism—used small, primary colors in the form of defined dots to create scenes with scientific exactness.²⁰⁶ Van de Velde and Kessler, however, must have been keenly aware of how Fuller's costume and movement style resemble the architectural form of Jugendstil as both utilize curves and bows to create an organic, natural appearance. The style was also van de Velde's hallmark, as he even created custom furniture for Kessler.²⁰⁷ Despite their misconception, Kessler still desires to see Fuller's dance not only because it is an abstraction and a more modern mode of representation but also because it is a direct reaction to the ballets and balls—to which he is accustomed and has become bored of watching.

Although one cannot ascertain from his journal if Kessler and van de Velde were in a Variété or theater setting, they most likely had never seen such a display involving color and movement given van de Velde's first observation. Kessler notices a quality in the dance typical of the early modern dancers: the lack of plot. The dance is supposed to be the embodiment and development of an idea and not necessarily a linear narrative. Instead of noticing her movement, Kessler is more interested in calling her a woman burning in sunlight: a poetization and abstraction consistent with his new aesthetic way of

²⁰⁶ Jane Black, *Pointillism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) - http://moma.org/collection/details.php?theme_id=10169

²⁰⁷ Easton, *The Red Count*, 91.

seeing. Kessler sees that she is being “painted” by different colors of light and tries to find a verbal description to correspond with what he sees on stage. His fiery characterization of Fuller reminds one of Kessler’s everyday, gestural illustrations regarding the girl’s feet while dancing and the officer on his horse whereby he abstracts from their apparent utility and aestheticizes their appearance.

Van de Velde’s astute comment—of not knowing if the performance is at the beginning or the end—demonstrates not only the lack of plot but also the embodiment of a simple, abstract idea. Since there is no narrative to follow, it leaves both observers with an unfulfilled, bewildered feeling signaling their unaccustomedness to seeing such performances. Van de Velde’s comment also implies that he is watching a performance that begins *in media res* or one which doesn’t seem to have a beginning or end but remains in a constant state of flux. He even senses the performance’s ability to be further developed: a quite naïve yet accurate observation in regards to the early modern dance movement in conjunction with the growth of Berlin’s urban space around 1900. This is likely one of Kessler’s first experiences encountering this new kind of dance as he does not write about it any earlier in his journal. He describes what he sees, yet lacks the accurate words and concepts to describe it. Unlike the Variété performances that were merely characterized as normal occurrences, Kessler and van de Velde’s experience is read with intrigue and positive confusion creating a desire to see and experience more experimental types of movement.

5.1 Representations of Fuller on Posters and in Sculpture

The connection between city life in Berlin and dance performances seems to be mediated by the poster as it functioned as a primary means to attract people to events. Placed on *Litfasssäulen* and other public areas, they were woven into the urban landscape. The early dance theoretician Marie Luise Becker suggested in her book *Der Tanz* from 1901 that the poster was the ideal medium, “um ein Bild des Zaubers von Licht, Farbe und Bewegung im Gewandanz zu vermitteln.”²⁰⁸ She points to the purely visual aspects of the poster and how it can function as a small moment or snapshot in time. Movement is implied from the picture in that action leading up to and following the moment can be imagined. One poster that Becker was particularly fond of was a “Bewegungsbild” by Jules Chéret called *Danse de feu. Loie Fuller im Serpentinanz*. (Figure 6)²⁰⁹ He used different hues to capture the changing colors emitted onto her costume during her performance.²¹⁰ The color and positioning of Fuller—as if she is amidst movement—enlivens the picture and adds to the dynamics of what could simply be a standard pose. By capturing virility while also being part of the urban landscape, this poster would be able to attract the eye of the modern individual and entice him or her to see the performance. With the heightened print culture emerging, posters had to possess a unique quality in order to garner attention among a sea of information. Becker names these posters “Bewegungsbilder” because they relay movement precisely because of the colors used and the positioning of the dancer. It is as if Fuller could be dancing in the

²⁰⁸ Marie Luise Becker, *Der Tanz*, (Leipzig: Hermann Seemann Nachfolger, 1901), 197.

²⁰⁹ <http://www.jules-cheret.org/Folies-Bergeres--la-Danse-du-Feu.-France-1897.html>

²¹⁰ Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, “Plakatkunst und Skulptur um die Jahrhundertwende: Loie Fuller als Modell” in *Loie Fuller: Getanzter Jugendstil* (München: Prestel, 1996), 61.

streets in Berlin, as the poster strongly invokes images of movement. As the flowing depiction of the dancer on the poster coupled with the bowing and curving of the *Littfassäule* thematically compliment the Jugendstil form of the buildings, their overall impression creates a massive urban space in perpetual motion. Although the posters by Chéret were to advertise Fuller's performances in Paris, Theodor Heine created his own



Figure 6 - *Danse de feu*, by Jules Chéret, 1897

entitled *La Serpentine* to accompany a text by Julius Meier-Graefe in *Die Insel*.²¹¹

Fuller's *Serpent Dance* also greatly inspired sculptors who created various images in her form out of bronze, silver and porcelain mostly involving a representation of her during the serpent dance.²¹² The craze over her dance also launched a myriad of many imitators documented in various photographs.²¹³

6. Isadora Duncan: Kessler's Misunderstanding

In Rudolf Lämmel's book *Der moderne Tanz*, published in 1928, he described how the early modern dancer Isadora Duncan from the United States, appeared "wie ein Meteor in Europa."²¹⁴ This comment demonstrates not only the sudden and foreign nature of her arrival in Europe, but bears a striking resemblance to how Kessler depicted Nietzsche as a meteor as well.²¹⁵ While Nietzsche's writing began drastically changing the perception of Kessler and his generation, Duncan also had a tremendous influence on Berlin and its intellectuals, writers and artists. In contrast to the United States where she was not well received, she established an enthusiastic following in Europe particularly in France and Germany.²¹⁶ In 1903, she eventually founded her school of free dance in the western part

²¹¹ Danzker, "Plakatkunst und Skulptur," 62.

²¹² Danzker, "Plakatkunst und Skulptur," 62.

²¹³ Danzker, "Plakatkunst und Skulptur," 63.

²¹⁴ Rudolf Lämmel, *Der moderne Tanz* (Berlin: Peter J. Oestergaard, 1928), 34.

²¹⁵ Kessler, "Lehrjahre," 199.

²¹⁶ Frank-Manuel Peter, "Das Land der Griechen mit dem Körper suchend: Isadora Duncan & Elizabeth Duncan in Detuschland." *Isadora & Elizabeth Duncan in Deutschland*. ed. Frank-Manuel Peter, (Köln: Wienand Verlag, 2000), 8.

of Berlin: Grunewald.²¹⁷ In her memoirs she writes: “I decided that all my resources should be concentrated upon founding a school for the youth of the world, and I chose Germany as the center of philosophy and culture, which I then believed it to be.”²¹⁸ Duncan’s thoughts allowed her to also have a great influence on many Berlin critics and intellectuals including Kessler. Following the performance of Fuller, Kessler’s aesthetic and bodily awareness continued to develop as he witnessed not only Duncan’s movement style during a performance in Berlin but also method of movement training and life education which her young dancers in her boarding school underwent.

Before performing in Berlin, one critic remarked from her appearance in Munich: “Ihre schönen und edlen Bewegungen, die anmutigen und durchgeistigten Gesten des schlanken Körpers gewannen der Künstlerin, die am 26. August 1902 im Künstlerhaus ihr erstes Gastspiel – und zwar inmitten des Saales – gab, rasch die Zuneigung und den begeisterten Beifall einer gewählten Zuschauerschaft.”²¹⁹ Most of her dances were “idyllic” and modeled after classical antiquity most notably from Greek vase paintings.²²⁰ Being left either enthralled or confused, audiences received her early appearances both negatively and positively. Her movement style was foreign to the rules and conventions of ballet and had an air of spontaneous and individual expression.²²¹ Duncan also wanted her “free dance” to bring about a “renaissance of dance” reminiscent of the Classic

²¹⁷ Peter, “Das Land der Griechen,” 9.

²¹⁸ Isadora Duncan, *My Life* (New York: Liveright, 1927), 177.

²¹⁹ “Das Münchener Künstlerhaus und der Künstlerhausverein 1900-1938,” *Stadtbibliothek München*, Mon. 417. “Die Tanzkunst im Künstlerhaus,” 25-26.

²²⁰ Peter, “Das Land der Griechen,” 32.

²²¹ Isadora Duncan, introduction to *Der Tanz der Zukunft. Eine Vorlesung*, trans. Karl Federn (Leipzig: Eugen Dieterichs, 1903)

Age.²²² She believed that a “never ending movement of waves flows through nature” and that every natural motion was governed by these universal laws of waves.²²³ She bridged these ideas with dance by asserting that nature was the “original source of all dance.”²²⁴ (Figure 7)²²⁵.

Duncan’s work was not always met with approval as controversial questions arose as to if she were really dancing. Just as Fuller was also questioned along the same lines, Duncan seemed to incur more scrutiny as it appeared that she was merely posing and not



Figure 7 – Isadora Duncan, by Elvira Studio, 1903

²²² Gerhard Schreiber, “Arthur Nikisch und Isadora Duncan,” *Der Tanz*, vol. 2. 1929, nr. 7.

²²³ Duncan, Isadora. *Memorien* (Leipzig: Amalthea 1928), 188-189.

²²⁴ Duncan, *The Dance of the Future*, (Leipzig: Eugen Diedrichs, 1903), 28.

²²⁵ <http://www.duncandancers.com/directory.html>

dancing.²²⁶ In 1903 the magazine *Die Zukunft* wrote that she was “wohl eine gute Figurantin, aber eine mittelmäßige Tänzerin.”²²⁷ The criticism reached its pinnacle as the *Berliner Morgenpost* wrote an article entitled “Can Miss Duncan Dance?” to which Duncan replied with another question “Can the dancing Maenad dance?”²²⁸ She refers to a statue in a Berlin Museum. Is this, however, an answer or does this further problematize the situation? The Maenad statue is assumed to be in a position that would infer dancing despite the static position which reminds one of the posters that had featured Loïe Fuller. Since the statue is called a “dancing Maenad” it is also believed that she is also dancing, however, no one seems to question if the statue is really dancing. One could likely argue—as in the case of Fuller—that although much of Duncan’s movements do result in poses, the way in which they are performed resembles a modern dance. Much of the skepticism brought about by the media most likely deals with the new, never-before-seen movement quality and presentation.

Despite the critics, she was able to find many admirers including Konrad Müller-Fürer, who eventually became a care-taker of the young girls after the dance school had been established. He described the anticipation in Berlin of seeing Duncan perform for the first time:

ISADORA DUNCAN TANZIDYLLEN. Groß standen die Buchstaben an der Anschlagssäulen. Erstes Auftreten in Berlin 1903. Münchner Künstler hatten sie zuerst gesehen und waren begeistert. Über ihre Kunst? Oder sahen sie nur ein schönes Modell in ihr? Ihr Name war schon in aller Munde, bevor sie noch jemand gesehen hatte. “Barfuß tänzerin” – Der Berliner Witz trieb schon wieder Blüten. Neugier, Spannung, Erwartung herrschten in weiten Kreisen. Alles

²²⁶ Peter, “Das Land der Griechen,” 45.

²²⁷ *Die Zukunft*, 233.

²²⁸ Gabriele Brandstetter, *Tanz Lektüren. Körperbilder und Raumfiguren der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt a.M: Fischer, 1995) 193.

horchte auf: Künstler und Musiker, Ästheten und “Naturmenschen”, die von Sport und vom Varieté. Jeder fragte sich: Ist das was für uns? Was würde Isadora Duncan uns bringen?²²⁹

Much like the posters on the *Litfasssäulen* that advertised the upcoming performances of Fuller in Berlin, Müller-Fürer sees a poster in large letters for Duncan’s show suddenly making him think about her reception in Munich. The hype intrigued people from all different fields to attend her performances, thus demonstrating her appeal and influence on not just those involved in dance but on anyone interested in seeing a new kind of movement.

The great anticipation, however, brought disappointment to dance critic Oskar Bie who called her performance an “unmusikalischer Dilettantismus” because it appeared that she was not dancing in time with the music. On the other hand Müller-Fürer thinks “daß die Bewegung durch Musik im Innern erregt und vom Körper ihren Weg in die Glieder finden kann, das war ihm unbegreiflich.” Bie is not only still connected aesthetically with the traditions of ballet in which dancing was to be musical, he is also not used to this new kind of movement. Bie cites Lothar von Kunowski who watched Duncan first in Munich: “Die Tänzerin Duncan ist der lebende Beweis für die Möglichkeit des praktischen Idealismus und für die Möglichkeit, Gesetze ganz geschiedener Gebiete, der Musik, der bildene Kunst, der Mimik in derselben Handlung zu vereinigen, vergangene Kunst mit gegenwärtigster Gegenwart harmonisch zu vermählen.”²³⁰ Kunowski characterizes Duncan’s style as combining different kinds of new and old art in order to produce a

²²⁹ Konrad Müller-Fürer, “Ich sagte irgend etwas Dummes über ‘Wirklichkeit gewordene Künstlerträume’: Erinnerungen an Isadora und Elizabeth Duncan und ihre Freitanz- Schulen,” in *Isadora & Elizabeth Duncan in Deutschland*, ed. Frank-Manuel Peter, (Köln: Wienand Verlag, 2000), 51.

²³⁰ Lothar von Kunowski, “Durch Kunst zum Leben,” in *Rhythmus und Bilderbogen* (Leipzig: Eugen Diederichs, 1905)

harmonious mixture and thereby modernizing the way in which one conceptualizes a performance.

While Kunowski praises the ingenuity of Duncan's dances, Harry Graf Kessler regards the performance as boring and annoying as she performs at the Kroll Opera House on January 26, 1903:

Abends mit VandeVelde bei Kroll die Isadora gesehen. Die ganze Berliner Gesellschaft dort. [...] Die Duncan misfiel Vandavelde und mir gleich stark. Sie ist affektiert, mit einem sentimentalén Augenaufschlag, hat nur eine Bewegung, die sie bis zur Qual wiederholt, tanzt ohne Takt und ohne Feuer, und hat mit der griechischen Kunst nur das gemein, was der Philister für 'antik' hält, d.h. öde Leere und süßliche Schönheit. Ihre Hauptreize sind, dass sie nackt und konventionell ist, eben dieselben Reize wie die der akademischen Kunst. Sie ist die Verwirklichung des Akademischen in der Tanzkunst.²³¹

While Kunowski associates Duncan's dancing as modern, Kessler and van de Velde find her fixated on traditional dance: boring, monotonous and fake. For them her nudity seems to be the only interest which would be a very typical reaction to the Variété but not to such a performance in the Kroll. Yet Müller-Fürer notes a common misconception regarding Duncan's dance: "Der 'freie Tanz' Isadora Duncans erschien vielen so 'einfach und natürlich', daß sie meinten, nur Schuh' und Strümpfe ausziehen zu müssen, um ebenso 'hüpfen' zu können. Ein instinktiv gutes Urteil war damit ausgedrückt, doch zeigte es die Ahnungslosigkeit des Laien."²³² One could argue that van de Velde and Kessler had been misinterpreting the seemingly dilettante dance only because they were unfamiliar with the new form of movement. By referring to her dancing as "academic" they imply the repetition that one saw with ballet, however, Duncan's philosophy was to break free from these conventions in favor of natural movement. Van de Velde and

²³¹ Harry Graf Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Dritter Band 1897-1905*, 539-540. - Berlin 26. January 1903, Monday

²³² Müller-Fürer, "Ich sagte irgend etwas," 59.

Kessler's reactions demonstrate a lack of understanding and under exposure that could only be changed by attending more performances and learning about Duncan's style of dance.

Although Kessler may not have appreciated Duncan's dancing after the initial performance, he was at least confronted with a new movement style that challenged his traditional conceptions of dance. According to Oberzaucher-Schüller some of the negative critics grew to like and appreciate her work: "In der Wertschätzung der Duncan begann sich langsam eine Meinungsänderung abzuzeichnen: Hatte man sie zunächst als exzentrische Frau schwärmerisch umwoben, begann man in ihr allmählich die Künstlerin wahrzunehmen und sie als die eigentliche Schöpferin des neuen Tanzes zu sehen."²³³ Her dances may not have assumed abstract dimensions like Fuller's *Serpent Dance*—in accordance with Kessler's taste—but they forced him, nonetheless, to think critically about her representation on stage and to slowly change his perception regarding abstract movement.

Besides seeing her perform once, Kessler would have another opportunity to gain more insight into her movement philosophy by watching how her young students moved and lived at the school. Since Kessler lived in Köthnerstr. 28 near Anhalter Bahnhof, he was close to Duncan's school, which—instead of being in Berlin proper—was located in a lush, green area west of the city: Grunewald in Trabenerstr. 16. Müller-Fürer characterizes the life of the children: "Ohne jeden Zwang, ohne Abrichtung oder suggestive Beeinflussung folgten die Kinder wieder ungestört dem 'inneren Lebenstrom.' Alle Spuren von Fremdem, Geziertem, Ausgedachtem wurden in diesem Gesundbrunnen

²³³ Gunhild Oberzaucher-Schüller, "Interlude classique: Sergei Diaghilew im Kaiserlichen Berlin," in *Spiegelungen: Die Ballets Russes und die Künste*, ed. Claudia Jeschke, Ursel Berger, Birgit Zeidler (Berlin: Verlag Vorwerk 8, 1997), 94-85.

hinweggespült.”²³⁴ The children’s isolation from the outside world allowed them intimate time with each other and Elizabeth Duncan, Isadora’s older sister who more or less ran the school and who taught them a majority of the time. During instruction the children, as mentioned earlier, took to the school as a way of life and development.

Müller-Fürer even describes his first visit to the home on March 1, 1906 in which he was the first to sign the guest book while taking note of the large Amazon statue, a symbol of Greek antiquity.²³⁵ He even draws his own floor plan of the different rooms in the house describing how the four to eleven year-old children interacted with Elizabeth Duncan who provided them with an atmosphere for learning and self-discovery.²³⁶ After this initial visit, Müller-Fürer would return more frequently and eventually become one of the caretakers who would follow them while they were even on tour.

On February 9, 1906—three years after he saw Isadora Duncan dance for the first time—Kessler visited the Grunewald school along with others such as Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the actor Max Reinhardt, and the families Hindenburg and Nostitzens:

Alle zusammen zur Duncan nach Grunewald. Ihr Haus, in dem sie 30 kleine Mädchen ausbildete, ist innen ganz einfach und fast kahl in hellen grauen und braunen Tönen gehalten. Nur einige griechische Reliefs und Vasenbilder an den Wänden und Blumen und weite Sessel in den Zimmern. Ein Zimmer ist ganz leer, mit einem hellgrauen Friesteppich ausgelegt; und hier erscheinen die kleinen Mädchen. Alle zwischen 4 und 8 Jahren, kleine blonde, rosige Geschöpfe mit blossen Füßen, Beinchen und Ärmchen, die sie in natürlichen, graziösen Linien zur Musik lustig aber rhythmisch bewegen. Es entwickelt sich eine Art Reigen und dann ein Tanz, bei dem die ganz kurzen, weichen Liberty Kleidchen, die kleinen, feinen Gestalten in der mannichfaltigsten, flüchtigen Weise modellieren. Eine grosse Frische und Grazie herrscht in Allem. Oben die Schulzimmer, Spielzimmer, Schlafzimmer, atmen denselben Geist. Sieben kleinen weisse und blaue Betten in jedem Zimmer, mit dem Blick nach dem Kiefernforst, neben

²³⁴ Oberzaucher-Schüller, “Interlude classique,” 66.

²³⁵ Müller, “Unser Tanz,” 67.

²³⁶ Müller, “Unser Tanz,” 69.

jedem Zimmer ein Badezimmer, in dem jedes Kind täglich kalt geduscht wird, Helligkeit und Freundlichkeit überall. [...] ²³⁷

Here Kessler seems to notice some of the aspects that Müller-Fürer pointed out in his memoirs such as a description of the girls and space of the home. Instead of like his previous remarks involving the monotony of Duncan's dance, Kessler seems to respond with a more open and positive tone in describing the dancing girls. The fact that both Kessler and Müller-Fürer both came to the school to primarily observe the children during their daily grind also brings to light not only the documentary nature in their journals but also the uniqueness of the school program's approach in education. As outsiders both recognize the aesthetic and performative manner of training children to move naturally. Instead of seeing just the product of one of Duncan's dances, Kessler and Müller-Fürer become more acquainted with the life philosophy as well as the process of forming her dancers. Although Kessler was skeptical of Duncan's dancing during her first performance in Berlin, his visit to her school proved to be a turning point as he gained an understanding of her movement philosophy which changed his own perception of dance.

7. Ruth St. Denis: Kessler's Fascination

Ruth St. Denis has already been discussed in respects to her contributions to the Variété, but as some agree, she also contributed greatly to the beginnings of modern dance: a form that would be taken more seriously than simple entertainment. While St. Denis was performing in Berlin in 1906, she not only fascinated the general public but also Kessler, with whom she had close contact for about a month during her stay. This

²³⁷ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 95-96. – Berlin. 9. Feb. 1906.

short but fascinating bond begins—what seems to be for Kessler—the starting point of his deeper involvement with dance moving beyond simple observation. On October 29, 1906 he relays his experience of watching St. Denis for the first time:

Über die St. Denis, die ich Sonntagabend mit Schröder gesehen habe, an Hofmannsthal geschrieben: ich habe sie jetzt wieder in einer ihrer wirklich grossen Sachen gesehen und davon den stärksten Eindruck gehabt, den mir der Tanz als Kunst überhaupt gemacht hat. Ein indischer Tempeltanz, ganz nackt, aber doch in einem märchenhaften Kleid aus schwarzem Goldgeschmeide. Wie sich hier die Linien des Nackten mit dem Faltenwurf und seiner schweren Grazie vereinigen, so dass bald das Gewand und bald der Mädchenkörper zu verschwinden scheint, und doch beide immer in ihrer ganzen Fülle von Reichtum und Anmut zusammenwirken, ist wirklich Bayaderenhaft, die Wesenheit der Bayadere, in der bloss die beiden Pole: Tierschönheit und Mystik, ohne jede Zwischen-Skala geistiger oder sentimentaler Töne, vorhanden sind, geschlechtslose Gottheit und blos-geschlechtliches Weib, der Kontrast die Wirkung Beider in höchster Potenz und in Eins auslösend. Sie ist Amerikanerin; und es ist sehr merkwürdig und subtil, wie ihr das zustatten kommt, das Geschlechtslose ihrer Rasse sich mit dem noch unter dem menschlichen zurückbleibendem, fast tierischen Geschlechtsempfindungen des orientalischen Weibes trifft.²³⁸

Kessler notes that her dance appeared to him like art in contrast to a simple Varieté act, thus pulling St. Denis into the more artistic ranks of modern dance. His description, however, still hovers between the Varieté characteristics and the qualities of a higher art. (Figure 8)²³⁹

²³⁸ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 192. – Berlin 29. Oct. 1906

²³⁹ <http://dance100.yolasite.com/why-ruth-st-denis.php>



Figure 8 – Ruth St. Denis in *Radha*, 1906

In stark similarity to Brandstetter's description of Loïe Fuller's *Serpent Dance*, St Denis' performance also had qualities of being degendered yet still retaining some femininity. Fuller's performance can be recognized as a woman dancing, but her long, draping costume draws more attention to the materiality and abstraction of the dance and less to her gender. St. Denis also has a similar effect on Kessler as she wears a dress which appears to become an extension of her skin. The blurring line between body and costume also blend a contrast between erotic femininity and a genderless, sensual abstraction.

In viewing St. Denis' dance as a new kind of art form in which his expectations of dance are challenged in a positive way, Kessler is forced to reflect more often about his experience. In contrast to his rather short entries on Fuller and Duncan, Kessler seems completely enraptured by St. Denis' performance as he can precisely articulate his sensual interpretation of the dance in a longer and more developed text. The degenderization involved in her dance, similar to Fuller's, brings a level of abstraction making it something less tangible to discuss also because he had likely never seen such a display. In processing what he has just seen, he uses adjectives and ideas that he already knows, yet is unable to directly pinpoint words that correspond to exactly what he perceives. By being more exposed to this "modern" dance, he grows more accustomed to each dancer's particular movement style and can better read and interpret each dance.

Kessler's fascination with St. Denis is also shared with Hofmannsthal who comes to Berlin for a visit and watches her dance.²⁴⁰ But unlike many onlookers, Kessler also had personal contact with dancers such as St. Denis and later the Ballets Russes star Vaslav Nijinski. Additionally, he tended to protocol what transpired during these meetings as his journal attests to examine the thought processes of dancers and choreographers. Whereas some of the dances inspiring authors can merely be generally confirmed, Kessler's thoughts can be followed and traced back in more detail. On November 16, 1906, Kessler writes about his experience talking with St. Denis, thus demonstrating direct access to her choreographic process and inspiration:

Im Lyceum Club bei Miss Smedley mit der Ruth St. Denis soupiert. Sie ist auch in Gesellschaftstoilette eine sehr auffallende Erscheinung: ein sehr kleiner Kopf auf einem sehr langen schlanken Körper, der wie eine Gerte biegsam und aufrecht ist. Aber über dem noch ganz jungen Gesicht, das kaum sechs- oder siebenundzwanzig scheint, fast graues Haar. Sie sagt ernste, tiefe Dinge und

²⁴⁰ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 197. – Berlin 7. Nov. 1906.

daneben plötzlich kindliche Naïvitäten. Sie sagt, ihr Wunsch wäre, in ihrem Theater schon die Türsteher indisch zu kostümieren, damit der Zuschauer gleich vom Eintritt an in die Stimmung käme; und sie sagt, dass die Wiederholung, die fortgesetzt, monotone Wiederholung die Macht und der Zauber der orientalischen Kunst sei, die geduldige, einlullende Wiederholung bis der Zuschauer wie hypnotisiert sich selbst vergisst und seine Seele ganz in die Seele des Kunstwerks hingiebt. Sie sagt, dass nur der gute Mensch grosse Kunst machen könne, or at any rate, I donot care for any other; und sie sagt, sie habe nie von Andren Opfer für ihre Kunst fordern wollen, weil es nicht recht sei, irgendeinem Menschen von seiner Kraft zu nehmen, for Life is greater than Art. Sie weint fast, als Jemand die Zeitdauer eines Kunstwerkes, sein Leben durch Jahrhunderte, für einen Teil seines Werts erklärt, denn: where am I then? aber auch weil: what has that to do with Art, with the depth and splendour of the moment the artist impresses on the hearer's soul. Über ihre Kunst spricht sie sehr klar und detailliert. Ihr Prinzip sei, alle Ausdrucksbewegungen mit den Brüsten anzufangen; dann von da aus gleiten sie in die Arme, in den Kopf, in die Hüften über. Das sei ihr ganzes Geheimnis, das sie übrigens von Delsarte habe. Aber beim Erfinden eines neuen Tanzes müsse sie für die Einzelheiten immer auf eine Art Inspiration warten. 'I am often very long over one thing, till I find exactly what I have in mind, I was two years over Radhu; because the moment you cut away from tradition, you have to be all yourself, or else you're a hybrid, you're nothing.'²⁴¹

After having been captivated by her performance, Kessler likely had little trouble seeking St. Denis' company given his extensive connection with Berlin's artistic community. Unlike some authors who depict dance and prefer or are not able to come in contact with the choreographer, Kessler leaps at this opportunity not only to satisfy his own natural curiosity but also to begin his development and choreographic inquiries as an artist. Since he still does not know St. Denis well—as the citation implies—he can still only judge her by the way that she moves by describing her body. The hypnotizing and monotonous effect of her dance influenced by the orient speaks true to the intensified relationship between the dancer and the watcher. The observer becomes enchanted and put under a spell while watching, and is completely involved in the dance as much as the performer. Such monotonous movements were exhibited by Fuller in her *Serpent Dance*.

²⁴¹ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 204. – Berlin 16. Nov 1906.

Clearly, in her own speech, St. Denis is trying to distinguish herself from the Varieté dancers with whom she has performed and to branch into the new modern dance by explicitly explaining to Kessler the philosophy behind her dance and her vision. He even mentions how she talks “über ihre Kunst” once again noting that it is not Varieté but rather a newer form that requires deep contemplation. Interestingly she mentions how by cutting away from tradition one becomes “a hybrid, a nothing” and thus implies that the only way to be an individual involves being completely new. Her comment proves problematic because her own dancing takes on characteristics of a hybrid as many had considered her a Varieté performer and not necessarily an early modern dancer. Despite this contradiction, not only St. Denis’ performance but also her ability to articulate her intentions intrigue and educate Kessler even further.

As St. Denis performs more in Berlin, his exposure to her dance intensifies. After another performance, he praises her even more on November 18, 1906:

Mit Gerhard Hauptmanns u. Ludwig von Hofmanns in die Matinee der Ruth St. Denis im Theater des Westens. Der Moment, wo sie aus der Lotosblüte aufwacht und aufsteht, ist wie ein Frühling; ich habe nie eine Kunst gesehen, die so vollkommen wie ihre Bewegungen in diesem Augenblick Dasselbe ausstrahlt wie junge Blüten, zartes Grün und der frische, reine Himmel im April. Sie ist die erste grosse Tänzerin, ein Genie der Bewegung. Die Grete Hauptmann sagte richtig, die Otero habe einen eben biegsamen, schönen Körper, aber hier komme der Intellekt dazu, der aus dem Material Etwas mache. Sie tanzt am Ende fast nackt, ohne keusch oder unkeusch zu sein; sie ist Beides zugleich wie das Griechische. Sie hat den schönsten Rücken, den man sehen kann; aber bei ihrem Tanzen wirkt er auf Auge und Geschlecht so gleichmässig, dass sie sich fast das Gleichgewicht halten. Vielleicht ist das psychologisch noch nicht richtig; aber irgendein solches Gleichgewicht, in dem die nackte Sinnlichkeit im Schach bleibt, fühle ich. Es gibt offenbar ganze Klassen sinnlicher Gefühle, die in Sinnlichkeit im engsten Sinne nicht einfließen, - oder bei gewissen Naturen nicht hineinfließen (individuelle Hemmungen)-, und die dann eine antisexuelle Attraktion ausüben (ablenken). Dieses Schweben zwischen Sinnlichkeit und Sinnlichkeit ist vielleicht der eigentliche Kunstgenuss; der Instinkt sich zu retten aus der einen in die andere der häufigsten Antrieb, Kunst zu schaffen. Sexuelle Erregung und Kunstgenuss analoge Zustände, die sich ablösen; Kunstschaffen der Übergang zwischen

Beiden, indem ein gleichwertiger Zustand zum Ersatz gesucht wird. Es giebt Menschen, für die sich Alles in Schönheit verflüchtigt und denen deshalb nur das Gemeinste noch sexuell erscheint, sexuelle greifbare Befriedigung gewähren kann.²⁴²

Kessler's interest in St. Denis continues as he marvels at one of her later performances. Once again he considers her dance an art and not just a Varieté act as others have called it and names her the first great dancer. He has already seen Loïe Fuller and Isadora Duncan dance, but was not as impressed as he is with St. Denis. His personal conversations with her also made him more interested in St. Denis' work as he becomes more informed about her movement philosophy. In a way, the questions that he poses about her dance gain clarity after speaking with her and yet incite more fascination and burning curiosity. Besides determining the polarity of her feminine sexuality and abstraction, it is precisely the play and lack of a union between the two that evoke enjoyment and a process of endless inquiry.

Grete Hauptmann's comment—concerning St. Denis' depiction not only as a beautiful dancing body but also as a phenomenon that causes one to engage with his or her intellect—embodies not only the essence of Kessler's journal entry but also the purpose and result of modern dance as a whole. A Varieté performance would only keep an audience member engaged for a short period during which they might marvel at the feat being performed or at the sexual enticement. St. Denis' dances, on the other hand, have proven to have longer-lasting, profound effects that develop into intellectual contemplation on Kessler's part and incite a further discourse that will be demonstrated later in his journal. Although St. Denis' body and costume do indeed accentuate her erotic appeal, Kessler's mind is quickly taken into the intellectual realm by contemplating

²⁴² Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 205. – Berlin 18. Nov. 1906.

her bodily movements and representations. The “Gleichgewicht” of her dance does not allow Kessler to dwell too long on each extreme but results in an enjoyable dynamic play of his senses.

The next day St. Denis joins Kessler and his group for breakfast where Hauptmann explains his plans to write a pantomime with her as the leading role; she thinks it will be “alright, as he is a great poet.”²⁴³ Subsequently, Kessler expresses his excitement of watching her “awaken” during the Tempeltanz, and she reports that the breath played a key role in helping her throughout the dance.²⁴⁴ These kinds of exchanges played an important part in the development of knowledge for Kessler and his intellectual circles as they sought and analyzed unique events trying to unravel the mysteries. Kessler even writes about Max Reinhardt who wants to stage a version of Salome with St. Denis in mind, but she doesn’t like the way in which it would be staged and gives her own suggestions.²⁴⁵

The relationship between St. Denis, Kessler and his community is unique because of their personal contact with each other. St. Denis’ performances were judged as a critic might have expressed, but Kessler’s level of analysis rose to intellectual and philosophical levels by deeming her work as art and not merely a Varieté act. His curiosity and profound impressions from her dances were so influential that they encouraged him to seek out St. Denis and to begin a discourse about her art and motivations. Kessler and his circle not only asked her about her performances but also

²⁴³ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 206.

²⁴⁴ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 206.

²⁴⁵ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 209.

took her advice and collaborated with her on their own projects resulting in fruitful conversations and feedback for both parties.

8. The Ballets Russes and *Josephslegende*: Kessler's Collaboration

After his meetings with St. Denis, Kessler's burning desire to work with dancers and to learn more about the process of collaboration reached a high point during his dealings with Sergei Diaghilev, artistic director of the *Ballets Russes*, and Diaghilev's muse and famed-dancer Vaslav Nijinski. With music by Richard Strauss and set design by Léon Bakst, their work together resulted in the dance *Josephslegende*.

Sergei Diaghilev planned for a visit in Berlin to show off his company in 1910. In wanting to bring ballet to the fore front, he wanted to prove that it was among similar ranks as other art forms and not just for entertainment purposes.²⁴⁶ He sent a letter to the *Berliner Secession* on the day of the premiere which was mentioned in the *Berliner Tageblatt* in order to draw public attention.²⁴⁷ Diaghilev—who was familiar with German art and philosophy—conveniently planned to premiere the ballet *Carnaval* in the summer months of 1910 to commemorate the 100th birthday of Robert Schumann, whose music accompanied the ballet piece.²⁴⁸ While Diaghilev brought a smaller company to perform in the Komischen Oper and a larger group to the Theater des Westens, the *Vossische Zeitung* wrote a preview with great anticipation on May 21, 1910:

Im Theater des Westens beginnt heute das erste Gastspiel des großen russischen Ballets um 8 Uhr. Das außergewöhnliche an diesem Ensemble ist, daß der Star der

²⁴⁶ Gunhild Oberzaucher-Schüller, "Interlude classique: Sergei Diaghilew im Kaiserlichen Berlin." in *Spiegelungen: Die Ballets Russes und die Künste*, ed. Claudia Jeschke, Ursel Berger, Birgit Zeidler (Berlin: Verlag Vorwerk 8, 1997), 5.

²⁴⁷ Zeidler, "Die Ballets Russes," 188.

²⁴⁸ Oberzaucher-Schüller, "Interlude classique," 96.

Truppe ein Mann ist, ein kaum 20 jähriger junger Mensch, namens Nijinski, der hervorragendste Tänzer nicht nur der russischen Theater, sondern sicher auch einer der merkwürdigsten und interessantesten Tanzkünstler der Gegenwart. An Leichtigkeit, Ausdrucksfähigkeit, Elastizität nimmt es keine der gefeierten Primaballerinen Petersburgs und Moskaus mit Nijinski auf.²⁴⁹

This citation already notes the extraordinary and unique talent of Nijinski as a male dancer who overshadowed ballerinas. Within a long-standing tradition of ballet that always highlighted the female dancer with the male in a supporting role, the *Ballets Russes* held Nijinski's modern and virtuosic dancing in high accord. A few days later the same newspaper reported:

Was uns die kleinere Truppe vom russischen Ballet des Marientheaters in der Komischen Oper [...] geboten hat, wird durch die Pracht und Großartigkeit der Vorführungen dieser drei- und vierfach so großen Truppe, die gestern ihre erste Gastvorstellung im Theater des Westens gab, noch weit überblendet. Das Haus war trotz der ganz ungewohnt hohen Preise auf allen Plätzen mit einer erwartungsvollen Gesellschaft gefüllt. Aber nie sind höchstgespannte Erwartungen eines Publikums glänzender erfüllt worden als in diesem Fall. Ein überreiches Programm kam zur Ausführung, das den Solisten, den großen Virtuosen ihrer Kunst, den männlichen wie den weiblichen [...] Gelegenheit bot, ihr außerordentliches tanzkünstlerisches Können in jedem Genre und die körperlichen Gaben, die sie dazu befähigen, in ihrer ganzen Vorzüglichkeit zur Anschauung zu bringen [...].²⁵⁰

As one can gather from this report, the success that the Ballets Russes experienced in Paris was unfortunately not to be matched in Berlin. Although the press responded positively, they were unable to differentiate them from the Russian Hofballett. Some newspapers thought it was inappropriate to bring Schumann's piano music onto an orchestra,²⁵¹ and others called the use of his music for the ballet a "Sünde gegen den

²⁴⁹ *Vossische Zeitung* - May 21, 1910 - Cited by Oberzaucher-Schüller, "Interlude classique," 96.

²⁵⁰ *Vossische Zeitung* - May 21, 1910 - Cited by Oberzaucher-Schüller, "Interlude classique," 96-97.

²⁵¹ L.S., *Berliner Tageblatt* – May 25, 1910 - Cited by Oberzaucher-Schüller, "Interlude classique," 97.

Geist.”²⁵² The Ballets Russes, however, started an innovative thrust: to create smaller ballets linking music, decorative design and choreography even more closely than ever resulting in a kind of “Gesamtkunstwerk.”²⁵³ Michel Fokine, who choreographed pieces for the Ballets Russes, said of their works: “It must show artistic unity of conception, complete unity of expression, the blending of three elements: music, painting and plastic art.”²⁵⁴ Diaghilev, the mastermind and diplomat of the company, was able to create interest from all sides of the artistic community utilizing composers such as Debussy, Ravel, Strawinsky and artists like Matisse, Miró and Picasso.²⁵⁵ The corps de ballet wasn’t decorative for the soloists anymore, but became rather a self-sustaining, individualistic “Körperschaft.”²⁵⁶ Another aspect that separated them from the Russian Hofballet and older classical companies was the large number of dancers on stage with as many as 90 to 100 at one time. One wrote about their size observing that they were a: “Massen von Menschen, die bis zur Ekstase sich bewegen und dennoch ein rhythmisches Ganzes bleiben.”²⁵⁷

The Ballets Russes differentiated themselves from the traditional Russian ballet companies:

Weder den ‘Trieb zur Selbstvernichtung’ noch den Hang zur Melancholie fand man in die Darbietungen der Diaghilewschen Truppe wieder. Im Gegenteil, alle Blicke waren auf diese Kompanie gerichtet, weil man hier den idealen Ausdruck

²⁵² *Vossische Zeitung* – May 25, 1910 - Cited by Oberzaucher-Schüller, “Interlude classique,” 97.

²⁵³ Oberzaucher-Schüller, “Interlude classique,” 98.

²⁵⁴ Oberzaucher-Schüller, “Interlude classique,” 98.

²⁵⁵ Jörg Schuster, “Sehr hohe Absichten der Mimik’ - Kesslers *Josephslegende* und die Ballets Russes,” in *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, ed. Jörg Schuster (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta. 2005), 57.

²⁵⁶ Oberzaucher-Schüller, “Interlude classique,” 98.

²⁵⁷ *Berliner Börsen-Courier*. 233/25.5.1910.

des Lebens fand, den nun besser im Tanz der Russen als in den Programmen der 'Barfuß tänzerin' oder anderer Kunstformen in Erscheinung trat.²⁵⁸

One could read more into this observation in that the new modern dancers' performances may have been too avant-garde for the Berlin audience as noted occasionally in the reviews. Besides simply describing the action on stage with Duncan, St. Denis and Fuller, the audience may not have been ready to have seen plotless depictions. The Ballets Russes, therefore, provided a transition between the somewhat alienating modern dancers and the old ballet tradition. Offering ballet, which combines old and new traditions, would lead the audience into a more gradual shift into modernity. Max Osborn agrees similarly in saying that Russians were so successful in Berlin because they were able to produce "den Ausdruck unseres neuen Lebens mit der aus der Tradition erwachsenen Sicherheit der Form zu einer alt-neuen Einheit zusammenzuschmelzen."²⁵⁹

One of the most talented dancers emerging from the *Ballets Russes* was Vaslav Nijinski who performed in Berlin in 1912. Robert Walser wrote in his essay "Der Tänzer": "Indem er tanzte, machte er den schönsten Eindruck, [...] nämlich den, daß er glücklich sei im Tanze. [...] Ihn seine Kunst ausüben sehen, hieß für ihn schwärmen."²⁶⁰ Herbert Ihering raved similarly about him: "Des Russens Nijinsky Tanz ist Befreiung aber keine Überwindung. Er ist Erlösung, weil er sich hingibt. [...] Ein begnadeter Körper, atmend im Ebenmaß, glühend im Spiel seiner Muskeln. [...] Um diesen Körper ist ein Schwingen wie atmosphärisches Strömen."²⁶¹ Nijinski received great praise in the

²⁵⁸ Zeidler, "Die Ballets Russes," 190.

²⁵⁹ Osborn, *Der Tanz der Russen*, 22

²⁶⁰ Robert Walser, "Der Tänzer" *Die Weissen Blätter*, 1/1913-14, 560.

²⁶¹ Herbert Ihering, "Nijinsky," *Die Schaubühne*, 52/1912, 689.

essays and poetry of Kurt Tucholsky²⁶², Hugo von Hofmannsthal²⁶³ and Rudolf Leonhard²⁶⁴ for being a “Tanzgenie.” The artists, who of course paid distinct homage to the dancer, were the sculptures as he was considered the “modèle idéal.”²⁶⁵

Kessler was also highly influenced by and had close relations with both Nijinski and Diaghilev. Given both Kessler’s and Diaghilev’s diplomacy, stature and connectedness, it would seem natural that the two would be able to collaborate. The beginning of their contact occurred before Kessler had even seen the company perform. Hofmannsthal writes to Kessler on March 16, 1912 from Paris about his dealings with the duo:

[...] Ich kam letzten Samstag früh aus Berlin an und habe seit dem Abend dieses Samstag eigentlich mit Niemand anderem existiert als mit Diaghilew und Nijinsky, Abends im Theater, frühstückend mit ihnen, sitzend und redend vom Frühstück bis wieder zum Theater – und Nachts schlecht schlafend aber vergnügt – Ballette für sie dichtend, von denen nur 2, ein tragisches, antikes und ein macabres, in diesem Hotelzimmer und an Nijinskys Krankenbett so weit gebracht wurden, dass mir fast vorkommt, als seien sie auch schon komponiert und sceniert und als könne nun garnichts Schöneres mehr kommen. Das tragische Sujet ist Orestes und die Furien, ein Ballett von 35 Minuten. Der Entwurf geht heute an Strauss, der es komponieren soll... Das schliesst natürlich nicht gar und ganz nicht aus, Harry, dass wir ein drittes machen.²⁶⁶

The third ballet, *Josephslegende*, eventually belonged to Kessler, who wanted to prove his artistic independence from Hofmannsthal. Hofmannsthal had discredited much of the work which the count had contributed on *Rosenkavalier* and wanted to give him another

²⁶² Kurt Tucholsky, “Russisches Ballett” *Die Schaubühne*, 12/1914, 347.

²⁶³ Hugo von Hofmannsthal, “Nijinskys ‘Nachmittag eines Faunes,’” *Berliner Tageblatt*. 633/12.12.1912.

²⁶⁴ Rudolf Leonhard, “Über den Tanz,” *Die Aktion*. 4/1913, 110.

²⁶⁵ Roger Marx, Rodins Meinung über Nijinsky wiedergebend; abgedruckt in *Nachmittag eines Fauns*. Ed. Nectoux, Jean-Michel (München: Schirmer / Mosel, 1989), 51.

²⁶⁶ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 800.

chance for collaboration, however Kessler would work primarily without Hofmannsthal's help.²⁶⁷ Despite these later developments, Kessler's entry documents the first contact that would lead to a very long working partnership between Kessler and Hofmannsthal—at least in the beginning—with Diaghilev, Nijinski, Strauss and a slew of others.

Hofmannsthal's conversations with Diaghilev and Nijinski also preceded the Ballets Russes first performance in Paris, which is noted as having been well received. Kessler had personally invited Rodin to a rehearsal,²⁶⁸ while others such as Strawinski and Ravel also attended. The main ballet piece Kessler describes is *L'après-midi d'un faune* (The Afternoon of a Faun), which portrays a sexually-charged faun who flirts with nymphs, and in the end manages to snatch one of their scarves with which he masturbates—however, the interpretation of the ending is widely contested. (Figure 9).²⁶⁹ While Debussy's dream-like, impressionistic music plays and the dancer's move in "profile" as if they are on a Greek vase or relief, the faune's abrupt and angular movements juxtapose the atmosphere. Kessler describes Nijinski's dancing on May 27, 1912 during a private rehearsal:

Nach einem Vorspiel aus 'Daphnis et Chloé' von Ravel kam Nijinsky's 'Après-midi-d'un Faune' zur Vorführung: archaisch stilisierte Gebärden, die Debussy's Musik begleiten; Nijinsky moduliert so herb mit seinem jungen Körper die halb tierisch halb sentimentale Begierde, dass sie fast tragisch wirkt; man tut, halb erschrocken halb entzückt, einen Blick in den faunischen Ursprung der Tragödie. Die Wucht von Nijinsky's Leistung erdrückt allerdings die zarte komplizierte Debussysche Musik, und Baksts kitschige Decoration stört; aber trotz dieser Disharmonie bleibt der Eindruck einer Art von Wiederauferstehung antiken Heidentums, wie wenn ein Grieche der Tyrannenzeit den dionysischen Faun

²⁶⁷ Schuster, "Sehr hohe Absichten der Mimik", 64.

²⁶⁸ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 826.

²⁶⁹ <http://poeticoneirism.blogspot.com/2009/05/ephemeral-stillness.html>

mimt, nachdem er uns etwas verschleierter im ‘Spectre de la Rose’ den antiken Eros zeigt.²⁷⁰

Kessler first describes Nijinski as a half animalistic and half sentimental hybrid, which he has never before witnessed. The polarity in description is reminiscent of St. Denis’ *Tempeltanz* as Kessler tried to capture her mixture of both body and material. Since Nijinski’s dance lacks a predictable concept, Kessler’s approach is to relate his own knowledge—from his experience of watching Fuller, Duncan and St. Denis—to the representations of the performance. The juxtaposition of Nijinski’s sharp movement and

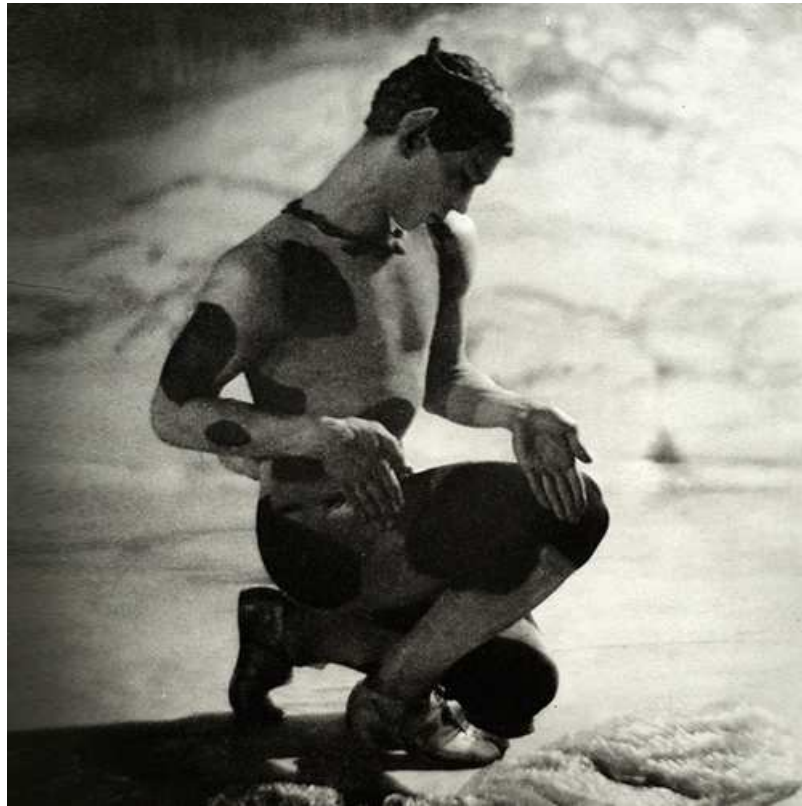


Figure 9 – Nijinski in *L'après-midi d'un faune* by Baron Adolf de Meyer from 1912

²⁷⁰ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 830.

the impressionistic, dream-like music of Debussy create a disharmony which Kessler seems to regard positively as it reminds him of a rebirth of antiquity. Despite this dissonance, Kessler believes they still create a unified impression. This modern aesthetic furthers the ways in which he can conceive of the dancing body by coupling it with contrasting music and scenery.

After the Ballets Russes' performance in Paris, they travel to Berlin, and Kessler notes their reception in Berlin on December 10, 1912:

Russisches Ballet. Erste Aufführung des *Après-midi-d'un Faune* hier. Ganz Berlin dort. [...] Stürmischer Erfolg des Faun, der wiederholt werden musste. Nur Bie drehte sich herum und flüsterte: 'Daran finde ich Nichts.' Ich fast noch mehr als in Paris ergriffen. Der Faun: das Tier, das den Menschen ahnt, das ahnt, was es heisst, Mensch zu sein, ein Tier das vergleicht, das sich und die anderen vergleicht, erstes Aufflammen der Reflexion und damit der Tragik und auch der Komik; aber die Tragik überwiegend. Man meint, in allen Bewegungen von Nijinski zu fühlen, dass es ein Tier ist, das sich seiner Nacktheit schämt (Sündenfall). Äusserste Konzentration des Ausdrucks; eine solche Gewalt in der Sparsamkeit der Mittel erreicht nur das Genie.²⁷¹

While Oskar Bie's lack of interest in the performance—echoing his less than enthusiastic response to Duncan's "unmusicality," – Kessler reverts back to his previous observation from the performance in Paris and builds upon his earlier remarks in terms of Nijinski's animal and human duplicity. This duality is reminiscent of the comments regarding not only Loie Fuller's *Serpent Dance* in which she wavers between being a woman and a drapery but also St. Denis' *Tempeltanz*. In all three cases it is clear that one cannot forget that each was actually a person performing, but the sheer act of a performance enchants the audience into thinking what they see is real. Choosing the mythical creature of the faun, who is half man and half goat, leads to a double representation that is further complicated by the dancer Nijinski taking on animalistic characteristics.

²⁷¹ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 861-862.

L'après-midi d'un faune was not the only modern piece by the Ballet Russes that changed the face of twentieth century dance forever and influenced Kessler's own work, but also *Le sacre du printemps* (The Rite of Spring). Strawinski's atonal, violent and dissonant music created a primitive mood while the staccato, turned-in, angular choreography of Nijinski deliberately reacted against the institution of ballet. The dance depicts the sacrifice of a young girl to the god of spring while surrounded by tribesmen. Kessler attended the premiere in Paris on May 29, 1913. He noted in his diary:

Abends „Sacre du Printemps“ Premiere. Eine ganz neue Choreographie und Musik; Nijinskis Tanzstil so verschieden von Fokines wie Gauguins Malerei von²⁷². Eine durchaus Neue Vision, etwas Niegesehenes, Packendes, Überzeugendes ist plötzlich da, eine neue Art von Wildheit in Unkunst und zugleich in Kunst: alle Form verwüstet, neue plötzlich aus dem Chaos auftauchend. Das Publikum, das glänzendste Haus, das ich in Paris je gesehen habe, Aristokratie, Diplomaten, Halbwelt, war von Anfang an unruhig lachte, zischelte, machte Witze; hier und dort standen Einige auf. Strawinski, der mit seiner Frau hinter uns sass, raste nach kaum fünf Minuten wie ein Besessener hinaus. Plötzlich rief aus der Galerie eine Stentorstimme: „Allons, les grues du Seizieme (das 16te Arrondissement, das der eleganten Welt), allez vous bientôt nous ficher la paix?“ Die Antwort kam aus einer Loge „Les voilà ceux qui sont murs pour l'annexion“. Im selben Augenblick bekamen in Astrucs Loge d'Annuzio und Debussy Krakehl mit den Herren der Nebeloge, denen sie ins Gesicht schrieen: „Tas d'imbéciles“. Jetzt wurde der Lärm allgemein. [...] Und über diesen Höllenlärm giengen immerfort wie Sturmwetter Lachsalven und gegnerisches Klatschen, während die Musik wütete und auf der Bühne die Tänzer unentwegt und emsig prähistorisch tanzten. Am Schluss der Vorstellung schlug Welt und Halbwelt aufs Haupt, ehe frenetischer Beifall siegte, so dass sich Strawinski und Nijinski zeigen und immer wieder verbeugen konnten.²⁷³

Kessler's enthrallment and knowledge of dance continues to grow as he is able to witness this scandalous and ground-breaking piece which utilized completely new, modern choreography and dissonant music. In saying that the piece “deserted” all previous forms and emerged suddenly from chaos creates a striking image of modernity to witness

²⁷² crossed out: “Delacroix“

²⁷³ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 886.

because of the drastic reaction to the bourgeois form of ballet. The reactions from the audience—displaying a wide range of both raving excitement and utter repulsion—occurred even before the end of the piece and attests to the shocking and contentious performance. This piece, without a doubt, opened Kessler’s eyes to an experimental aesthetic, which provided him with a range of influences in conceptualizing his own work.

Kessler followed the Ballets Russes while they toured and gained key insights into their aesthetic use of the moving body, music and set design. After the company’s premiere in Paris, Kessler, who conceptualizes the libretto for *Josephslegende*, began his collaboration with Diaghilev and Nijinski, composer Strauss, and the set designer Bakst. The project became a European-wide affair as Kessler traveled between London, Berlin, Munich, Paris and other cities in order to work with his Russian dancers and German composer. He met in London with Diaghilev, Nijinski and Bakst on July 10, 1912 to first relay the conception, motivation and gestures of each character and to which Nijinski created corresponding movements.²⁷⁴ After conveying his ideas to Strauss in Garmisch concerning the music, Kessler received feedback from not only his collaborators but also Lady Ripon, a patron of Diaghilev who was responsible for bringing the Ballets Russes to Covent Garden in London to debut in 1911.²⁷⁵ Kessler writes: “Vor dem Frühstück Lady Ripon zu ihrer Beruhigung einen Teil des Joseph vorgelesen. Sie ist seit Monaten in einer nervösen Aufregung wegen des Sujets, weil Joseph eine ‚komische Figur‘ sei und sie fürchtet, Nijinsky könne lächerlich werden. Sie sagte mir nachher, sie sei beruhigt; die

²⁷⁴ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 850.

²⁷⁵ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 868. – Feb. 22, 1913.

Figur sei ganz neu gemacht und könne nicht schockieren.”²⁷⁶ Her comments likely moved the depiction of Joseph into a less experimental realm yet still remained modern. As this was Kessler’s first work, he likely showed trepidation and was eager to receive approval from those in his own intellectual circle.

The plot of the ballet involves the biblical Joseph from the book of Genesis who dances and catches the eye of Potiphar’s wife. Intrigued by the boy Joseph, she embraces him in a motherly way during his sleep but becomes overwhelmed by passion and kisses him. As a result, she feels angry and ashamed and orders her husband to execute the boy. In the last scene the boy shines even more radiantly as the wife darkens and dies.²⁷⁷ Joseph’s dance represents “a cleaner, purer world” filled with joy and exuberance that at the same time retains a mysterious solitude.²⁷⁸ This mystery is relayed by Kessler to Strauss while in Garmisch on Aug. 4, 1912: “Joseph [sei] ein Träumer [...], die Atmosphäre des Magischen [...] müsse den ganzen Schluss einhüllen vom Moment der Nacktheit Josephs an. Dieser Moment der Enthüllung Josephs müsse der Höhepunkt des Werkes für Auge und Ohr sein, ein allerstärkster Effekt und Umschwung in der Stimmung...”²⁷⁹ Joseph has become the Nietzschean *Übermensch* or rather Überkind because of his youth and his focus on the future. Kessler interprets Joseph as both the child and the future and hopes that the piece is read as “modern und symbolisch.”²⁸⁰ If Joseph is the embodiment of Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*, or at least demonstrates strong ties

²⁷⁶ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 868 – Feb. 22, 1913.

²⁷⁷ Easton, *The Red Count*, 205.

²⁷⁸ Easton, *The Red Count*, 205.

²⁷⁹ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 853.

²⁸⁰ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 868. – Feb. 22, 1913.

to this idea, then one might also read the ballet's symbolism with Kessler's own biography. Kessler deeply wanted to escape the stifling, bourgeois conventions of his parent's world and to branch out intellectually in his established artistic circles and to learn about all aspects of art, arts administration, and politics. He was constantly involved in projects and continually learned by watching and through his own personal connections. Kessler's dance is, therefore, closely related to his own life and represents the perpetual striving, which he did in order to inform and develop both his artistic and analytical prowess.

Although the role of Joseph was choreographed and to be danced by Nijinski, his marriage to dancer Romola de Pulszky betrayed his homosexual relationship with the master Diaghilev, who fired Nijinski.²⁸¹ The experimental and expressive movements of Nijinski were replaced by the introspective Leonid Mjassin as Kessler commented on March 25, 1914: "Sehr schön namentlich das Innerliche, die Macht religiöser Extase. Er ist das genauer Gegenteil von Nij; ganz Innigkeit wie ein russisches Volkslied Nichts von Nijinskis Glanz und übermenschlicher Kraft. Er packt aber durch die Tiefe der Empfindung."²⁸² While the premiere on May 14, 1914 at the Paris Opera was a "brilliantes gesellschaftliches Ereignis" due to Kessler's masterful ability to gather aristocrats and artists, the piece was generally not well received by the press as it did not meet their expectations created by the hype.²⁸³ Although Mjassin's dancing was praised on the whole, the scenery and music met with mixed reactions. The libretto was strongly

²⁸¹ Schuster, "Sehr hohe Absichten der Mimik," 66.

²⁸² Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Vierter Band 1906-1914*, 911.

²⁸³ Schuster, "Sehr hohe Absichten der Mimik," 67.

criticized as being too laden with symbolism: “Là où sont deux Allemands, il y a forcément un symbole. [...] Leur style est si plein de bouffisure et de prétention en même temps que d’obscurité qu’il en est absolument inintelligible,”²⁸⁴ remarked the critic Pougin. Perhaps the lack of understanding was due to the high number of collaborators being overly ambitious.²⁸⁵ Schuster summarizes the piece by remarking: “Die *Josephslegende* ist ein später Repräsentant des Fin de Siècle mit seiner widersprüchlichen Mischung aus Historismus, Eklektizismus und einzelnen Momenten der Modernität, wie sie etwa im ekstatischen Ausdruckstanz Josephs verwirklicht wird.”²⁸⁶ Although Kessler may have overconceptualized and sought too much help for his project, his connections within the artistic community in the metropolises of Berlin, London and Paris allowed him to witness seminal modern dance pieces that would inevitably demonstrate a range of experimental aesthetics so as to shape his own artistic identity.

9. Conclusion

Berlin played a key role in attracting numerous dancers from different parts of the world to perform and provided an open space for them to experiment choreographically and to meet other artists. These performances were one of many stimuli within the urban space that was challenging the established aesthetics of the modern individual. Kessler among others noticed the hybridization and abstraction exhibited by many of the early modern dancers leading him to become more interested in dance as an artistic medium

²⁸⁴ Cited by Prost-Romand: *La Légende de Joseph*, 544. in Schuster, “Sehr hohe Absichten der Mimik,” 68.

²⁸⁵ Schuster, “Sehr hohe Absichten der Mimik,” 66.

²⁸⁶ Schuster, “Sehr hohe Absichten der Mimik,” 70.

and much less as a social event like balls and as entertainment like ballets and the Varieté. The descriptions and receptions particularly of Fuller's changing colors and materiality, St. Denis' radiating yet degendered sexuality and Nijinski with his enigmatic dancing and choreography profoundly widened Kessler's aesthetic scope. His ability to communicate and to collaborate with some of these artists allowed him insight into the production and motivation behind modern dance and created an avenue which to develop his own aesthetic. The protagonist Joseph from his piece *Josephslegende* not only represents the Nietzschean idea of the *Übermensch* but also symbolizes Kessler's diligence in creating a network of friends and collaborators from whom he could develop his own aesthetic and with whom he could create his own artistic projects. By breaking free from the old, bourgeois traditions of his parents' world, he was able to discover a new artistic life in which he could critique and verbalize his musing about modern dance and art.

CHAPTER III

WRITING THE URBAN SPACE

1. Introduction: Learning to Read and Write the Dynamic Urban Space

The new way of experiencing the metropolis challenged not only journalists but also writers who were being influenced by the city's dynamic being in terms of the topics with which their writing engaged and also in regards to style. While Peter Fritzsche used the term *Momentbilder* to succinctly describe events such as panoramic views of the city and urban traffic scenes, authors during this time were also experimenting through similar forms of writing. Andreas Huyssen in his essay "Modernist Miniatures: Literary Snapshots of Urban Spaces" goes into more depth in situating this genre.²⁸⁷ Huyssen reads the episodic nature of Rainer Maria Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* less like a linear narrative and more like highly condensed prose called "Bilder" or miniatures.²⁸⁸ He defines this kind of writing as:

[an] antiform [that] resists the laws of genre as much as a systemic philosophy or urban sociology, [and] cross[es] the boundaries between poetry, fiction, and philosophy, between commentary and interpretation, between language and the visual. But as form it is firmly grounded in the micrological observation of metropolitan space, time, and life at the earlier stage of modernization.²⁸⁹

As Huyssen alludes to by calling these episodes "Bilder" and "literary snapshots," there is a strong visual dimension that these texts portray. Roswitha Kant also writes: "Der

²⁸⁷ Andreas Huyssen, "Modernist Miniatures: Literary Snapshots of Urban Spaces," *PMLA* 122.1 (Jan. 2007): 27

²⁸⁸ Huyssen, "Modernist Miniatures," 31. – Others have conceptualized this idea and called it various names such as *Denkbild* 'thought image' (by Benjamin), *Raubild* 'space image' (by Krakauer), *Körperbild* 'body image' (by Jünger), *Bewusstseinsbild* 'consciousness image' (by Benn) and simply *Bilder* 'images' and *Betrachtungen* 'observations'.

²⁸⁹ Huyssen, "Modernist Miniatures," 32.

Protagonist als Beobachter, wichtigstes Element in Rilkes visuell-narrativer Strategie, fungiert als künstlerisches Mittel, um neuartige, eindrucksmächtige Bilder zu erschließen.²⁹⁰

It is specifically the authors' experiences in the city that caused them to see, hear, think and even smell differently allowing them to experiment aesthetically in their writing similar to the journalistic *Momentbilder* about city occurrences and Harry Graf Kessler's journal depicting his encounters with early modern dance. In this chapter, I will investigate how the (un)fragmented, urban experiences of August Endell, Rainer Maria Rilke, Alfred Döblin, and Else Lasker-Schüler manifested themselves in their own writing not only in the themes that they chose to represent but also the characteristics and modern aesthetics associated with their work particularly in scenes involving bodies, pedestrian movement and dance movement. Endell's text educates its reader to learn to see more aesthetically in the metropolitan surroundings by using modernist miniatures. Rilke's scenes involve the protagonist Malte who watches a man experiencing a fit caused by a degenerative neurological condition called "Veitstanz." While Rilke's depictions occur within the urban expanses, Döblin's text takes place within a more limited space of the metropolis: in a hospital. His story portrays a ballerina stricken with a strange illness who in the end loses a long battle with her own body. Lasker-Schüler's scenes assume a less pragmatic and more fantastic and poetic aesthetic. She views the boundlessness of dance by depicting: first the narrator, Variété dancer Gertrude Barrison and two oriental figures dancing on the Islambühne at Lunapark, second, Barrison

²⁹⁰ Roswitha M. Kant, *Visualität in Rainer Maria Rilkes Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge: Eine Untersuchung zum psychoanalytischen Symbolbegriff* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), 79-80.

dancing alone, and third, Café Kurfürstendamm as an oriental dancer within the urban space of Berlin.

2. Programmatic Change: Endell's "Die Schönheit der großen Stadt"

August Endell's "Die Schönheit der großen Stadt"²⁹¹ from 1908 focuses its attention on form, movement and beauty in the urban space of Berlin. Endell seems to assume a programmatic approach to persuade the readers to become critical in the way they perceive the urban landscape of Berlin and to train their eyes to see beauty in a city that has historically not been elegant. Although Endell does not specifically deal with dance in his portrayal of the metropolis Berlin, his depictions of a number of scenes allow one to see the interaction of humans, crowds and the urban space in a different light. His didactic approach begins with his critique of romantic ideas, leading into the influence of Impressionism—particularly in the depiction of the "Schleier"—and then finally to the description of streets scenes and people. I argue that Endell teaches the reader to observe similarly to an intellectual, flâneur or journalist—all of whose writing seemed to reflect the genre of the "modernist miniature." Not only could training through Endell's writing allow the modern individual to see more aesthetically, but it would arm him or her seemingly with the ability to also understand and interpret the new phenomenon of modern dance happening outdoors and in theaters.

2.1 "Wir müssen lernen zu sehen...": Endell's Aesthetic Program

²⁹¹ August Endell, "Die Schönheit der großen Stadt." In *August Endell: der Architekt des Photoateliers Elvira 1871 – 1925*, ed. Klaus-Jürgen Sembach (München: Stuck-Jugendstil-Verein, 1977), 87- 120.

In his first essay “Um die Schönheit” written in 1896—12 years before he wrote “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt”—Endell expressed two of his ambitions: first, “Wir müssen lernen zu sehen, und wir müssen lernen, daß Form und Farbe, die in uns bestimmte Gefühle hervorrufen, uns auch wirklich zu Bewußtsein kommen.”²⁹² Second he wanted to express his view of fine art and to close the gap between the artist and the audience because the laymen considered art to be too intellectual. In learning about and recognizing these new ways of seeing, one was to look at an object or phenomenon not at all for its function but instead for its optics and aesthetics. Endell’s perspective was similar to Wilhelm Wundt’s argument—concerning the focus on sensuous form and deemphasizing content²⁹³—which strongly influenced Harry Graf Kessler’s own intellectual thought. Endell further argued that one will find “eine nie versiegende Quelle ausserordentlichen und ungeahnten Genusses [...]. Es ist in der That eine neue Welt, die sich da aufthut [...]Es ist wie ein Rausch, wie ein Wahnsinn, der uns überkommt [...]”²⁹⁴ This new way of seeing was not so much focused, therefore, on the intellectual, but more intended for the everyday person at the time. Endell’s aesthetic concepts were influenced by the French impressionist painters.²⁹⁵ They heavily informed his perspective on observing natural and urban phenomena. The goal of all Endell’s work was to create

²⁹² August Endell, “Um die Schönheit,” In *Eine Paraphrase über die Münchener Kunstausstellung* (München: Verlag Emil Franke, 1896), 29.

²⁹³ Laird McLeod Easton, *The Red Count. The Life and Times of Harry Graf Kessler* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 40.

²⁹⁴ Endell, “Um die Schönheit,” 11.

²⁹⁵ Klaus Reichel, “Vom Jugendstil zu Sachlichkeit: August Endell (1871-1925),” (Ph.D. Diss., Ruhr Universität Bochum, 1974), 36.

“Schönheit” that could influence the individual psyche.²⁹⁶ These principles—brought forth in his earlier work—flourish in his “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt” in which his aesthetic program is depicted thoroughly and further developed by using urban structures and settings as examples.

Endell was an architect influenced by Impressionist painters as well as by contemporary sociologists and literary circles including Georg Simmel, Lou Andreas-Salomé and Rilke.²⁹⁷ Published in 1908 “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt” is divided into various sections including: “Die Anklage gegen das Zeitalter,” “Die Abkehr vom Heute,” “Die Liebe zum Heute und Hier,” “Die große Stadt,” “Die Stadt als Landschaft,” and “Die Straße als lebendiges Wesen.” As these titles suggest, Endell begins by complaining about the way in which contemporaries view the world by constantly looking to the past and reveling in romantic notions.²⁹⁸ By stating his case again and critiquing modern society, he gives himself a platform from which to build his aesthetic theory which he then follows by proclaiming a devotion to the present day and depicting the paradox of Berlin: “[...] das ist das Erstaunliche, daß die große Stadt trotz aller häßlichen Gebäude, trotz des Lärmes, trotz allem, was man an ihr tadeln kann, dem, der sehen will, ein Wunder ist an Schönheit und Poesie, ein Märchen, bunter, farbiger, vielgestaltiger als irgendeines [...]” and is full of “tausend Schönheiten, ungezählte Wunder, unendlichen Reichtum, offen vor aller Augen und doch von so wenigen gesehen.[...]”²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ Reichel, “Vom Jugendstil zu Sachlichkeit,” 37.

²⁹⁷ Alexander Eisenschmidt, “Visual discoveries of an urban wanderer: August Endell’s perception of a beautiful metropolis,” *Architectural Research Quarterly* 11 (2007): 71.

²⁹⁸ Endell, “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt,” 88-92.

²⁹⁹ Endell, “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt,” 94-95.

By embracing the here and now, Endell argues and proposes the possibility of seeing beauty in Berlin which had been historically depicted by many critics as an ugly, industrial city. Inspired by the impressionistic idea of trying to depict “Die Schleier des Tages”—such as fog, mist, sun, rain and dusk—Endell uses these as a means to give color, life and movement to otherwise dirty, empty, urban structures and scenes. As Alexander Eisenschmidt writes: “Endell’s notion of the city aspired to its rethinking, rather than its remaking,” and his theory “sought to engage with rather than modify the existing city.”³⁰⁰ Instead of changing the metropolis of Berlin by creating new, beautiful buildings, the existing structures were to be observed with a new aesthetic.

Endell’s depictions first begin with beautified urban structures—“Die romanische Kirche,” “Die eiserne Brücke,” “Bahnhof Friedrichstraße”—and culminate in large expansive areas—“Der Exerzierplatz,” “Unter den Linden,” “Der Potsdamer Platz,” “Vor dem Brandenburger Tor.” After Endell imbues these static urban, architectural structures with the “Schleier” and colors, he intensifies his depiction by infusing the open, urban spaces with the movement of people and crowds to create an even greater feeling of a living, dynamic system. In each of Endell’s short, concise descriptions he abstracts from the actual function of the everyday scenes that he sees and aestheticizes them by emphasizing their color, form and movement.

Essentially his readings of these places and buildings progress successively—by giving the reader a detailed look at a seemingly insignificant urban structure—and then subsequently move on to larger bird’s eye views of metropolitan squares. In the last section of his text called “Die Straße als lebendiges Wesen” and in a small fragment called “Vor dem Café,” Endell characterizes an unnamed “Platz” in Berlin as people

³⁰⁰ Eisenschmidt, “Visual discoveries,” 71-72.

move in and out of the area. His enchantment with the scene emerges as the moving pedestrians seem to not resemble people but rather abstracted forms that group together and later break apart.

2.2 The Square

Endell accounts:

Zu dem Erstaunlichen gehört in dieser Hinsicht das Leben auf einem Platze. Der unseligen romanischen Kirche gegenüber liegt ein Café mit einer Terrasse, auf der ich oft an Sommerabenden stundenlang gesessen habe und mich nicht müde sehen konnte an dem bunten Spiele der kommenden und gehenden Menschen.³⁰¹

Endell places himself as an observer of urban phenomena by watching “das Leben auf einem Platze” which can be read less in terms of its portrayal of daily life, and more in regards to the liveliness that the groups of moving people display in the narrator’s eyes. Accustomed to his daily wanderings about the city, Endell seats himself at this café precisely to watch people come and go within the square. In this respect he seems slightly different than the flâneur who would be walking and observing at the same time. Endell is seated in order to keep a fixed distance so he can observe the square more objectively instead of being among the living system. Obviously this site would be so mesmerizing that it would be able to occupy his attention for many hours as these people would turn into purely abstract forms and colors similar to an impressionist painting. As an architect, Endell rejects the design of the space:

Der Platz ist töricht als Architektur, vielleicht noch schlimmer als Verkehrsanlage – wie wenn jemand die größtmögliche Zahl gefährlicher Übergänge hätte schaffen wollen – aber als Feld mit darüber verteilten Menschen ist er ganz einzig. Die Menschenströme der benachbarten Straßen lösen sich hier nach allen

³⁰¹ Endell, “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt,” 115.

Richtungen auf, und der ganze Platz scheint bedeckt von vereinzelt
Menschen.³⁰²

Endell points to a fault in the planning of this space as he calls the square silly in its architectural construction and notes its failure for allowing smooth traffic flow, but the square takes on a unifying role as the side streets lead into the main area. Despite his comment regarding the poor architecture, he focuses on the space and the people filtering in because his café view allows him to observe from a greater encompassing distance. In fact, emphasis is not placed on the individuality of the pedestrians but instead on their streaming collectiveness and their likeness to a natural phenomenon. In doing so Endell abstracts from the everyday appearance of the group and concentrates on their form.

The dynamic movement, however, furthers his interest even more as the groups of people change formations:

Jeder löst sich vom anderen. Zwischen ihnen breitet sich der Raum. In perspektivischer Verschiebung scheinen die entfernteren Gestalten immer kleiner, und man empfindet deutlich die weite Dehnung des Platzes. Alle Menschen sind frei voneinander, bald nahen sie sich zu größerer Dichte, bald lassen sie Lücken, fortwährend ist die Teilung des Raumes eine andere. Die Schreitenden schieben sich durcheinander, verdecken einander, lösen sich wieder ab, schreiten frei und allein, jeder aufrecht einen Platzteil betonend, verdeutlichend, und so wird der Raum zwischen ihnen ein fühlbares, ungeheures, lebendiges Wesen, [...]³⁰³

In this scene visual play ensues between the single people forming groups and the space in the square creating the sense of constant activity and liveliness. At times the pedestrians will form tight clumps that will then break apart, however, each seems to hold his or her individual identity. Endell notes that they are free from each other—meaning they have their own will, and yet they remain formed groups. The movement patterns change from forming groups into the individuals maneuvering between and momentarily

³⁰² Endell, “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt,” 115.

³⁰³ Endell, “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt,” 115-116.

concealing each other. Throughout this energetic description, Endell focuses his attention on the aesthetic play between the people and space giving no consideration to reading specific individuals or imagining who they are or what they are doing. Essentially, he is reading their movements not in their everyday senses and purposes but on a higher level of abstraction. He has seated himself at the café distanced enough in order to see the patterns and formations that the groups create. Being separated so far has likely caused him to be unable to distinguish individual faces and gestures.

While he observes the people in the square—with an aesthetic delight from his perch at the café, the pedestrians most likely do not think they are being watched. Yet Endell, the sitting flâneur, retains his anonymity and blends in with the rest of the crowd so that he may obtain any position to his liking in order to have a perfect point of observation. Endell desires to watch the moving people in their natural setting devoid of any affect and theater. He aestheticizes this pure, everyday movement—like Harry Graf Kessler aestheticized the girl's feet and the officer clutching the horse. To Endell the people are not just pedestrians maneuvering in a square but rather an experienceable, living entity with its own dynamic life. Anselm Heine like Endell approaches great city squares with similar intentions, for instance, as Heine portrayed the many forms of public transportation such as trains and streetcars filled with people reading the newspaper. Although Heine's scene could be read simply as a display for the new means of travel, it also evokes the notion of a perpetual, forward motion and an aesthetization of the ways in which to traverse the urban space.

Besides the architectural space of the square and the groups of people in constant motion, Endell adds the effects of the “Schleier” which he outlined theoretically earlier as a means of adding color and more energy to the display:

[...] was noch viel merkwürdiger wird, wenn Sonne jedem Fußgänger einen begleitenden Schatten, oder Regen ein blitzendes, unsicheres Spiegelbild unter die Füße breitet. Und in diesem seltsamen Raumleben entfaltet sich das Gewimmel der bunt gestrichenen Wagen, der farbigen Toiletten, alles vereint, verhüllt, verschönt mit den Schleiern des Tages und der Dämmerung.³⁰⁴

The sun causes the people to cast a shadow which adds another dimension to their appearance. Meanwhile the colorful cars and toilets combined with the movement of the pedestrians create almost a swirl of moving impressions difficult to absorb because of the constant activity. Endell refers to this scene or occurrence as a “seltsam[es] Raumleben,” which points to a different understanding of the world and reflects the way in which the modern individual at the turn of the century was observing his or her surroundings. In his essay *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben* Simmel described the city dweller’s experience as their senses being bombarded by a plethora of dizzying stimuli to which they develop a filter and attain a blasé attitude. Considering that Endell had attended some of the lectures that Simmel had given while in Berlin,³⁰⁵ his theories likely had permeated the thoughts of Endell while writing “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt.” The scene with the moving groups, color and lights seems to correspond to the modern individual in the metropolitan space. In this scene Endell even clearly establishes his voice as that of a narrator who carries the reader through his own experiences. The

³⁰⁴ Endell, “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt,” 116.

³⁰⁵ Eisenschmidt, “Visual discoveries,” 75.

dynamics of the display also relate back to the urban space of Berlin which was filled with an overwhelming amount of excitement that also stimulated Endell.

His depiction of the moving people and lively color reminds one of a similar abstraction seen in Harry Graf Kessler's depiction of Loïe Fuller's serpentine dance. Just as Endell was influenced by the techniques of the French impressionists and in his own way of viewing street scenes in Berlin, Kessler cites his contemporary Henry van de Velde who called Fuller's performance neo-impressionistic.³⁰⁶ Kessler notes the lack of plot in Fuller's dance which leads him to wonder why there seems to be no beginning or end to the dance except for changes in color and constant movement. Endell's depiction of the square takes on similar attributes. He does not narrate a plot but rather describes the transforming colors and the perpetual maneuvering of the people. The use of light in both texts also plays a central role in enlivening and enhancing the visual experience by creating the effect of perpetual motion. While Fuller was a pioneer in using light gels to vary her color and illumination from all angles to create the illusion of a painted appearance, Endell utilizes the sun and rain as part of his "Schleier" motifs to similarly paint the scene of his own groups of moving people. Both of these examples bring together the ideas of the modern individual's experience in the city space of watching urban phenomena. Kessler's time observing early modern dance in the theater marks new experiences that demand an unexplored method of aesthetic realization. These scenes could be seen as an attempt to force the modern individual to see differently than he had before. Endell's suggestion on how to view the metropolis Berlin with renewed senses could then, theoretically, help not only Kessler and van de Velde in reading Fuller's dance, but also help the general city dweller in interpreting modern dance particularly in

³⁰⁶ Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Dritter Band 1897-1905*, 448. – Berlin 7. Dez 1901.

the impressionistic style of Fuller. In the spirit of this impressionism, Endell seems to view the moving bodies as becoming woven into the architectural structures and squares and playing an integral part in creating the dynamic city space. One could also argue that if Endell's theory of reading Berlin can be applied to modern dance, then one could read the scene with the square as a "dance" performance.

2.3 Endell's Writing Style

The style in which "Die Schönheit der großen Stadt" is written reminds one of Huyssen's definition of the modernist miniature:

[an] antiform [that] resists the laws of genre as much as a systemic philosophy or urban sociology, [and] cross[es] the boundaries between poetry, fiction, and philosophy, between commentary and interpretation, between language and the visual. But as form it is firmly grounded in the micrological observation of metropolitan space, time, and life at the earlier stage of modernization"³⁰⁷

The text assumes an "antiform" to the extent that it actually takes on the guise of many other genres. As pointed out earlier "Die Schönheit der großen Stadt" begins with commentary in reasoning against a yearning for the past and instead instills a desire for the present day—modernity. The programmatic argument is followed by overwhelmingly visual and superbly aestheticized depictions of urban landscape and structures which resemble the modernist miniature because they are written as a collection of concise, urban impressions. Helge David accurately describes the text:

In dem Strom der permanenten Gegenwart versucht Endell, der impressionistischen Flüchtigkeit des Sichtbaren durch einen Moment der Kontemplation eine neue, genießende Langsamkeit abzugewinnen, ohne freilich die Geschwindigkeit des modernen Lebens drosseln zu wollen oder zu können.

³⁰⁷ Huyssen, "Modernist Miniatures," 32.

Das Sichtbare geht vorüber, ist Bewegung. Die Stadt der Gegenwart hat sich der höheren Ideale entledigt und schafft sich ihre Existenz täglich neu.”³⁰⁸

Being in a city of constant flux and a bombardment of stimuli would encourage one to somehow preserve particularly striking and memorable moments, which Endell has apparently achieved. In his writing he tries to capture the visual impressions of his daily life similar to that of the journalists discussed by Fritzsche. The journalist would flâneur about the city until he encountered an event which he deemed newsworthy and would attempt to recreate and capture the event in a written form called the *Momentbild*, which resembles what Huyssen called “literary snapshots.”

In view of the fact that recording routine events on a daily basis would be virtually impossible and undesirable for Endell, he collects impressions that would further his goal to encourage his contemporaries in observing Berlin as aesthetically beautiful. His snapshot from “Vor dem Café” involving the people moving in the square deals with his attempt to not only recreate visually what he sees—through his writing—but to also call attention to and imbue it with his own view by emphasizing the dynamic movement, form and color. To this extent Endell’s *Momentbild* resembles many of the same principles that one would apply when watching a dance performance. For instance the *Illustrierte Zeitung*—which could likely be considered a journalistic *Momentbild*—provides a description of Loïe Fuller’s performance paying particular attention to the illumination of her body in the stage lighting and her turning movements.³⁰⁹ One difference between the two is that modern dance grew out of a rejection of the traditional ballet and purposefully used plotless and abstract themes, but Endell’s new way of

³⁰⁸ Helge David, “Ezkurs: Die Schönheit der großen Stadt,” in *An die Schönheit. August Endells Texte zu Kunst und Ästhetik 1896 bis 1925* (Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2008), 227.

³⁰⁹ (Gez.:) E.R., “Serpentintanz”, in *Illustrierte Zeitung*, 99/2580 (10. Dezember 1892): 684.

observing Berlin has less to do with changing *what* one sees and more to do with altering *how* one observes. Both, however, demand a new way of seeing and development of a new aesthetic so as to gain an appreciation and understanding for more abstract forms and colors. Endell's push for all modern individual's to observe his or her urban surroundings more aesthetically plays a large role in how Rilke, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler observed their own environments and greatly influence their writing in terms of their experimental form and depictions of dance.

3. Fragmented Perception, Fragmented Dance, Fragmented Writing: Rilke's *Malte Laurids Brigge*

Rainer Maria Rilke was an author who lived in the metropolis of Paris and whose writings were heavily influenced by all facets of the city like Endell. Rilke's move to Paris in 1902 coincided with the beginnings of his work *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*. The original title of the novel *The Journal of My Other Self* contains many autobiographical elements of Rilke himself in Paris portrayed through the protagonist Malte. Inger Gilbert reads the name "Brigge" as a play on the word "Brücke" which bridges the two characters.³¹⁰ Rilke leaves his wife and daughter behind in Worpswede in order to journey to Paris where he is to work on his novel along with other projects such as a monograph on Rodin. Malte is then just like the author who is also new to Paris and has to struggle with adapting to the crowded and anonymous daily life.

Gilbert argues that Rilke has created the character Malte in order to give himself some

³¹⁰ Inger Gilbert, "From Myth to Language: Childhood's Narrative in Rainer Maria Rilke's *Malte Laurids Brigge*," In *Unreading Rilke: Unorthodox Approaches to a Cultural Myth*, ed. Harmut Heep (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2001), 53-60.

distance and to write even more freely about the protagonist instead of Rilke himself.³¹¹

Along these same lines one could then even tie Malte's feelings and sentiments toward Paris more directly with Rilke.

Rilke's relationship to Paris has been observed by most critics as being ambivalent. In his letters, at times, he describes how beautiful Paris is, and during other instances expresses a desire to be back in the countryside.³¹² Like Rilke, Malte also suffers from this pull between forces in which he feels comfortable and safe at home, but always compelled with the urge to explore the streets during which he usually has strange encounters. Without question Rilke finds Paris engaging and helpful for his productivity:

Der Anspruch, den diese Stadt an einen macht, ist unermesslich und ununterbrochen. (Ich verdanke ihr das Beste, was ich bis jetzt kann.) Deshalb hilft sie einem nicht gleich und unmittelbar bei künstlerischer Betätigung, sie wirkt gleichsam nicht zuerst auf die Arbeit ein, die man tut, - aber sie verwandelt, steigert und entwickelt einen fortwährend, sie nimmt einem leise die Werkzeuge aus der Hand, die man bisher benutzte, und ersetzt sie durch andere, unsäglich feinere und präzisere und tut tausend unerwartete Dinge mit einem, wie eine Fee, die Lust daran hat, ein Wesen alle Gestalten annehmen zu sehen, deren Möglichkeiten in ihm verborgen sind. Man muß Paris, wenn man es zum erstenmal um sich hat, mehr wie ein Bad wirken lassen, ohne selbst zuviel dabei tun zu wollen: als zu fühlen und es sich geschehen zu lassen.³¹³

Rilke's poetic and metaphoric description of the city shaping the writing process relates similarly to passive absorption of daily activity. The stimuli seep into the body as if Paris helps him write and the author is simply a medium through which the city works. In a sense the writer seems less capable of deciding what he depicts in his work as it would remain dependent on the unexpected experiences that he would encounter in the

³¹¹ Gilbert, "From Myth to Language," 56.

³¹² Michael Pleister, *Das Bild der Großstadt in den Dichtungen Robert Walsers, Rainer Maria Rilke, Stefan Georges und Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (Hamburg: Helmut Kusse Verlag), 1990.

³¹³ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe*, Bd. 3, S. 183 – 29.03.1907 an Tora Holmström

streets. On the other hand, it is the author's poetic and aesthetic sensibility that would enable him to relay this in writing. If indeed Rilke is correct, and the city is writing itself with the author as simply a means, then the fragmentary, episodic, nonlinearity of his work shines through.

3.1 From "Tanzkraft" to "Schreibkraft": Malte's Encounter with the "Veitstänzer"

Given the "bildhaft" nature of essentially all the miniatures in Rilke's novel, I decided to focus on one scene that deals specifically with reading the body through its gestural and dance-like movement in the urban space. Not only do these scenes evoke mental images, but more importantly they convey a sense of performance, excitement and development between the protagonist Malte and the man whom he watches. The scene involves Malte's encounter with a sickly man stricken with Veitstanz, a degenerative, neurological disease affecting people in their forties which eventually leads to death. The symptoms of the disease result in abrupt, angular, dance-like movements that traverse the man's entire body strangely intriguing Malte and at the same time sparking the fear which has been plaguing the protagonist since the beginning of the novel.

The episode involving the man with Veitstanz begins as Malte remarks: "Gestern war mein Fieber besser, und heute fängt der Tag wie Frühling an, wie Frühling in Bildern."³¹⁴ In a previous scene the protagonist had been at the doctor and became reacquainted with his "Große:" a fear that he had known as a child. As Malte was in the hospital he noted the sick lethargic people in the waiting room and became filled with uneasiness. His mental state was further complicated and prolonged because he had not

³¹⁴ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (Königswinter: Tandem Verlag, 2010), 62.

made an appointment and wasn't called in until an hour later. The remnants of this sickness linger with him as he comments subsequently: "Heute habe ich es nicht erwartet, ich bin so mutig ausgegangen, als wäre das das Natürlichste und Einfachste. Und doch, es war wieder etwas da, das mich nahm wie Papier, mich zusammenknüllte und fortwarf, es war etwas Unerhörtes da."³¹⁵ "Mutig" does not typically characterize Malte's mood when he ventures into the city. After having his encounters with the strange "Blumenkohlverkäufer"—cauliflower salesman—and the deteriorating walls, his current mood does not correspond to his usual enjoyment of the secluded libraries. Further complicated with his "fever," it seems that he should be even more cautious; however, related to the unexpectedness that one would find in the city as proposed by Peter Fritzsche and other critics of city life, Malte should have learned that a walk through the streets of Paris had a tendency to invite both pleasant and shocking encounters.

This image of the crumbled-up paper being thrown away could be symbolic of a piece of trash: a rather banal everyday occurrence of purging of waste; it also foreshadows the end of the scene. The word choice of "unerhört" connects with Goethe's use when coining his definition of a novella which dealt with an "unerhörte Begebenheit." Goethe's characterization encompassed a verisimilitude of everyday, plausible happenings, yet contained a strange, unexpected episode. While a novel would depict a large portion of one's life, the novella would essentially capture a mere fragment out of the grand scheme. Rilke's depiction of Malte's encounter similarly captures fleeting moments. Much like many of these events that happened to the modern individual wandering through the streets like Malte, he or she was supposed to be prepared for such incidents. Using a map seemed to have its limitations as getting lost

³¹⁵ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 62.

and the idea of wandering could be intriguing. Thus begins Malte's wandering as he describes the atmosphere of his surroundings:

Der Boulevard St-Michel war leer und weit, und es ging sich leicht auf seiner leisen Neigung. Fensterflügel oben öffneten sich mit gläsernem Aufklang, und ihr Glänzen flog wie ein weißer Vogel über die Straße. Ein Wagen mit hellroten Rädern kam vorüber, und weiter unten trug jemand etwas Lichtgrünes. Pferde liefen in blinkernden Geschirren auf dem dunkelgespritzten Fahrdamm, der rein war. Der Wind war erregt, neu, mild, und alles stieg auf: Gerüche, Rufe, Glocken.³¹⁶

Here Rilke describes the urban scene not only visually but also aurally and olfactorily with use of the words “Gerüche, Rufe und Glocken.” Rilke tries to awaken the senses of the reader to recreate the setting just as one would observe as having been there. Rilke does not involve himself in a long impressionistic view from above of a landscape as Anselm Heine had done, but rather focuses his perception on what is in his immediate vicinity as an urban dweller in the streets. His short, succinct sentences aim at recreating the feeling of presentness by not creating classically beautiful, idyllic scenes but rather raw, everyday occurrences in the city. This description takes into account the modern individual's change in perception in being more instantaneous. Rilke's language may not have the long elegance of an author depicting a “Bildbeschreibung”—an impressionistic, literary description of a scene often used by 19th century writers—but his language despite this still retains its “Bildhaftigkeit” and poetics in its rhythm. After describing the atmosphere, Rilke continues to depict the strange reactions of some waiters:

Glattgekämmte Kellner waren dabei, vor der Türe zu scheuern. [...] Der Kellner, der ganz rot im Gesicht war, schaute eine Weile scharf hin, dann verbreitete sich ein Lachen auf seinen bartlosen Wangen, als wäre es darauf verschüttet worden. Er winkte den anderen Kellnern, drehte das lachende Gesicht ein paarmal schnell von rechts nach links, um alle herbeizurufen und selbst nichts zu versäumen. Nun

³¹⁶ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 62.

standen alle und blickten hinuntersehend oder suchend, lächelnd oder ärgerlich, daß sie noch nicht entdeckt hatten, was Lächerliches es gäbe.³¹⁷

Malte's everyday strolling in the streets leads him to see merely the reaction of the waiters who just saw the "Unerhörte." These varying reactions point toward their puzzledness in trying to ascertain and interpret what they see from various angles. As events in the streets for the modern individual could be so strange, it would prove customary for many to encounter instances which would be unexplainable. After having not even seen the "Unerhörte" but only the reactions of the waiters, Malte feels the fear within himself start to build: "Ich fühlte, daß ein wenig Angst in mir anfang. Etwas drängte mich auf die andere Seite hinüber; aber ich begann nur schneller zu gehen und überblickte unwillkürlich die wenigen Leute von mir, an denen ich nichts Besonderes bemerkte.." ³¹⁸ Although Malte does not say it explicitly, his "Angst" and his "Krankheit/Fieber" could be something similar. One cannot assume that they are necessarily the same, but they seem to be caused by uncertain events as demonstrated while he is in the hospital or when he is in the streets. As much as the modern individual was to be as wary of and ready for unforeseen occurrences in the city, Malte is not able to cope successfully in his new environment of Paris. First he feels fear, yet his actions show that he is also intrigued. By venturing out of his confined and, therefore, safe haven of the library, he leaves himself vulnerable to an open, urban environment filled with unpleasant surprises. Malte also portrays one of the characteristics of Simmel's modern individual as he has learned to filter out other stimuli and acquired a blasé attitude to anything not pertaining to the "Unerhörte" for which he is searching.

³¹⁷ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 63.

³¹⁸ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 63.

Malte's search for the "unknown" leads him to a boy, whose reactions he sees: "Doch ich sah, daß der eine, ein Laufbursche mit einer blauen Schürze und einem leeren Henkelkorb über der einen Schulter, jemandem nachschaute."³¹⁹ Malte learned that the only way to get to this "unknown" is to be searching for the reactions of others. During his search he not only has to be aware of his surroundings but also has to navigate as his unknown is moving as well. While maneuvering and searching for clues, Malte constantly has to reevaluate the space in which he finds himself. As Simmel pointed out in his essay on the modern metropolis, Malte too has to develop a keen sense and disregard the stimuli which are not important to him. Appropriately the errand boy, who likely developed a sense of orientation and mental mapping of the streets of Paris, will lead Malte to the unknown figure.

After Malte is led to the "Unerhörte," he realizes that it is an old man that has raised the eyebrows of the people in the streets:

Ich erwarte, sobald mein Auge Raum hatte, irgendeine ungewöhnliche und auffallende Figur zu sehen, aber es zeigte sich, daß vor mir niemand ging als ein großer, hagerer Mann in einem dunklen Überzieher und mit einem weichen schwarzen Hut auf dem kurzen fahlblonden Haar. Ich vergewisserte mich, daß weder an der Kleidung noch in dem Benehmen dieses Mannes etwas Lächerliches sei, und versuchte schon, an ihm vorüber den Boulevard hinunterzuschauen, als er über irgend etwas stolperte.³²⁰

Malte's detective skills have lead him to an old man whose appearance does not seem to be particularly strange at first until the man trips over something unrecognizable. The reactions that have lead Malte to his first unknown, the man, lead him into further inquiry when the man stumbles: "Da ich nahe hinter ihm folgte, nahm ich mich in acht, aber als

³¹⁹ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 63.

³²⁰ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 64.

die Stelle kam, war da nichts, rein nichts. Wir gingen beide weiter, er und ich, der Abstand zwischen uns blieb derselbe.”³²¹ As soon as he gets closer to the man, Malte also has to be aware of himself and how he acts to make sure that no one—especially the man—notices the protagonist’s watching. Similar to the flâneur, who indeed must maintain his anonymity in order to be master of his own situation, Malte does not want to be noticed either. Although uneasy while in the streets of Paris, Malte is learning regardless and captured by his own curiosity. By remaining anonymous he will be able to observe the man in his “natural” state without any outside influences.

The investigation continues as Malte notices that the man hadn’t tripped over anything. This puzzling aspect does not add up in his mind as logically there must have been some kind of object that caused the stumble. They begin walking together almost in tandem as Malte sustains the same distance between the both of them so as not to call attention to himself and to retain his anonymity. Here is the first place in which Rilke depicts their coming together making them seem as if they are one system or unit moving in tandem. It is as if Malte sets himself parallel with the man not only in step but eventually also in feeling. From this point on, the intensity of their connection builds:

Jetzt kam ein Straßenübergang, und da geschah es, daß der Mann vor mir mit ungleichen Beinen die Stufen des Gangsteigs hinunterhüpfte in der Art etwa, wie Kinder manchmal während des Gehens aufhüpfen oder springen, wenn sie sich freuen. Auf den jenseitigen Gangsteig kam er einfach mit einem langen Schritt hinauf. Aber kaum war er oben, zog er das eine Bein ein wenig an und hüpfte und auf dem anderen einmal hoch und gleich darauf wieder und wieder. Jetzt konnte man diese plötzliche Bewegung wieder ganz gut für ein Stolpern halten, wenn man sich einredete, es wäre da eine Kleinigkeit gewesen, ein Kern, die glitschige Schale einer Frucht, irgend etwas; und das Seltsame war, daß der Mann selbst an das Vorhandensein eines Hindernisses zu glauben schien, denn er sah sich

³²¹ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 64.

jedesmal mit jenem halb ärgerlichen, halb vorwurfsvollen Blick, den die Leute in solchen Augenblicken haben, nach der lästigen Stelle um.³²²

Malte's analysis of the man deepens as they approach a different urban structure in Paris: a pedestrian bridge, as if the area represents a change in the man's movement. Malte studies the "Veitstänzer's" skipping intently in order to unlock the mystery behind his movement in hopes of gaining clarity. He isn't sure if the man really believes that an object is present even when there really isn't anything there. In addition to the skipping, another development begins involving the man's shirt collar:

Der Kragen seines Überziehers hatte sich aufgestellt; und wie er sich auch, bald mit einer Hand, bald mit beiden umständlich bemühte, ihn niederzulegen, es wollte nicht gelingen. Das kam vor. Es beunruhigte mich nicht. Aber gleich darauf gewährte ich mit grenzenloser Verwunderung, daß in den beschäftigten Händen dieses Menschen zwei Bewegungen waren: eine heimliche, rasche, mit welcher er den Kragen unmerklich hochklappte, und jene andere ausführliche, anhaltende, gleichsam übertrieben buchstabierte Bewegung, die das Umlegen des Kragen bewerkstelligen sollte. Diese Beobachtung verwirrte mich so sehr, daß zwei Minuten vergingen, ehe ich erkannte, daß, im Halse des Mannes, hinter dem hochgeschobenen Überzieher und den nervös agierenden Händen dasselbe schreckliche, zweisilbige Hüpfen war, das seine Beine eben verlassen hatte. Von diesem Augenblick an war ich an ihn gebunden.³²³

On many levels this man's movements are just as fragmented as Malte's mind and for that matter, the perception of the modern individual living in the metropolis of Paris. As soon as the movement in the "Veitstänzer's" legs subsides, it seems to reappear as he unsuccessfully attempts to fix his collar. A normal day, consisting of an easy stroll around in the city for the man, has become agony. Yet for someone like Malte, who is still relatively new to all kinds of sights in Paris, he too has to learn to cope with his own fragmented perception. Just as the man's abrupt and jagged movements lack any kind of elegance, the origins of the motions also change. As he watches the "Veitstänzer,"

³²² Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 64.

³²³ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 65.

Malte's attention is captivated precisely because he has no way to predict what will come next. Much like all of his experiences in the city in which he finds new houses not on the map or runs into odd, unexplainable people, Paris has proven to be full of unexpected events. As soon as the man's jerky movements change, Malte becomes more captured and enchanted.

The tension between the fast and the exaggeratedly slow hand movements once again cements the idea of fragmentation caused by the man's affliction. The "Veitstänzer" puts himself on display for Malte and others to witness and becomes a part of the many sick and diseased people whom the protagonist describes in his notebooks. Both intrigued and confused Malte gets so caught up in watching the man's fascinating movement that the protagonist almost doesn't notice that the jumping has reemerged in the "Veitstänzer's" legs. Just as the man is unable to control his own movements, Malte—and assumingly so the modern individual—is also not able to visually block out what he sees in Paris. Malte's journal attests to this as most of his experiences in the city relate to disease and decay involving people and objects whose sight he is forced to see. Malte knows that when he is in the streets, he will always encounter something strange or downright shocking.

After having observed the man's movement for a while, Malte discovers something new about the gentleman's condition:

Ich begriff, daß dieses Hüpfen in seinem Körper herumirrte, daß es versuchte, hier und da auszubrechen. Ich verstand seine Angst vor den Leuten, und ich begann selber vorsichtig zu prüfen, ob die Vorrübergehenden etwas merkten. Ein kalter Stich fuhr mir durch den Rücken, als seine Beine plötzlich einen kleinen, zuckenden Sprung machten, aber niemand hatte es gesehen, und ich dachte mir aus, daß auch ich ein wenig stolpern wollte, im Falle jemand aufmerksam wurde.³²⁴

³²⁴ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 65-66.

Malte identifies the man's movements as having an uncontrollable power as if both the gentleman and the sickness are trapped in the same body. This disharmonious combination can also be compared with Malte's experience in the city as he feels safe in the library but is also strangely compelled to walk around the streets of Paris. Malte understands that he will encounter people and occurrences that will instill him with fear. On this level Rilke tries to parallel the experiences of both Malte and the man.

Before his encounter with the "Veitstänzer," Malte had mentioned that his fever had gotten better. And before that, his fever had taken him to the doctor's office where he also encountered his unexplainable, overwhelming, childhood fear: "das Große."³²⁵ Upon meeting the gentleman, both are stricken with apprehension. In stating that he understood the man's fear of the people suggests that the gentleman is scared of not appearing like a normal person walking in the streets. Another connection establishes itself between the man and the people watching him as Malte observes to see if anyone else is inspecting the man. Suddenly there are three separate entities or groups who are having an effect on each other. The attention of the people causes the level of fear to rise in the man, and thus the uncontrollable sickness will cause the fear to also be irrepressibly similar to Malte's fear. Malte does not know exactly what causes his own fear, but the events in the city streets—such as that with this afflicted man and in establishments like the hospital—seem to cause him anxiety.

Earlier as Malte encountered the man, he was just being introduced to the "Veitstänzer's" intriguing and confusing movements. But as soon as he concentrates on carefully observing the man, Malte also starts to feel the afflicted's sickness. Malte feels

³²⁵ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 52.

a cold twitch through his back as the man jumps slightly: “Ein kalter Stich fuhr mir durch den Rücken.”³²⁶ Seemingly his identification with the sickened man has now caused Malte to feel corresponding symptoms experienced by the “Veitstänzer” even though they are sensed and expressed in different places, thus pointing again to the unexpected fragmentariness of the affliction and Malte’s experience in the city. His identification with the man has gone so far that he will also trip when the gentleman stumbles. It is almost as if the “Veitstänzer’s” sickness has transferred itself to another host: Malte’s body.

Besides the movements of the legs, arms and hands, the protagonist mentions that the suffering man was carrying a cane: “es war ein einfacher Stock aus dunklem Holze [...]Und es war ihm in seiner suchenden Angst in den Sinn gekommen, diesen Stock zunächst mit einer Hand [...] auf den Rücken zu halten. [...] Das war eine Haltung, die nicht auffällig, höchstens ein wenig übermütig war.”³²⁷ Presumably the cane is used for more conventional purposes: to help the man to walk properly. But as Malte introduces it into the narrative, the man places it along his back so that the handle hangs from his collar. Similarly to how the protagonist is confronted by strange occurrences that he cannot explain, it would seem that the “Veitstänzer’s” placement of the cane is unwarranted. Malte reads this motion as not being so conspicuous and a bit carefree. However, is this the disease speaking? Or is the man just trying to deal with his symptoms?

³²⁶ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 65-66.

³²⁷ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 66.

While Malte continues to track the afflicted man's movements as both of them walk over another pedestrian bridge, he notes that the jumping is kept to a minimum:

[...] der eine, wirklich sichtbare Sprung war so geschickt angebracht [...], daß nichts zu befürchten war. Ja, noch ging alles gut; von Zeit zu Zeit griff auch die zweite Hand an den Stock und preßte ihn fester an, und die Gefahr war gleich wieder überstanden. Ich konnte nichts dagegen tun, daß meine Angst dennoch wuchs.³²⁸

The man is accustomed to his condition as he has ways to suppress his symptoms and, as a result, Malte's mind is put to rest momentarily. Like the man's debilitating condition that affects all facets of his daily life, Malte is also overwhelmingly consumed by his fear which appears sometimes without a trigger. While the man is able to control his simmering disease, Malte seems to be unable to control his own fear, which builds as he sees the disease brewing and the "Veitstänzer's" attempt to ignore his symptoms: "Ich wußte, daß, während er ging und mit unendlicher Anstrengung versuchte, gleichgültig und zerstreut auszusehen, das furchtbare Zucken in seinem Körper sich anhäuften; auch in mir war die Angst, mit der er es wachsen und wachsen fühlte, und ich sah wie er sich an den Stock klammerte [...]"³²⁹ Malte feels the same fear that the sickly man experiences. Attempting to ameliorate the afflicted man's pain, Malte tries to give his hope to the gentleman's will: "Und ich, der ich hinter ihm herging mit stark schlagendem Herzen, ich legte mein bißchen Kraft zusammen wie Geld, und indem ich auf seine Hände sah, bat ich ihn, er möchte nehmen, wenn er es brauchte. Ich glaube, daß er es genommen hat."³³⁰ In this instance, one could read Malte's actions as a rather symbolic and poetic offering by virtue of his sentence formulation and logic. Malte wants to help the old man so much

³²⁸ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 66.

³²⁹ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 66-67.

³³⁰ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 67.

that the protagonist goes to extremes in trying to mentally aid him. Although Malte says that he offered the man his help and that the “Veitstänzer” would take it when he needed it, it does not work logically in the narrative. If the “Veitstänzer” had known about Malte’s presence, then one could believe that the afflicted man would have acted differently and perhaps talked to Malte or at least had more interaction with him in some regards. One could also read Malte’s gesture as a symbolic act that occurred in his mind. Whether Malte actually gave the man his hope or not can still be discussed, but in any case, the connection between the two, especially in Malte’s thoughts, demonstrates his extreme connection with the man and the ailment.

Malte’s encounter with the gentleman has thus far been on rather less populated streets in pedestrian areas. After the protagonist offers the man strength, the two enter a busier street scene with more people and traffic:

Auf der Place St-Michel waren viele Fahrzeuge und hin und her eilende Leute, wir waren oft zwischen zwei Wagen. [...] so betraten wir die Brücke, und es ging. Es ging. Nun kam etwas Unsicheres in den Gang, nun lief er zwei Schritte, und nun stand er. Stand. Die linke Hand löste sich leise vom Stock ab und hob sich so langsam empor, daß ich sie vor der Luft zittern sah; er schob den Hut ein wenig zurück und strich sich über die Stirn. Er wandte ein wenig den Kopf, und sein Blick schwankte über Himmel, Häuser und Wasser hin, ohne zu fassen, und dann gab er nach. Der Stock war fort, er spannte die Arme aus, als ob er auffliegen wollte, und es brach aus ihm wie eine Naturkraft und bog ihn vor und riß ihn zurück und ließ ihn nicken und neigen und schleuderte Tanzkraft aus ihm heraus unter die Menge. Denn schon waren viele Leute um ihn, und ich sah ihn nicht mehr.³³¹

This climactic scene shows the defeat of the “Veitstänzer” as he enters an area with even more commotion than before. The increased agitation leaves him susceptible to even more people who could be potentially watching him. The bystanders’ observation of the man would then create a vicious and ever-worsening cycle of the afflicted’s condition

³³¹ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 67-68.

and intensification of his symptoms. The sickness consuming the “Veitstänzer” operates in full force by combining all the movements that Malte had witnessed in the course of the protagonist’s observation: the fragmented steps integrated with a complete standstill of his feet, adjustments with his hands, letting go of his cane, and a full body surge as if he were going to fly. Even if not being observed, the mere thought and suspicion of being watched is enough to send that man’s entire body into a fit.

As these agitations persist, both he and Malte travel over a bridge which one could interpret as a symbol of their connectedness and as a turning point in the man’s condition. The bridge—and for that matter the other bridge mentioned earlier in the scene³³²—functions as sign posts marking not only a change in the man’s symptoms but also an intensification of these dance-like movements.

In the end, the man’s worse fate has come true as he is the concern and spectacle of the crowd. Rilke’s use of the word “Tanzkraft” further hints at the dance-like nature and performativity of the man’s symptoms as if the sudden, angular movements are to appear aesthetically pleasing. However shocked Malte and the onlookers might be feeling, Rilke’s goal is likely to make these disjointed movements seem beautiful. Rilke calls into question the perceived ugliness of the “Veitstänzer’s” motions and demands that his protagonist and the reader reevaluate his or her way of seeing.

After having ascertained the man’s condition, Malte contemplates his own situation: “Was hätte es für einen Sinn gehabt, noch irgendwohin zu gehen, ich war leer. Wie ein leeres Papier trieb ich an den Häusern entlang, den Boulevard wieder hinauf.”³³³

³³² Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 64.

³³³ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 68.

Having acknowledged his futile attempt to help the afflicted man, Malte reintroduces the metaphor that he employed at the beginning of the scene in which he felt like a crumbled piece of paper. His detective prowess was able to determine the man's problems, but Malte was unfortunately not able to help the "Veitstänzer" battle the disease. The metaphor has changed as at the beginning of the passage Malte mentions his feeling are like a crumpled-up piece of paper having been thrown away. However, at the end of the scene the paper is simply empty. The earlier depiction carries a connotation of being disposed of while the second is more ambiguous. The empty paper metaphor could be read as a soul who is completely exhausted similar to how the man seems to feel, and who is at such a loss for words and energy that he cannot produce on paper. Malte himself said in the beginning of the *Aufzeichnungen*, that in order to write verse one has to have "Erfahrungen" with the world.³³⁴ The unexpectedness and excitement associated with this encounter indeed adds to his productivity as Malte is able to continue to write what the reader holds in his or her hands. Just as the "Veitstänzer" is able to read and deal with his own symptoms by using devices such as the cane, Malte is able to battle against his own fear by writing with his pen: "Ich habe etwas getan gegen die Furcht. Ich habe die ganze Nacht gesessen und geschrieben [...]"³³⁵ But while Malte is in the streets experiencing, he is obviously not able to write nor does the idea arrive to him to go home and write in his safe space. In order for him to have any kind of productivity, the protagonist has to muster enough courage to venture out into the urban area and then later channel his energy into productive writing. While the cane functions as a tool to help the

³³⁴ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 19.

³³⁵ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 17.

man control the symptoms of his condition, Malte's pen, like the cane, not only assists the protagonist to bear his jarring urban encounters, but also to produce a document which aesthetically reflects the modern individual's metropolitan experiences.

As a lasting impression, this empty paper of Malte is described having to walk home through the sometimes terrifying streets of Paris in order to reach his abode. His fascinating and "unerhörte Begebenheit" began and ended in the streets of Paris reemphasizing it as a place of fluctuating und unexpected occurrences and an area where not only Malte but the modern individual could thoroughly experience the strange and new.

In the same *Aufzeichnung* after his encounter with the "Veitstänzer," Malte writes a letter to someone commenting on his relationship with Paris:

Es ist eine große Stadt, groß voll merkwürdiger Versuchungen. [...] Ich bin diesen Versuchungen erlegen, und das hat gewisse Veränderungen zur Folge gehabt, wenn nicht in meinem Charakter, so doch in meiner Weltanschauung, jedenfalls in meinem Leben. [...] Ich habe es augenblicklich etwas schwer, weil alles zu neu ist. Ich bin ein Anfänger in meinen eigenen Verhältnissen.³³⁶

Even if he is only referring to his experiences up to this point, he is writing this remark after having just run into the sick man. Although not writing a poem or story, he is recording his ideas, thoughts and impressions in the form of a journal which one could consider a modern literary or artistic production.

In the paragraph following this self-reflection, Malte notes his understanding of Baudelaire's poem "Une Charogne," in which "Auswahl und Ablehnung gibt es nicht."³³⁷ In this poem Baudelaire writes about a decaying carcass that the lyrical I encounters with

³³⁶ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 69.

³³⁷ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 69.

his lover during a stroll. The active process of deterioration creates its own kind of vitality as the dead animal is feasted upon by voracious maggots.³³⁸ This juxtaposition is similarly pursued by Malte when he describes a pregnant woman who carries “zwei Früchte: ein Kind und ein Tod.”³³⁹ One could also relate “Une Charogne” to the gentleman’s life-compromising disease, which most scholars consider “Veitstanz” or Chorea Huntington. The dying carcass’ appearance of being lively as it is eaten represents an example of Baudelaire’s radical aesthetization and can be seen in a similar light to the ‘dancing’ of the man. Although the man’s daily routine is severely compromised by a disease with its own will and his ultimate fate will be death, his abrupt movements, nonetheless, may not conventionally be beautiful yet can be read with an unorthodox air of vitality. The lively “Tanzkraft” concludes the dance with a more positive depiction and presents itself as a necessary evil to influence Malte’s developing modern intellect. Like the carcass which provided Baudelaire with a stimulus to write, it seems that his encounter with the man has challenged Malte’s perception and also provided the protagonist with an impetus for his writing. Malte und Baudelaire do not try to avoid but rather deal with what they see no matter how shocking or disgusting it may be. Malte’s realization concerning ‘Une Charogne’ demonstrates that he is surely coming to grips with his surroundings in Paris as both this poem and his experiences deal with rather unorthodox representations—both striking and unpleasant to the senses.

Endell’s aesthetic program is reflected in the way in which Malte has “learned to see” the urban phenomena in his immediate surroundings. Much in the same way

³³⁸ David Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995) xii.

³³⁹ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 17.

Endell's narrator doesn't simply observe a square with moving people—but rather a lively, organic system of form and color—Malte doesn't simply see a man moving distortedly. Instead he perceives an individual whose fragmented and fascinating movements resemble a dance. Endell's model demonstrates its applicability in interpreting not only everyday movement—but more particularly dance movement—in the urban space.

4. Documenting a Demise, Documenting Modernity: Döblin's "Die Tänzerin und der Leib"

As Rilke described the experience of Malte watching the "Veitstänzer," Alfred Döblin's short story *Die Tänzerin und der Leib* from 1910 portrays a young dancer's plight with her unknown sickness as she is observed by doctors and nurses in a hospital. Stricken with a strange illness and an untamable body that begins to have a life and will of its own, the protagonist Ella is brought to a hospital by her mother under the strict supervision of medical specialists and caretakers who read her symptoms daily and protocol their findings. The girl's conflict with her body escalates to the point that she embroiders three figures and stabs herself in the chest out of desperation in order to escape her dire, unknown situation.

4.1 Döblin and His Surroundings: *Der Sturm*, Early Writings, and Medical Studies

Unlike Rilke, who had moved to Paris at the age of 28 to engage with and write about the city, Döblin was more or less dependent financially on his mother who found work in the bustling metropolis of Berlin at the turn of the century. Referring to his actual birthplace of Stettin as his "Vorgeburt" at the age of ten, Döblin declared his birth upon

his arrival in Berlin.³⁴⁰ The first text he wrote—entitled “Modern” from 1896 as an eighteen-year old—seems to play a dominant role in his development of the German literary modernism.³⁴¹ Despite sometimes leaving Berlin in order to further his studies in medicine, he was always brought back to the metropolis with the desire to develop himself intellectually. He befriended Herwarth Walden, who married Else Lasker-Schüler and who later became the editor of *Der Sturm*, a magazine devoted to culture and the arts in which Döblin published his “Die Tänzerin und der Leib” among other early works.³⁴² In 1904 Walden began a group called *Verein für Kunst* that met weekly and took part in lectures, readings, and concerts which included writers and intellectuals that belonged to the Berliner Bohème—artists, philosophers, humanists, cultural critics, architects and actors.³⁴³ Those who took part included: Peter Altenberg, Hermann Bahr, Peter Behrens, Hermann Bang, Peter Baum, Max Brod, Louis Corinth, Richard Dehmel, Alfred Döblin, Julius Hart, Peter Hille, Arno Holz, Harry Graf Kessler, Kaul Krauss, Thomas Mann, Johannes Schlaf, Frank Wedekind.³⁴⁴ Undoubtedly Döblin was able to learn from these authors and intellectuals and must have been heavily influenced by their writing. The literary historian Rudolf Kayser reminisces on a day back in 1913:

Im Hinterzimmer eines Cafes in der Potsdamer Str. ist eine seltsame kleine Gesellschaft versammelt. Ganz junge Menschen, Maler, Literaten, Dichter—darunter Else Lasker-Schüler und der andere Arzt-Dichter Gottfried Benn. Ein

³⁴⁰ Oliver Bernhardt, *Alfred Döblin* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2007), 17.

³⁴¹ Heidi Thomann Tewarson, “Döblin’s Early Collection of Stories, *Die Ermordung einer Butterblume*: Toward a Modernist Aesthetic,” in *A Companion to the Works of Alfred Döblin*, ed. Roland Dollinger, Wulf Koepke and Heidi Thomann Tewarson (Rochester: Camden House, 2004), 25.

³⁴² Bernhardt, *Alfred Döblin*, 29.

³⁴³ Sven Arnold, *Das Spektrum des literarischen Expressionismus in den Zeitschriften Der Sturm und Die Weissen Blätter* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998), 34.

³⁴⁴ Georg Brühl, *Herwarth Walden und >>Der Sturm<<* (Leipzig: Edition Leipzig, 1983), 20.

behender, kleiner Mann mit rötlichem Spitzbart und scharfen Augengläsern springt an das Pult, liest lebhaft und nie ermüdend aus einem Manuskript >Gespräche mit Kalypso. Über die Musik<, liest mit großer Leidenschaft, halb belehrend, halb verkündend, Denker und Dichter zugleich. Es ist Alfred Döblin.³⁴⁵

Such acts of reading brought the text even more to life as the author would stand in front of an audience and “perform” his or her work.

Not only was Döblin devoted to his intellectual development and writing, but he was also fascinated with medicine particularly psychiatry which would play a large role in his literary portrayals. He finished his dissertation in 1905 entitled “Gedächtnisstörungen bei der Karsakoffschen Psychose” and, as Tewarson pointed out, began to approach “psychiatry from a psycho-physiological rather than psychoanalytical perspective. In other words, he sought insight about mental problems on the basis of physiological symptoms and syndromes.”³⁴⁶ This aspect is clearly brought forward in *Die Tänzerin und der Leib*.

4.2 Ella’s Body

Döblin’s text begins by introducing the protagonist Ella and describes the instrument with which she works: her body. At the age of eleven she shows great promise in her limbs:

[sie] lernte [...] jetzt ihre federnen Bänder, ihre zu Gelenke zwingen, sie schlich sich behutsam und geduldig in die Zehen, die Knöchel, die Knie ein und immer wieder ein, überfiel habgierig die schmalen Schultern und die Biegung der

³⁴⁵ Rudolf Kayser, “Alfred Döblin. Zu seinem 50. Geburtstag,” in *Berliner Tageblatt*, Jg. 57, Nr. 374 – 9.8.1928.

³⁴⁶ Tewarson, “Döblin’s Early Collection,” 33.

schlanken Arme, wachte lauernd über dem Spiel des straffen Leibes. Es gelang ihr, über den üppigsten Tanz Kälte zu sprühen.³⁴⁷

This depiction establishes the flexibility and resilience of Ella's body to create all sorts of shapes, to move in different directions and to demonstrate that she can withstand the numerous repetitions necessary to perform. This particular kind of bodily analysis occurs to girls who would want to pursue ballet as a career since the body—at this age—is still developing and can still be molded to a specific form. Another sign that points to the probability of her beginning ballet is the attention to the feet and leg articulation as the art form deals intensively with the training of these body parts. Thirdly, her upper body is fitting for ballet because her arms and shoulders are slender instead of muscular and defined. Lastly, the narrator says that she emits “coldness” when she dances which implies that she performs calculated, mechanical steps. Ballet is sometimes compared in this manner to math in the exactness in which positions are held and in the possibility to move “incorrectly.” Döblin also introduces the reader to Ella's nemesis—her taut body. He calls their relationship a “game” at first because as a child, she has not developed her own identity and is still learning to master her body. Ballet belonged to the 19th century bourgeois forms of dance that focused on traditional gender behavior and hierarchical roles. The emergence of modern dance, however, would be the antithetical style that sought to break with the rules of ballet. While Harry Graf Kessler sought experimental and modern depictions of dance in the city, Döblin, as one will see, was also moving away from the older aesthetic and sought to represent the transition into modernity in his writing by using Ella as his pivotal figure.

³⁴⁷ Alfred Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” in *Jugend Rosse. Der schwarze Vorhang und andere frühe Erzählwerke*, ed. Christina Althen (Olthen: Walter Verlag, 1981), 18.

When Ella turns eighteen, she seems to have developed more into her body: “[sie] hatte [...] eine seidenleichte Figur, übergroße schwarze Augen. Ihr Gesicht fast knabenhaft lang und scharfgeschnitten. Die Stimme hell, ohne Buhlerei und Musik, abgehackt; ein rascher, ungeduldiger Gang. Sie war lieblos, sah klar auf die unbefähigten Kolleginnen und langweilte sich bei ihren Klagen.”³⁴⁸ The dancer has retained her very light figure in order to appear whimsical and delicate on stage. Some scholarship has called her a *femme fragile* because she retains an underdeveloped, child-like figure,³⁴⁹ while others refer to her as an “asexual, a child-woman but without the associated appeal so common in turn-of-the-century literary and artistic representations of the type.”³⁵⁰ What seems to have been overlooked is that her bodily characterizations point to a budding if not already ripe prima ballerina diva. Her waif-like body helps her have an elongated appearance and her impatient walk implies Ella’s dissatisfaction with everything. Since she is likely a principle dancer in her company, Ella considers her colleagues to not be as talented as she is and has little regard for the other dancers.

During her prime years of dancing at the age of nineteen, she becomes afflicted with “ein[em] bleiche[n] Siechtum [...] Ihre Glieder wurden schwer, aber sie spielte weiter. Wenn sie allein war, stampfte sie mit dem Fuße, drohte ihrem Leib und mühte sich mit ihm ab. Keinem sprach sie von ihrer Schwäche. Sie knirschte mit den Zähnen über das Dumme, Kindische, das sie eben zu besiegen gelernt hatte.”³⁵¹ Dancers incur an

³⁴⁸ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 18.

³⁴⁹ Stephanie Catani, “Die Geburt des *Döblinismus* aus dem Geist des Fin die Siecle: Döblins frühe Erzählungen im Spannungsfeld von Ästhetik, Poetik und Medizin,” in *Alfred Döblin: Paradigms of Modernism*. ed. Steffan Davies and Ernest Schonfield (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 40.

³⁵⁰ Tewarson, “Döblin’s Early Collection,” 44.

³⁵¹ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 18.

array of acute and overuse injuries which many have to learn to deal with in the same way Ella has to cope with her body. The notion of continuing to dance despite pain and creating the illusion of effortless movements follows dancers throughout their career. Not only does Ella want to not appear weak on stage, but she also does not want to seem frail in front of the female company members. Her actions of taming and punishing her body elucidate her conflict and the secret she attempts to hide from others and herself. Whereas before she was only learning how to use and manipulate her body into positions, now Ella has to work on keeping her body maintained and in good functioning order. A sign of weakness would ruin her role as a principle dancer and endanger her career as one of the other female dancers in the company would be eyeing the enviable position as a star. Becoming a prima ballerina was deeply desired as one could separate herself from the corps de ballet and retain her own individuality for main soloist and principle roles.

The “Veitstänzer’s” situation from Rilke’s *Aufzeichnungen* also resembles that of Ella’s as both are confronted with a lingering, chronic illness that both have to deal with on a daily basis. Their diseases take over and compromise their lives so severely, that disorders affect their daily activity. While the afflicted man goes about his daily routine of walking through the streets of Paris hoping that his nerve condition does not act up, the young woman must constantly use her body as an instrument for her task in creating beauty. Both of them are in a battle to retain a normalcy in their lives and in trying to control their unpredictable symptoms. The man is afraid of being judged by the people in the streets while Ella is terrified of the scrutiny of her company dancers. While I have argued that the “Veitstänzer” is a representation of the modern individual’s experience in the urban space filled with unexpected occurrences and fragmented perception. I propose

to read Ella as a figure whose struggles stem from the dichotomous and antagonistic relationship between her will and her body. On the one hand she embodies the 19th century bourgeois individual vehemently against progression in modern society. On the other hand, a lingering and intensifying illness infiltrates her body, assumes its own will and becomes the acute interest of the modern medical community. As Ella tries to temper and to stay true to her passé craft of ballet, she slips into the hands of the doctors and nurses whose clinical observations drain the life out of her spirit and cause her to kill herself.

Although the city does not appear as prominently in this story as it did in Rilke's *Aufzeichnungen*, it still has a major impact on modernity and the individual: "Attributed to the effects of modernization generally and to modern economic transformations in particular, the neurasthesia of modern culture found its most direct expression in the form of a body that refused to obey the dictates of the will."³⁵² Becoming clinically sick because of modernity was therefore not unfamiliar particularly when given conflict between the body and spirit as is the case with Ella.

4.3 Who's Observing Ella

Similar to the theme of bodily observation in which not only Malte and the bystanders in the streets observe the afflicted man, but also the "Veitstänzer" himself, Ella is also under the scrutiny of many people: the company, her mother, doctors, nurses and herself. Undoubtedly while being primed for ballet and eventually becoming a star,

³⁵² Michael Cowan, "Die Tücke des Körpers: Taming the Nervous Body in Alfred Döblin's 'Die Ermordung einer Butterblume' and 'Die Tänzerin und der Leib,'" *seminar* 43:4 (November 2007): 483.

she would experience a constant life “under the microscope” because her body; her presentation would be judged. Ella seems like a relatively strong dancer in fighting her sickness, however it is her mother who is grief-stricken, “weinte stundenlang”³⁵³ and decides to take Ella to the hospital. One can only guess that the mother had taken notice of the daughter’s deterioration, but the ballerina simply gives her “einen gehässigen Blick.”³⁵⁴ The spiteful look that the dancer gives to her could be read as if the daughter is tired of the emotional mother controlling her.

The next day the mother drives Ella to the hospital where “im Wagen [...] sie [Ella] unter ihrer Decke vor Wut [weinte].”³⁵⁵ The ballerina shows signs of resistance as she heckles her own body and desires to spit on it. Ella still demonstrates a childish banter and interaction with her body which she has been controlling for years. Her relationship up to this point with her body has been similar to a taunting game and less like a real struggle. However, as soon as she approaches the hospital, her anger and defiance lead to a paralyzing fear:

In leiser Angst öffnete sie die Augen, als sie die Glieder betrachtete, die sich ihr entzogen. Wie machtlos sie war, o wie machtlos sie war. Sie rasselten über das Pflaster des Hofes. Die Tore des Krankenhauses schlossen sich hinter ihr. Die Tänzerin sah mit Abscheu Ärzte und Kranke. Die Schwestern hoben sie weich ins Bett.”³⁵⁶

This scene is a turning point in the story as it divides the two worlds in which Ella proclaims her existence—the old world of ballet and bourgeois society and the new modern frontier of science. As a dancer she built herself up, mastering her body to the

³⁵³ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 18.

³⁵⁴ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 18.

³⁵⁵ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 18.

³⁵⁶ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 19.

best of her ability and in an environment to which she had devoted a great deal of her life. But now the ballerina enters the terrifying grips of a hospital that should help her improve? If anything—based on her reaction—this atmosphere is supposed to create even more anxiety about the future and to worsen her condition. While approaching the hospital she only has a quiet fear, which begins to build as she can no longer keep her body under control. As the car drives into the courtyard and the gates close, the reader gets the foreboding feeling that she will never leave.

In addition to being scared about the future and her health, Ella loses the ability to speak³⁵⁷ signaling her shock and inability to describe her symptoms to the doctor. The command in her voice is lost and “es geschah alles ohne ihren Willen.”³⁵⁸ She truly loses control of her life on account of her failure to dance and the completely foreign, clinical environment, which she occupies. Ella is under the keen observation of the doctors: “Täglich, fast stündlich fragten sie die Tänzerin nach seinen Dingen, schrieben es sorgfältig in Akten auf, so daß sie erst darüber unwillig wurde, dann sich immer tiefer verwunderte. Sie trieb bald in eine dunkle Angst und Haltlosigkeit hinein.”³⁵⁹ In order for the doctors to “help” her, they will have to obtain her medical history verbally and then periodically study her symptoms. Modernity has created an environment in which medical knowledge has expanded even further than before, and diseases such as Ella’s—that would have been likely misdiagnosed or ignored before—are now being investigated. However, this examination leaves her without any kind of comfort like her mother or

³⁵⁷ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 19.

³⁵⁸ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 19.

³⁵⁹ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 19.

dance. The exposure to modern medicine has created an anxiety and helplessness leaving her unprepared for modernity.

When the doctors admit Ella into the hospital, they also allow the body to enter, which they primarily treat instead of Ella's emotional state. The doctors are characterized by their mechanical instinct to learn more about her symptoms. Döblin writes "der Leib konnte sehen, wie er sich mit den Doktoren abfand. 'Es wird schon protokolliert werden.'"³⁶⁰ The doctors' actions show that they and the body are working together for a similar goal: to embrace modern sciences and to further their knowledge. The body seems accustomed to the idea of its symptoms being recorded, however, "Sie [Ella and her body] führten getrennte Wirtschaften."³⁶¹ Ella is still trapped in her 19th century bourgeois mode of thinking in which she only knows how to dance and tame her body, but the doctors are also at fault for not informing Ella about her condition. There is a large disconnect between her, the doctors and the body, thus commenting on the gap between 19th century thought and modernism.

Ella has, therefore, been stripped unwillingly from her bourgeois life, while the nagging body of modernity has infiltrated Ella. She and her 19th century morals will not give up without a fight: "Jetzt wurde sie erbittert und wehrte sich. Sie belog die Ärzte, beantwortete ihre Fragen nicht, ihren Schmerz verheimlichte sie. [...] [Sie] lachte in plötzlich aufloderndem Hasse den Ärzten, die den Kopf schüttelten, ins Gesicht und schnitt ihnen eine höhnische Fratze."³⁶² A cursory reading would prove this scene to be

³⁶⁰ Döblin, "Die Tänzerin und der Leib," 20.

³⁶¹ Döblin, "Die Tänzerin und der Leib," 20.

³⁶² Döblin, "Die Tänzerin und der Leib," 20.

strange because she is not cooperating but instead acting childishly with the doctors who are, in theory, supposed to help her. However, a closer look reveals that not only is she upset about her lack of knowledge concerning her own condition but also because of the foreign environment of the hospital—a site of modernity. She even mocks the doctors in their attempts to help: “Gleichgültig und leicht ironisch beobachtete sie die Ärzte und konstatierte ironisch die Erfolglosigkeit ihrer Anstrengungen. Eine Spannung und Lustigkeit kam wieder über sie und eine wild sich schüttelnde Schadenfreude über das Mißgeschick der Ärzte und den Verderb des Leibes.”³⁶³ As if to play a childish game she laughs at the establishment of medical progress which threatens not only ballet but the values of the 19th century.

After having been isolated from her normal surroundings and comfort of dance, one day she hears “Soldaten mit klingender Marschmusik an dem Krankenhause vorbei[ziehen].”³⁶⁴ Despite being within the confines of the alienating hospital, she is still able to glean a glimpse of her past society through the medium of militant music which promises, as Cowan put it, “disciplinary order onto the disorderly body.”³⁶⁵ Music is also one of the major media to accompany dance, which works together with the regimented, mechanics associated with the 19th century body and culture. The image of soldiers creates a group mentality as if going off to fight which thus inspires Ella to also “go off to war” with her body. The music functions as a mode of inspiration for Ella to produce something artistic: “Die Tänzerin wollte sticken und begehrte Seide und Leinwand.”³⁶⁶

³⁶³ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 20.

³⁶⁴ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 20.

³⁶⁵ Cowan, “Die Tücke des Körpers,” 496.

³⁶⁶ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 20.

Knowing full well that the struggle against her body is thoroughly taxing and seemingly futile, she seeks needle work as a means of giving herself order. Döblin was also fully aware that embroidery was one of the most widespread types of occupational therapy in hopes of giving the patient “a sense of order over their environment.”³⁶⁷ However, before she begins stitching, she sketches a scene:

Mit einem Bleistift warf sie rasch auf das weiße Tuch ein sonderbares Bild. Drei Figuren standen da: ein runder unförmiger Leib auf zwei Beinen, ohne Arm und Kopf, nichts als eine zweibeinige, dicke Kugel. Neben ihm ragte ein sanftmütiger großer Mann mit einer Riesenbrille, der den Leib mit einem Thermometer streichelte. Aber während er sich ernst mit dem Leib beschäftigte, machte ihm auf der anderen Seite ein kleines Mädchen, das auf nackten Füßen hüpfte, eine lange Nase mit der linken Hand und stieß mit der rechten eine spitze Schere von unten in den Leib, so daß der Leib wie eine Tonne auslief in dickem Strahl.³⁶⁸

At this point, instead of instilling her body as a means of expression and communication, Ella employs a prophetic representation in which she is trying to destroy her body. The amorphic body propped up on two legs represents the formless unknown of modernity which is meticulously being medically examined by a man with huge glasses: most likely the doctor. Interestingly the ballerina sketches the doctor who caresses his specimen of modernity with a probing thermometer usually used for the objective measurement of body temperature. Ella’s drawing suggests the doctor’s sympathizing with the new, fascinating body and has left the little dancing girl in the picture alone. The child apparently doesn’t need any help as she is maliciously stabbing the blob with a pair of scissors. The sketch’s depiction of the doctor nurturing the modern body might not be as exaggerated as one would think as the thrill of the unexpected and constant change interests the doctors in the first place. Their analytical minds want in no way to destroy

³⁶⁷ Cowan, “Die Tücke des Körpers,” 497.

³⁶⁸ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 21.

their specimen—or as the narrator also calls the body: “Kindchen”—but to protect it so they can further examine it. By nurturing and working with their new “child,” they will hopefully open up more opportunities to unearth new knowledge. The drawing of the scornful girl shows her revenge as she has in no way been attended to emotionally by the doctors. In fact, she is jealous of the attention the body receives and ruthlessly attacks it. Much like the diva system in ballet in which envy plays a large role in the politics of dance, Ella is starved for attention, and her indignant behavior in the hospital and while she had been dancing in the company have manifested themselves in the sketch of her embroidery.

Ella’s depiction of the three figures seems to strangely go against her own 19th century aesthetic sensibilities. Like the codified, mechanical movements of ballet—capturing a linear, predictable storyline—impressionist artists were painting street and landscape scenes quite similar to reality. Ella’s work, however, proves to be a superbly modern manifestation. The blob is unrecognizable as a person and functions more as an amorphous distortion, while the doctor wears huge glasses and the girl holds a nose in her hand. Such deformed, disproportionate body parts can be seen in the expressionist poetry of Gottfried Benn.³⁶⁹ As *Die Tänzerin und der Leib* is considered by most critics to be an example of early expressionistic literature³⁷⁰, then one could also read Ella’s embroidery as not only a prophetic embodiment of the immediate future in which she literally stabs herself but also as an indicator for the future epoch and the style in which not only literature but also art would assume.

³⁶⁹ Benn’s poem “Nachtcafé” displays varying body parts such as “Grüne Zähne, Pickel im Gesicht,” “Doppelkinn,” “Fettleibigkeit.”

³⁷⁰ Tewarson, “Döblin’s Early Collection,” 37.

In addition to the modern expressionistic characteristics in paintings and literature, dance is also addressed quite visibly in her embroidery. While the little girl in the picture is stabbing the amorphous blob, she is depicted as barefoot. Modern dancers from the United States such as Ruth St. Denis and particularly Isadora Duncan were always known to be dancing in bare feet, as symbolic for the emancipation from the restrictive corsets, pointe shoes and mechanical movement that belonged to the grand 19th century institution of ballet. Ella's representation demonstrates this leap into modernity. Döblin was also well aware of the changing tides and the difficulty in compromising the gap between ballet and the emerging form of the freer modern dance. In an essay entitled *Tänzerinnen* dated October 1912, Döblin reflects on his own aesthetics regarding modern dance, which I will reflect on in a later chapter.³⁷¹

Some scholars, like Cowan, call Ella's act of embroidery a "dress rehearsal" for her final "dance"³⁷² in which she essentially stages the scene from the sketch:

Sie wollte wieder tanzen, tanzen. [...] Sie wollte einen Walzer, einen wunderschönen, mit ihm tanzen, der ihr Herr geworden war, mit dem Leib. Mit einer Bewegung ihres Willens konnte sie ihn noch einmal bei den Händen fassen, den Leib, das träge Tier, ihn hinwerfen, herumwerfen, und er war nicht mehr der Herr über sie. Ein triumphierender Haß wühlte sie von innen auf, nicht er ging zur Rechten und sie zur Linken, sondern sie, - sie sprangen mitsamt. Sie wollte ihn auf den Boden kollern, die Tonne das hinkende Männlein, Hals über Kopf es hintrudeln, ihm Sand ins Maul stecken.³⁷³

Although her illustration shows the modern dancer of the future, Ella is still trapped in the only kind of dance that she knows besides ballet: the waltz, which belongs to both

³⁷¹ Alfred Döblin, "Tänzerinnen," in *Kleine Schriften I*, ed. Anthony W. Riley (Olten: Walter Verlag, 1985), 128-130. – His aesthetic analysis of modern dance will be dealt with in detail in the subsequent chapters.

³⁷² Cowan, "Die Tücke des Körpers," 497.

³⁷³ Döblin, "Die Tänzerin und der Leib," 21.

royal and bourgeois traditions of the past century. During the dance she is able to maintain control over the body as she had been able to do while performing ballet. The smooth, fluidity of the dance should result in a harmonious pair but is destroyed nullifying the beauty through her hate. In a rather ambivalent act she tries to dance with her modern body as if to give it one more chance, but at the same time she yearns to master the body to give her 19th century values an opportunity to live. For a while both of them are actually dancing in step but their togetherness looks contrived. Cowan calls this dance “a paradoxical sort of harmony, one imposed rather than chosen by Ella herself, and one revealing the impossibility of her project to subject the nervous body.”³⁷⁴ Essentially her power and control have been sapped away by the body, the doctors and the environment of the hospital. She is ill prepared to enter into modernity. Older forms of ballet and social dance will not suffice in the frenetic and dizzying contemporary society.

In the end she calls the doctor over to her: “Über sich gebeugt, sah sie ihm von unten ins Gesicht, wie er erstaunt die Stickerei betrachtete, sagte dann mit ruhiger Stimme zu ihm auf: << Du, - Du Affe, -- Du Affe, Du Schlappschwanz. >> Und stieß sich, die Decke abwerfend, die Nähsschere in die linke Brust.”³⁷⁵ The doctor analyzes the embroidery, but it’s too late to save her as she wants to have the last word in her fruitless battle against her modern body. Her incessant bickering is brought to an end as she stabs herself in the chest. Curiously she lets down the blanket, which she held onto so tightly as her mother drove her to the hospital, as if to admit defeat. In killing herself she also

³⁷⁴ Cowan, “Die Tücke des Körpers,” 494.

³⁷⁵ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 21.

destroys her body and will. However, the hospital, the doctors and everyone else in the metropolis, who are able to manage, will learn how to live in the every changing urban space.

4.4 The Role of the Metropolis

With its mass industrialization and influx of people, the city itself created a drastic change in the way the modern individual perceived itself and its environment as Simmel³⁷⁶ and Hofmannsthal³⁷⁷ have remarked. As a result some of its citizens such as Ella are not able to adjust to these transformations and are brought to the hospital—just like Malte goes to the hospital when he has his fever.³⁷⁸ The doctors are interested in investigating the new, interesting body of modernism that has entered their hospital. They finally get to experience a live specimen that has lived in the realm of a modern, industrial world, which they will intently study using their own new methods. In order to remember their findings, they have to record phenomena and symptoms in a book—similar to the way in which Malte observes the man with Veitstanz, how Peter Fritzsche described the way in which journalists would capture their *Momentbilder* in writing, how Harry Graf Kessler depicted the early modern dancers in his journal, or how Endell illustrated his urban structures and spaces. As the doctors cannot be in the streets like the journalists and the flâneur, they have to stay within the hospital where the victims of modernity enter their ward. The doctors are just as industrious and hard-working with

³⁷⁶ Simmel, *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben*.

³⁷⁷ Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Brief des Lord Chandos: poetologische Schriften, Reden und erfundene Gespräche* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 2000)

³⁷⁸ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 52-60.

their findings as Malte, the flâneur, the journalists and Endell because they are encountering living specimens which are just as unexpected as occurrences in the streets. Unlike the observers of the phenomena in the urban space, who only have moments to watch a particular occurrence, the doctors have the luxury of holding their specimen for as long as they want to study, thus allowing them to keep a live piece of modernity. Instead of transforming their findings into artistic expression—like Malte, Endell and the flâneur or for general knowledge like the journalists—the doctors will use the results they obtain from their study in order to further their own medical advancements. The “Veitstänzer” presents himself similarly to a medical study even though Malte only observes him once and is unable to observe the man’s condition over time. The gentleman with Veitstanz, however, could just as likely be under the supervision of a neurologist who would be performing similar examinations that Ella undergoes in the hospital.

Strangely enough *Die Tänzerin und der Leib* resists a literary form even though Döblin ironically calls it a “novella,” as it does not follow the conventions of the 19th century form³⁷⁹ and other scholars call it a “short story.”³⁸⁰ To what extent, however, could one consider it a “modernist miniature” as Huyssen has described about Rilke’s *Aufzeichnungen*? Scholarship also points to Döblin’s text as a “klinische Fallstudie”³⁸¹ most likely in the manner in which the story presents Ella’s case by chronicling her medical history and struggle with her body according to her age: eleven, eighteen and

³⁷⁹ Tewardson, “Döblin’s Early Collection,” 37.

³⁸⁰ Cowan, “Die Tücke des Körpers,” 483.

³⁸¹ Catani, “Die Geburt des *Döblinismus*,” 43.

nineteen.³⁸² As Döblin was trained in both fields of medicine and literature, his short story reads similar to an intriguing and harmonious marriage between the two as if a medical study had been given aesthetic attributes. In this respect the protocol and the observations that the doctors write are essentially the text (*Die Tänzerin und der Leib*) that Döblin creates for the reader resulting an uncanny self-reflection. Döblin presents his text as a piece of literature in *Der Sturm* in 1910, and yet he is able to also present the objective medical findings. Although Döblin's text cannot be as closely compared with a "modernist miniature" like Malte's observation of the "Veitstänzer," both can still, however, be paralleled because they resemble medical case studies. Even if Malte's unexpected experience does happen in the streets of Paris, the halls of the doctors' ward can allure just as surprising and unexplainable cases. One could even read Döblin's text as an attempt to present objective medical facts in an episodic manner allowing it to take on more characteristics of a modernist miniature. Just as Malte described the streets of St. Michel using short, concise and rather fragmented formulations that picked up on all phenomena around him without any filter, Döblin's text depicts a similar objectivity: "Die Stimme hell, ohne Buhlerei und Musik, abgehackt; ein rascher, ungeduldiger Gang."³⁸³ Here one can imagine the doctors in the story—or Döblin—quickly noting the utmost important details in a medical report and recording them similarly to how Malte would be noticing and registering his own surroundings. This fragmented and concise text is still readable even with the omitted and—seemingly for Döblin's purposes—superfluous verbs. Just like the flâner, modern individual and Endell who have to observe and see with their eyes, the doctors and Döblin have to be able to filter out all

³⁸² Döblin, "Die Tänzerin und der Leib," 18.

³⁸³ Döblin, "Die Tänzerin und der Leib," 18.

unnecessary stimuli in order to get at the core of what intrigues them about the occurrence or case.

If Huyssen reads Rilke's *Aufzeichnungen* as a modernist miniature because of its episodic nature and representations of the metropolis, then one could read Döblin's *Die Tänzerin und der Leib* as not only a literary medical case study, but also as having characteristics of a modernist miniature. Each paragraph does focus solely on the dancer but is able to encapsulate intense, succinct readings of her bodily symptoms at differing times.

5. Into the Boundless: Lasker-Schüler's *Mein Herz*

While Rilke's "Veitstänzer" and Döblin's ballet dancer Ella suffer from mysterious conditions that hamper their lives and symbolize a struggle in negotiating modernity, Else Lasker-Schüler in her novel written in letters *Mein Herz* uses dance in three specific scenes to represent a chance to escape the city of Berlin and to enter an exotic, oriental realm for which she yearns. In the scene at the very beginning Lasker-Schüler writes about her encounter with the alluring Minn, the son of the sultan of Morocco, with whom she dances in Lunapark. The second deals with the Variété performer—turned modern dancer—Gertrude Barrison. The third scene involves the Café des Westens being depicted as an oriental dancer whose movement billows throughout its structure. In what follows, I will situate Lasker-Schüler in her role in the Berliner Bohème and coffeehouse culture around which the novel focuses, provide a close reading of the scenes with Minn, Barrison and the Café des Westens, and compare the stylistic techniques of *Mein Herz* with Endell's, Rilke's, and Döblin's texts.

5.1 Lasker-Schüler and the Bohème

As Döblin had been instrumental in the beginning stages of the literary newspaper *Der Sturm*, Lasker-Schüler was just as important. She has been credited as actually having named the publication.³⁸⁴ The prominent Viennese critic Karl Kraus has also noted many times in letters to her husband Herwarth Walden about her outstanding work.³⁸⁵ And like most writers, critics and intellectuals who also contributed to *Der Sturm*, Lasker-Schüler was involved in the Berlin coffeehouse culture:

Hier im Café ist der grosse Gedankenaustausch, hier werden die Schlachten der Cliques geschlagen. Hier werden Weltanschauungen täglich aus dem Ärmel geschüttelt, Existenzen vernichtet, neue Helden auf den Thron gehoben, Kritik geübt an allem, was man nicht selbst geschaffen hat. [...] Hier wartet jeder auf den Augenblick der Macht, auf diesen grossen Augenblick, wo auch er einmal wirklich etwas zu sagen haben wird.³⁸⁶

Lasker-Schüler's engagement in these circles certainly influenced her writing. In her novel *Mein Herz*, the narrator—who can often be equated with Lasker-Schüler herself—writes letters to various people like Walden and the essayist Kurt Hiller. Her text oscillates between the real Berlin and the fictitious Thebes—a city in Egypt which she never visited—and between real life and the life of the imagination. *Mein Herz*, therefore, forces the reader to continually call into question whether the comments and depictions that the narrator/Lasker-Schüler make are either real or fictitious. In one passage the narrator notes the help of Alfred Döblin:

Ich bin nun zwei Abende nicht im Café gewesen, ich fühle mich etwas unwohl am Herzen. Dr. Döblin von Urban kam mit seiner lieblichen Braut, um eine Diagnose zu stellen. Er meint, ich leide an der Schilddrüse, aber in Wirklichkeit hatte ich

³⁸⁴ Markus Hallensleben, *Else Lasker-Schüler: Avantgardismus und Kunstinszenierung* (Tübingen: Francke, 2000), 30.

³⁸⁵ Hallensleben, *Else Lasker-Schüler*, 31-32.

³⁸⁶ *20 Jahre Café des Westens: Erinnerungen vom Kurfürstendamm*, ed. Ernst Pauly (Siegen: Universität-Gesamthochschule, 1986)

Sehnsucht nach dem Café. Er bestand aber darauf, mir die Schilddrüse zu entfernen, die aufs Herz indirekt drücke; ein wenig Cretin könnte ich davon werden, aber wo ich so aufgeweckt wäre, käm ich nur wieder ins Gleichgewicht.³⁸⁷

This scene sums up the aesthetics of both authors: while Döblin believes that she has a problem with her thyroid, the narrator of *Mein Herz* likes to think that she simply yearns for the café after a two night absence. The objectivity of the doctor's writing is contrasted with her emotional, whimsical and lyrical mixture of prose and poetry. This scene also shows the therapeutic nature of the café as a place which the narrator needs in order to maintain her health and intellectual equilibrium. Throughout the letters in the novel, the café and the people with whom she interacts demonstrate their importance and source of inspiration for her writing.

Although bustling Berlin and coffeehouse culture served as a perpetual source of stimulation—much like Paris was for Rilke or Berlin's landscape was for Endell, Lasker-Schüler's narrator also grew tired of it at times much as Rilke did:

Ich habe das Café satt, aber damit will ich nicht behaupten, daß ich ihm Lebewohl für ewig sage, oder fahre dahin Zigeunerkarren. Im Gegenteil, ich werde noch oft dort verweilen. Gestern ging es Tür auf, Tür zu, wie in einem Bazar; nicht alles dort ist echt Ware: Imitierte Dichter, falsches Wortgeschmeide, Similigidanken, unmotivierter Zigarettendampf. Der Rechtsanwalt kommt schon lange nicht mehr hin. Warum es einen so ins Cafe zieht! Eine Leiche wird jeden Abend dort in die oberen Räume geführt; sie kann nicht ruhen. Warum man überhaupt in Berlin wohnen bleibt? In dieser kalten unerquicklichen Stadt. Eine unumstößliche Uhr ist Berlin, sie wacht mit der Zeit, wir wissen, wieviel Uhr Kunst es immer ist. Und ich möchte die Zeit so gern verschlafen.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁷ Else Lasker-Schüler, *Mein Herz: Ein Liebesroman mit Bildern und wirklich lebenden Menschen. Mit Zeichnungen der Autorin aus der Ausgabe von 1912* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1989), 14.

³⁸⁸ Else Lasker-Schüler, *Mein Herz: Ein Liebesroman mit Bildern und wirklich lebenden Menschen. Mit Zeichnungen der Autorin aus der Ausgabe von 1912* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1989), 35.

In expressing her disinterest for the café, the narrator also needs some distance from the intellectual environment but will obviously come back for more. One could also read the general coffeehouse scene as a microcosm of the actual city. Although it would harbor many of the same artists and intellectuals, the time at which when one frequented the café was not always the same. Much like the metropolis, new people could also come thus resulting in different amounts of excitement. As Rilke in his journals would describe his mysterious attraction to Paris and also his yearning for the countryside, Lasker-Schüler's narrator seems to have a similar relationship with her cafés. In fact she calls the café a "Bazar," a term usually associated with the oriental market in which miscellaneous goods are typically sold in the streets. She points to the lack of authenticity and false imitations of the intellectual work being displayed at the café. Her depiction also points to coincidental encounters, frequent visitors—demonstrated by the door being opened and closed—and the geographical space of the street as if the café were outside in a large market area. Lasker-Schüler's description of the café being a bazaar bears a resemblance to Simmel's observations in his essay "Über Kunstausstellungen" from 1890 in which he regarded world exhibitions as "symbolic representations of the modern metropolis."³⁸⁹ A bazaar optically compares to an exhibition as well as in regards to the goods or objects which both try to display.

Having relayed the sentiment of wanting to be away from the café also seems to communicate her discontent with Berlin by calling it cold and unenlightening. Although for many others, who considered Berlin around 1900 to be an intellectual center for inspiration as it most likely had been for Lasker-Schüler, the narrator is more inclined to

³⁸⁹ David Frisby, "The City Interpreted: Georg Simmel's Metropolis," *Cityscapes of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 100.

portray it as passé—no longer creating any kind of artistic motivation for her. Markus Hallensleben remarks: “Lasker-Schüler ersetzte in poetologischer Konsequenz die Kunsthauptstadt Berlin durch ihre Kunststadt Theben.”³⁹⁰ By following Hallensleben line of argumentation, one could therefore see a correspondence between the way she characterizes the café as a bazaar or how she tries to look beyond the boundaries of her own present city. The Berlin which she then describes in *Mein Herz* takes on depictions of both the city which she sees in real life and the one which she wishes to see it become—an exotic, boundless place with which she can transcendently communicate: “[...][ich] spreche [...] zu meiner Stadt und öffne ihren Menschen meine Seele wie einen Palemhain, den sie betreten dürfen. [...] Mein Bildnis wird verteilt in Theben.”³⁹¹

While Thebes attains spiritual levels in the novel, the narrator expresses negativity to Walden und Kurtchen concerning Berlin: “Ich möchte Euch heut abend nur sagen: Berlin ist eine kleine Stadt, täglich schrumpft sie mehr und mehr ein. Groß ist eine Stadt nur, wenn man von ihr aus groß blicken kann. Berlin hat nur ein Guckloch, einen Flaschenhals, und der ist auch meist verkorkt, selbst die Phantasie erstickt. Gute Nacht!”³⁹² Lasker-Schüler refers to the provinciality of Berlin and how one can only view it through one peep hole implying that it only has one perspective. She also uses the image of a corked bottle as if the endlessness of one’s creative imagination is being stifled. Once again the narrator/Lasker-Schüler expresses her dissatisfaction with Berlin, but at the same time the city has provided her with the opportunity to experience a world vastly different from her everyday life.

³⁹⁰ Hallensleben, *Else Lasker-Schüler*, 155.

³⁹¹ Lasker-Schüler, *Mein Herz*, 164.

³⁹² Lasker-Schüler, *Mein Herz*, 38.

5.2 From Reality to Transcendence: Dance Scenes From Lunapark, Gertrude Barrison and Café Kurfürstendamm

The three scenes involving dance—(1) the narrator and Minn, Gertrude Barrison and the bearded man at Lunapark, (2) Barrison being observed by Minn, and (3) the Café des Westens as an oriental dancer—take place within the urban landscape of Berlin. These scenes and the spaces of Lunapark and the Café des Westens embody both metropolitan qualities and introduce an element of oriental exoticism. I argue that Lasker-Schüler arranges these scenes to demonstrate a progression from real to transcendent depiction by using dance as a medium. By situating the concrete characters of the narrator and Barrison—who innocently encounter Minn and the bearded Arab at Lunapark—Lasker-Schüler creates a cohesive and imaginable scene. However, once Barrison begins to understand and to imitate oriental dances herself, Lasker-Schüler uses her as a transitional figure who starts to transcend the boundary of the real world. The pinnacle of this progression manifests itself in the Café des Westens as an oriental dancer—presumably another incarnation of Barrison—and creates an unimaginable depiction in a transcendental space.

5.2.1 Lunapark

At the very beginning of *Mein Herz*, Lasker-Schüler's narrator and her friend—Variété dancer Gertrude Barrison—visit an Egyptian exhibition at Lunapark:

Vorgestern war ich mit Gertrude Barrison in den Lunapark gegangen, leise in die ägyptische Ausstellung, als ob wir so etwas Süßes vorausahnten. Gertrude erweckte dort in einem Caféhaus die Aufmerksamkeit eines Vollbartarabers, mit ihm zu kokettieren, auf meinen Wunsch, schlug sie mir entsetzt ab, ein für allemal. Ich hätte nämlich gerne den Lauf seiner sich kräuselnden Lippen beobachtet, die nun durch die Reserviertheit meiner Begleiterin gedämmt wurden.

Ich nahm es ihr sehr übel. Aber bei den Bauchtänzerinnen ereignete sich eines der Wunder meines arabischen Buches, ich tanzte mit Minn, dem Sohn des Sultans von Marokko. Wir tanzten, tanzten wie zwei Tanzschlangen, oben auf der Islambühne, wir krochen ganz aus uns heraus, nach den Locktönen der Bambusflöte des Bändigers, nach der Trommel, pharaonenalt, mit den ewigen Schellen. Und Gertrude tanzte auch, aber wie eine Muse, nicht muselhaft wie wir, sie tanzte mit graziösen, schlankhaften Armen die Craquette, ihre Finger wehten wie Fransen. Aber der und ich verirrten uns nach Tanger, stießen kriegerische Schreie aus, bis mich sein Mund küßte so sanft, so inbrünstig, und ich hätte mich geniert, mich zu sträuben. Seitdem liebe ich alle Menschen, die eine Nuance seiner Hautfarbe an sich tragen, an sein Goldbrokat erinnern.³⁹³

The narrator's remark at the beginning demonstrates that she and Barrison came to the exhibition with the premonition of something wonderful happening. Her intuition points to their experienced city-dweller mentality of preparing themselves for the unexpected. Barrison and the narrator simply have a "feeling" that something would happen but will not find out what the surprise is until they continue with their day at Lunapark. Like the journalists' *Momentbilder*, Malte's numerous strange incidents with people in the streets or Endell's modernist miniatures, the modern individual living in the metropolis would also have to be ready for any kind of likely or unlikely encounter.

For this scene it seems fitting that not only the narrator attends one of the newest venues—Lunapark—to learn about Egyptian culture, but that she is also accompanied by a rather famous Varieté dancer of the time: Gertrude Barrison. As a member of the Ensemble Five Sisters Barrison, Gertrude Barrison took part in Varieté acts in the 1890s in European metropolises and often in the Berliner Wintergarten.³⁹⁴ She then developed into a rather prominent modern dancer whose prowess is depicted in *Mein Herz*.

Appropriately, both Barrison and the narrator visit an exotic exhibition presumably because of their interest in distant lands and foreign cultures. Barrison and the Egyptian

³⁹³Lasker-Schüler, *Mein Herz*, 7-8.

³⁹⁴Kirschnick, "Tausend und ein Zeichen," 172.

exhibition are examples of foreign exporting in an attempt to enlighten the cultural hub of Berlin about other parts of the world as well as to feed the narrator's fascination with both American modern dance and the Orient. The narrator already points to an expectation about what will happen in the park as they and the reader would probably assume her and Barrison to be part of the observers learning at the exhibition. Their observations at the exhibitions—which likely consisted of artifacts and displays—culminates as they encounter real, living beings from the Orient: Gertrude with the fully-bearded man and the narrator with Mann, the son of the Moroccan sultan. The narrator seems to be so hypnotized by the man's beard and lips that she can give little regard to Barrison's discomfort. The bearded Arab turns into more of a sensual object instead of remaining an actual person as she has not noted his name but is beguiled by his physical appearance. The narrator, Barrison, Minn and the bearded Arab, however, still remain as conceivable figures who reflect reality and whose dance on the stage can be spatially imagined by the reader.

While Barrison and the narrator peruse Lunapark, they assume the role of the modern individual who would come to observe the foreign displays. The women are looking at small artifacts in an attempt to understand and grasp the meaning of each display, which incidentally also reminds one of the bazaar image that the narrator used to describe café life. With a myriad of objects and exclusive artifacts which give them a glimpse into a world not immediately available to them, such an exhibit could be just as overwhelming to the senses as the stimuli in the urban setting—despite being located on the outskirts of the city. Yet such a place created a microcosm for a new land waiting to be discovered just as the metropolis Berlin had remained to be realized on a large scale.

In fact, as Hallensleben argued, Lasker-Schüler's thought of Berlin being substituted by Thebes only aligns these two polar opposite places together by juxtaposing the urban modernism with the exotic orientalism. As the modern individual and flâneur would be strolling in the streets and observe his or her surroundings, Lasker-Schüler's narrator had grown tired of the urban environment and sought a new freedom and inspiration in the foreign exhibits at Lunapark.

Attending such an exhibition has situated them to not only watch others but also to be observed by others. While Barrison has awoken the interest in the full-bearded Arab much to her dismay, the narrator meets Minn. Although they are not in a central city area—for instance where Malte had begun observing the man with Veitstanz on the Boulevard St. Michel in Paris or where Endell discovered structures and space in central parts of Berlin—Barrison and the narrator are at an exhibition which could double as an exotic city. They are also in a sense putting themselves on display for the foreign men whom they meet, thus culminating in the narrator dancing with Minn. This impromptu meeting reminds one again of the random encounters that the modern individual would chance upon in the urban space. At this point the narrator and the exotic Minn come together for what she calls a “Wunder,” and they dance like two “Tanzschlagen” on the “Islambühne.” Their dance together is stronger than simply one person dancing alone and results in a unifying process combining the narrator's European background and Minn's orientalism. It results in a fantasy and an almost hybrid of both worlds reaching even higher seemingly transcendental proportions given their warlike cries: a primitive gesture of ecstasy. As Andrea Bandhauer notes: “Wie viele ihrer Zeitgenossen beschwört auch Else Lasker-Schüler die ‘magische’ Kraft des Tanzes, der auszudrücken vermag, was

jenseits der Worte liegt.”³⁹⁵ Besides using dance symbolically to reach beyond the terrestrial, the narrator combines the two harmoniously in order to create an even more heightened experience—at least aesthetically.

The euphoric dancing of the two is signaled by their ability to dance almost as one body to the sounds of primitive bamboo flutes and drums, and culminates in a kiss which thoroughly surprises the joyous narrator. Their dance cements her fixation with the Orient. But they are not the only ones dancing; their improvised show is augmented by Barrison whom the narrator describes like a muse with slim, graceful arms and who appropriately should be accustomed to dancing on stage.

Having criticized the cold and unenlightening Berlin in the two subsequent letters, the narrator seems thoroughly at home among anything resembling the exotic Orient even if she has to create this fiction through her writing. Hallensleben comments:

Die Orientalismen des Gedicht- und Erzählbandes sind von daher weniger als Exotismen, sondern vielmehr als verfremdende Einbrüche von Realität des imperialistischen Deutschlands zu werten. [...] Er illustriert damit nicht mehr die Befindlichkeit der erzählten und Erzähl-Figuren, sondern steht für eine Sprache als avantgardistischen *Event*, womit gezwungenermaßen der Entstehungsprozeß des Kunstwerks mitgeliefert wird.³⁹⁶

Lasker-Schüler praises this culture to the highest degree especially after dancing with Minn by saying that she loves all people who have darker skin. However, Hallensleben also points to another reason for Lasker-Schüler’s use of oriental symbolism: as being a break from the reality of the Wilhelminic rule. He also mentions the language as an “event” which alludes to the notion of performance. Incidentally the area on which Minn and the narrator are standing happens to be a stage devoted to Islam: Islambühne. Perhaps

³⁹⁵ Andrea Bandhauer, “Unermüdlicher tanzte nie der Tanz,” *seminar* 32:2 (May 1996): 133.

³⁹⁶ Hallensleben, *Else Lasker-Schüler*, 75-76.

this is where the exhibition had been taking place; however the use of the word “Bühne” implies performance and the idea of being watched. The transformation of the exhibition into a stage is not unfathomable as both have a performance function displaying themselves as a spectacle of sorts. Perhaps unusual is the narrator dancing with Minn on stage as she herself now becomes an unlikely part of the exhibition.

The element of orientalism plays a large role not only in this scene but also throughout Lasker-Schülers entire literary oeuvre. Hallensleben cites the French literary scholar Marcel Brion from 1928: “Else Lasker-Schüler nimmt in der deutschen Dichtung einen ganz außergewöhnlichen Platz ein. Eigentlich scheint sie in ihrer Zeit und unter ihren Landesleuten so fremd zu sein wie ein persischer oder chinesischer Dichter auf dem Potsdamer Platz.”³⁹⁷ Brion notes some of the most powerful characteristics about Lasker-Schüler and her writing: her association with Berlin, her penchant for depicting the Orient and assuming fictitious roles. Her displacement is furthered as Hallensleben also notes the many possible outlets that Lasker-Schüler could have encountered because of the outside world’s influence on Berlin: “Wie sehr der Imaginationsraum des Orients hingegen im Alltag des Wilhelminischen Berlins präsent war, und zwar fern einer zwingenden Verbindung mit dem Judentum, beweisen Plakate und Werbeschriftzüge, architektonische Bauten wie die des Zoologischen Gartens, die phantastische Welt des Lunaparks, Modenschauen oder auch Aufführungen des *Scheherezade*-Stoffes.”³⁹⁸ Lunapark in Berlin opened on May 14, 1910 as an amusement park near Halensee. It not only featured rides but also anthropological shows, theaters, revues, dances and

³⁹⁷ Marcel Brion 1928 (105) – Cited by Hallensleben, *Else Lasker-Schüler*, 76.

³⁹⁸ Hallensleben, *Else Lasker-Schüler*, 77.

cabarets.³⁹⁹ In the summer of 1911 the press announced an exhibition called “Miniatur-Kairo” (*Berliner Tagesblatt* 13.03.1911) among many others during the time.

5.2.2 Barrison’s Solo Dance

Barrison’s talent is featured even more soundly in a subsequent letter:

Wißt Ihr, wer plötzlich in den Saal trat, als Gertrude Barrison tanzte? Minn! Aber er versteht die Tänze des Abendlandes wie ich nicht; nur bei Gertrude mache ich eine Ausnahme. Die letzte Schöne der Tänzerinnen Barrisons bewegt sich interessant und anmutig, und ihre Gewänder sind seidene Geheimnisse weißer Marquisperückenzeiten. Alle Schauenden waren entzückt.⁴⁰⁰

Although the narrator and Minn had been dancing on a stage in the previous scene, here she points to their lack of understanding concerning the oriental dances and even Minn, who is from this region, is not versed in this practice. The narrator’s depiction of Barrison sets the dancer off as an exotic creature no longer a part of their world and who can understand movement beyond the laymen’s comprehension. And, as her dance suggests, Barrison has moved on from the Varieté performances and has delved into the new modern dance which required personal expression and demanded intellectual contemplation. One would think that Gertrude Barrison’s Danish-German ancestry would have a bearing on her ability in understanding oriental dances as the narrator notices a gap between her Europeaness and the exotic Orient. However, as Barrison deals with the *transcendental language* of dance, then perhaps she is the “Ausnahme” who can penetrate these dances—certainly Ruth St. Denis was able to. As dance can reach beyond the limits of words, language does not come into question or work as a barrier against her

³⁹⁹ Sylke Kirschnick, “Tausend und ein Zeichen: Else Lasker-Schülers Orient und die Berliner Alltags- und Populärkultur um 1900” (PhD Diss., Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007), 167.

⁴⁰⁰ Lasker-Schüler, *Mein Herz*, 44.

in conceiving a foreign, oriental dance. Even the way in which the narrator describes Barrison's costume as "seidene Geheimnisse" implies that her entire dancing aura remains a mystery beyond description.

5.2.3 Café Kurfürstendamm as Oriental Dancer

The third scene builds from the second by implying that Barrison's dancing has been captured and later manifests itself in the Café Kurfürstendamm:

Ihr beiden Freunde!

Was ist das? Wart ihr schon dort, Ecke Kurfürstendamm und Wilmersdorferstraße, im Café Kurfürstendamm? Ich bin zum Donnerwetter dem Café des Westens untreu geworden; wie einen Herzallerliebsten hab ich das Caféhaus verlassen, dem ich ewige Treue versprach. Das Café Kurfürstendamm ist eine Frau, eine orientalische Tänzerin. Sie zerstreut mich, sie tröstet mich, sie entzückt mich durch die vielen süßerlei Farben ihres Gewands. Eine Bewegung ist in dem Café, es dreht sich geheimnisvoll wie der schimmernde Leib der Fatme. Verschleierte Herzen sind die sternumhangenen, kleinen Nischen der Galerien. O, was man da alles sagen und lauschen kann—leise singen Violinen, selige Stimmungen. Das Café ist das lebendig gewordene Plakat Lucian Bernhards. Ich werde ihm einen Mondsichelorden, der ihn zum thebanischen Pasche ernennt, und meine huldvollste Bewunderung übermitteln lassen.⁴⁰¹

The narrator continues to use metaphors to change the urban expanses and areas of Berlin to depict her fantasy-filled idea of the Orient. But instead of describing the café as a physical place like a bazaar—demonstrated earlier as far more imaginable—or the Islambühne, the narrator pushes the café metaphor by describing the Café Kurfürstendamm as an oriental dancer. Instead of a bazaar which evokes images of hoarding people curiously wandering along lined streets or passively rummaging through market goods, the Café Kurfürstendamm is an entity which is capable of sensual movement and which indeed comforts, amuses, and amazes the narrator with the various colors of the dancer's garb. The narrator used a similar image as Barrison had been

⁴⁰¹ Lasker-Schüler, *Mein Herz*, 150-151.

dancing. Not only she but everyone around them was beguiled by the modern dancer's movement. In a sense, Lasker-Schüler has built upon the earlier example by first describing a real Varieté dancer on a smaller scale that has now been transformed into an entire café. She seems to point out the magnitude of her own creative power in finding a symbol which is essentially "unimaginable." She is constantly looking for a way in which to make Berlin appear small and finite while making dance and the foreign appear boundless and eternally large. In the earlier scene with Barrison dancing at the exhibition turned "Islambühne," this metaphor is carried further to the present scene as the actual café becomes a stage as well. Hallensleben notes: "Tänzerin und Raum sind vertauschbar geworden."⁴⁰² While the dancer has taken over the café and has converted every facet into a stage on a large scale, a movement emanates and evolves throughout the room. Once again as with the depiction of Barrison whose costume had "seidene Geheimnisse," the oriental dancer café similarly has "geheimnisvoll[e] [Bewegung]" hinting at the transcendental, incomprehensibility of the movement. Instead of just one dancer on a stage captivating an audience as Barrison had done, the Café des Westens-dancer has taken on magnanimous proportions consuming the café and imbuing every inch of space with the mysterious movement.

At the Egyptian exhibition where the narrator and Minn danced, the Islambühne also featured primitive instruments like drums and bamboo flutes, but at the Café Kurfürstendamm-dancer moves to violins and conversations which provide what one would normally associate with a café. In fact the movement of the oriental dancer billows and reverberates throughout every inch of the café and is the guiding factor that connects it with the music and mood.

⁴⁰² Hallensleben, *Else Lasker-Schüler*, 94.

The narrator's relationship with the café echoes further her connection with Berlin demonstrating that although she was not loyal to the Café des Westens, she had always pledged her allegiance. Despite expressing her own lack of desire to go there, she is still drawn to it because of its intellectual circle and because it functions as one of the prime settings in the novel about which she writes.

5.3 What Kind of Text Is *Mein Herz*?

As a text *Mein Herz* seems to separate itself stylistically from Rilke's *Aufzeichnungen*, Döblin's "Die Tänzerin und der Leib" and Endell's *Die Schönheit der großen Stadt* yet still retains some characteristics and remains heavily influenced by the urban landscape of Berlin. Having expressed her discontent for Berlin, the narrator needs a way to artistically express herself in her writing without being stifled. Yet she cannot let go of her surroundings as they remain central. Hallensleben has demonstrated—in his tracing of outside influences on Berlin—the formation, framing and educating of Lasker-Schüler's mind about the Orient which thus has a profound impact in the depiction of urban areas of Berlin in her text.

Although *Mein Herz* is dubbed a Briefroman and *Aufzeichnungen* is known as a Großstadtroman,—or as Huysen more accurately depicts as a "modernist miniature"—the way in which the authors are writing is similar particularly in regards to the choice of letter or journal entry. Malte's notebook entries do not necessarily recap the happenings of the day but rather focus on precise moments that appeared interesting to him. His written musings provide a chronological index of his thoughts with himself as he does not necessarily address his entries to anyone, however, they do read stylistically similar to the

genre of the letter. In *Mein Herz* the narrator writes mostly to Walden und Kurt retelling anything newsworthy, but the text takes on both a prosaic as well as poetic feeling, whereas Malte essentially writes just prose. The succinct, urban descriptions—complete with sound, reminiscent of the journalistic *Momentbilder* and Endell's modernist miniatures—do not appear at all in the dream-like *Mein Herz*. In fact, there is a reduced adherence to chronology as Hallensleben observes:

Zum anderen geht Lasker-Schüler mit dieser Form frei um und löst ihre Zeitgebundenheit auf, indem sie die Briefe montiert und zusammen mit den Illustrationen ein avantgardistisches Artefakt vorstellt, dessen Bildsprache nicht nur entschlüsselt, sondern dessen einzelne Sprachbilder vom Betrachter zu einem Gesamteindruck—ähnlich wie bei einer Collage—geordnet werden müssen. Das Kunst-Puzzle *Mein Herz* ist nichtsdestotrotz keineswegs auf Vollständigkeit seiner Teile angelegt, sondern vielmehr auf eine Variierbarkeit ihrer Verbindungsmöglichkeiten. Diese spiegelt sich auch in den Gattungsübergreifen zwischen Prosa und Lyrik.⁴⁰³

Hallensleben's suggestion—that the text is a collage which can be read in varying ways leading to different connections—implies to the reader that the narrator's sentiments regarding Berlin and imagery with dance do not have to be read in any specific order or necessarily in a continuum. He also proposes that reading the episodes as complete would be a mistake because the endless junctures between these fragments allow the text to thrive.

Although Malte's journal entries tend to be read chronologically as there are signs of some linear development, *Mein Herz* appears to be devoid of any noticeable plot. However, both of these texts assume a similar episodic nature. Feßmann and Heizer write: "The fact that there are no framed stories, that characters jump forwards and backwards in time, and that stories are episodic rather than continuous, contributes to the

⁴⁰³ Hallensleben, *Else Lasker-Schüler*, 159.

disjointed and fragmented experience for the reader.”⁴⁰⁴ Lasker-Schüler’s text jolts its readers similarly like Malte’s experience in watching the man with Veitstanz in that both are disconnected causing perhaps confusion for the reader but also demanding more from them in order to endure and understand the text.

Hallensleben also mentioned the “Gesamteindruck” that one can perceive from not only reading the text but also taking in the drawings—allowing the senses to be exposed to more than just one medium. Hallensleben’s overall argument looks at the oeuvre of Lasker-Schüler’s work in relation to the idea of an “event” with the audience reading the text and observing it as a “performance.” If one is to read not only the analyzed dance scenes but also the text as a whole which involves inexhaustible constellations, then the work could also be related to the way in which Rilke writes *Aufzeichnungen* or the manner in which journalists write *Momentbilder* in that they also try to recreate an event through precise, poignant description in an attempt to awaken all the senses of the reader. Döblin’s text also takes on a similar clinical, protocol-style in which happenings are objectively documented and in which sentences are shortened in order to summarize the most important information. *Mein Herz* has, however, a different and perhaps more “performative” way in which to recreate events: namely through pictures. Interestingly though Lasker-Schüler does not attempt to pictorially depict any of the dance scenes involving Minn, Barrison, herself and particularly the Café des Westens as it essentially resists any kind of representation besides poetic. In fact, it is the mixture of prose and poetry that integrate both the “imaginable” and the “unimaginable,” in the

⁴⁰⁴ Meike Fessmann, *Spielfiguren: Die Ich-Figurationen Else Lasker-Schülers als Spiel mit der Autorrolle* [Else Lasker-Schüler's Figurations of the Self as Play with the Role of the Author] (Stuttgart: M & P, 1992), 160. And Donna Kay Heizer, *Those Other Orientals: The Muslim Orient in the Works of Else Lasker-Schüler, Friedrich Wolf and Franz Werfel* (Columbus: Ohio State University 1992), 42. – cited by Hallensleben, *Else Lasker-Schüler*, 95.

sense that such an unprecedented depiction warrants a visual concept, and the creativity of the mind is called upon in order to create an image. While dance scenes from *Mein Herz* aesthetically seem to be the most experimental and avant-garde in regard to form and content compared with the other texts, Endell's assumes a more stylistically traditional and programmatic role.

6. Conclusion

The overarching ways in which Endell and Rilke propose their new manner of seeing is quite striking as both do not want to alter the urban landscape in which they occupy but rather to work with it. As Eisenschmidt writes: "Neither the unconditional embrace nor a reductive negation of the modern condition, but rather a working through of the modern situation was intended."⁴⁰⁵ Both authors, however, obtain their goal portraying two contrasting cities: Berlin and Paris. Considered for the most part as an industrial, dirty and haphazardly planned metropolis, Endell tries to change this perspective by creating beautiful depictions of everyday urban landmarks and scenes. On the other hand, while Paris is traditionally held as a site of beauty, Rilke describes the rather ambivalent side of Malte's life and can only document fragmented descriptions of his protagonist's strange encounters in the streets. While both are leading toward similar goals in trying to "learn to see," both obtain this aim using opposing depictions. While Malte's encounter with the afflicted "Veitstänzer" ultimately arouses varying levels of fear and anxiety which correspond to the development of the man's physical symptoms, Endell feels the opposite and enjoys the dynamic movement and brilliant colors. Whereas the movements of the old man are jerky, fragmented, and unpredictable, the maneuvering

⁴⁰⁵ Eisenschmidt, "Visual discoveries," 78.

people form seamless groups with individuals weaving smoothly past and in between each other. The man with Veitstanz can no longer deal with the severity of his symptoms and must collapse at the end of the scene from sheer exhaustion resulting in a symbolic death. Despite this figurative downfall—effectively foreshadowing his impending death, the man’s lively display for “Tanzkraft” has spawned a creative surge and inspires Malte’s writing. Endell describes how the ease of movement and play of the pedestrians in the square are so strong so as to create its own “Raumleben:” a harmoniously functioning system that will continue on living. These divergent examples imply the flexibility with which the metaphor of dance can be applied as Endell and Rilke pursue similar goals in pure seeing yet use conflicting instances to attain them. After Malte’s encounter with the man, he reads Baudelaire’s ‘Une Charogne’ and claims to have gained an understanding of the poem, thus reflecting his development into the new way of seeing that Malte and Endell ponder.

The ease and beauty in Endell’s depiction is contrasted further with Döblin’s text which describes the suffering of a ballet dancer. Endell’s goal in encouraging the modern individual to learn to see is most likely a lost cause in regards to the doctors and nurses who attempt to bring Ella out of her downward spiral. They are concerned more with working with modern medicine in trying to understand the disease and are not only incapable of sympathizing with her but also cannot see beyond their scientific objectivity. Having been exposed to a modern specimen afflicted with a strange disorder, they are unable to perceive their own feeling and certainly do not interpret her symptoms or ‘final dance’ as an aesthetic product. Therein lies the disconnection of the doctors and even Ella

with modernity. Endell's goal was for not just the intellectual but every citizen to be able to observe a way of pure seeing to any extent.

Despite the unsuccessfulness of Endell's project in view of the doctors in Döblin's text, Lasker-Schüler's work not only assumes these dimensions but expands them even further in creating highly poetic images that defy pictorial representation. Instead of simply describing a seemingly "normal" reality as Rilke, Döblin and Endell portray, Lasker-Schüler uses Berlin as a venture point to reach into her imagination by transforming it into a fantastic, oriental dance. She demands that the readers not concentrate so much on the finite city as such but more on the exoticism in her writing that allows no bounds for their imagination. Both Endell and Lasker-Schüler's depictions of movement or dance contain perpetual, dynamic and thoroughly beautiful maneuvering as if attempting to recreate these motions with in text.

Endell, Rilke, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler were writers who wanted to drastically change the perception of the modern individual in the metropolis by depicting narrators who undergo this process of beginning to see their surroundings more aesthetically. Much of their writing style can be captured by the genre of what Huyssen calls the "modernist miniature." While Endell's *Die Schönheit der großen Stadt* focuses on architectural sights and scenes of Berlin, it seems that his proposal could be applied to observing dance or dance-like movement in the urban space. In fact, it is the combination of integrating movement into the metropolitan areas—such as in a square, the streets, a hospital and a café—that creates a fragmented (or unfragmented) depiction of movement as if it had been woven into the fabric of the city.

CHAPTER IV

THE WRITER AS “CHOREOGRAPHER”

1. Perceiving Dance in the Urban Environment

The exciting, urban experiences of Endell, Rilke, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler evoked such correspondingly vibrant portrayals not only of the metropolis in their writing, but also the moving body. In all of their encounters in the city, the authors were confronted with figures whose maneuvering ranged from simple walking in a city square, in the case of Endell’s work, to sharp and abrupt gestures, as portrayed in Rilke’s and Döblin’s writing, and further contrasted with Lasker-Schüler’s depiction of a free-flowing, boundless body. These scenes can arguably be considered ‘dances’ to the extent that there is an observer watching a moving body. In characterizing this kind of movement, dance scholar Gabriele Brandstetter and anthropologist Christoph Wulf remark that all dances share the trait:

dass in ihnen Bewegungen des menschlichen Körpers inszeniert und aufgeführt werden. Aus dem Verhältnis von Körper und Bewegung bilden sich rhythmische Figurationen. [...] Tänze repräsentieren, vermitteln und aktualisieren in spezifischer Form Wissen vom Menschen, das auf jeweils unterschiedlichen historischen und kulturellen Voraussetzungen basiert. Sie sind Darstellungs- und Ausdrucksformen der Menschen, ihrer Verhältnisse zur Welt und ihrer Selbstverhältnisse. In ihnen artikulieren sich differente Sichtweisen und Interpretationen des Menschen und seiner Welt.⁴⁰⁶

By employing movement and bodies, dance essentially communicates interpretable knowledge to the spectator. Just as choreographers tell a story or express emotion to an audience through their dance works, Endell, Rilke, Döblin, and Lasker-Schüler similarly compose ‘dances’ out of their own words, phrasing and syntax to create an overall mood

⁴⁰⁶ Gabriele Brandstetter and Christoph Wulf, introduction to *Tanz als Anthropologie* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2007) 9-10.

as well as to initiate a dialogue with their readers. As much as their works are regarded as ‘modern’ texts, not only in respect to their depiction of the metropolitan setting but also in assuming stylistic qualities such as those embodied in the “modernist miniature,” their writing can also be considered more like the new ‘free’ ‘modern dances’ taking place at the beginning of the twentieth century which reject the conventions of the archetypal nineteenth-century ballet.

In contrast to Brandstetter and Wulf’s definition in which dances are “inszeniert und aufgeführt,” this notion is arguably lacking in the depiction illustrated by the four authors. Naturally the writers “stage” and choreograph their own dance texts, however, to most of the onlookers and protagonists in the text, the scene which they encounter is relatively *unexpected*. The four scenes, arguably, assume this model: Malte happens upon the “Veitstänzer,” the doctors study Ella’s bizarre symptoms, Lasker-Schüler’s narrator suddenly begins dancing with Minn on the Islambühne, and Endell sits himself comfortably at a café to observe a colorful display of people moving within a square. The protagonists, in a sense, are viewing less a choreographed dance and more an ‘impromptu performance’. This distinction brings up a vital difference between a staged and an unscripted dance: namely that of authentic feeling to which philosopher Susanne K. Langer states: “It is *imagined feeling* that governs the dance, not real emotional conditions. [...] Dance gesture is not real gesture, but virtual. The bodily movement, of course, is real enough; but *what makes it emotive gesture* [...], is illusory [...]. It is *actual movement*, but virtual *self-expression*.”⁴⁰⁷ Langer essentially addresses the masking of true feelings by creating the illusion of real ones. At times for the viewer, the magic of a

⁴⁰⁷ Susanne K. Langer, “From feeling and form,” in *What is dance? Readings in theory and criticism*, ed. Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 31.

dance piece is often times so powerful and moving, that the onlooker gives little regard to the ‘virtual’ emotions. However, the way in which dance is portrayed in the works of our four writers leaves no illusion to the emotions felt by the dancers. In fact the staging of these ‘unexpected performances’ creates even *more* authenticity for both the protagonists as well as the reader of these texts. These surprising events connect significantly with Peter Fritzsche’s understanding of how the city dweller was to be prepared for surprises within the urban space. By expecting the unexpected, journalists would be ready to absorb, interpret and later create *Momentbilder* of specific events in the city.

In what follows, I will trace the conception and development of a ‘dance text’ and provide an analytical reading of it. (1) The process begins with the perception of the authors themselves living in a metropolis and experiencing ‘dance’ not only in theaters, but in ateliers, like Rilke, or urban expanses like Endell. (2) The second section involves the seemingly “Unübersetzbarkeit” of describing and writing dance in both poetic and prosaic styles. These two similar activities involve subtle nuances and demonstrate a development in the writers’ capabilities of portraying dance. (3) The last section analyzes the four authors’ specific dance scenes by using the theoretical framework established by American dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster whose semiotic model will dissect the dance into signs and symbols engaging with the following five criteria: the dance’s frame, modes of representation, style, vocabulary and syntax.

The creation of these dance texts likely emerged from the authors’ own compelling experiences in the city inciting them to not only thematize dance, but more importantly: to situate dance in and among the urban landscape and structures. As dance scholar Sabine Huschka remarks: “Die Avantgardströmungen in Literatur und bildender

Kunst sind vom Tanz als Kunst ausgesprochener Sinnlichkeit und dynamisierter Kinetik inspiriert, da sie beinahe mystisch-konkret und doch abstrahierend das Energetische der aufbrechenden Moderne zu gestalten weiß.” (9).⁴⁰⁸ Endell, Rilke, Döblin and are no exceptions to this trend as they had written texts concerning their own encounters with dance and movement in their respective cities. Endell’s text “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt” recounts his experiences of observing modern architectural structures as well as moving groups of people. He serves as an excellent example of an author who was inspired by a new way of seeing his own city as he wrote a programmatic work to encourage others to perceive Berlin in an aesthetic light. Rilke and Döblin also had written texts about their experience of watching dance movement in either Paris or Berlin. In a letter to his wife Clara on April 26, 1906, Rilke described his encounter with a Spanish dancer in his friend painter Ignacio Zuloaga’s atelier in the Parisian city district of Montmartre:

Gestern war die Taufe von Zuloagas Sohn. Ich hatte keine Zeit, in die Kirche zu gehen, war aber hernach für eine Weile in seinem neuen Atelier, Montmartre, unter dreißig oder vierzig mir völlig fremden Menschen (von Cottet kannte ich wenigstens Nase und Bart, konnte aber, da er selbst dabei war, mit denen allein nicht sprechen). Man sang und tanzte. Eine Spanierin, deren Wesen es war zu singen, sang sehr schön, im Rhythmus spanischen Bluts, die Carmen und spanische Lieder; eine Gitane, mit dem gewissen schwarz-bunten Tuch, tanzte spanische Tänze. Es war ziemlich viel vom Klima in dem mittelgroßen Atelier, in dem man sich drängte. (Aber die eng von Zuschauern umstandene Tänzerin Goyas war mehr.) Zuloaga war lieb und schön, mit seinem Stolz und seinem aufglänzenden Lächeln...⁴⁰⁹

Although his encounter with the Spanish dancer does not occur in the streets, it nonetheless takes place in a unconventional performance area: an atelier, where Zuloaga

⁴⁰⁸ Sabine Huschka, *Moderner Tanz. Konzepte – Stile – Utopien* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2002), 9.

⁴⁰⁹ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Rainer Maria Rilke. Briefe aus den Jahren 1902 bis 1906* (Leipzig: Insel, 1930), 316-317.

presumably worked on his art. The staging of dances and performances outside of the theater space around 1900 was an appealing idea according to Brandstetter:

Die Wahl des Museums als Tanz-Bühne erfolgt dabei unter zwei Gesichtspunkten: Der eine steht im Zusammenhang mit der für die Theater- und Tanzreform der Jahrhundertwende aktuellen Frage des Aufführungsortes: der Suche nach anderen, von der Tradition des Illusionstheaters des 19. Jahrhunderts unbelasteten Theaterbauten und Bühnenformen. Nicht nur antike Amphitheater, Festspielstätten, Rundbauten und alle Formexperimente avantgardistischer Theaterarchitektur bezeugen dieses Streben nach einem Wandel der Institution. Auch für den Tanz besitzt die Eroberung neuer Aufführungsräume eine vergleichbare Bedeutung. Neben Konzertbühnen und Tonhallen, Künstlerhäusern und Park-Terrassen werden Galerien und Museumssäle zur Bühne der modernen Bewegungsdarstellung.⁴¹⁰

Having grown tired of the conventional 19th century settings for dances, choreographers and dancers sought to venture into different, urban spaces. This experimentation with staging—in spaces besides the traditional theater—certainly widened the scope of the choreographer’s and the viewer’s aesthetic on how a dance could be produced. While there was a demand for alternative areas to be used as settings for dances, the space correspondingly invoked its own analysis just as much as the movement of the dancers.

Besides the fact that the dance took place in an atelier, Rilke is enveloped into a sea of strangers at the performance which corresponds to the modern individual’s anonymity in the metropolitan streets. One could also assume that Rilke did not necessarily anticipate such a dance performance in an atelier, therefore pointing toward the unexpectedness of the situation. Rilke’s entry focuses first on contextualizing the space and then further concentrating on the dancing woman who seems to create a fiery, festive mood as “man sang und tanzte.” The combination of her singing and dancing casts a spell over the audience which Rilke tries to convey in his letter to his wife. In his

⁴¹⁰ Gabriele Brandstetter, *Tanz-Lektüren. Körperbilder und Raumfiguren der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1995), 83.

writing he not only recapitulates the dance but also displays the aesthetic effect it has on the moving and singing onlookers. In addition, Zuloaga's proud demeanor and smile seem to parallel the mood of the Spanish dancer in a poem Rilke wrote two months later in June 1906 called "Spanische Tänzerin."

Rilke's experience of watching the dancer in the atelier likely served as a strong catalyst to portray what he had experienced himself. He doesn't simply protocol the dance but instead translates the movements visually, rhythmically, and aesthetically into a poetic dance text:

Wie in der Hand ein Schwefelzündholz, weiß,
eh es zu Flamme kommt, nach allen Seiten
zuckende Zungen streckt -: beginnt im Kreis
naher Beschauer hastig, hell und heiß
ihr runder Tanz sich zuckend auszubreiten.
Und plötzlich ist er Flamme, ganz und gar.
Mit einem Blick entzündet sie ihr Haar
und dreht auf einmal mit gewagter Kunst
ihr ganzes Kleid in diese Feuersbrunst,
aus welcher sich, wie Schlangen die erschrecken,
die nackten Arme wach und klappernd strecken.
Und dann: als würde ihr das Feuer knapp,
nimmt sie es ganz zusamm und wirft es ab
sehr herrisch, mit hochmütiger Gebärde
und schaut: da liegt es rasend auf der Erde
immer und ergibt sich nicht -.
Doch sieghaft, sicher und mit einem süßen
grübenden Lächeln hebt sie ihr Gesicht
und stampft es aus mit kleinen festen Füßen.⁴¹¹

The echoes of the live atelier performance ring clearly as Rilke portrays the audience in the poem as surrounding the dancer and her flame, thus framing the context and the space of this performance. The close proximity of the onlookers creates not only an intimate mood but a building fervor that begins slowly in the dance and intensifies to a grand flourish as the flame is extinguished. The round formation also gives the opportunity for

⁴¹¹ Rainer Maria Rilke, "Spanische Tänzerin," in *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. I, (Wiesbaden: Insel, 1955), 531.

the crowd to not only watch her dancing but also—importantly for Rilke: the reactions of others gazing upon the woman. The end of the dance, in which she demonstrates her control over the flame by smiling and stamping it out, parallels Zuloaga’s grin of pride during the atelier performance which further echoes his control over the dance.

Although the flame was likely not present at the actual performance, Rilke uses this imagery as a symbol that both incites the Spanish woman to dance and demonstrates her power to control the flame. The fire represents not only the passion of the dancer but also the growing interest of the spectators whose emotions intensify in tandem with the magnitude of the flame. Brandstetter notes the importance of Rilke’s poem with respect to dance and dance texts:

Rilkes Gedicht bietet darüber hinaus eine Exposition der wichtigsten Themenbereiche, die für den Tanz und für Tanz-Texte von Bedeutung sind: die Dramaturgie eines Tanzes in Sukzession und Steigerung von Bewegungselementen; den Gegensatz von beherrscher und entfesselter Gebärde, von Disziplin und Ekstase des Tanzes als Modell von Selbstfindung und Selbstverlust des Individuums; die Dualität von Natur und Kultur, von Bewegung und Stilstand, von Augenblick und Dauer im transitorischen Prozeß der Zeichensetzung und Zeichenlöschung.⁴¹²

The “Sukzession und Steigerung von Bewegungselementen” represent a choreographic device in which numerous amounts of repetition or variations occur in order to create a sense of momentum and accumulative building. These techniques would likely attune the viewer’s interest, and cause it to subsequently evolve correspondingly with the intensity of the dance. Rilke attempts to recreate these feelings by using rhyme allowing the text to be read in a specific rhythm that compels one to reach the conclusion. Within the poem not only does Rilke create an ambience and describe the dance, he characterizes the fervent spirit and relationship between the dancer and the flame.

⁴¹² Brandstetter, *Tanz-Lektüren*, 283.

The opposition of the “Disziplin und Ekstase des Tanzes“ also unfolds as one sees the symbiotic connection between the fire, which represents the full ecstatic extent that can be reached using its means, and the discipline of the rational dancer. With their combined powers the woman can manipulate the seemingly untamable fire to reach such a climactic state which will undoubtedly and intentionally reverberate with the audience: thus embodying one of Rilke’s intents in the poem.

“Spanische Tänzerin” clearly shows strong evidence that the performance in the atelier likely inspired and helped shape Rilke’s thoughts in creating the poem. While his letter to Clara attests to his presence at such an event and subsequently creating a poem based on his experience, the argument can be furthered that the city of Paris served as a focal point of arousing his imagination to actualize his own literary work. Not only did he decide to write about the dancer, but he chooses the genre of lyric over prose to convey his experience. Much like many of the unexpected events that Rilke most likely encountered in Paris’ large urban landscape, his experience in the atelier stands out as an influential event he deemed worthy of documentation not simply as a letter to his wife, but also in the form of a poem.

While Rilke’s encounter compelled him to create a beautiful image of a Spanish dancer, Döblin’s essay “Tänzerinnen” from October 1912—containing reviews of various theater and music performances—presents not only his encounter with modern dance, but also presents a sharp critique against the older forms of dance such as ballet.⁴¹³ He criticizes the current state of dance as being too “akademisch” and filled with “Hupfen, Drehen, entzücktes Puppengesicht,”: namely the movement vocabulary customarily

⁴¹³ Alfred Döblin, “Tänzerinnen,” in *Kleine Schriften I*, ed. Anthony W. Riley (Olten: Walter Verlag, 1985), 128-130.

associated with nineteenth century ballet. Unlike Rilke who contextualized the setting in which he saw the performance, Döblin does not mention his location as he watches two dancers. Both of the dancers do not appear archetypal in any sense as their body proportions and movements are rendered as thoroughly distorted:

Die eine ist ein solider, muskelöser Mensch weiblichen Geschlechts, mit Knochen, Gliedern. Dagegen und hinwiderum die andere dünn, wie das beinahe nicht mehr schön ist. Sie scheint nur ein lederüberzogenes Klappergestell weiblicher Signatur; manchmal zerbrach ich mir den Kopf, wie so was möglich sein kann, wie derartiges stattfinden kann.⁴¹⁴

The first dancer appears to have quite masculine characteristics which would be unheard of for female dancers at the time, while the other woman could be a ballet dancer with her thin appearance, however, she is completely devoid of beauty. Döblin's warranted shock demonstrates namely the unforeseen representation of the female dancers on stage. Up until around 1900, ballet and the Varieté had been dominating the scene of dance with women almost exclusively in the limelight—harboring endless attention from often male admirers. Unfortunately Döblin's portrayal creates problematic reservations concerning the validity of his documentation. Where in Berlin would these two women be granted an appearance on stage? Unlike Rilke's letter to his wife, which allows us to make a connection between Rilke's experience and his poem, there is no evidence that Döblin attended such a performance. However, he likely creates such a fictitious setting to purposefully illustrate two grossly distorted bodies, which he decides to polarize even more by depicting their styles of dancing.

The manners in which the women dance also do not especially correspond in regard to traditional representations of their body type: "Der Herkules tanzte einmal einen ‚Festtanz‘; fest war es, fest, ganz fest, mit wuchtigen Ellenbogen, massiven Schultern,

⁴¹⁴ Döblin, "Tänzerinnen," 129.

trittfähigen Beinen; der Herkules freute sich ersichtlich.”⁴¹⁵ Döblin exaggerates and ridicules the manly attributes of the first dancer by calling her “Herkules,” emphasizes the pun of “fest” meaning both “festive” and “firm,” and shows little enthusiasm in her conventional movement. His interest, however, lies in the other dancer:

Das Meisterstück der einen (Led.-sof.) [Ledersofa], Tanz der jungen Koboldin: das Klappen und Winken der Hände, die unschönen, plötzlichen, schlenkernden Beinbewegungen, das Rasen und Wühlen der Schultern. Sie kann etwas, - ich weiß wie gesagt nicht, was sie vielleicht von da unten hat -, reichlich tänzerische Einfälle, richtig gehende körperliche motorische Gedanken, motorische Gedanken, motorische Witze, motorische Absurdität. Sie sind wirklich, ernsthaft, originell und sehenswert, aber ich bin von Natur im Ausdruck etwas drastisch.⁴¹⁶

Döblin’s fixation begins with an attempt to describe the ugly, abrupt way in which the emaciated dancer moves. His writing implies an emphatic documentation while lacking a clear purpose. Yet these impulsive thoughts and formulations show a dire attempt to not only illustrate succinctly and precisely the second dancer’s mannerisms, but also to demonstrate Döblin’s deep desire, at that time, to express his feelings and thoughts in a verbal critique without need for reflection. One could read this citation as if Döblin were actually spontaneously speaking his thoughts without a filter, thus implied by his repetition of the word “motorische.” Unlike Rilke who provided a rather short description of the dance at the atelier, Döblin begins with his own general criticism of past and current dance and continues by expressing his developing aesthetic in regard to the styles of two dancers.

Döblin’s lack of precise articulation regarding the second dancer points to a similar “Wahrnehmungskrise” as experienced by many authors and intellectuals at the turn of the century. Döblin’s senses are overwhelmed with new phenomena as he is

⁴¹⁵ Döblin, “Tänzerinnen,” 129.

⁴¹⁶ Döblin, “Tänzerinnen,” 130.

exposed to a new kind of 'modern' dance that overthrows the conventions of the nineteenth century ballet. Being situated within Berlin allows him to experience such unique, bizarre stimuli that Simmel observed the modern individual would encounter in the metropolis. While the birth of modern dance has provoked great interest among intellectuals, it has, on the other hand, also contributed to their tremendous frustration not only in perceiving, but also in being able to articulate themselves in writing. Döblin's text also attests to prevalent difficulties experienced by those who wrote about dance around 1900 like Rilke and Harry Graf Kessler as well as others who wrote about urban phenomena like Endell, journalists and flâneurs.

Despite some of his inaccuracies in his understanding and perception of the two dancers, Döblin senses a steadying aesthetic shift within the realm of dance. Similarly to Rilke's encounter in the atelier, Döblin's text also serves as a notable impetus for him to explore the theme of dance in his own compositions. After having written "Die Tänzerin und der Leib" in 1910, he wrote "Die Tänzerinnen" two years later. The latter text seems to expand on many of the ideas having been established in the short story such as the distortion of the body. Ella's struggle with the doctors and her anatomy leads one to recognize her extremely conflicted situation which forces the ballerina to dance with her own body and to draw a prophetic representation of her death. While Ella isn't able to cope with modernity, the thin dancer in "Tänzerinnen" is able to fully perform ugly, sudden, and sauntering movements which not only demonstrates the effect that modernity has set upon her dancing body but also function as a direct contrast to the glorious lines of ballet. Unlike Ella who receives puzzling looks and detects uncomfortable confusion from the doctors and nurses, the emaciated dancer from "Tänzerinnen" is greeted with an

overwhelmingly curious and tremendously positive reaction from Döblin, who vehemently upholds the new direction in which modern dance is progressing.

Döblin's interest in portraying the body lead him to write the short story about Ella and provoked him to engage even further in live performance—as evidenced his text “Tänzerinnen.” He was able to build upon his previous knowledge and demonstrate not only his increasing interest in dance but also his development in understanding the body and movement. Not just Döblin but also Endell, Rilke, Lasker-Schüler were concerned with creating a language that was sufficient in not only describing but also critiquing dance: “Die quasi ästhetische Architektur des modernen Tanzes eröffnet facettenreiche Einblicke in die ungeheure Dynamik dieses Kunstmediums. Vor allem aber zielt die Darstellung darauf, dem changierenden Sinn- und Sinnengerüst der Tanzkunst als zentralem Kunstmedium der Moderne eine sprachliche Kontur zu geben.”⁴¹⁷ As the perception of the viewer had to change dramatically in regard to understanding dance movement, the spoken and written discourse on these performances assumed questioning problems of representation.

2. From Live Dance to Writing: Questions of “Unübersetzbarkeit”

“Schwieriger indessen ist es, das Tanzen zu beschreiben, das Gesehene in Worte zu fassen. Denn es begegnet einem ein Phänomenbereich, der—mit dem Sinnenbereich des eigenen Körpers verwoben—dem eignen Sprachvermögen fremd ist.”⁴¹⁸ Sabine Huschka summarizes some of the difficulties of representing dance that various writers

⁴¹⁷ Huschka, *Moderner Tanz*, 15.

⁴¹⁸ Huschka, *Moderner Tanz*, 17.

and intellectuals around 1900 experienced especially when encountering dance performances in the metropolis. The degree that one must endure in order to “translate” and find the most accurately corresponding adjectives to describe a movement sequence can often result in catastrophe. In fact “[d]ie Sprache wird seinen Phänomenbereich [vom Tanz] niemals berühren können”⁴¹⁹ because language encounters the problem of reducing “ein dynamisches, räumliches-zeitliches Geschehen auf ‘verbale Äquivalente.’”⁴²⁰ This detachment exists between the relative exactness of language and the deficiency of vocabulary from which the new modern dance suffers. The ballets of the nineteenth century have a tradition based on codified forms with terminology that corresponds to specific positions and movement. The plot of the dances was typically well-known and each dancer was prescribed an easily recognizable role. Ballets also came with costumes and background sets that created a familiar atmosphere and staged the scene where the dances were to take place.

With the advent of early modern dance, the viewers were confronted with a set of completely foreign movement vocabularies leaving them in a void without the necessary tools to create an interpretation. By breaking all the conventions of ballet and the codification of describing dance, the audience lacked any kind of sufficient vocabulary to describe this new movement. And unlike ballet, with its elaborate sets and costumes, many modern dancers performed on barren stages, or as Brandstetter has noted, in places away from the conventional theaters: museums, ateliers, gardens etc. Not only did the viewer have to come to terms with the new movement style, but he or she also had to

⁴¹⁹ Huschka, *Moderner Tanz*, 20.

⁴²⁰ Werner Jakob Stüber, *Geschichte des Modern Dance. Zur Selbsterfahrung und Körperaneignung im modernen Tanztheater* (Wilhelmshaven: Heinrichshofen's Verlag, 1984), 17.

interpret the costumes and spatial ambience, which created many difficulties for authors to write about the freer modern dance and its surroundings. Essentially a new kind of language had to be developed in order to discuss dance: “Dabei reichen die Vorstellung von einer generellen Unübersetzbarkeit bis hin zu jener von einer eigenen neuen Sprache, die gefunden werden müsste, um Bewegung verbal erfassen zu können.”⁴²¹ The seeming untranslatability regarding the perception of movement into text leads to an alternative, as for example, developed by Gabriele Wittmann who realizes that both entities of dance and writing are not the same and, therefore, try to realize the possibilities instead of the limitations of depicting and writing about dance.

Wittmann’s investigation stems from the question: “Gibt es eine Sprache, die das kinästhetische Momentum des Tanzes ausdrücken oder nachbilden kann?”⁴²² She first considers the possibilities of dance critique but finds them deficient in describing the actual dance; these kinds of texts also use too few adjectives and metaphors, which unfortunately convey an insufficient sense of movement within the text.⁴²³ She next turned to poetry:

In meiner Unzufriedenheit über die mangelnde Dichte der Sprache in der Tanzkritik wendete ich mich der Dichtkunst zu. Etliche Lyriker—besonders des ausgehenden 19. und angehenden 20. Jahrhunderts—haben sich vom Tanz inspirieren lassen und versucht, ihn in Sprache zu übertragen. Meine Beobachtung war dabei allerdings, dass sie neben der Atmosphäre oder dem Bild eines Tanzes zwar oft sogar seinen Rhythmus wiedergeben, nicht aber unbedingt das kinästhetische Moment.⁴²⁴

⁴²¹ Christina Thurner, *Beredete Körper – bewegte Seelen. Zum Diskurs der doppelten Bewegung in Tanztexten* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2009), 42.

⁴²² Gabriele Wittmann, “Dancing is not Writing: ein poetisches Projekt über die Schnittstelle von Sprache und Tanz,” in *Tanz Theorie Text*, ed. Gabriele Klein and Christa Zipperich (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2002), 586.

⁴²³ Wittmann, “Dancing is not Writing,” 586.

⁴²⁴ Wittmann, “Dancing is not Writing,” 587.

In this instance, her keen observation brings one closer to reproducing the feeling of the dance as Rilke's "Spanische Tänzerin" and arguably the other texts discussed in this dissertation. Although poetry with its rhyme and meter may come closest to conveying dance movement, other prose texts can have a similar ability such as the scene with Malte and the "Veitstänzer."

Wittmann continues to argue that—as children—humans develop a "Bewegungssinn" which corresponds to understanding fundamental movements such as falling, turning and stabilizing etc. Subsequently when one watches a dance performance, not only are the eyes perceiving but the "Bewegungssinn" as well.⁴²⁵ She coins a term later "mimetischer Sinn" to mean a state of watching others in which "wir schlüpfen gewissermaßen *in die Haut* des anderen Wesens. In der Fantasie—oder wo auch immer dieser Prozess stattfindet—SIND wir dieses andere Wesen."⁴²⁶ Despite not having been the first theorist to discuss the degree to which an observer 'becomes' or assumes some of the feelings of a dancer performing, Wittmann mentions a key aspect in helping to understand not only how Rilke in the atelier or Döblin in the theater felt as they observed dance, but also for the way they portray the *protagonists* in their texts who watch dance. In many of the works discussed in this study particularly *Aufzeichnungen* and "Die Tänzerin und der Leib", a main character is confronted by a scene involving dance or dance movement in which an emotional connection *is* or *isn't* expressed throughout the duration of the observation. The greatly thematisized 'mimetischer Sinn' hints to a poignant component of watching dance that the authors undoubtedly had felt themselves.

⁴²⁵ Wittmann, "Dancing is not Writing," 589.

⁴²⁶ Wittmann, "Dancing is not Writing," 589.

Wittmann's argument concludes that poetry is the most appropriate type of writing that helps to recreate the kinesthetic experience of observing a live dance:

Es müsste ein Gedicht sein. Ein Gedicht, das sich der im mimetischen Schreibprozess gefundenen Worte bedient und sie arrangiert, in Szene setzt. Die Mittel der poetischen Sprache bieten dabei immerhin Verdichtungen an, sodass sich das von der mimetischen Wahrnehmung als vertikale Zeitachse Erlebte als Verdichtetes und damit geschichtet durchwirkt arrangieren lässt. Außerdem ist Poesie eine Sprache, die für das Hören konzipiert ist. Selbst wenn der Leser still für sich liest, liest er im Allgemeinen so, als ob er laut rezitiere. Die Sprache tut also durch ihr Rauschen schon ihre Wirkung.⁴²⁷

Her support of poetry—as the style of writing closest to recreating the feeling of live dance—lies behind the similar time elapse of both media as they tend to be shorter and demonstrate transience after having been ‘performed.’ Wittmann essentially likens poetry with music given its sounds, rhythm and fleetingness which parallels it to dance in regard to their phenomenology. Dance and poetry are both similar in their ability to be performed numerous times, however, with every execution resulting in a unique occurrence. Therefore, although not the case with all the texts in this study, prose texts that liken lyric—like *Aufzeichnungen* and *Mein Herz*—can arguably be perceived as ‘dances’ in their own right in regard to their reproduction of elapsed time as with dances and in addition to the kinesthetic moments of the texts.

While Wittmann argues that poetry as a dance text might be the closest genre which can strive toward kinesthetically recreating the experience of live dance, many other dance scholars do not only turn to texts of various styles (literature, performance critiques, newspaper articles, etc.) but other types of media such as, when present, film, photographs, and interviews from choreographers, which have been termed

⁴²⁷ Wittmann, “Dancing is not Writing,” 593.

“Erinnerungstexte” by some scholars.⁴²⁸ While the transience of dance doesn’t allow it to be properly recorded and presents itself as an ultimately unique phenomenon, scholars’ efforts attempt to recreate the dance as much as possible. Being able to watch the same performance in order to discuss or write about dance would be ideal, however, its nature proves this feat to be impossible. Instead scholars have to piece together as much of the performance as attainable through other media to recreate the dance. While the scenes that Endell, Rilke, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler depict do not necessarily account real encounters with dances, their texts comprise one part of a body of “Erinnerungstexten.” Although such scripts and other media remind one of past performances, dance texts also assume the role of an “Übersetzung” as Janine Schulze points out.⁴²⁹

Inspired by Benjamin’s understanding of the word translation, Schulze argues that dance texts also function as translations, which try as much as possible to refer to the original. Translations should, therefore, be looked upon as an interpretation and large component of the entire artistic project that affords variability and allows the translated text to live longer and in other contexts.⁴³⁰ The notion of the text’s continuous life demonstrates, as Benjamin argues, a transformation and renewal of the original.⁴³¹ Instead of considering the shortcomings of a dance text which will only come close and never actually *become* or have the aesthetic impact of live dance, Schulze’s interpretation of Benjamin supports the independence of the dance text as a medium in its own right.

⁴²⁸ Janine Schulze, *Dancing Bodies Dancing Gender: Tanz im 20. Jahrhundert aus der Perspektive der Gender-Theorie* (Dortmund: Edition Ebersbach, 1999), 34.

⁴²⁹ Schulze, *Dancing Bodies*, 34.

⁴³⁰ Walter Benjamin, “Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers,” in *Illuminationen*. 1. Auflage (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), 57.

⁴³¹ Benjamin, “Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers,” 60.

Although dance texts likely refer to a phenomenon or performance in the past—even in the case of the scenes written by the authors in which reference to an event has never been historically documented—they should justifiably be judged and analytically interpreted as a genre on their own and within the fictional realities created by their writers.

3. Reading Dance

Endell, Rilke, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler were undoubtedly authors living in a climate of aesthetic change not only influencing the way they viewed their booming, urban surroundings but also refining the manner in which they interpreted dance and metropolitan movement. The lines between urban encounters—such as Endell’s depictions of modern architecture, space and moving crowds in Berlin or Malte’s experiences on a daily basis in Paris—and metropolitan movement begin to blur particularly because of the staging of dance outside of the conventional theater. As a result of observing urban motion of bodies in such contexts as ateliers, in cafés, and in the streets, these authors began to experiment in their own writing by depicting dance movement within the metropolis. These dance texts function in two roles: one demands a literary reading as shown in chapter three and another that requires a dance theory to help read and understand dance movement within the urban space

Dance studies appear to fall under two rather polar understandings of the body and movement. The first philosophy stems from a phenomenological study that speaks on the essence of the body by helping the viewer to understand the subjectivity of dance.⁴³²

⁴³² Sondra Horton-Fraleigh, *Dance and the lived Body. A descriptive Aesthetics*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987), 13.

This approach avoids looking separately at “the body as an instrument, movement as the medium, and mind or soul as the mover or motivational source for dance,” but rather sees these three components joined resulting in ‘natural’ movement and carrying aesthetic meaning.⁴³³ In this theoretical model “dance is seen as an outlet for intuitive or unconscious feelings inaccessible to verbal (intellectual) expression. [...] [and] dancers often cultivate a sanctimonious mutism, denying what is verbal, logical, and discursive in order to champion the physical and the sensate.”⁴³⁴ Precisely the momentous feeling and expression of inner emotions could be an end in itself; however, it lacks any form of critical analysis that could further enhance their connection.

Susan Leigh Foster, who believes in the possibility in reading dance more systematically, states: “Once the body, and subject, and the expressive act have been <denaturalized>, then the dance can be examined explicitly as a system of codes and conventions that support its meaning.”⁴³⁵ She addresses the constructed nature of dance by separating the body, movement and the subject into analyzable and semiotic ways of representation. Foster likely developed this theory after having seen the Merce Cunningham Dance Company whose director Cunningham believed that music, human feeling and movement should be seen as separate realms of events, which are arbitrarily united.⁴³⁶ Dances, therefore, could simply mean human bodies moving around and

⁴³³ Horton-Fraleigh, *Dance and the lived Body*, 13.

⁴³⁴ Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dancing. Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance*, (Berkeley / Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), xv.

⁴³⁵ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, xviii.

⁴³⁶ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, xiv.

nothing more.⁴³⁷ Cunningham often used chance to dictate the order in which movement sequences were performed. He is also considered one of the founders of postmodern dance of the 60s and 70s which broke free from modern dance techniques and hailed pedestrian movement as an art form. One of Foster's goals in her book *Reading Dancing* is to question the construction of dances:

At the same time, in much the same way that Cunningham's dances challenged our expectations when they were first presented, I hope to call into question our familiar beliefs about how a dance is made. All too often we attend a dance concert with unquestioned assumptions concerning the kind of body we will see or the kind of message we will receive. But choreographers do not necessarily share those assumptions [...].⁴³⁸

Although Foster is likely considering dance during the modern and postmodern era, her view can be applied to virtually all periods of dance. She also mentions that her encounter with performances by the Cunningham Company changed her perceptions about dance at the time similarly to how the views of authors and intellectuals were also confronted around 1900 by early modern dance. For example, Döblin's "Tänzerinnen" assuredly attests to challenging his belief about dance.

In her book Foster tries to interpret dance as a system of meaning by looking at the choreographic conventions of four American dance makers: Deborah Hay (1941-)—postmodern, George Balanchine (1904-1983)—neo-classical American ballet, Martha Graham (1894 -1991)—modern, and Merce Cunningham (1919-2009)—bridging modern into postmodern. She addresses five areas of their dance compositions: (1) the dance's frame – how it separates itself from the rest of the world, (2) modes of representation – resemblance, imitation, replication or reflection, (3) style – personal signature, (4) vocabulary – individual movements, (5) syntax - principles of selection and combination

⁴³⁷ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, xiv.

⁴³⁸ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, xvii.

of movement. Although Foster applies her theory to live dances, she, like most all dance scholars, requires a means to review the performances with use of what Schulze has called “Erinnerungstexte” such as interviews with the choreographer, reviews and, most notably, videos as many of these dances Foster analyzed had also been recorded.

I will be reading Endell, Rilke, Döblin, and Lasker-Schüler as “choreographers” who create their own dances in their writing. I will analyze and interpret these dance texts through Foster’s proposed framework. Similar to real dance makers, these writers also have to make artistic decisions in setting their “dances,” contemplate how they would like their pieces to be interpreted, use a style that is unique to their dance writing—whether poetic or prosaic or a mixture, select the kinds of movements their dancers will perform, and designate the order in which these maneuvers will be executed.

3.1 Freedom from Frames: Open Experimentation in the Urban Space

Foster’s understanding of “frames” deals primarily with how dance sets itself apart from other events particularly in the more traditional theater setting. Posters or ads in the streets and in magazines could likely lure individuals into a theater while a program would help focus their attention of a particular dance piece.⁴³⁹ The lighting, ambience and layout of the theater were also supposed to contextualize themselves as conditions surrounding an event different from the outside world.⁴⁴⁰ While her consideration of dance lies in a more conventional notion of stage performance, all of the scenes depicted by Endell, Rilke, Döblin, and Lasker-Schüler do not take place in a theater but rather in the urban space: in a street square, in the streets, in a hospital or in a

⁴³⁹ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 60.

⁴⁴⁰ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 60.

café. As already pointed out by Brandstetter—who notes that dances around 1900 were also being performed in other venues such as museums, galleries and parks—and also, as noted by Rilke, in ateliers, space played an integral part in how the audience perceived the dance.

Foster gives consideration to two different kinds of spatial constellations during a performance: the proscenium theater and the theater-in-the-round. The first:

emphasizes the separation of audience and performance by situating the action on stage in a different realm from that of the viewers. The architecture delineates a functional role for viewers – as observers who sit facing in one direction toward the stage – and for performers – as residents of the framed, boxlike structure of the stage.⁴⁴¹

This separation between viewers, who will focus their attention on the action on stage with an ideally manageable view, and actors clearly demarcates the role that each assumes. Of the four dance movement scenes discussed thus far, Endell's depiction of moving people in the square in "Vor dem Café"⁴⁴² comes closest to the proscenium theater model. During many of Endell's flâneries throughout Berlin, he, in all likelihood, walked while absorbing and illustrating the various architectural structures and urban phenomena. However, when he portrays the movement in the square, Endell sits himself at a café as he has done numerous times before on a summer evening. Similarly to when an individual would venture to the theater for an evening dance performance, the pedestrians in the square assume the role of the performers. Instead of being subjected to artificial lighting—presently undergoing tremendous technological advancement due to the widespread use of electricity—Endell instills the use of "Dämmerung" to naturally illuminate the performance. While Foster's proscenium theater will abruptly frame the

⁴⁴¹ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 60.

⁴⁴² August Endell, "Die Schönheit der großen Stadt," 115-116.

viewers' mind by using stage lighting instead of daylight, the natural dusk will color Endell's perspective and not clearly demarcate a division between square and café. Arguably others around 1900 would require a clearly recognizable, lit stage and a program in order to help them contextualize watching a dance performance. However, taking into account Endell's argument in advocating citizens to learn to perceive Berlin with an eye toward beauty, he essentially aestheticizes his daily surroundings and will envision far more 'dance performances' than others who have not learned to 'see' as he has. He will also presumptively be the only audience member watching as a flâneur: empowered in the world that he creates, yet yearning to retain his anonymity. In fact for not just the square scene but many other episodes in *Die Schönheit der großen Stadt*, the aesthetic flâneur's eye will, simply upon seeing, quickly delineate who the players in the dance performance are while at the same time establishing the stage on which it is executed. In Endell's eyes, the stage is the square while his seat in the café represents the equivalent of a prime viewing point in a theater. However, on a different day, given the unpredictability regarding his eye's aesthetic, his perception could lead him to observe only a smaller part of the square or, for that matter, an infinite number of spatial variations, where the performance takes place.

While Endell's "Vor dem Café" seems to primarily assume characteristics of the proscenium theater, Rilke's experience with the Spanish dancer embraces Foster's second type of theatrical setting theater-in-the-round:

Theater-in-the-round implies the opposite [of a proscenium setting]: the fact that any viewer can see other viewers watching the dance from other perspectives suggests that all viewing locations are valid and desirable. Equally important, the action in theaters-in-the-round is framed by the audience itself, and this frame is ambiguous. Dancers exiting from the space merge with the audience, while at the same time viewers can watch each other as part of the performance. Furthermore,

the action in a theater-in-the-round is usually more physically proximate, and viewers can see dancers sweating and breathing hard.⁴⁴³

Rilke's experience in the atelier corresponds well to this definition due in large part to the close proximity and intimate environment that the space creates. With the thirty to forty people in the room, whose attention is focused on the Spanish dancer, Rilke is also naturally inclined to not simply observe but to truly kinesthetically experience her movements. His positioning in regard to the performance allows him to also see the bodily reactions of the other viewers: some of whom are singing and dancing. Since the frame of the theater-in-the-round is also ambiguous, the energy from the Spanish dancer seems to radiate out into the audience causing them to also become part of the spectacle.

In the Veitstanz scene, the boundaries are even more ambiguous because the errand boy and the waiters are just as much dancers and actors in the performance as the old gentleman. While Endell presents himself as an artistic and authoritative player in his text—who confidently conceives of beauty in architectural structures as well as dance movement in the urban space—the young Malte, new to Paris, remains more frightened and shocked by the metropolis than happily enthusiastic. His way of framing the space—in contrast to Endell—is less defined precisely because they both reside at antithetical levels in their ability to interpret their corresponding cities. While the flâneur Endell assuredly waltzes into the Berlin streets in search of movement and structures that will stimulate his mind, Malte would rather stay at home or in the comfortable confines of the library. Nonetheless, in order to become inspired to write, Malte must also wander around Paris' urban space.

⁴⁴³ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 61.

As Malte cultivates his aesthetic acuity, as purported by Endell, it seems that his episodic, journal fragments liken themselves not only to experiencing urban phenomena but also performances of dance movement with particular regard to the “Veitstänzer.” In a much greater sense, in accordance with Endell, the city itself becomes a stage for dance. With the combination of unexpectedness associated with the metropolis and the new aesthetic seeing, the urban areas like Paris and Berlin represent an energetic space teeming with dynamic meaning for both Malte and Endell to absorb. While the entire city presents itself to them as dance, both allow their senses to detect what will be the frame of the performance *and* at which point in time. In other words, half a day of wandering in the city would likely manifest, hypothetically, at least a couple ‘performances’, and during these events the frames of the dance would be created and subsequently dynamically change. In order to illustrate this thought, focus should be directed to the scene with Malte and the “Veitstänzer.”

One could argue that the performance that Malte watches starts at the beginning of the episode as he notes that he:

will versuchen, auszugehen in die Bibliotheque National zu meinem Dichter, den ich so lange nicht gelesen habe, und vielleicht kann ich später langsam durch die Gärten gehen. Vielleicht ist Wind über dem großen Teich, der so wirkliches Wasser hat, und es kommen Kinder, die ihre Schiffe mit den roten Segeln hineinlassen und zuschauen.⁴⁴⁴

In his sheltered mind, he imagines an ideal day of how events should unfold by first going to the library—where he can bury himself in books and avoid the stress of the Parisian streets—and then into a quiet garden to watch children play with boats. As much as he would like to ‘plan’ his outings, he is forever plagued with meeting strange dwellers

⁴⁴⁴ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (Königswinter: Tandem Verlag, 2010), 62.

of the streets. Of course Malte does not actually *do* the things that he says which means he hasn't, at this point, ventured onto the 'stage' of Paris.

Before entering onto the urban 'stage', he describes his surroundings on the empty and wide Boulevard St-Michel:

Der Boulevard St-Michel war leer und weit, und es ging sich leicht auf seiner leisen Neigung. Fensterflügel oben öffneten sich mit gläsernem Aufklang, und ihr Glänzen flog wie ein weißer Vogel über die Straße. Ein Wagen mit hellroten Rädern kam vorüber, und weiter unten trug jemand etwas Lichtgrünes. Pferde liefen in blinkernden Geschirren auf dem dunkelgespritzten Fahrdamm, der rein war. Der Wind war erregt, neu, mild, und alles stieg auf: Gerüche, Rufe, Glocken.⁴⁴⁵

This rather long depiction of opening windows, flying birds, horses and carriages creates a visual setting that also functions as the beginning frame for the performance that Malte observes. As having already hinted in the text that he will meet something "Unerhörtes" earlier, his remark represents his perception of the space before any dancers emerge onto the stage.

Throughout the piece, Malte is constantly in motion as he first passes by the "[g]lattgekämmte[n] Kellner"—who react "lächelnd oder ärgerlich" to the old man—then the errand boy and finally the "Veitstänzer." In order to get to the main performer, the protagonist has to significantly traverse the urban space by passing coffeehouses and restaurants, crossing streets and bridges. Unlike "Vor dem Café" in which Endell could comfortably sit himself down to watch the droves of people walking in the square, Malte has to physically maintain a pace with his dancer: "Wir gingen beide weiter, er und ich, der Abstand zwischen uns blieb derselbe."⁴⁴⁶ Since the frame of the dance continues to change dynamically and spontaneously from second to second, one could, in fact, argue

⁴⁴⁵ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 62.

⁴⁴⁶ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 64.

that the area which both Malte and the “Veitstänzer” have to cover would be considered the actual ‘stage’ upon which the entire dance takes place; indeed, Paris then becomes subjected to dance in any of its arrondissements. The amount of movement that Malte has to undergo to remain equidistance from the Veitstänzer contrasts the theater-in-the-round view in which the dance stage stays in a relatively fixed location. To abstract even further, one could reason that the stage is actually an imaginary space given its ambiguous boundaries, which progresses wherever Malte and the old man move.

Besides the long distance that he has to travel, Malte also has “other dancers” whose ascertainable reactions help him find the “Veitstänzer.” Even though there are numerous actors who observe the old gentleman’s struggle with his body: the errand boy, the laughing waiters, and the hoard of people surrounding the dismal “Veitstänzer” at the conclusion of the scene, Malte remains, more or less, the sole audience member of the dance who takes on an *aesthetic* mode of seeing. While the other actors and observers simply see a man who has lost control of his body, Malte, in contrast, perceives a dance by describing the man’s lively movements as “Tanzkraft.”⁴⁴⁷ He also senses a tremendous amount of unexplainable feeling and connection with the man: “Von diesem Augenblick an war ich an ihn gebunden.”⁴⁴⁸ Unlike the atelier performance—in which Rilke and the other viewers were able to watch the Spanish dancer and feel inspired to dance and sing—Malte acts as the only onlooker who is able to perceive and acknowledge the “Veitstänzer’s” struggle. He does not have the luxury to see how others react to the performance as during a theater-in-the-round setting because the observers do not even treat the man’s movements as a dance.

⁴⁴⁷ Rilke, *Aufzeichnungen*, 68.

⁴⁴⁸ Rilke, *Aufzeichnungen*, 65.

As Foster mentions the difference in aesthetic meaning which a dance can assume, for instance, in a close physical proximity, in contrast to one that is situated farther away as in the case with Endell and the square, Malte's distance from the "Veitstänzer" portrays tension because, on the one hand, Malte wants to appear as if he is not watching the man, but on the other hand the protagonist also needs to stay close to the gentleman in order to maintain an optimal viewing point. This push and pull keeps Malte at an ideal position so as to keep a view of the man's full range of motion and preserve the protagonist's anonymity.

While the "Veitstänzer" scene assumes predominantly the theater-in-the-round setting and Endell's depictions, at times, embrace the theater-in-the-round and the proscenium model, Döblin's "Die Tänzerin und der Leib" takes on primarily the traditional proscenium context in which Ella either performs ballet on stage for an audience and peers or in the intimate, clinical setting of the hospital. At the beginning of the story, Döblin describes the ballerina's natural bodily development making her appropriate to become a dancer: "Sie wurde mit elf Jahren zur Tänzerin bestimmt. Bei ihrer Neigung zu Gliederverrenkungen, Grimassen und bei ihrem sonderbaren Temperament schien sie für diesen Beruf geeignet."⁴⁴⁹ The later regimented practice, which her body undergoes in the studio to reach an ideal form, also presents itself as a setting in which one would have to constantly improve, compete with other dancers, and "perform" everyday. The assumption remains that Ella would be performing on stage in leading roles, and thereby assuming the traditional proscenium model of theatrical stage dance with dramatic lighting. Döblin, however, does not depict this in the story but rather portrays Ella's conflict with her body and the other dancers' reactions to her struggle:

⁴⁴⁹ Döblin, "Die Tänzerin und der Leib," 18.

“Wenn sie allein war, stampfte sie mit dem FuÙe, drohte ihrem Leib und mühte sich mit ihm ab. Keinem sprach sie von ihrer Schwäche. Sie knischte mit den Zähnen über das Dumme, Kindische, das sie eben zu besiegen gelernt hat.”⁴⁵⁰ During dance class and rehearsal, this principal dancer must assume a confident, radiant role devoid of any bodily weakness. The room, in which class and rehearsal take place, represents the fixed area in which other dancers not only practice with the principal but are also in prime positions to observe as audience members. The “stage”, therefore, is a shared space whose boundaries change constantly between the viewer and the principal. While these frames switch, the role of the other dancers constantly alternate between dancer *and* observer. The seemingly informal classroom then transforms from a practice area into a space to be judged not only by peers but more importantly by the ballet master or mistress and artistic director. After others realized Ella’s bodily weakness, the severe, relentless scrutiny grows in intensity due to the pressure for perfection. As much as her fellow dancers may have been at awe by her graceful movement in the past, they are now questioning themselves as to if Ella can attain the same level of performance as before.

As she cannot withstand the fixed conventions of a ballet lifestyle, she is taken into the clinical throngs of an alienating hospital ward away from her mother and her duties as a dancer. She does, however, assume another unforeseen “dancing” role as a patient who struggles with her body like the “Veitstänzer.” Instead of her fellow company members closely examining her body and movement, it is the doctors who scientifically inspect and investigate the “new dancer” that Ella is becoming. In doing so they have created another proscenium model within the confines of her hospital room and which is now designated as the “stage.” Like the company members who would watch and

⁴⁵⁰ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 18.

scrutinize her dancing daily, the doctors embody this practice, however, to an even more extreme degree by observing her several times a day whilst noting her symptoms and giving her medicine. The way in which both parties view her body and movement differ greatly as the other dancers remained likely in awe of Ella's virtuosic talent and her elegant presence. Her fellow dancers might be captivated by her beauty and would wholly be observing her moving body as performing a dance work. On the other hand, the doctors see namely a deranged girl with an unknown sickness and view her symptoms less as an aesthetic dance display and rather as an objective, medical case to be solved. Ella is, however, dancing for the wrong audience. Neither the dance company members, the doctors, nor Ella herself are able to understand her display and why the effects of modernity are wreaking havoc on her body. The closest audience members, who are not present at her final suicide dance but could undoubtedly perceive and obtain an interpretation of the dancer, would be the writers—such as Endell, Rilke, Döblin, and Lasker-Schüler—and the reader as they have acquired the ability to sense such events aesthetically. These writers may not be able to critically express themselves with eloquence concerning the new, free modern dance; however, they are just discovering this movement form as a new medium of articulative motion. Döblin's "Tänzerinnen" attests that he remains one who can begin to understand and open dialogue concerning this new, dynamic form of expression.

While the texts from Endell, Döblin and Rilke correspond varyingly to the proscenium and theater-in-the-round model, Lasker-Schüler's whimsical and poetic depiction of the Café des Westens as an oriental dancer far exceeds and transcends the borders between viewer and movement display making the scene even more difficult to

definitively frame. At the beginning of the scene the narrator remarks leaving the Café des Westens which she often frequents and thus provides the only clue as to her physical position in regard to the café. The narrator's ambiguous positioning during the dance scene proves even more problematic as she describes the café:

Das Cafe Kurfürstendamm ist eine Frau, eine orientalische Tänzerin. Sie zerstreut mich, sie tröstet mich, sie entzückt mich durch die vielen süßerlei Farben ihres Gewands. Eine Bewegung ist in dem Café, es dreht sich geheimnisvoll wie der schimmernde Leib der Fatme. Verschleierte Herzen sind die sternumhangenen, kleinen Nischen der Galerien. O, was man da alles sagen und lauschen kann – leise singen Violinen, selige Stimmungen. Das Cafe ist das lebendig gewordene Plakat Lucian Bernhards.⁴⁵¹

As the position of the narrator is not clear, it appears rather that Lasker-Schüler might actually be “dancing” *with* the café because the radiating motion that the space creates animates and brings everyone and everything within its vicinity to lively movement. Similar to Rilke's atelier scene with the Spanish dancer, she is creating an ambience that penetrates each audience member by transposing her movements and feeling onto them so that they begin singing and dancing. While the Spanish woman functions as the central figure whose dance radiates out onto the others, the oriental dancer embodies the entire café acting rather as a transcendental body. Lasker-Schüler's dance scene—along with many other episodes in *Mein Herz*—adheres neither to the proscenium nor the theater-in-the-round model because of the ambiguous depiction of space. Since the café *is* the oriental dancer, then the depiction seems to also imply that both are a stage upon which the movement happens. Essentially the narrator presents a variety of activities that characterize the liveliness and mood of a café, which she further aestheticizes by portraying them on a stage.

⁴⁵¹ Else Lasker-Schüler, *Mein Herz: Ein Liebesroman mit Bildern und wirklich lebenden Menschen. Mit Zeichnungen der Autorin aus der Ausgabe von 1912* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1989), 150-151.

The idea of a stage also emerged earlier in *Mein Herz* as the narrator and Varieté dancer Getrude Barrison attend an Egyptian exhibition at Luna Park.⁴⁵² While both are present to learn and observe, they suddenly become swept into a dancing escapade on the “Islambühne” with Barrison dancing a solo and the narrator with Minn:

Aber bei den Bauchtänzerinnen ereignete sich eines der Wunder meines arabischen Buches, ich tanzte mit Minn, dem Sohn des Sultans von Marokko. Wir tanzten, tanzten wie zwei Tanzschlangen, oben auf der Islambühne, wir krochen ganz aus uns heraus, nach den Locktönen der Bambusflöte des Bändigers, nach der Trommel, pharaonenalt, mit den ewigen Schellen. Und Gertrude tanzte auch, aber wie eine Muse, nicht muselhaft wie wir, sie tanzte mit graziösen, schlankhaften Armen die Craquette, ihre Finger wehten wie Fransen.⁴⁵³

As with the oriental dancer café example, the lines demarcating those of a stage and the audience are intentionally ambiguous. However the roles—which the narrator and Barrison assume as spectators at first—change instantaneously as they become part of the dancing spectacle themselves. The narrator’s penchant for oriental culture presents itself at first glance as simply a respectful admiration, however, subsequently transforms into a physically emotional state that launches her and Barrison into an exotic, intoxicating dance drenching them in a culture to which they direly would like to partake in. Among the four authors, Lasker-Schüler’s text is the only one that self portrays a protagonist actually becoming part of an urban dance display. This event highlights the unforeseen metropolitan encounter and exhibits the surprising reversal of frames during a performance.

Despite Foster’s rather traditional proscenium and theater-in-the-round models presenting the relationship between the audience and the performers, they serve as a basis for discussing space and movement. The texts of Endell, Döblin, Rilke, and Lasker-

⁴⁵² Lasker-Schüler, *Mein Herz*, 7.

⁴⁵³ Lasker-Schüler, *Mein Herz*, 7-8.

Schüler deviate immensely from these forms in order to fulfill their depictions of dance within an urban environment whether in a café, in the streets or within an institutional setting. By essentially freeing themselves from conventional methods of dance choreography in the theater, these four writers are able to experiment in the many metropolitan structures and expanses using urban space as a creative canvas in the undertaking of their writing dance. Their scenes belie the lines between audience member and performer and transcend the notion of stage space.

3.2 Demanding New Modes of Representation

After situating the audience's relationship spatially in regard to the performers, Foster discusses four types of representation modes in which dance movement can be perceived. In order to explain *resemblance*, she uses the example of curved arm movements to symbolize a wandering river:

The movement does not look precisely like that of a meandering river. In fact, it embodies a quality shared by many events in the world—a vine creeping up the side of a building, snake moving in grass. [...] Viewers can easily make mistakes in identifying what the movement *resembles*, but this seldom matters. Either the precise nature of what is represented becomes clear as the dance continues, or an apprehension of something meandering is all that interpretation of the dance requires.⁴⁵⁴

Building upon the notion of resemblance, *replication* represents:

a dynamic system, an organic whole made up of functionally distinct parts. The movement replicates the relationship of these parts – for example, between the flowing water and the bounded channel between the current and the small island.[...] As in *resemblance*, the exact identity of the replicated event may be unclear. [...] But in *resemblance* a single quality of the river is selected and then depicted, whereas in *replication* a relationship between qualities is represented.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁴ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 65.

⁴⁵⁵ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 66.

While these two qualities seem to intertwine with each other, *imitation* sets itself apart from these others as it—still using the river example—produces a schematized version of the river’s appearance: “Imitation depends on a spatial and temporal conformity between represented entity and danced step. Imitative representation leaves little doubt about the referent of the movement, so the viewer is encouraged not only to identify the movement as riverlike but also to evaluate how well it renders the river.”⁴⁵⁶ An example of imitation would be using a piece of blue fabric stretched across a stage to represent a river.

The last kind of representation that Foster addresses is *reflection* which “makes exclusive reference to the performance of movement and only tangentially alludes to other events in the world.”⁴⁵⁷ A prime instance would be the ballet vocabulary as it is meant simply to be beautiful and has little reference to occurrences outside of the dance realm. The story ballets of the nineteenth century predominantly assume the modes of *reflection* and *imitation* as their movement terminology do not further the plot; ballet dancers often pantomime their movements such as playing an instrument or nodding their heads which *imitates* real life and can be easily read and understood by the audience.⁴⁵⁸

While these ballets contained a linear plot line and easily recognizable characters, the modern dancers of the twentieth century created dances that took on brief episodes of *imitative* representation within a *replicative* narrative structure.⁴⁵⁹ Foster further illustrates: “[Mary] Wigman dresses like a witch for her Witch Dance (1914) but performs movements that *replicate* “witchness.” That is, she does not imitate stirring

⁴⁵⁶ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 65.

⁴⁵⁷ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 68.

⁴⁵⁸ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 69.

⁴⁵⁹ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 75.

toads into a kettle but rather assembles enigmatic menacing shapes of unpredictable duration into one foreboding figure.”⁴⁶⁰

With these four modes of representation, one can attempt to read and interpret particular movement sequences within the context of their respective dances. Endell’s episode “Vor dem Café” thematizes dance movement by depicting pedestrians moving into different forms in a square: “Die Menschenströme der benachbarten Straßen lösen sich hier nach allen Richtungen auf, und der ganze Platz scheint bedeckt von vereinzelt Menschen. Jeder löst sich vom anderen. [...] Alle Menschen sind frei voneinander, bald nahen sie sich zu größerer Dichte, bald lassen sie Lücken, fortwährend ist die Teilung des Raumes eine andere. [...] ...und so wird der Raum zwischen ihnen ein fühlbares, ungeheures, lebendiges Wesen. [...]”⁴⁶¹ To an everyday observer, one could say that these movements are *imitative* of commonplace motions of pedestrians going about their daily activity—even though Endell does not mention this explicitly. Endell and other aesthetes would be able to perceive a *resemblance* in continual, flowing sequences of dancing people creating beautiful shapes while maintaining a persistent vitality. As not just an individual but masses of people are moving in the square, Endell indeed remarks that this activity *resembles* a tangible, monstrous, living being.

While Endell’s depiction involves the swarming of groups and anonymous people—devoting little attention to the individual, Rilke channels his energy into the solo dance of the “Veitstänzer.” Malte’s experience with the man demonstrates three main progressions that characterize the man’s movement: the hopping, the flipping of the

⁴⁶⁰ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 75.

⁴⁶¹ Endell, “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt,” 115-116.

collar, and the final movement combination. The gentleman's dance begins with the abrupt jumping and skipping: "Aber kaum war er oben, zog er das eine Bein ein wenig an und hüpfte auf dem anderen einmal hoch und gleich darauf wieder und wieder. Jetzt konnte man diese plötzliche Bewegung wieder ganz gut für ein Stolpern halten.[...]"⁴⁶²

The hopping scene acquires an *imitative* nature as it appears that his jumping could refer to any kind of everyday activity, however, the repetitive aspect leads one to soon regard it as eccentric. The "Veitstänzer's" skipping and slipping is not only surprising to the observer Malte but also to the man himself who seems to think he has tripped over something. When observed in isolation, the man's movements could *resemble* the jarringness of the modern individual's senses of experiencing the unexpected stimuli of a city. The unsteady and abrupt walk could also *resemble* a deeply troubled person who experiences difficulty in his daily life.

During the next sequence as the man tries to adjust his collar, two prominent movements emerge: "eine heimliche, rasche, mit welcher er den Kragen unmerklich hochklappte, und jene andere ausführliche, anhaltende, gleichsam übertrieben buchstabierte Bewegung, die das Umlegen des Kragens bewerkstelligen sollte."⁴⁶³

Although the man seems to be performing *imitative*, commonplace movements of adjusting his collar, this illusion is shattered once the incessant repetition begins. While keeping the hopping sequence in mind as one interprets this scene, the collar episode could *resemble* two polar opposite ways in which a city dweller could be perceiving his surroundings: at first in an emphatic, reactionary manner and second in a slow, overly contemplative way. Throughout the protagonist's experience of watching the man, Malte

⁴⁶² Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 64.

⁴⁶³ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 65.

reflects deeply regarding the “Veitstänzer’s” movement and circumstances, but within seconds the man’s symptoms change dramatically forcing Malte to react accordingly.

The last progression results in the culmination of all his isolated movements into a grand medley:

Es ging. Nun kam etwas Unsicheres in den Gang, nun lief er zwei Schritte, und nun stand er. Stand. Die linke Hand löste sich leise vom Stock ab und hob sich so langsam empor, daß ich sie vor der Luft zittern sah; er schob den Hut ein wenig zurück und strich sich über die Stirn. Er wandte ein wenig den Kopf, und sein Blick schwankte über Himmel, Häuser und Wasser hin, ohne zu fassen, und dann gab er nach. Der Stock war fort, er spannte die Arme aus, als ob er auffliegen wollte, und es brach aus ihm wie eine Naturkraft und bog ihn vor und riß ihn zurück und ließ ihn nicken und neigen und schleuderte Tanzkraft aus ihm heraus unter die Menge.⁴⁶⁴

As Foster remarks on the significance of movement patterns becoming clearer as a dance performance continues and nears its end, one would likely read this last section as an exhibition and repetition of the various movements that he had performed in the earlier sequences. His feet, legs, arms, torso—including his hat and cane as other bodily extensions—are fully engaged having taken on a life of their own. In the two previous progressions in which one could detect a *resemblance* in the separate scenes, this present sequence now *replicates* the problematic relationship of the individual living in a metropolis among swarms of city bustle. By being coerced to engage with perceiving multiple stimuli, his senses overload and his psyche becomes exhausted.

These three sequences from Rilke’s dance text demonstrate how they parallel the modes of representation in modern dances during the twentieth century which tended to utilize predominantly *resemblance*, *replication* and sometimes *imitation* as opposed to the nineteenth century ballets that nearly exclusively favored *imitation* and *reflection*. Similar to choreographers at the time, Rilke was also concerned with creating dances and

⁴⁶⁴ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 68.

activating the body as a medium to not simply give the audience an easily understandable text. Instead the “Veitstänzer’s” mysterious performance, like the other modern dances being performed at the time, were supposed to demand interpretation and intellectual contemplation.

The representational gap between ballet and modern dance is clearly exemplified in Döblin’s “Die Tänzerin und der Leib” in which the protagonist Ella essentially straddles both realms and essentially becomes a casualty due to her incapacity to cope with modern dance and ultimately modernity. Although the young woman does not perform any kind of movement until the end of the story, the traditional modes of representation that she would have likely undertaken as a ballerina include *imitation* and *reflection*. The roles, costumes and set design all point to *imitative* aspects of life’s past centuries, while the *reflective* ballet vocabulary simply refers to itself and is not tied to any deeper meaning other than beautiful movement. However, as soon as she becomes an inhabitant of the hospital ward under heavy supervision of doctors and nurses, her bodily symptoms react even more violently. The final movement sequence also involves the media of drawing in an attempt to articulate herself as her body seems no longer to move in harmony with her will:

Sie wollte wieder tanzen, tanzen. Wie einstmals, als ihr straffer Leib wie eine Flamme geweht hatte, wollte sie ihren Willen wieder fühlen. Sie wollte einen Walzer, einen wunderschönen, mit ihm tanzen, der ihr Herr geworden war, mit dem Leib. Mit einer Bewegung ihres Willens konnte sie ihn noch einmal bei den Händen fassen, den Leib, das träge Tier, ihn hinwerfen, herumwerfen, und er war nicht mehr der Herr über sie. Ein triumphierender Haß wühlte sie von innen auf, nicht er ging zur Rechten und sie zur Linken, sondern sie, - sie sprangen mitsamt. Sie wollte ihn auf den Boden kollern, die Tonne das hinkende Männlein, Hals über Kopf es hintrudeln, ihm Sand ins Maul stecken.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁵ Alfred Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” in *Jagende Rosse. Der schwarze Vorhang und andere frühe Erzählwerke*, ed. Christina Althen (Olthen: Walter Verlag, 1981), 21.

This sequence represents all four modes of representation as they both seem to battle each other for attention. Instead of choosing to perform ballet, Ella selects another conventional dance whose aim is to attain harmony with another partner: the waltz. This social dance form like ballet also assumes the *imitative* representation of a man and woman dancing, bowing and curtsying as well as the *reflective* vocabulary consisting of codified steps lacking reference to any outside phenomena. Although Ella's will had been lacking throughout most of the story, she musters enough energy for her last attack on her modern body. Their immense hate for one another seems momentarily melodious as they move together, however, given the tremendous problems that both encountered throughout the story, such a display simply reads as contrived. This dance sequence could be *replicating* the inner battle of many dancers who feel the push and pull between performing traditional (ballet) and modern dance forms. Similarly on a large scale: the antagonistic relationship between ballet and modern dance as cultural institutions is *replicated* in the symbolic struggle between Ella and her modern body.

While Döblin's dance text presents a tormented ballerina unable to come to terms with her own body, the oriental dancer café in Lasker-Schüler's *Mein Herz* embodies movement, spatial dimension and a representation that is essentially *unimaginable*. Because of the narrator's poetic language, the movement qualities of the café as dancer become even less definable: "Das Cafe Kurfürstendamm ist eine Frau, eine orientalische Tänzerin.[...] Eine Bewegung ist in dem Cafe, es dreht sich geheimnisvoll wie der schimmernde Leib der Fatme."⁴⁶⁶ In fact the woman is not described in motion but rather inspiring movement to reverberate throughout the café. The dancer café does not assume

⁴⁶⁶ Lasker-Schüler, *Mein Herz*, 151.

any *imitative* qualities as her incomprehensible representation as an architectural structure remains surely unheard of. This sequence *replicates* the relationship between the café as an urban building and the movement and liveliness within. The scene involving the narrator's dance with Minn on the Islambühne demonstrates *imitative* representation that probably appears as a couple dancing on a stage without any preconceived desire to contemplate how they are portraying themselves.

Interestingly enough these movement sequences all appear to have a hint of *imitative* representation because they simulate everyday behaviors: hopping, flipping of a collar, walking around in a square, dancing a waltz. Depending on the context and way in which someone could be watching these scenes, an observer could also read these episodes as representations of *resemblance* and *replication*, which strikingly mirror these comparable attributes detected in modern dances of the twentieth century. These progressive sequences are generally not conceived by the protagonists as traditional, staged performances, but rather unpredictable events whose movement qualities themselves *resemble* a dance. Once the protagonists believe that the displays which they see *are* or *are similar* to dances, then they can begin to contemplate the mode of representation that each assumes as well as the message that the performance tries to communicate.

3.3 Style: Fragmented Individuals or Sweeping Swarms

Besides addressing the framing and the possible modes of representation that these dance texts employ, Foster also approaches the area of style which she defines: “Any stylistic choice in dance implies a background of alternatives rejected in favor of

some feature of movement that lends a distinctiveness to, by signifying an identity for, its bearer,”⁴⁶⁷ and “[it] results from three related sets of choreographic conventions: the quality with which the movement is performed, the characteristic use of parts of the body, and the dancer’s orientation in the performance space.”⁴⁶⁸ In a similar sense to how our writers were known for their particular style that characterized their writing, choreographers, and for that matter these authors in their dance texts, also assume various traits that make their characteristic manners unique to them. Since the framing of a dance deals considerably with reading space, I will concentrate on applying qualities of movement and body part usage in regard to these text’s styles.

Movement quality, also called texture, was further developed in the 1920s by Rudolf Laban who established a comprehensive system involving four aspects called “efforts”: space, time, weight and flow. Each of these components consists of two opposing characteristics – “indirect and direct for space, sustained and quick for time, strong and light for weight, and free and bound for flow. All human movement, according to Laban, exhibits constellations of these factors that form identifiable efforts or textures of movement.”⁴⁶⁹ Foster continues outlining Laban’s theory:

Laban further postulates that specific combinations of the four factors correspond to psychological states or drives. For example, certain combinations of weight and flow are associated with dreamlike, subconscious states of mind, whereas combinations of space and time may show that the person is engaged in conscious and practical thinking. Thus strength and bound flow together indicate cramped concentration or even gloominess, whereas lightness and bound flow enjoin to signify a tentativeness of feelings. And directness in space when added to

⁴⁶⁷ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 76.

⁴⁶⁸ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 77.

⁴⁶⁹ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 77-78.

quickness in time reveals a pointed and exacting thinking process, while a use of indirect space and sustained time signals a slow evaluation of all possibilities.⁴⁷⁰

In addition to addressing movement qualities, style also approaches characteristic uses of the body. Foster summarizes many of the key representations associated with Isadora Duncan's and Martha Graham's choreography, which can be applied to the movement episodes from our four authors:

At the time these women began to choreograph, movement of the pelvis was associated, as it still is, with sexual, primitive instincts and desires; the chest indicated emotions and feelings; and the head was thought to symbolize intellect, rationality and the process of thinking. Similarly, the periphery of the body was seen as more articulate and intelligent than the intuitive central body, and the forthright, active and social right side of the body contrasted with the obscure, unconscious left side.[...] [They] relied on these and many more detailed cultural codes of the body to convey their artistic mission.⁴⁷¹

Since Endell's square does not involve the depiction of body parts, I will concentrate on reading the movement qualities of the swarm of people as a larger, general phenomenon. Endell emphasizes the mass motion of the crowd who generally assumes a combination of direct and indirect use of space as they "lösen sich hier nach allen Richtungen auf, und der ganze Platz scheint bedeckt von vereinzelt Menschen."⁴⁷² This description shows as if the dancers have been chaotically ejected into the performance in every which way demonstrating indirect space. Slowly the single people begin to form "größere[...] Dichte" that dissolve and later form groups that intermingle and cover each other. Soon it appears as if they are working together for a common goal and utilize direct space with light weight. Although each person is walking around, the strong groundedness is not as emphasized as the lightness and agility associated with moving

⁴⁷⁰ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 78.

⁴⁷¹ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 79.

⁴⁷² Endell, "Die Schönheit der großen Stadt," 115.

quickly in the square. Given the spatial directness of a majority of the dance scene, the pedestrians could be either practically thinking or strolling carefreely to arrive to the next designated space.

Viewing the “Veitstänzer’s” sequences through the lenses of movement quality and body part engagement will hopefully shed more light on the three separate progressions discussed in the previous section. During the skipping scene the old man hops on one leg, then subsequently onto the other and repeats it on the same side. The importance of this sequence is emphasized by the focus on *just* his legs, which are the body parts helping him travel through space allowing the dance to even happen. Without the use of his legs, the man would be unable to escape other’s watching him, and the dynamism of the performance would be lost. While his legs represent the first body part to become symptomatic of his disease—which demonstrate his abnormal gait and gives signs of his struggle—the man is also depicted with a cane that functions as a third leg: ironically controlled by his unstable hands. Foster remarked earlier that the outer limbs are “more articulate and intelligent than the intuitive central body.[...]” which is in the case of the old man demonstrative of the almost exclusive use and even isolation of movement that is first assumed by his legs and later by his hands. Reading his body in such a manner allows one to see the agility and rationality associated with the “Veitstänzer’s” desire to control his symptoms while in public.

During the collar scene, in which only his hands and arms are engaged, and the final medley that results in his demise, the “Veitstänzer’s” torso and pelvis are hardly mentioned. Instead of the disease attacking the intuitive bodily center, it is wreaking havoc on the man’s extremities: the proximal and most articulate body parts that could

lead an observer to think that he is sick. While his limbs have a mind of their own, his core is able to help him stabilize and maintain composure until the very end in which he loses control of his *entire* body. In the last scene, his head also becomes engaged in the potpourri of movement: “Er wandte ein wenig den Kopf, und sein Blick schwankte über Himmel, Häuser und Wasser hin, ohne zu fassen, und dann gab er nach.”⁴⁷³ Typically characterized as housing rationality and the process of thinking, the center of the man’s intellect, is unable to maintain composure as his head is taken through its full range of motion. The diseases full power over the entire body allows it to contort the man against his will resulting in unorthodox and, likely, unheard of movement sequences scaring and perhaps even captivating the young aesthete Malte: “...ich [richtete] meine ganze Aufmerksamkeit auf seine Beine [...]”⁴⁷⁴

The movement quality associated with the legs unfortunately is not depicted in detail, however the collar sequence with the hands can be read with Laban’s system: “eine heimliche, rasche, mit welcher er den Kragen unmerklich hochklappte, und jene andere ausführliche, anhaltende, gleichsam übertrieben buchstabierte Bewegung, die das Umlegen des Kragens bewerkstelligen sollte.”⁴⁷⁵ The first hand movement can be interpreted as having a fixed and directed path in space and utilizes quick time as the goal is to clearly and distinctly flip the collar up. Although not depicted in the text, one could also assume that the weight of the movement is light because its directional aim is headed upward instead of down, and flow would likely be bound. By reading the four movement qualities of this sequence, one could interpret them as conscious and focusing yet

⁴⁷³ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 68.

⁴⁷⁴ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 65.

⁴⁷⁵ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 65.

performed in a tentative and reserved manner as if the man were trying to hide his symptoms. The second hand movements operate in contrast to the first as space is still used directly, while weight is light as the motion continues to reach upward, and flow remains bound, however, time becomes sustained and drawn out. One could still read this sequence as a focused, tentative and concerted effort to flip the collar back down, yet the secretive manner associated with the first sequence is clearly lost as now the second movement emphasizes elongated time. The poetics and word choice of the hand depiction also relays a corresponding aesthetic experience for the reader as Rilke uses only two, short-syllabic adjectives describing the first hand motion: “heimliche, rasche” which serve as a contrast to the five, long-syllabic modifiers depicted in the second: “andere ausführliche, anhaltende, gleichsam übertrieben buchstabierte.”⁴⁷⁶ While establishing an imaginable dance display, these poetics resemble a text that Wittmann would argue comes closest to reestablishing the kinesthetic experience of watching live dance for the reader.

While the “Veitstänzer” displays his isolated, abrupt movement in a large space, Ella must deal with being in a much smaller, institutional environment with constant supervision. Since her body seems to be taking over her will, the former ballerina has not only lost the ability to speak, but loses her own energy to express herself through dance. It is not until she hears military music from outside the hospital, that she becomes inspired into artistic creation. She demands silk and a canvas with which to embroider and first sketches a prophetic depiction of a girl stabbing an amorphous blob: “ein kleines Mädchen, das auf nackten Füßen hüpfte, eine lange Nase mit der linken Hand und stieß mit der rechten eine spitze Schere von unten in den Leib, so daß der Leib wie eine Tonne

⁴⁷⁶ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 65.

auslief in dickem Strahl.”⁴⁷⁷ Although she herself is not dancing, she expresses her feelings through a visual media by creating a dance image, which can also be analyzed as a text. Much like a live event occurring in Ella’s hospital room, which cannot be perceived by the reader, her physical drawing is also not seen because both media then have to be transposed and rendered into the readable form of text.

While movement quality cannot be detected because of the picture’s static qualities, specific body parts can still be read. Döblin brings attention to the little girl’s bare feet, a clear sign of modern dance, and the use of both her hands. As was ascertained in the depiction of the “Veitstänzer” whose peripheral limbs were emphasized, Döblin’s depiction of the picture once again engages these body parts to signal articulation and intelligence as well as to demonstrate their ability to physically attack the blob of modernity. Foster’s remark concerning “the forthright, active and social right side of the body contrasted with the obscure, unconscious left side”⁴⁷⁸ displays itself clearly in the depiction of the long nose held in her left hand, which represents a perhaps ambiguous and latent desire, while the scissors in her right hand symbolize the lively, direct action against the amorphous body. While the little girl is displayed with a normal body—hands, feet and assuredly a torso and head, modernity is set up to directly contrast a nebulous embodiment: “ein runder unförmiger Leib auf zwei Beinen, ohne Arm und Kopf, nichts als seine zweibeinige, dicke Kugel.”⁴⁷⁹ This blob has still yet to be formed by the scientists and intellectuals, who are trying to expand their knowledge and give contours to their new discovery. Although the girl in the drawing is attempting to destroy

⁴⁷⁷ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 21

⁴⁷⁸ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 79.

⁴⁷⁹ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 21.

modernity, the non-human characteristics of the amorphous body would simply disperse itself even more instead of perish.

As a direct comparison, one can also consider Döblin's depiction of Ella's actual final performance:

Sie rief mit einer Stimme, die urplötzlich heiser geworden war, nach dem Doktor. Über sich gebeugt, sah sie ihm von unten ins Gesicht, wie er erstaunt die Stickerei betrachtete, sagte dann mit ruhiger Stimme zu ihm auf: 'Du Affe, -- Du Affe, Du Schlappschwanz.' Und stieß sich, die Decke abwerfend, die Nähscere in die linke Brust. [...] ⁴⁸⁰

While her childish insult—"Schlappschwanz"—demonstrates her perception of the doctor's supposed impotence and lack of virility, the opposite occurs: the doctors find her developing symptoms even more intriguing and their scientific "excitement" is further aroused. Before Ella kills herself, she wants the doctor to witness her suicide and her prophetic embroidery so as to involve him in her performance. Stooped over as if to hide herself while looking up at the doctor, thus recapitulates the drawing in which she is depicted stabbing the blob from under; however in the live performance she stabs herself and not the blob. As she tears away her comfort blanket, Ella has to reveal her chest: home of her "emotions and feelings"⁴⁸¹ but also her heart. Unfortunately like the picture, the movement qualities of this scene are not significantly addressed, however, one could assume that the stabbing scene used space directly to add to the suspenseful theatrics, while the action was performed quickly, otherwise the doctor may have tried to stop her. Bound flow could be read as representing the direness of her situation as her body is likely tense and controlled, and the weight would assuredly be light instead of a strong, downward motion, since she is striking her upper left chest.

⁴⁸⁰ Döblin, "Die Tänzerin und der Leib," 21.

⁴⁸¹ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 79.

While Rilke's and Döblin's dance scenes were often characterized with movement qualities utilizing direct space, quick time and bound flow, Lasker-Schüler's oriental dancer café assumes many of the opposite traits creating a different mood and aesthetic for its protagonist and reader. The café's unorthodox bodily appearance, with lack of normal body parts, creates difficulties in interpreting this dancing structure. On the one hand the narrator uses an entirely poetic image by calling the café an oriental dancer, which conjures up many visual associations, however, this description is not followed by the most concrete depiction of the dancer. One characteristic of the dancer mentioned are "die vielen süßerlei Farben ihres Gewands,"⁴⁸² to which Brandstetter argues:

Die Hülle des Gewandes ist nicht 'Verkleidung', sondern eine Art Haut des Tanzes.[...] Die Drapierung des Schleiers bezeichnet die Zone des Übergangs; wie der Tanz selbst entfaltet der Schleier den transitorischen Akt eines beweglichen Bedeutungsstiftens und Bedeutungsverschiebens: Zum einen ist es der Körper, der im Schleier erst zur Erscheinung kommt, der sich in die Hülle gewissermaßen einformt und sie durch seine 'Contour' (J.J. Winckelmann) prägt. Zum anderen aber tritt das Gewand, der Schal in seiner Kontur-auflösenden Beweglichkeit in den Vordergrund, im abstrahierenden Prozeß einer Verwandlung des Körpers gleichsam in die Textur des Gewebes hinein.⁴⁸³

Brandstetter relates not only the body to the drapery, but also the transformation of the body *into* the fabric. Instead of maintaining focus on the textile, Lasker-Schüler pulls the emphasis from the oriental dancer and her "skin" and metamorphoses her into the café retaining the continuous dancing and infectious movement. Unlike the individual body parts such as the head, chest and extremities, which characterized Rilke and Döblin's dance scenes, Lasker-Schüler uses the drapery as a skin representing the dancer's *entire* body in order to convey a wholly encompassing movement that reverberates throughout

⁴⁸² Lasker-Schüler, *Mein Herz*, 151.

⁴⁸³ Brandstetter, *Tanz-Lektüren*, 126.

the café: “Eine Bewegung ist in dem Café, es dreht sich geheimnisvoll wie der schimmernde Leib der Fatme.”⁴⁸⁴ The echoed motion in the café conveys an implicit, indirect use of space due to the lack of designation and implies an aimless meandering without any goal. The turning, secretive movement also reads more likely as sustained time with a wandering quality deprived of urgency. Instead of a strong, earthy, weighted feeling, the café movement can be interpreted as light and carefree. Similarly the flow assumes a freer instead of bound motion that implies a “dreamlike, subconscious state[...] of mind.”⁴⁸⁵ As if having intoxicated the entire café life with her beguiling dance, the reverberated movement creates a relaxed, less serious yet lively atmosphere. As the narrator remarked in the beginning how the oriental dancer café calmed, consoled and excited her, the movement created in the café has a similar soothing, freeness and playfulness affecting not only those in the café but also the reader.

While Döblin and Rilke’s dance texts use specifically isolated, gestural body movements to convey not only a fragmentary depiction of the effects of modernity, but also by using, quick, direct and bound qualities to portray great tension, Lasker-Schüler and Endell engage an entirely abstract body—a soothing café dancer and an energetic and dynamic swarm of people. As the dancer café echoes movement throughout the space, the pedestrians unite as a single “lebendiges Wesen” to engage their entire bodies and convey their motion. Both Endell’s and Lasker-Schüler’s style in their dance texts evoke larger, abstract bodies to create a pleasant wave of seemingly revitalizing energy for its protagonists and the reader in which to indulge. On the other hand, Döblin’s and Rilke’s choreographic style uses detailed, gestural and peripheral articulations of human bodies

⁴⁸⁴ Lasker-Schüler, *Mein Herz*, 151.

⁴⁸⁵ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 78.

to scare and overwhelm the senses of their observers in hopes of causing intellectual contemplation.

3.4 Vocabulary and Syntax: Incessant Repetition or Natural Pathos

Foster's final two ways to read dance consider the movement vocabulary and the choreographic work's syntax. While ballet has around 200 individual steps codified in lexica, the majority of modern dance choreographers do not have such a well-developed catalogue but have created principles for generating steps: Doris Humphrey, for example, is known for her fall and recovery sequences and Martha Graham for her contract and release progression. To contrast style from vocabulary Foster states: "The style washes over the entire vocabulary of a dance, giving it a cultural and individual identity, whereas the vocabulary sets structural limits on the number and kinds of moves in a given dance and determines their discreteness."⁴⁸⁶ While one could characterize Döblin and Rilke's dance texts as having an unexpected, frightening, and curious style, Endell and Lasker-Schüler's works exhibit a sensually rich, relaxing yet intoxicating style with simply a general, enrapturing movement as their vocabulary. If all their individual movements from their dance texts translate into an applicable collection, then our authors as choreographers must decide how to structure and sequence their movement while giving consideration to how their dances would be interpreted.

Syntactic choices involving movement, according to Foster, can be organized under the following major headings: mimesis, pathos, and parataxis.⁴⁸⁷ Mimesis essentially stems from the idea of repetition: "Recurrence is one of the most common and

⁴⁸⁶ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 91.

⁴⁸⁷ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 92.

readily apparent structuring devices lending both coherence and complexity to the dance: moves previously associated with one dancer or seen in a specific context can recur in a new context that gives them added significance.”⁴⁸⁸ Creative variations of repetition are found particularly with Rilke’s “Veitstänzer” and Endell’s square. While their scenes seem to be based on more design and structure, Lasker-Schüler’s dance assumes the role of the syntactic trait of pathos in which it simply “feels” right to set any particular movement: “In a way that can be felt and understood if not explained, each syntactic choice builds the relationship between psychological and physical space in the dance toward an inevitable conclusion.”⁴⁸⁹ Dancers such as Graham and Wigman would choreograph in such a way that they let their “emotional life, dream life, or the realm of intuition, inspiration and impulse” inform their sequencing of movement.⁴⁹⁰

The final type of syntactic device, which relates more to mimesis than to the feeling of pathos, is parataxis which “includes diverse procedures for sequencing movement that range from aleatory techniques to variations on spatial or temporal properties of movement. These procedures have in common a formulaic approach to the organization of movement.”⁴⁹¹ A majority of the authors utilize variations as a choreographic device both spatially and temporally. In terms of spatial variation, movement can be performed by a different body part, on a different plane, in reverse motion, in the air or on the ground, while examples of temporal variation deal with altered movement speed such as legato or staccato: much in the spirit of music.

⁴⁸⁸ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 93.

⁴⁸⁹ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 94.

⁴⁹⁰ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 93.

⁴⁹¹ Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 94-95.

While Foster's analytical devices such as style and modes of representation focused on smaller movement sequences to derive their meaning, syntax encompasses the dances as a whole and will be treated as such. In regard to the syntax of all four of the performances, Brandstetter notes a fundamental trait that dances and dance texts share: namely the dramaturgy of the "Sukzession und Steigerung von Bewegungselementen,"⁴⁹² which thus addresses the tactical conceptualization with great consideration given to the aesthetics and reactions for a piece. Although Brandstetter's remarks are in regard to the intensity of Rilke's poem "Spanische Tänzerin," her thoughts are demonstrated in the four texts by slowly introducing the movement vocabulary, and then gradually varying the sequences and finally ending with a flourish. I argue that these three general patterns seem to dominate the progression of these dance texts in an attempt to not only move the protagonist(s) but also the reader.

Endell assumes a mixture of mimesis and pathos in order to create his exciting piece in "Vor dem Café." His piece can be sectioned into three parts: first, the pedestrians enter the square and slowly begin to move, second, the people form groups and the movement intensifies, third, color, weather and other supplementary objects are used to even further enhance the unfolding "Raumleben" of the square. The beginning portion of the dance involves streams of pedestrian entering the space from the streets. The square appears to be filled with people who break apart from each other and then come together forming "größere[...] Dichte." The movement is not being formed by one person but the entire group working as a unified system or dancer, who could be organically and spontaneously moving around in the square with pathos. Exuding even more energy and intensity in the second part, the pedestrians demonstrate a mimetic variation as they

⁴⁹² Brandstetter, *Tanz-Lektüren*, 283.

intermingle with each other more by actually covering each other and then retreating. The clear, perpetual bustle of the functioning system leads Endell to characterize the space between the masses as “ein fühlbares, ungeheueres, lebendiges Wesen:” a poetic abstraction and aesthetization that raises the fervor of the dance. Although the last scene does not depict the moving group, his illustration utilizes natural elements like the sun and rain to illuminate, color and shade the square and all the elements in its vicinity. The final part adds to the overall intensity of the scene and actualizes Endell’s illustration of the space as a living body. The entire dance exemplifies the succession and the accumulation of various movement patterns and formations as well as the pathos of the harmonic group resulting in a colorful flourish.

While Endell’s swarm of people take on both mimesis and pathos as choreographic tools, Rilke seems to engage primarily with mimesis in varying forms. In turning one’s attention to the entire dance episode of Rilke’s “Veitstänzer,” Malte’s experience with the dance sequence follows quite similarly to movement developments promoted by Brandstetter by addressing the structure. Before the protagonist encounters the main dancer, he first meets other actors: the waiters and errand boy, who perform a smaller yet vital role in preparing Malte for meeting the gentleman. Malte’s reading the reactions of the other groups unfortunately becomes a tease for the “unknown.” While Rilke was able to watch both the Spanish dancer and the audience’s reaction, which create a unique harmony in the experience, Malte continues to seek the important part of the dance. The sequencing of these elements and the anticipation of the main performer create suspense within the piece.

As Malte notices the man, to whom the waiters and the errand boy strangely react, the protagonist unsuccessfully tries to locate peculiarities about the gentleman by judging his appearance. The old man's performance can be dissected into four different movement sequences: the first part addresses solely his legs, the second his hands and collar, the third his cane, and the fourth the medley. The progression with the "Veitstänzer's" legs begins with a stumble or trip over a presumed, yet nonexistent object. His movements develop as he hops down onto a walkway "wie Kinder manchmal während des Gehens aufhüpfen oder springen, wenn sie sich freuen" and steps up "mit einem langen Schritt hinauf." Subsequently he hops a single time on one leg and then twice on the other leg. Lastly the gentleman is able to walk twenty steps without any distortion in his gait. This first sequence likens itself to a modest wave of activity which exhibits three types of movement vocabulary: a stumble, a skip and a pedestrian walk. These steps represent a gradual progression by using movements that demand more engagement and activity with the legs and employ mimesis to gain aesthetic intensity. In order to fool Malte and the viewers into thinking that the man could actually be normal and to play with their expectations, Rilke choreographs a long series of undistorted steps amidst the abrupt motions.

The variety of movement vocabulary develops by employing the hand as it flips his collar up and down. Temporal variation and mimesis are utilized in this instance by contrasting the both "heimliche, rasche" action of flipping the collar upward and the "ausführliche, anhaltende, gleichsam übertrieben buchstabierte" motion of situating it back down. Rilke's word choice in describing these actions points at the grossly exaggerated nature of the movement, which draw even more curious attention to an

unorthodox dance. Malte later identifies that the skipping, which occurred in that man's legs, now seems to be traversing the Veitstänzer's entire body in different variations and manifestations.

After having depicted the engagement of the legs and hands in their own body part variation and mimesis, in the third section Malte turns his attention to a cane, which the man presses to the ground in order to suppress his symptoms. Next the man makes two smaller hops and then a larger "Sprung," which is the most active maneuver he has performed up until this point. The movement vocabulary in this piece is widened even further with the introduction of the cane which functions both as a tool to help the gentleman control his movements as well as another readable body part. Both the cane and the man's body are treated merely as objects and media through which the Veitstanz can express its unexpected, somewhat improvised choreography.

The final medley flourishes by engaging not only the legs, arms and cane, but also other body parts that had not been previously employed: the head and torso. Throughout the entire scene as the man is walking throughout the urban space, he bemoans the idea of being watched which further agitates and aggravate his symptoms and result in a deeper movement vocabulary: thus more creative sequences. At the mercy of his sickness, he loses control of his body, which creates an artistic space for the Veitstanz to thoroughly explore and express its ability through a full, uninhibited range of the man's anatomy. The final sequence involves an unharmonious, abrupt array of movement as the man first takes two steps forward and then stands completely still. This sudden initiation and stopping of movement illustrates an even more striking image as the man is now no longer continuously walking as he had been before. The complete stand still could

possibly demonstrate an intensification in the man's symptoms to the extent that his insufficient coping mechanisms force him to surrender and to allow his sickness to choreograph and articulate itself. This dramatic stop breaks the rhythm of his walking and is used as a choreographic device to draw even more attention to the progression of the Veitstänzer's movements.

Since the man's body is comprised essentially of two powers inhabiting the same host: the man's will and the Veitstanz, confusion can arise in trying to identify which of the two actually initiates the movement. Bearing these thoughts in mind, it appears that the man might be giving up his own will as his left hand releases the cane, he adjusts his hat, and throws his head back. The gentleman spreads his arms as if he is expecting to fly and then essentially convulses while being pushed back and forth. Without the use of the man's body as a host, the disease has no way to choreograph its movements. The man's will and his disease presents themselves as choreographic tools primed against each other and battle for the right to use the body as a means of creative articulation. The more agitated the old gentleman becomes, the more his symptoms heighten and the less capable he is to mask the jerky motions. Rilke's unique choice—to depict a deteriorating nerve disease that creates abrupt, variable movement—functions as an extraordinary choreographic device with which to set movement within a city space and results in the succession and intensification of movements, as Brandstetter observed in the “Spanische Tänzerin.”

While the “Veitstänzer's” performance uses a wide range of temporal and body part variations depicting dynamic movement along a continuously moving stage, Ella's motions assume less vitality than the man; however, the striking parallel concerning the

prophetic and mimetic variation involving the drawing and her final performance prove to build with intensity and flourish in the end. This dance can also be separated into three accumulating stages: first the drawing of the attack scene for her embroidery, second waltzing with modernity, and third stabbing herself in front of the doctor. After having heard the musical march outside, she feels inspired to finally express herself through a sketch, which hasn't yet been manifested into reality. The depiction of the premeditated act conveys actual movement of a little girl, representing Ella, stabbing a blob: assuredly her untamable body of modernity. This stage not only foreshadows the following two scenes but also establishes her gradual return to being able to articulate her feelings: a key aspect shared by the early modern dancers. One could then, in fact, read her creation of the drawing as driven by her pathos simply because she "felt" compelled to communicate her emotions.

In listening to her own feelings, she begins to assume the same syntactic device of pathos as Duncan, however, the second scene juxtaposes this development as Ella wants to dance a waltz. Lacking the exposure to the newly emerging modern dance, she is forced to revert to an early style of dance disagreeing with her modern body. Similar to Rilke's old man who deals with two starkly different wills that battle each other, Ella's will also serves a subservient role to her modern body which results in a contrived, unharmonious dance. Despite their ability to move together compatibly, she doesn't approach the waltz with a whimsical, carefreeness but instead with a devious demeanor in wanting to conquer her body. In following the conventions of the waltz, Ella returns to the old style of ballet in which one feigned his or her own personal feelings, danced purely for the "Schein," and performed extremely difficult and taxing maneuvers with an

affected effortless and lightness. In both ballet and the waltz, she knows only how to portray a façade instead of engaging with the pathos of her body. Modern dancers such as Fuller, Duncan and St. Denis choreographed and staged their own dances to truly express themselves instead of assuming and acting in a formulaic role given to them by a male choreographer. This penultimate scene demonstrates Döblin's desire to create suspense and to demonstrate the ballerina's inner conflict between modes of expression.

The final part of the dance exhibits a variation on the drawing from the first scene as it no longer functions as a mere representation but the actualization of a death. While the picture shows a little girl stabbing the blob of modernity, who maintains a separate body from her, the last scene shows Ella thrusting scissors into herself. In order for her to manifest the reality of her own drawing, she has to kill herself in the process. Instead of regressing into her previous tendencies, she genuinely listens to her pathos and commits suicide.

The observation of Ella's final performance in the hospital bares resemblance to the 'Traumtänzerin' Madeleine from 1904 who was a patient of doctor and psychologist Freiherr von Schrenck-Notzing in Munich and allegedly performed dances under hypnosis. Despite the lack of proof revolving around the authenticity of her induced trances, other scientists understood the 'künstlerische Bedeutung der Ausdrucksbewegung in der Hysterie und Hypnose' or as Brandstetter comments: "Die Hypnose erfüllt in diesem Zusammenhang die Aufgabe, den Körper zu ekstatisieren; mithin das Ich aus seinen sozial erworbenen Hemmungen zu befreien und das kreative 'Natur'-Wesen aus der Kultur herauszulösen."⁴⁹³ Similar to Madeleine, Ella is undergoing medical treatment and could be rendered as also suffering from a form of

⁴⁹³ Brandstetter, *Tanz-Lektüren*, 251.

hysteria. Her emphatic drawing and final dance deserve artistic interpretation as representing a dancer who has learned to let go of her social obligations and opened herself up to her creative nature. By having destroyed herself, she relinquishes ballet and allows the pathos model of the early modern dancers not only to end the story, but to symbolize a new beginning upon which a modern aesthetic can be developed. This highly figurative suggestion purports Döblin's mastery of using choreographic devices to suspensefully build a performance which ends in a dramatic turn of events and further illustrates Brandstetter's characterization of both a dance performance and text.

While Ella conclusively seems to allow herself the opportunity to perform a violent yet pathos-filled, articulative gesture of suicide, the narrator from Lakser-Schüler's *Mein Herz* has indeed no inhibitions about creating her own "Islambühne" and dancing with Minn. The beguiling, intoxicating experience of the Egyptian exhibit at the Luna Park serve as a necessary impetus compelling her and friend Barrison to engage in a spectacle of themselves while exemplifying the syntactic choreographic device of pathos. This performance is divided into three sections: first, the dancing union between the narrator and Minn, the second, Barrison's dance, and third, the couple's climactic kiss. The spontaneous performance begins as the pair dance like "zwei Tanzschlangen" to fitting accompanying music. Captivated by the atmosphere and each other, both perform closely connected, sequential movements that emerges chiefly from their merging into a harmonious match. Both are compelled by their pathos and a simple desire to bodily articulate themselves instead of mimetically creating their dance. Similarly in the second part the Variété performer Barrison is depicted dancing on stage and engaging her slim, graceful arms. It appears that she too is involved in a "free" flowing manner induced by

the music and her friend the narrator. The unexpectedness of this scene, which results from the narrator's role reversal from first observer and then to dancing spectacle, reaches its pinnacle as she and Minn kiss while on stage. During the third part, the performance enters an exhilarating state of ecstasy which concludes the depiction and further elucidates the succession and building intensity of movement associated with performances and dance texts.

In tandem with the narrator's performance on the Islambühne, Lakser-Schüler's illustration of the oriental dancer assumes the spontaneous initiation of free, unbound movement that reverberates throughout the café. This episode is divided into two parts: the first proclaims the café as an oriental dancer, and the second sketches out the liveliness within the space. As the scene lacks any concrete portrayal of movement qualities, except an overall ensuing vitality, attempting to read variation or mimesis as syntactical tools proves nearly impossible. For this reason, both of Lasker-Schüler's depictions assume the pathos device which focuses on the feelings of the choreographer. Although the author creates a successive and intensifying dance, her goal was to depict a soothing and embracing mood—similar to Endell's—instead of using repetition or variation like Rilke or Döblin.

4. Conclusion

The bustling urban movement in the city streets, the modern architecture, and the emergence of the new modern dance all contributed in the formation of an energetic and dynamic environment around 1900 in which to inspire authors and intellectuals. These catalysts animated their imaginations and expanded their notions of modern aesthetics to

conceive of not only dance texts, which attempted to describe and write about dance, but also to recreate the kinesthetic feelings caused by live dance, presumably from their own urban experiences. Instead of portraying their performances in the traditional theater space, writers like Endell, Rilke, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler established a practice of depicting dance in the urban cityscape including venues such as in a square, in the streets, in a hospital or in a café. The vibrant, urban movement featuring pedestrians and transportation coincided with both the beautiful and horrid movement of dance in the city and imbued the writings of these four authors.

In analyzing their dance texts through Foster's post-modern, denaturalized, and semiotic approach to reading dance movement, one can gather the important role in which framing the performances—a difficult task—aesthetically furthers the notion for the possibilities of staging modern dance. By placing dances in urban areas outside of the theater, the frames of these performances created an entirely different atmosphere demanding even more spatial analysis than before. The four dances also predominantly assumed the *imitative*, *resemblance* and *replicative* mode of representation with particular emphasis on the latter two, which require a more intensive reading than the *reflective* ballets of the nineteenth century. These modes of representation, not surprisingly, also could be perceived in the twentieth century dances of Duncan, St. Denis and Fuller among others. Stylistically the dance texts divided themselves into two general opposing fields: quick, bound, direct and light motions of the extremities characterized the movement qualities and body parts associated with Rilke's "Veitstänzer" performance and Döblin's ballerina scene—creating a fragmented, abrupt and unexpected dance. Lasker-Schüler's Islambühne dance, café and Endell's square assume predominantly

sustained, free, indirect and light qualities of movement with a holistic engagement of the body—requiring these dances to be read with an air of smooth, comfortably enveloping, sensuality. Although all four texts show a succession and building of movement intensity—regarding Brandstetter’s remark in defining dance texts—they also differ in respect in their employment of choreographic syntax. While Endell’s crowded square of pedestrians demonstrates a mix of both cooperative structuring as well as organically felt movement, the “Veitstänzer” appeared to improvise with the unexpected symptoms of his disease. Rilke’s strategic placement of sequential movements and variations allowed the dance to end dramatically. Ella’s final performance also assumed mimetic choreographic devices, but pathos of the early modern dancers overwhelmingly won the battle against the traditions of the waltz and ballet. Finally, the dance on the Islambühne and in the café exemplify solely pathos and build to a transcendental ending.

By using Foster’s theory, we can see how these dance texts both aesthetically resemble and—in the case with the Oriental Dancer Café—exceed the dances being performed by St. Denis, Duncan and Fuller. Like these modern dancers and choreographers who experimented with time, space and representation, Endell, Rilke, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler began to experiment stylistically in their writing and became “choreographers” in a similar sense. This study has shown that Foster’s theory does not necessarily have to be applied only to live dance but also literary dance texts because they, in more ways than one, create an imaginable dance complete with human reaction.

CHAPTER V

KINESTHESIA, EMPATHY, AND EMOTIONS: REACTING TO “DANCE” IN THE URBAN SPACE

Clearly Endell, Rilke, Döblin, and Lasker-Schüler's exposure to the urban environment, dance and dance-like movement had a profound impact on not only their personal writings in letters, essays and journals but more importantly on their fictional texts. While chapter 3—inspired by Simmel and others—focused on reading the dance scenes of these four authors as depicting thoroughly fragmented perceptions or fluid impressionistic views of observing, chapter 4 reads Endell, Rilke, Döblin, and Lasker-Schüler's texts through Foster's postmodern, semiotic approach to dance. In chapter 5, I will investigate the reactions *in* and *to* these dance texts by exploring kinesthesia, emotions and empathy of the recipients on two levels: (1) concerning Rilke's protagonist Malte, Döblin's dancer Ella, and Lasker-Schüler's and Endell's respective narrators and (2) finally the reader of the texts. In regard to emotion, I will more specifically focus on theoretical aspects which have received great attention, particularly in regards to dance, in the past decade: kinesthesia, empathy. I will first briefly differentiate my project from others, second provide a brief genealogy regarding the historical discourse of these ideas from the late 1800s until present and lay out the theoretical texts with which I will engage. Finally, I will demonstrate how Endell, Rilke, Döblin, and Lasker-Schüler's literary representations of dance exude characteristics in many of the theories that I present.

1. Approaches in Kinesthesia, Empathy and Emotion Studies

Contemporary discourse in regard to emotion, empathy and kinesthesia studies seems to fall into two categories: the theoretical and the practical. Susan Leigh Foster's recently published book *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*⁴⁹⁴ represents a thorough cultural historical and theoretical study of exploring the interconnectedness of choreography, kinesthesia and empathy from the 1700s to the present. She demonstrates the changing conceptions of these three aspects, and how they are historically and culturally representative of their own time. Lastly Foster selects contemporary dances that either demonstrate or push the boundaries of dance and compares them to her aforementioned historical tracing. My chapter uses her theoretical approaches but differs in that I will analyze *literary dance scenes* instead of live dances and performances.

Departing from a purely historical and theoretical approach, Matthew Reason and Dee Reynolds' article "Kinesthesia, Empathy, and Related Pleasures: An Inquiry into Audience Experiences of Watching Dance"⁴⁹⁵ provides a brief discussion of theoretical discourses but focuses essentially on interpreting audience's verbal and qualitative reactions to non-western dance forms such as bharataanatyam—a style of Indian dance—and as well as western forms like ballet and contemporary dance. The study notes prominently reoccurring themes in their enjoyment and experiences with these dance forms: the admiration of virtuosity, the imagining of moving and inner mimicry, kinetic

⁴⁹⁴ Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2011)

⁴⁹⁵ Matthew Reason & Dee Reynolds, "Kinesthesia, Empathy, and Related Pleasures: An Inquiry into Audience Experiences of Watching Dance." *Dance Research Journal*, Volume 42, Number 2 (Winter 2010): 49-75.

response to music, empathy as embodied anticipation, and sensual and escapist motivations in watching dance. Reason's and Reynold's study, which focuses on engaging practically with responses from viewers, is representative of other contemporary approaches that link neuroscience, cognitive science and emotion studies. A study by Antonio Camurri and others tried to let viewers recognize pre-categorized feelings in dance pieces choreographed with specific emotions in mind such as anger, fear, grief and joy,⁴⁹⁶ while another attempted to single out specific dance movements which create the most pleasure for the viewer and correspondingly exhibited the most excited brain activity.⁴⁹⁷

The project that relates to mine in regard to its approach is Bruce McConachie's book *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre*⁴⁹⁸ which adopts contemporary cognitive science theories and applies them to specific scenes from prominent theater plays. His analysis has less to do with empirical audience reaction and relates more closely toward the text as I will be doing. However his understanding of the theater and the pieces that he selected deal essentially with the static viewer in a theatrical setting, while my dance scenes are woven into a dynamic city space with a thoroughly mobile observer.

These recent experiments of combining cognitive studies and dance show a new trend in scholarship which tries to empirically detect emotion and empathy in live dance,

⁴⁹⁶ Antonio Camurri, Ingrid Lagerlöf and Gualtiero Volpe. "Recognizing emotion from dance movement: comparison of spectator recognition and automated techniques," *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies* 59 (2003): 213-225.

⁴⁹⁷ B. Calvo-Merino, C. Jola, D.E. Glaser, R.E. Passingham, and P. Haggard. "Towards a sensorimotor aesthetics of performing art," *Consciousness and Cognition* 17 (2008): 911-922.

⁴⁹⁸ Bruce McConachie, *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

performance, art and literature. But long before brain scanning technology had been developed, theorists, philosophers and scientists had already been engaging in discourses in regard to their emotions, empathy and kinesthesia to a dance performance.

2. Defining Kinesthesia and Empathy

Foster opens her second chapter entitled “Kinesthesia” by using the striking idea of the individual’s ability to orient him- or herself in a metropolitan environment after having emerged from the underground transportation.⁴⁹⁹ She cites the differences between urban maps in the “West” such as in New York, London and Paris and those in the “East” such as in Tokyo, Shanghai and Taipei. In western cities maps are depicted with the cardinal direction “North” at the top forcing the dweller to determine his or her own orientation based on the lay of the streets, while in the East the orientation of the map is based on the direction in which the pedestrian is facing. Foster’s example aimed at demonstrating that “this procedure of self-location entails a recalibration of internal and external sensings of one’s own whereabouts. The body must perceive simultaneously its position, movement, momentum, and proximity to everything around it, and even its relationship to gravity.”⁵⁰⁰ Her idea of kinesthesia deals with the awareness not only of one’s own body but also one’s positioning within space. Her notion of the perpetual need for orientation within the urban environment points both to the massive size of the metropolis and the demands for maps. While such issues of orientation affect contemporary citizens of these major cities, these demands were also characterized in the

⁴⁹⁹ Foster, “Choreographing Empathy,” 73.

⁵⁰⁰ Foster, “Choreographing Empathy,” 73.

journalistic writing as captured by Fritzsche as well as the fictional texts of Endell, Rilke, Döblin, and Lasker-Schüler.

The nineteenth century proved to be a developmental period involving the physiological mechanisms of one's sense of spatial orientation. The physiologist Thomas Brown, in 1820, ascertained that "our muscular frame was not merely a part of the living machinery of motion, but was also truly an organ of sense."⁵⁰¹ And later in 1880 the neurophysiologist Henry Charlton Bastian coined the word kinesthesia after demonstrating the connection of the cerebral cortex to the muscles sense of three sensations – pain and fatigue, weight and resistance and movement and position.⁵⁰² Originating from *kine*, Greek for movement, and *aesthesia*, for sensation, the original use of the word "kinesthesia" dealt with "the muscular sense of the body's movement."⁵⁰³ Alongside the development of the "muscle sense," physiologists investigated the role of the inner ear in maintaining balance and bodily equilibrium, and in 1870 the vestibular system was established.⁵⁰⁴ These scientific developments concerning both the muscle system and the inner ear point to the growing interest with bodily awareness.

As the term "kinesthesia" emerged from the end of the nineteenth century, "empathy"—Greek for *empathia*—originated similarly in 1873 and was given the German name *Einfühlung* by German aesthetician Robert Vischer. Later it was translated into English by Edward Titchener in 1909. In analyzing the experience of viewing art,

⁵⁰¹ Quoted in E.G. Jones, "The Development of the 'Muscular Sense' Concept During the Nineteenth Century and the Work of H. Charlton Bastian," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 27, no. 3 (July 1972): 72.

⁵⁰² Jones, "Development," 72.

⁵⁰³ Foster, "Choreographing Empathy," 74.

⁵⁰⁴ Foster, "Choreographing Empathy," 74.

Vischer describes the sensation of moving into the object being observed and assuming its dimensions and demeanor.⁵⁰⁵ This visualization allowed the viewer to inhabit the body of another person or object and to appropriate the corresponding kinesthetic sensation. Consequently “the compressed or upward striving, the bent or broken impression of an object fills us with a corresponding mental feeling of oppression, depression, or aspiration, a submissive or shattered state of mind,”⁵⁰⁶ which relate considerably with emotions. Empathy, generally considered as “embodied simulation or substitution” is often confused with sympathy: “a response involving feelings.”⁵⁰⁷ McConachie’s theater perspective views empathy as “stepping into an actor/character’s shoes,” while “sympathy involves projecting her or his own beliefs and feelings onto the stage figure.”⁵⁰⁸

3. Approaches from the 1930s-1990s: Martin, Gibson, Berthoz

My goal here is not to provide an exhaustive genealogy of the terms ‘empathy’ and ‘kinesthesia’ but rather to provide some background and basic concepts of their meanings. Given their rich discourses, I will focus on more contemporary views of three theorists as featured by Susan Leigh Foster—John Martin, James J. Gibson, and Alain Berthoz—whose conceptions of empathy and kinesthesia reflect their historical and

⁵⁰⁵ Robert Vischer, Harry Francis Mallgrave, and Eleftherios Ikonou, “On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics,” in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893* (Santa Monica, California: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities; distributed by the University of Chicago Press, 1994), 104.

⁵⁰⁶ Vischer et al., “On the Optical Sense of Form,” 104-105.

⁵⁰⁷ Reason and Reynolds, “Kinesthesia, Empathy, and Related Pleasures,” 53.

⁵⁰⁸ McConachie, *Engaging Audiences*, 99.

cultural context. I will outline their theories and demonstrate to what extent their ideas are reflected in the literary dance scenes of Endell, Rilke, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler.

Empathy and kinesthesia began warranting attention in dance circles through the *New York Times* critic John Martin whose writings appeared from the 1930s to 1960s and formulated a theory of dance expression. He argued that while an observer is watching a dancing body, he or she will feel similar kinesthetic sensations: a process called “inner mimicry.” This phenomenon relates to the physical reaction to all kinds of events: we pucker our lips when we watch someone bite into a lemon or we yawn when someone around us does.⁵⁰⁹ Consequently, Martin’s observation not only takes into account dance movement, but more broadly pedestrian motions and even objects:

Since we respond muscularly to the strains in architectural masses and the attitudes of rocks, it is plain to be seen that we will respond even more vigorously to the action of a body exactly like our own. We shall cease to be mere spectators and become participants in the movement that is presented to us, and though to all outward appearances we shall be sitting quietly in our chairs, we shall nevertheless be dancing synthetically with all our musculature. Naturally these motor responses are registered by our movement-sense receptors, and awaken appropriate emotional associations akin to those which have animated the dancer in the first place. It is the dancer’s whole function to lead us into imitating his actions with our faculty for inner mimicry in order that we may experience his feelings.⁵¹⁰

The viewer’s recognition and identification with another moving body forces the onlooker’s body to also “dance”, yet Martin begins his argument with describing relatively “static” objects such as architecture and rock formations. Although these massive bodies do not “move,” they indeed still provide an area for either expansive or encroaching space and allow themselves, regardless, to be read as empathetic phenomena. Despite using natural or urban masses as a transition into the moving,

⁵⁰⁹ John Martin, *Introduction to the Dance* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1939), 47.

⁵¹⁰ Martin, *Introduction to the Dance*, 53.

dancing body, his remarks still point to his broad interpretation of kinesthetic empathy. For a growing metropolis like Berlin, Martin's view would also then not only simply pertain to the dancing bodies in the city space, but also the space and urban structures *themselves*: the streets, cafes, libraries, and hospitals.

The new emerging modern dance leads to Martin's argumentation of creating radically new assumptions regarding movement and motion. By abandoning the stories and spectacle of ballet, modern dance engaged the body to develop its own narrative. By reaching into the depths of the unconscious, a choreographer could create movement which would cause the audience to not only empathize but also to correspondingly feel fundamental human emotions:

The modern dancer, instead of employing the cumulative resources of academic tradition, cuts through directly to the source of all dancing. He utilizes the principle that every emotional state tends to express itself in movement, and that the movements thus created spontaneously, though they are not representational, reflect accurately in each case the character of the particular emotional state. Because of the inherent contagion of bodily movement, which makes the onlooker feel sympathetically in his own musculature the exertions he sees in somebody else's musculature, the dancer is able to convey through movement the most intangible emotional experience.⁵¹¹

Besides focusing on the modern dancer's ability to convey emotion through movement, Martin interestingly points to the "spontaneity" with which the choreography is created. Foster similarly used the term "Pathos" to describe this process which indeed resembles the idea of movement improvisation. They differ, however, in regard to improvisation's emphasis on the collective and the reliance on outside forces and stimuli to trigger its choreographic impulse. On the other hand, modern dancers as individuals were involved in introspective discovery and portraying unconscious feeling. Similar to his idea of "inner mimicry", Martin also uses a similar term "contagion" which strikingly relates to

⁵¹¹ John Martin, *The Dance* (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1946), 105.

both Rilke's protagonist Malte and Döblin's Ella in regard to the depiction and aesthetization of illnesses, which I will discuss in greater depth later.

Although Matthew Reason mentions how Martin made great contributions in analyzing and creating a discourse for dance, Reason calls his theories "overly prescriptive and based on universalist assumptions,"⁵¹² which presuppose that all humans are equally moved by the same events and objects. More contemporary discourse such as Hanna Järvinen suggests that "bodies and bodily experiences are historically specific rather than universally alike,"⁵¹³ and further critiques by Reason state that Martin's model "ignores the possibility that different audiences expect and receive different kinds of pleasures from dance, watching with different motivations and interpretative strategies."⁵¹⁴ In the dance scenes Endell, Rilke, Döblin, and Lasker-Schüler's view points as authors as well as their protagonists instill another perspective, whose personal history and natural dispositions will greatly affect how they respond to dance. Both the writers and protagonists represent individuals who are intellectually capable of learning to decipher meaning through both pleasurable and repulsive dance movement.

Along similar lines of taking each individual's perception into account arises the theory of James J. Gibson. In his 1966 book *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems*⁵¹⁵, he argues that perception is unlike a passive absorption of stimuli but rather a highly active act of gleaning information from one's immediate surroundings. Instead of

⁵¹² Reason and Reynolds, "Kinesthesia, Empathy, and Related Pleasures," 54.

⁵¹³ Hanna Järvinen, "Some Steps Toward a Historical Epistemology of Corporeality," *Society of Dance History Scholars, 30th Annual Conference Co-sponsored with CORD* (Paris: Centre national de la danse, 2007), 145.

⁵¹⁴ Reason and Reynolds, "Kinesthesia, Empathy, and Related Pleasures," 55.

⁵¹⁵ James Jerome Gibson, *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966)

the afferent, a neural system concerned with processing incoming stimuli, and the efferent, another system dealing with the body's reaction to the stimuli, being conceived as separate concepts, Gibson claims that perception demands the individual to use both these systems which results in a dynamic engagement continually in flux.⁵¹⁶ He further maintains that the sense organs associated with the muscles and inner ear continuously affect the sense of one's balance and orientation in space regardless if he or she is moving. While many have argued that the visual perception of the eye changes the modern individual's aesthetic sense in seeing, the vestibular system, ocular muscles and the eye together further enhance the gravitational relation to one's surroundings.

Foster strongly relates Gibson's theory to the movement principles of contact improvisation which subsequently transpired a few years after the book's appearance. This form of dance "asks participants to forge a moving point of contact between two bodies and to follow the contact wherever it leads, Gibson's theory proposes an ongoing duet between perceiver and surroundings in which both are equally active."⁵¹⁷ Similarly the dance scenes by Endell, Rilke, Döblin, Lasker-Schüler demand a constant reevaluation of the protagonist's positioning in space and their relation to the stimuli – whether actual dancers or simply objects. This observation suggests that the stimuli need not always be a dancer or human body, but could also include objects such as architectural structures and urban means of transportation. These stimuli relate to Martin's similar transcendent ideas of the body and allows these theories to be applied in a more abstract sense. In fact Gibson calls the viewer "active" and "willful" while the

⁵¹⁶ Gibson, *The Senses Considered*, as summarized by Susan Foster, "Movement's Contagion: The Kinesthetic Impact of Performance," In *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, edited by Tracy C. Davis, 46–59 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

⁵¹⁷ Gibson, *The Senses Considered*, cited by Foster, "Movement's Contagion," 51.

surroundings were depicted with neutral words such as “stimulation, ambient array,” and “external invariants”⁵¹⁸ – all of which lack any cultural or historical markers.

Gibson’s theory of perception demonstrates an affinity to the shifting, postmodern meanings of dance in the 1960s and 1970s. Instead of searching for repressed desire and unified meaning, like Martin’s theory suggests, Gibson’s concept lets dance be interpreted in any number of ways by its audience and allows them to derive their own personal meaning(s). The composer John Cage, who recalls during his collaboration with choreographer Merce Cunningham, stated:

We are not, in these dances and music, saying something. We are simpleminded enough to think that if we were saying something we would use words. We are rather doing something. The meaning of what we do is determined by each one who sees and hears it . . . I may add there are no stories and no psychological problems. There is simply an activity of movement, sound and light.⁵¹⁹

In order to divert attention away from any hidden meaning imbedded in the movement, Cage suggests a multiplicity in the observer’s interpretation resulting from his or her shifting focus and perception which differs from those of another viewer. Foster succinctly contrasts the theories of Martin and Gibson by stating, “In the first case, the dancer’s body becomes a vessel for the dance’s message and the viewer receives that message by being moved by it. In the second, the dancer’s body emits actions to a viewing body that actively seeks out their message.”⁵²⁰

During the 1990s, the concept of kinesthesia evolved through the work of Alain Berthoz and others who discovered the new kind of brain cell called “mirror neurons,” which once again alter the way in which one perceives movement. While Berthoz agrees

⁵¹⁸ Gibson, *The Senses Considered*, cited by Foster, “Movement’s Contagion,” 52.

⁵¹⁹ John Cage, “In This Day,” *Dance Observer* (January 1957): 10.

⁵²⁰ Gibson, *The Senses Considered*, cited by Foster, “Movement’s Contagion,” 53.

with Gibson that kinesthesia plays a large role in the body's ability in orienting oneself in space and among stimuli, his theory deviates in two central ways: first he argues that "perception is a simulation of action" and second "he does not assume that observers share a common environment, instead holding that each individual may perceive the world quite differently, based on the kinds of cultural and gendered differences from which the *habitus* is formed."⁵²¹ Berthoz's experiments stress the "anticipatory quality of attention," which deals with the mind's propensity to expect actions after having just seen objects: when one sees a bike, one already simulates the motion of mounting it and pedaling off. While Gibson believes that all humans, who occupy the same space at different times, have equal opportunity to perceive it,⁵²² Berthoz emphasizes the observer's oculomotor direction of the eye while observing an object which depends firstly on his or her current thinking: "Pleasure or fear or interest all influence the tiny motions of the eye, known as saccades, through which visual perception occurs."⁵²³ Secondly, one's personal history with the surroundings and stimuli greatly affects *how* and *what* one sees; he alludes to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus in which "longstanding features of our cultural as well as physical environment inform the way we perceive the world."⁵²⁴

In order to bolster his argument Berthoz conducts experiments which demonstrate that the "mirror neurons" are engaged both when an individual performs an action as well

⁵²¹ Alain Berthoz, *The Brain's Sense of Movement*, trans. G. Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 58. Cited by Foster, "Movement's Contagion," 53.

⁵²² J.J Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 43.

⁵²³ Berthoz, *The Brain's Senses*, cited by Foster, "Movement's Contagion," 54.

⁵²⁴ Berthoz, *The Brain's Senses*, cited by Foster, "Movement's Contagion," 54.

as when he or she sees the same movement being performed. Scientists call this response “resonance” as Vittorio Gallese relays:

A metaphor that describes well this correspondence between observed and executed biological motions is that of a physical “resonance.” It is as if neurons in these motor areas start to “resonate” as soon as the appropriate visual input is presented. This “resonance” does not necessarily produce a movement or an action. It is an internal motor representation of the observed event which, subsequently, may be used for different functions, among which is imitation.⁵²⁵

Foster notes that these empirical signs of “resonance” are reflected in Martin’s terms “contagion” and “inner mimicry” and provide evidence for what was thought to be purely based on feeling. She argues that the fundamental difference between the two is that our perception of movement can be, but not necessarily is, infused with emotion, while “the mirror neurons indicate [...] the mutuality of sensing and physical action.” As a dancer may be on stage performing, one observer may detect a deep anger in the strong, bound and tense movement that may or may not have been present in the choreographer’s intention, while other viewers may detect no emotion but might try to anticipate the movement which resonated with them.

Scientists have also ascertained that “the resonance phenomenon [is] present not only during the observation of goal-oriented movements, but also during the observation of meaningless art movements”⁵²⁶ which appropriately allows their empirical findings to be applied to dance and depictions of dance. A study demonstrated heightened neural activity of professional dancers who observe their own style of dance such as ballet

⁵²⁵ G. Rizzolatti, L. Fadiga, L. Fogassi, and V. Gallese, “From Mirror Neurons to Imitation: Facts and Speculations,” in *The Imitative Mind*, eds A. N. Meltzoff and W. Prinz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 253.

⁵²⁶ B. Calvo-Merino, D. E. Glaser, J. Grèzes, R. E. Passingham, and P. Haggard, “Action Observation and Acquired Motor Skills: An fMRI Study with Expert Dancers,” *Cerebral Cortex* 15 (August 2005): 1243–9.

because those movement vocabularies correspond to their own existing constructs.⁵²⁷ In the next section, I will discuss to what extent Endell, Rilke, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler's narrators and protagonists exhibit: Martin's concept of inner mimicry and contagion, Gibson's idea of dynamic kinesthetic awareness which invites a multitude of perspectives and finally Berthoz's borrowed idea of Bourdieu's *habitus*.

4. Astonishing Abstraction: Transcendent Perception in Endell's *Die Schönheit der großen Stadt*

August Endell portrays an individualized perspective that dramatically infuses how he perceives his surroundings. Endell selects a distinctly programmatic style in order to lead his reader to begin perceiving Berlin as an actual place of beauty instead of overt ugliness. Under Berthoz's borrowed concept of *habitus* (from Bourdieu), one can understand that Endell's perspective tries to go against the grain of the most typical industrial depictions of Berlin in favor of reexamining the current aesthetic values of its readers and challenging them essentially to see beauty in the mundane and everyday. Even if the text does not explicitly say that Endell embodies the "I," it is clear that his theoretical writings do find a strong voice embodied by the narrator.

I want to propose that Endell's main thrust in his depiction—in corresponding to Gibson's theory—remains less with his narrator's amazement and has more to do with not only the keen awareness of the moving bodies in the square but more importantly the aesthetization of the banal and everyday into creating a sense of beauty.

The first sentences of the scene "Vor dem Café" situates the narrator at his static perch sitting in a café: "Zu dem Erstaunlichsten gehört in dieser Hinsicht das Leben auf

⁵²⁷ Calvo-Merino, "Action Observation," 1248.

einem Platze. Der unseligen romanischen Kirche gegenüber liegt ein Cafe mit einer Terrasse, auf der ich oft an Sommerabenden stundenlang gesessen habe und mich nicht müde sehen konnte an dem bunten Spiele der kommenden und gehenden Menschen.”⁵²⁸

The narrator describes the opening sequence which both establishes his visual as well as programmatic view and remains one of the few instances in which he relates the scene to his astonishment with the square. Although the narrator notes his frequent attendance and familiarity with the space, he still remains captivated by the colorful display of people—arguably because of its perpetual development and unexpectedness. Endell’s depiction involves large, dynamic groups of “Menschenströme” focusing on the idea of the collective movement. This cumulative idea forces the narrator’s perspective to avoid looking at specific individuals from his, likely, elevated perch and allows him to see more room than a traditional theater space. His inability to focus on a single individual allows him to objectify his surroundings, to focus less on the emotions of a single person and to transfer his thinking into a more abstract realm.

The goal of Endell’s dance scene is to not only create an awareness of spatial surroundings but also to abstract from everyday representations: the groups of people moving organically perform a beautiful scene from nature. The narrator not only takes into account the people but also the weather, the sun and cars by calling the collective movement: “ein fühlbares, ungeheures, lebendiges Wesen.”⁵²⁹ The importance of the scene bridges from the narrator into his astonishing depiction of what he sees and focuses less on his empathy with the event. Since Endell’s narrator is *sitting* at the café—just like

⁵²⁸ August Endell, “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt.” In *August Endell: der Architekt des Photoateliers Elvira 1871 – 1925*, ed. Klaus-Jürgen Sembach (München: Stuck-Jugendstil-Verein, 1977), 115.

⁵²⁹ Endell, “Die Schönheit der großen Stadt,” 116.

others in a traditional theater space or as Martin discusses in describing his ideas of “inner mimicry” and “contagion”—he has less ability to personally interact and move about in his kinesthetic sphere. The action in Endell’s depiction remains within the confines of the square dealing less with the narrator’s embodiment of the movement and more of a distant, yet aesthetic gaze. In being in a more static position, Endell’s narrator has little concern for his own feelings of “amazement” and own bodily awareness in regard to the performance since he doesn’t move.

The degree to which Endell’s language escapes any personal feeling related to the people he watches—and to which he becomes absorbed into a world of abstraction and aesthetization—exhibits itself by his word choices of describing both the space and movement. In calling the people “Menschen” and “Menschenströme” he recognizes that they are moving human bodies but does not go into greater detail in describing their personality, gender or size but instead remains intentionally abstract while focusing simply on the intensity and patterns of movement they create. Similarly there is no use of proper nouns in describing which square he is situated, and his depiction remains purely on the objectified level. Such abstraction is also reminiscent of Gibson’s language in depicting his theory by also using neutral words.⁵³⁰ In a sense, Gibson and Endell’s texts try to create a degree of objectivity similar to Simmel’s text “Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben” which describes the modern individual’s plight of working through and enduring the multiple stimuli in the metropolis. In a similar vein Max Osborn’s visual depiction of Berlin as a “Stadtorganismus” as well as Anselm Heine’s descriptions “from up above” correspond greatly with Endell’s choice of portraying the liveliness from a higher and more objective perch.

⁵³⁰ Gibson, *The Senses Considered*, cited by Foster, “Movement’s Contagion,” 52.

Endell's programmatic text shifts the established aesthetics of the time to involve an expansion of perception and meaning. His view is similar to how Gibson's theory—relating to the constant awareness of fluctuating stimuli in one's immediate vicinity—reflected a penchant toward the postmodern understandings of dance in the 60s and 70s. Both lead their viewer to consider their normal, everyday surroundings in another light but not necessarily demand that they see or perceive the same stimuli nor arrive at a unified meaning. In both cases, the individual must be perpetually vigilant of his or her changing surroundings, yet not necessarily feel a collection emotion.

5. Emotional Distance: Kinesthesia and Empathy in Rilke's *Aufzeichnungen*

While Endell's scene focuses less on identifying with the moving bodies and more on a widespread abstraction of the people in the square—demonstrating Gibson's theory of inviting multiple interpretations and maintaining a keen awareness of space, Malte's experience of watching the man with Veitstanz provides one with the clearest illustrations of all three theories carried out by Martin, Gibson and Berthoz. In large part, Rilke desires to emphasize his protagonist's bodily reactions. While in previous chapters I have analyzed this scene in regard to the dance-like movements of the "Veitstänzer," this section will address the depictions of the protagonist's emotions, empathy and kinesthesia concerning the old man afflicted with Veitstanz.

I argue first that Rilke engages two choreographic tools: the unpredictable and unbridled nerve conditions, which has taken over a great deal of the man's movements, contrasted with the weak will of the man who tries to battle his disease and maintain some semblance of normalcy in his daily motions. Furthermore, these opposing

movement generators create a paradox causing Malte to, on the one hand, feel a growing and fluctuating “fear” throughout the entire dance—reminiscent of Martin’s theory of inner mimicry and contagion—while, on the other hand, Malte’s developing aesthetic is further penetrated by the man’s fragmented, jerky movement which are devoid of meaning and emotion—thus embodying Gibson’s theory. In both cases, however, Rilke provides a clear illustration of Malte’s kinesthetic awareness of himself and the man while developing a deep empathy for him.

The pervading emotion of “Angst” dominates the novel and generally characterizes Malte’s psychological predisposition during his street encounters. Before he even meets the man and while coming across the waiters, Malte expresses fear associated with the unknown: “Ich fühlte, daß ein wenig Angst in mir anfing. Etwas drängte mich auf die andere Seite hinüber.”⁵³¹ This first instance of rekindled fear instantly connects his ubiquitous “Angst” with that of the “Veitstänzer’s” and thus begins the protagonist’s journey into slowly embodying not only the man’s gestures but more importantly his feelings. Throughout the “dance,” the empathy grows as Malte notes that he himself “verstand seine [the man’s] Angst.”⁵³² At other times Malte feels “merkwürdig erleichtert” and “beunruhig[t]”⁵³³ as the man’s struggle with his disease becomes apparent. The protagonist constantly notes: “meine Angst wuchs,”⁵³⁴ “...auch in mir war

⁵³¹ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (Königswinter: Tandem Verlag, 2010), 63.

⁵³² Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 65.

⁵³³ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 65.

⁵³⁴ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 66.

die Angst”⁵³⁵ and at one point he denotes feeling a “kalte[n] Stich”⁵³⁶ as he is watching the old man. This progression of Malte’s depicted emotions—from at first a simple, sympathetic understanding of the man’s torment and subsequent advancement into an exhibiting of symptoms himself—demonstrates the process of “embodied simulation or substitution” and shows a gradual transition into what McConachie’s theater perspective has called “stepping into an actor/character’s shoes.”⁵³⁷

Martin’s theory of inner mimicry can be applied to Malte’s situation because the protagonist is easily able to recognize the man’s fear which causes Malte’s own fear to be even more sensitive and magnified. According to Martin, these “non representational” or abstract movements can still be perceived as an emotional state. While Malte becomes acquainted not only with the man fragmented, dance-like motions but also the reactions of passersby, these jerky movements as an aesthetic form are not as significant at the moment for Malte’s emotions but will play a significant role later. His “Angst” is triggered more so and deeply dictated by the gentleman’s societal situation of being ostracized. In a less artistic sense, Malte recognizes and empathizes with the man’s struggle to express his own will by needing to battle the nerve condition.

Modern dancers choreographed using pathos searching their unconscious and allowing movement to happen itself. The spontaneity associated with this choreographic device bears a resemblance to the fragmented movements of the “Veitstänzer,” yet differs in regard to its lack of harmony. While modern dancers could channel their inner, subconscious psyche for inspiration, the “choreographers” of the gentleman’s dance—his

⁵³⁵ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 67.

⁵³⁶ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 65.

⁵³⁷ McConachie, *Engaging Audiences*, 99.

will and his nerve disease—provide a unique combination of origins. The unpredictable nerves create movement spontaneously and become even more engaged as the man becomes more agitated, while his will tries not only to mask the repetitive movement but also to perform “normal” task-related movements. These opposing actions soon become woven together and resist differentiation. Unlike the modern dancers and the “Veitstänzer’s” will who are human choreographers, the nerve disease occupies its host and uses the body as its medium. Despite these differences in creative generators, the spontaneity of the movement remains similar in their choreography.

Martin also coins the term “contagion” to describe how the movement of one individual can become assumed by another simply by watching it. The connotations of this word certainly lead one to think of pathological terms like “catching a cold.” Along similar lines Martin must have hoped that this idea would illustrate his notion of kinesthesia and empathy. This similar phenomenon takes place as Malte seemingly also acquires the same uncontrollable nerve condition of the man even though the disease is pathologically genetic and none communicable. Malte’s connection with the man and susceptibility to the dance “contagion” lasts only as long as the protagonist remains in contact with him. While Malte may not suffer any lasting physical effects from his brief encounter of “catching” the “Veitstänzer’s” sickness, he will forevermore be deeply moved emotionally: “...ich war leer.”⁵³⁸

Besides simply describing his emotions throughout his encounter with the man, Malte uses the symbol of paper—both by prefacing and ending the dance—as an alternate avenue to express his feelings. Before the scene begins, the protagonist asserts: “Heute habe ich es nicht erwartet, ich bin so mutig ausgegangen, als wäre das das

⁵³⁸ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 68.

Natürlichste und Einfachste. Und doch, es war wieder etwas da, das mich nahm wie Papier, mich zusammenknüllte und fortwarf, es war etwas Unerhörtes da.”⁵³⁹ Although there is no visible “paper,” Malte’s depiction of himself assumes similar dimensions to Vischer’s visualization of inhabiting another body or object.⁵⁴⁰ The protagonist’s feelings embody the crumbled dimensions of the disposed piece of paper leaving him shattered. His exhaustion results from his draining experience of observing and embodying the “Veitstänzer” battling the nerve condition. Appropriately Martin also mentions how observing objects—and not necessarily just moving bodies—could create emotions.⁵⁴¹ At the end of the scene, Malte notes: “...ich war leer. Wie ein leeres Papier trieb ich an den Häusern entlang, den Boulevard wieder hinauf”⁵⁴² His metaphor changes from the beginning as he describes his empty feeling related to his utter exhaustion. Malte is no longer able to contribute productively to society nor to himself as he walks home. These examples demonstrate the extent to which objects can be engaged to symbolize the physical emotions related to the protagonist despite merely being imagined.

While the dance scene demonstrates how the man’s fragmented movement—on the level of his social ostracism and less on the aesthetic value—invoke Malte’s deep empathy and emotions in regard to the gentleman’s daily battle, the illustration of Gibson’s theory of kinesthetic awareness and multiplicity of meaning also deserves a thorough investigation. According to Gibson the observer will be highly active in his engagement with not only the object or person, whom he watches, but also his

⁵³⁹ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 62.

⁵⁴⁰ Vischer, “On the Optical Sense of Form,” 104.

⁵⁴¹ Martin, *Introduction to the Dance*, 53.

⁵⁴² Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 68.

surroundings which offer a dynamic, fluctuating environment in which all stimuli perpetually evolve. It is this hypersensitivity in which the modern individual in the metropolis interacts and characterizes not only this particular dance scene but Malte's experience with urban phenomena throughout the novel. Foster likens Gibson's argument to the 1960's emerging concept of contact improvisation which demands a constant awareness not only of one's own body but its active spatial relationship to another. This idea is exhibited in the dance as Malte describes his heightened attention: "Da ich nahe hinter ihm folgte, nahm ich mich in acht [...]"⁵⁴³ Besides being fully aware of the man's disease and marginalization within society, Malte's awareness of his surroundings becomes even more heightened as he becomes supersensitive to the passersby watching the man. He tries to remain equidistance from the man: "...der Abstand zwischen uns blieb derselbe"⁵⁴⁴ while always staying "hinter diesem Manne"⁵⁴⁵ which establishes his viewpoint while continuing to traverse the city streets. Similar to contact improvisation in which the dancers remain in very close contact with each other, Malte also must keep a close distance with the man while they travel around the urban space. While contact improvisations tend to be governed by the confines of the theater space, the city provides seemingly infinite stage space upon which he performs. One could also argue that while Malte begins simply as the observer, his vested emotion, kinesthetic awareness and empathy with the man transform the protagonist into an individual who actually "dances" with the man resulting in a modified version of a contact improvisation.

⁵⁴³ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 64.

⁵⁴⁴ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 64.

⁵⁴⁵ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 65.

Along the lines of dance aesthetics associated with the 1960s follows the idea of movement being just movement and not necessarily connected to an unconscious emotion. Each onlooker as an individual would be able to provide his or her own valid interpretation in hopes of finding a message personal to them. Gleaning one central meaning or emotion from a dance was considered outdated as it invited all kinds. Since Malte's emotions arise mostly from the societal ostracism from the man, does he have any response to the gentleman's jerky movements? Does Gibson's notion of "just movement" occur in this dance scene? The answer would lean toward yes based on Malte's written reflections *after* the encounter with the man. During his encounter with the "Veitstänzer," Malte expresses his *immediate* fear during the situation and therefore demonstrates Martin's theory of not only embodying an object or moving body but subsequently becoming emotionally moved. However, after being left with time to ruminate about the frightening incident, the protagonist can critically reflect and formulate his thoughts in writing. He says that the metropolis of Paris is "voll merkwürdiger Versuchungen"⁵⁴⁶ while experiencing "gewisse Veränderungen [...] in meiner Weltanschauung, jedenfalls in meinem Leben. Eine vollkommen andere Auffassung aller Dinge hat sich unter diesen Einflüssen in mir herausbildet. [...] Eine veränderte Welt. Ein neues Leben voll neuer Bedeutung. Ich habe es augenblicklich etwas schwer, weil alles zu neu ist. Ich bin ein Anfänger in meinen eigenen Verhältnissen."⁵⁴⁷ The accumulation of his strange, urban street experiences result in a changed way of perceiving his world. The distance that he has gained by seeing these

⁵⁴⁶ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 68.

⁵⁴⁷ Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, 69.

events allows him to critically engage and challenge his previous ideas and representations of the world. The dance scene functions solely as one event that contributes to the amassing of these unique, urban experiences. The man's abrupt and seemingly non-representational movement still may have had an impact on Malte but only after the allotted time for reflection.

Avant-garde art aesthetics of the 1960s—in which one could regard an object or event as art simply because it was framed in such a way or named “art”—also bear a strong resemblance to the aestheticized view of not only the flâneur but also authors and intellectuals like Endell, Rilke, Lasker-Schüler, Döblin, Kessler and others around 1900. Post modern dance choreographers of the 60s made use of not only everyday objects but also pedestrian movement such as walking, running and gesturing and explored the notion of space by setting pieces outside of the traditional theater space in art galleries, churches etc.⁵⁴⁸ They pushed the aesthetic limits of what could be considered dance and art and engaged with a strategy illuminated in the essays of Victor Shklovsky from 1917 called defamiliarization: “a strategy writers have long used for reinvigorating perception.”⁵⁴⁹ Sally Banes further notes the parallels between dance of the 1960s and the early modern dancers: “...the breakaway choreographers of the 1960s could be called the forerunners of post-modern dance, just as Isadora Duncan, Loïe Fuller and Ruth St. Denis are sometimes called the forerunners of modern dance.”⁵⁵⁰ Both of these time periods questioned their current forms of dance, demanded a significant reevaluation of their

⁵⁴⁸ Sally Banes, *Terpischore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), xv-xxii.

⁵⁴⁹ Sally Banes, “Gulliver’s Hamburger. Defamiliarization and the Ordinary in the 1960s Avant-Garde.” *Reinventing Dance in the 1960s. Everything Was Possible*, ed. Sally Banes (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003)

⁵⁵⁰ Banes, *Terpischore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance*, xxiv.

current aesthetics, and experimented heavily in regard to reforming dance. Many of these avant-garde dances still remain innovative and radical to this day; during the period following, dances began to assume “normative” aesthetics.

Malte is therefore developing his aesthetic after the performance and likens himself to not only Rilke but other authors and intellectuals at the time who were, for instance, able to see Loïe Fuller perform on stage. One could compare her plotless, repetitive, abstract *Serpentine Dance*—to which Kessler and van de Velde can merely describe—to the fragmented dance of the “Veitstänzer.” In order for Malte to comprehend the man’s movement, and for Kessler and van de Velde to gain an aesthetic understanding of Fuller’s performances, they must be able to see beyond the “use” of the dance movements and be able to perceive differently. Malte’s post-performance reflection demonstrates his recognition of being able to see everyday objects and events in a different way adhering both to the perspective of the flâneur as well as the postmodern dance aesthetics.

While Martin concepts of inner mimicry and contagion and Gibson’s theory of dynamic awareness and multiple meanings are strongly demonstrated in Malte’s encounter with the man, Berthoz’s can also be applied as it builds off of Gibson’s by stating namely first that based on empirical research of “mirror neurons,” perception is a simulation of action in which the onlooker anticipates movements of the observed and second that each observer perceives differently depending on his or her interests and historical and cultural background. The anticipation of movement based on Malte’s observation of the man has less to do with the task-based nature and more with the unpredictability of the actions. Berthoz’s bases his ideas on the assumption that the

observer is somewhat familiar with the concept of the movement or object and can predict the next motion. But because Malte meets his “Unerhörtes” for the first time, the protagonist has to acquaint himself with the “Veitstänzer’s” movement vocabulary. Soon Malte learns that he cannot associate the man with a fixed concept -- such as seeing a bike and visualizing the mounting and pedaling – but rather correlates the man’s movement with a *lack* of predictability much like Malte’s own writing. Arguably his mirror neurons would still be active to an extent as he demonstrates his embodying the man’s actions and feelings but probably not to the same degree that a ballet dancer would be engaged in when watching his or her codified movement vocabulary. The degree of “resonance” occurring as Malte observes the man would be great given the protagonist’s ability to actually stand and remain in close proximity with the man. The study involving the ballet and capoeira—a Brazilian martial art—dancers showed merely the activity of the brain in test subjects who were most likely sitting similarly to how Martin describes the “inner mimicry” involved with audience members who are apart of a theater setting and “sitting” in seats. On the other hand, by not only being in an open space and in the same standing position as the man but also essentially acting out the movements, Malte demonstrates that he is more engaged than those sitting as he is actually doing what the others can only imagine, thus his resonance and mirror neurons could, as a result, also be *more* active. Similar to a dance technique class to an extent, he learns by not only feeling but also moving and imitating.

Berthoz’s idea – taken from Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* – of each observer being unique in his or her perspective because of interests, cultural and historical background ultimately shapes Malte’s encounter with the old man by providing his

mental context. As discussed before, the pervading emotion that the protagonist possesses is a nagging fear associated with his urban surroundings and particularly while in public. Before even encountering the man the protagonist's personal history of being a young writer in a dynamic and daunting urban space contextualize his perspective and influence how he will feel during the encounter. What he perceives will most likely be different from what another individual would see based on the intensity with which he focuses on the man. Throughout the "dance," the protagonist concentrates not simply on the whole aura of the man's dancing body but also focuses his attention on distinct body parts like first the legs and then the arms. Malte's intense depiction of concentrating on certain parts of the man's body shows his individual, subjective perspective. His experience points to the lack of a unified meaning and thus allows other observers of the "Veitstänzer" to have just as a different individual interpretation.

Malte learns that his own fear can be controlled and manipulated by outside agents—through Martin's concept of inner mimicry and contagion—whom he has never met. Through intense observation, Malte essentially slips into the shoes of the man and is able to not only feel ostracized by society but also physically experience the abrupt and unexpected manifestations of the Veitstanz. On the other hand, his encounter with the old man has opened his ability to see aesthetically, (ie. recognizing beauty in the everyday and shocking) more vigilantly and to interpret in different ways—as Gibson's theory suggests.

6. Failed Improvisation in Döblin's "Die Tänzerin und der Leib"

In "Die Tänzerin und der Leib" Döblin, like Rilke, engages two opposing choreographic tools to stage his dance: one is controlled by the will of ballet dancer Ella, who still exudes her classical vocabulary and the other is her modern body, whom she battles on a daily basis. Both of these dueling powers possess one body like the "Veitstänzer" and fight for its turn to use its host as a means to create expression. Unlike Malte's encounter with the man, which can be considered one dance scene, Döblin's short story depicts three specific dance sections all with different performers and audience members. The first scenes are the development of Ella's trained and disciplined body for ballet. During these events Ella performs while her will learns to tame her uncultivated body; her mother, ballet masters and fellow dancers are the observers. The second section takes place in the hospital as Ella's emotions run high and her will becomes rather weakened; the viewers this time are not only the doctors and the nurses but also the dancer herself. The final scenes involve her prophetic embroidery, the waltz and her suicide as Ella's will regains some of its vitality to battle her body while the doctors and nurses watch. Unlike the Veitstänzer scene which revolves around primarily the observers perspective, the ballet dancer is not only choreographing her movements but also has to view them just as much as the doctors, nurses, mother and fellow dancers.

These three sections could be read with the concepts of Martin and Gibson in mind. In regard to Martin's concept of inner mimicry and contagion, Ella is depicted as having even more erratic and, at times, unexplainable emotional outbursts that eventually seek expression in both dance-like movement and embroidery, yet it remains unclear whether the doctors and nurses are able to read and understand her creations. Gibson's

theory—which Foster bridges into the concept of contact improvisation—applies even more closely than with Malte and the “Veitstänzer” given the fact that the two powers of her will and the modern body both must coexist in the same space.

During the first section Ella’s “will” is constructed and fueled by the outside influences of her mother and the bourgeois institution of 19th century ballet. At such an impressionable young age she has not experienced enough of the world to likely have developed her own true will. At the age of 19 she becomes sick and has to fight even harder to maintain her conditioning: “Mit neunzehn Jahren befiel sie ein bleiches Siechtum, [...] Ihre Glieder wurden schwer, aber sie spielte weiter.”⁵⁵¹ Interestingly in the first part, she is depicted as having almost no emotion and being cold which one could argue would be a byproduct of the balletic discipline in which technical prowess was first highly regarded yet the portrayed emotions did not come from the dancer but from learned acting skills: “Es gelang ihr, über den üppigsten Tanz Kälte zu sprühen.” The emotions that an observer would see would be completely affected and often times melodramatic and would not be a reflection of the feelings of the dancers themselves but rather those of the predominantly male choreographer. Despite the lack of training involved in exploring and reading her own feelings, she has, on the other hand, become quite the expert in her kinesthetic awareness and in being able to read and control her body up until the onset of the sickness.

Section two depicts the brewing and worsening battle with her untamable body while at the same time her uncontrollable emotions begin to emerge after her mother decides to take her into the hospital. As she is taken from her safe haven, she faces the unknown just as Malte willingly, yet often begrudgingly, adventures into the streets of

⁵⁵¹ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 18.

Paris to learn and gain inspiration for writing. Her colorful array of emotions during her time in the hospital include “Angst,” “Abscheu,” “dunkle Angst,” “Entsetzen,” “Schadenfreude,” “Kälte,” “Haß”⁵⁵² and during which she remains “ohne Willen.”⁵⁵³ During the scenes in the hospital she curiously loses the ability to speak which further hinders her in communicating with the doctors and nurses. Unlike a modern dancer who would be able to channel these highly charged, inner emotions—sometimes unconscious ones—and translate them into movement that would be able to convey embodied emotion into the viewer, Ella represents, at this point, a failed dancer who is unable to bridge the gap between her balletic upbringings and become a mover of modernity. Instead of experimenting with creation, she is confined to a small, alienating hospital room feeling a plethora of erratic, inexpressible feelings.

Part three illustrates the reemergence of her will and ability to produce artistically once again. She first begins by sketching a prophetic scene—depicting an amorphous blob being stroked by a thermometer held by a doctor and, at the same time, being stabbed with scissors by a barefoot girl—which she later embroiders. Then she suddenly retains the urge to dance and “wollte [...] ihren Willen wieder fühlen”⁵⁵⁴ by picking a waltz and “[m]it einer Bewegung ihres Willens konnte sie ihn noch einmal bei den Händen fassen, den Leib...”⁵⁵⁵ These two moments demonstrate the reengagement with her creative vigor by deciding to move. Although it seems that the short story might be taking a positive turn, this brief glimmer of hope is snuffed out due to the incompatibility

⁵⁵² Alfred Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” in *Jagende Rosse. Der schwarze Vorhang und andere frühe Erzählwerke*, ed. Christina Althenm (Olthen: Walter Verlag, 1981), 18-21.

⁵⁵³ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 19.

⁵⁵⁴ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 21.

⁵⁵⁵ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 21.

of her will and her body's dance styles. Essentially Ella is doomed from the beginning of the story because of her ignorance and lack of probable exposure to other movement forms. She picks the out-dated waltz to perform, which unfortunately does not correspond to her inner feelings but rather to those of affected bourgeois society. Her sketch and embroidery show some promise in reaching a more modern aesthetic because of its lack of traditional beauty and abstraction -- thus perhaps showing a more accurate portrayal of her inner emotions. In fact her expression in these works carries more promise than the waltz with her own body.

The last section of her dance culminates as she calls for the doctor by insulting him, stabs herself with sewing scissors and releases one final scream. Her emotions finally reach a form of bodily expression that could be deemed worthy for modern dance even though she might merely consider it a final act of desperation. She has finally learned to channel her will to artistically produce even though her first cathartic dance is her last. During this final scene and the second section in the hospital, she does not have a receptive audience who not only understands her feelings but also kinesthetically empathize with her. The "Veitstänzer" at least is able to thoroughly captivate Malte who not only embodies the man's dance but is also compelled to take part in the event by imitating him. The reader of Döblin's text might also feel the emotions and empathize with Ella, but the doctors and nurses are unable to participate. Therefore, Martin's theory of inner mimicry and contagion, to this extent, could only be exercised through the reader and not by the coldly depicted hospital staff.

From an early age on, Ella is taught to train her body to the academic ballet standard and has developed sensitive acuity to the demands of her body demonstrating an

extraordinary kinesthetic awareness. Due to her chosen job and lifestyle, she, above all other professionals, needs to be receptive in reading her own body. In following Gibson's idea of the observer's perception being engaged in both receiving and reacting to visual stimuli and further to Foster's notion of contact improvisation, Döblin's text demonstrates Ella's constantly citing her own bodily observation as well as her and her body's struggle to inhabit and coexist in the same space. As soon as she becomes sick at the age of 19 and dancing begins to become difficult, her body starts to hinder her performance and plays a central role in her life. The notion of contact improvisation essentially consists of two dancers who willingly desire to dance harmoniously together by trusting, sharing and negotiating their movements through space. While this dance is usually self-limiting, Ella's battle with her body is constantly demanding and emotionally draining. Yet one could argue that their relationship represents a rather unconventional and unsuccessful attempt at a contact improvisation simply because they share the same body, have to negotiate their movement, and be cognizant of their space.

While at first she would always be able to coerce her body to perform, she eventually loses her power and confidence and has to learn to work with her body by physically observing it in another way. On the drive to the hospital Döblin writes: "In leiser Angst öffnet sie die Augen, als sie die Glieder betastete, die sich ihr entzogen. Wie machtlos sie war, o wie machtlos sie war."⁵⁵⁶ The ride to the hospital symbolizes not only a decisive change of venue but also in the way Ella begins to react to her body. As she opens her eyes she notices the alienating hospital, yet also touches her body as if she has never seen it before: being a stranger in her own skin. Away from her mother and ballet peers, the young girl has to get to know this body who also seems just as

⁵⁵⁶ Döblin, "Die Tänzerin und der Leib," 19.

intimidated to dance with her as it resists her touch. The push and pull of their relationship continues as Döblin writes: “ein Grauen überkam sie vor diesem Leib. Sie wagte gar nicht, ihn zu berühren, an ihm zu wischen, starrte auf ihre Arme, ihre Brüste, erschauerte, als sie sich lange im Spiegel besah.”⁵⁵⁷ The degree to which she is observing her detached body is even further removed as she watches her reflection instead of looking at her actual limbs. Instead of only being slightly scared and curious to touch her body, Ella now seems utterly afraid to even have contact. Her brewing contempt for the body escalates as “Sie sperrte den Leib ein, legte ihn in Ketten.”⁵⁵⁸ Apart from poking at her body early on, this quotation cites aggressive behavior against her body in trying to stun its power. However, the only genuine attempt to “dance” with her body occurs when she suddenly is reinvigorated with the desire to physically move again:

Sie wollte wieder tanzen, tanzen. Wie einstmals, als sie Kälte über jede Üppigkeit des Tanzes sprühte, als ihr straffer Leib wie eine Flamme geweht hatte, wollte sie ihren Willen wieder fühlen. Sie wollte einen Walzer, einen wunderschönen, mit ihm tanzen, der ihr Herr geworden war, mit dem Leib. Mit einer Bewegung ihres Willens konnte sie ihn noch einmal bei den Händen fassen, den Leib, das träge Tier, ihn hinwerfen, und er war nicht mehr der Herr über sie. Ein triumphierender Hass wühlte sie von innen auf; nicht er ging zur Rechten und sie zur Linken, sondern sie - sie sprangen mitsamt. Sie wollte ihn auf den Boden kollern, die Tonne, das hinkende Männlein, Hals über Kopf es hinrudeln, ihm Sand ins Maul stecken.⁵⁵⁹

While their bodily awareness should allow Ella and her body the opportunity to move about harmoniously, her seemingly good intentions of proposing the beautiful waltz are camouflaged with a devious plan to usurp power over her body. This last scene involves the only point in the story in which she can forge a central point with her body, like in

⁵⁵⁷ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 19.

⁵⁵⁸ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 19.

⁵⁵⁹ Döblin, “Die Tänzerin und der Leib,” 21.

contact improvisation, in order to negotiate their use of space together; however, the opposing agendas make it virtually impossible for them to move harmoniously, and even though “sie sprangen mitsamt” one usually considers this a contrived and fleeting moment.

Both Ella and the “Veitstänzer” are plagued with unpredictable forces within their bodies, whom they battle on a daily basis. In both cases they maintain some form of control due to their developed kinesthetic senses and try to defend themselves and fight against their alien forces. While Döblin portrays the life of the dancer Ella from her perspective, Rilke depicts the thoughts of the “Veitstänzer” to a lesser extent but highlights those of the observer Malte. From these perspectives one can see how Martin’s theory first begins with the choreographic intentions and devices used in the work even if the pieces are not being fully receptive or understood—as demonstrated with the doctors watching Ella. Because she is unable to express her emotions through movement until the very end, unlike the “Veitstänzer” who cannot control his motions, she cannot arguably communicate with the doctors and nurses. When she finally does regain some control over her will, Ella has to kill herself out of desperation, and thus ends her life and her production of art. The doctor is, however, just as puzzled as before about the whole display and, implicitly does not learn aesthetically even as the text ends. On the other hand in Rilke’s text, although the waiters and errand boy snicker and laugh at the dancing man, Malte becomes captivated and not only feels the “Veitstänzer’s” emotions but also sees more aesthetically beyond what is actually in front of him, and thus illustrates Gibson’s notion of non-representational movement carrying multifarious meanings.

Döblin learns that Ella's emotions surface due to the battle with her body. Instead of having a free will to perform ballet, she becomes part of a dysfunctional contact improvisation which puzzles the doctors. Ella is a representative of a bourgeois individual who is unable to make the transition between her old and her worlds.

7. Sweeping Intoxication: Emotion and Abstraction in Lasker-Schüler's *Mein Herz*

While the narrative perspectives of both *Malte* and "Die Tänzerin und der Leib" remain clear—as Rilke and Döblin create characters who embody a historical and cultural identity with somewhat consistent desires and emotions—the narrator experiencing dance in Lasker-Schüler's *Mein Herz* assumes a more "lyrisches Ich" position in which nearly any trace of personal history is seemingly negated because of the text's poetic nature. Therefore, it cancels out a need to analyze these scenes with Berthoz's borrowed notion of *habitus* and anticipatory perception. Despite some of these differences Lasker-Schüler's text still demonstrates some of the kinesthetic theories put forward by both Martin and Gibson. In respect to Martin's concepts of inner mimicry and contagion, the scene with the oriental dancer involves itself less with an actual "dancer" and more with the moving café as an architectural unit enveloping its narrator and causing her to catch the "contagious" sway within the urban structure. In contrast to Gibson's theory of keen bodily awareness—as demonstrated with *Malte* and the "Veitstänzer," the narrator from the oriental dancer café depiction appears to revel in the lack of kinesthetic awareness and control and to relish in free and unbound movement.

Although Martin's theory deals primarily with the contagious effects of the human dancer on other observers, he—as already mentioned before—briefly introduces his thoughts by mentioning the viewer's muscular responses to architectural structures and rock formations.⁵⁶⁰ Martin's arguments demonstrate that objects and moving bodies do not necessarily have to be in motion in order to create an effect on the observer. The opening scene from Lasker-Schüler's *Mein Herz* seems to provide a rather beautiful yet “unimaginable” representation which culminates in an urban structure that *actually* moves, at least within the confines of the poetic: “Das Café Kurfürstendamm ist eine Frau, eine orientalische Tänzerin. Sie zerstreut mich, sie tröstet mich, sie entzückt mich durch die vielen süßerlei Farben ihres Gewands. Eine Bewegung ist in dem Café, es dreht sich geheimnisvoll wie der schimmernde Leib der Fatme.”⁵⁶¹ (151). The café should be a rather static architectural structure, yet the dancing oriental women immediately evokes further connotations of flowing, draping veils in constant motion reminiscent of Loie Fuller's *Serpent Dance*. While the typical modern individual is confronted with a dizzying array of overwhelming stimuli and daunted by the buildings and traffic of the metropolitan setting, the dancer café, in direct contrast, charms, consoles and casts an enchanting, yet soothing spell over the narrator. Instead of performing unexpected, fragmented gestures and maintaining the observer Malte's attention, the café sweeps up its narrator into an intoxicating transcendental world of eternal movement that billows throughout the entire café. While Malte's observation of the “Veitstänzer” begins with the slow, gradual development of movement elements that builds to a climax, the oriental

⁵⁶⁰ Martin, *Introduction to the Dance*, 53.

⁵⁶¹ Else Lasker-Schüler, *Mein Herz: Ein Liebesroman mit Bildern und wirklich lebenden Menschen. Mit Zeichnungen der Autorin aus der Ausgabe von 1912* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1989), 151.

dancer's motions begin rather suddenly and radiate almost immediately enlivening all aspects of the café including violins and voices. This collective, sweeping and turning effect reminds one of Henry van de Velde's comment of Loïe Fuller's *Serpent Dance* when he noted in his journal that he did not know when the dance begins and ends.⁵⁶² Fuller's dance would begin essentially *in medias res* with no gradual movement, but rather a sudden and constant tempo. Just as the narrator is enchanted by the flowing fabric of the café, one journalist similarly writes about the *Serpentine Dance*: "Die stets wechselnden Reflexe und Farben des elektrischen Lichtes tragen wesentlich dazu bei, den Effect der ganzen Vorführung derartig zu erhöhen, daß die Zuschauer sich in den Glauben versetzt fühlen könnte."⁵⁶³ He also notes being lifted to a higher level due to the hypnotic stimuli of Fuller's performance. The notion of literally becoming swept away by the moving café creates an immediate *contagion* as the narrator now becomes part of the living space. The narrator not only feels the inner desire to move, but actually becomes part of the thriving "organism." The idea of an organic system reminds one of Max Osborn's depictions of Berlin as a "Stadtorganismus" that utilized images of circulating blood and constant development.⁵⁶⁴ The oriental dancer then represents a microcosm of the metropolis Berlin both of which are characterized by their perpetual motion, development and ability to beguile and intoxicate it's observer to not only watch the action intensely but also to empathize and eventually move with both moving bodies.

In a similar vein as the café dancer who "zertreut," "tröstet," and "entzückt" the narrator, corresponding emotions such as affection, care, and amazement, could be felt as

⁵⁶² Kessler, *Das Tagebuch Dritter Band 1897-1905*, 448. – Berlin 26. Nov. 1987

⁵⁶³ (Gez.:) E.R., "Serpentinetanz", in: *Illustrierte Zeitung*, 99/2580 (10. Dezember 1892): 684.

⁵⁶⁴ Max Osborn, *Berlin 1870-1929* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1994), 151.

a result. These emotions perhaps point to Lasker-Schüler's conception of creating this dance by—much like the modern dancers according to Martin—accessing her own inner emotions and channeling them into the movements of the café. At the same time at which the narrator becomes enveloped into a vacuum of eternal liveliness, there remains a certain amount of spatial ambiguity with respect to the awareness of her body in regard to the café. Unlike Rilke's narrative in which he is able to precisely describe the urban landscape as well as the man's meticulous gestural movement—thus demonstrating an acute kinesthetic awareness,—Lasker-Schüler's dance scene assumes the opposite effect by occupying a less definable poetic space in which the lack of awareness leads to an aesthetic propensity for free, unbound movement. The café absorbs the narrator into its space and hypnotizes her to become a part of their continual motion, which once again reminds one of Fuller's *Serpent Dance*. This kind of choreography on the one hand could create these respective feelings held by the narrator; however, for the reader such a visual depiction *resists* representation as he or she would have to use his imagination in order to produce mental images. Since these depictions lack representation, it is possible for the reader to interpret them more symbolically or metaphorically and perhaps not necessarily tie them to a particular emotion but simply movement for movement sake as John Cage expressed about dance in the 1960s. The text then raises itself to another level of representation by inviting the reader to imagine and perceive the oriental dancing cafe aesthetically. However, these images will not always be there for another reader and, therefore, allow for other interpretations and multiplicities of meanings. Although Lasker-Schüler depicts her narrator as feeling soothed, comforted and amazed by the enveloping café—which the reader may also perceive if one follows Martin—she also

juxtaposes the notion of not only traditional dance but also space by depicting a billowing architectural structure. She attempts to depict a scene that is non-representational with actual dancers and objects and forces the reader to evaluate the text even more—just as Malte has to do with the “Veitstänzer.” It is not until later that Malte is able to create an interpretation and state its effect on himself; this is also the case with the readers of Lasker-Schüler’s oriental dancer café. The need to demand time away from the event in order to contemplate the performance would be less of an emotional reaction and would require more reflection, thus being closer to Gibson’s concept of abstracting from the everyday and focusing on stimuli as such.

8. Conclusion

All four texts of Endell, Rilke, Döblin, and Lasker-Schüler offer different experiences in regard to the reception and reaction of the narrators, protagonists and readers. The texts depict dances scenes that exemplify—to varying degrees—Martin’s theory of inner mimicry and contagion as well as Gibson’s concept of dynamic awareness and inviting different interpretations. While Malte is initially struck by great fear—which consumes his entire being and intensifies greatly as he embodies the “Veitstänzer’s” own feelings and actions—the sick man also symbolizes one of many frightening incidents that accumulate and contribute to the protagonist’s new way of perceiving, conceiving and representing his urban surroundings. His sudden heightened emotions are contrasted with his ability to establish an objective distance from the performance and to reflect on and represent the effects of the man’s fragmented, non-representational movement. On the other hand Endell’s depiction does still portray his narrator being astonished by the groups of moving people and emphasizes in detail, like Rilke, the complexity and

variation of their movement but does so with a distanced and purely objectified perspective. Lasker-Schüler's oriental dancer café involves movement contagion yet lacks a kinesthetic awareness concerning her surroundings. The narrator depicts herself being emotionally swept into the motions of the café which symbolizes a non-representational abstraction of pure movement. Finally Döblin's Ella, similar to Malte, undergoes a tormenting fear that fluctuates between deep anger, hate and spite and at the same time depicts a failed version of a contact improvisation between her and her body.

By using Martin's concept of inner mimicry and contagion, Gibson's theory of dynamic kinesthetic awareness and multiplicity of meaning, and Berthoz's borrowed idea of Bourdieu's *habitus*, this chapter brought to light the complexity of kinesthetic, empathetic and emotional reactions associated with Endell, Rilke, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler's "dance" scenes. Martin's theory allows us to see that not just the moving human body but also inanimate objects such as architectural structures and a crumpled piece of paper—in the case of Malte— can cause the observer to empathize. This expansion of the possible stimuli that can affect the observer opens up the interpretation of dance and movement which can become indistinguishable. In view of Gibson's concept, any movement becomes open to interpretation and can cause any multitude of emotion—or lack thereof.

CONCLUSION

This study has shed light onto the notions of dance and urban space around 1900 by exploring their representations in August Endell's *Die Schönheit der großen Stadt*, Rainer Maria Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, Alfred Döblin's "Die Tänzerin und der Leib," and Else Lasker-Schüler's *Mein Herz*. These authors came to the city—Berlin or Paris—to become inspired in their personal and fictional writing. Their experiences in the city—whether by partaking in flânerie, engaging in conversations with artists and intellectuals, or watching live dance performances—were filled with numerous impressions inspiring them to conceptualize the urban space on a more abstract level. The constant influx of stimuli on the authors caused them to experiment stylistically in order to capture their experiences in writing.

Instead of addressing dance as a phenomena that happens only in a theater, this study addressed how representations of dance, dance-like and pedestrian movements around 1900 situated themselves into everyday life in urban space and among all individuals regardless of their social status. Whereas the "black box" of the theater was filled with artificial, decorative props for ballets that arguably served secondary functions, transferring dance into a visceral and dynamic environment of a bustling city would demand the space to be read as a meaningful element like the moving body. Along similar lines, my definition of dance encompasses a wide range of understandings: dance in the spirit of nineteenth century balls and ballets certainly count as dance. However, I also consider the abrupt, jagged motions of the "Veitstänzer" as dance-like movement even though he is not performing in a traditional setting or demonstrating conventionally

aestheticized movements. While this example might not be contested, pedestrian movement seen as “dance” movement, however, could be. But by taking inspiration from postmodern dances of the 1960s in which everyday movements were aestheticized, I incorporated this into my general understanding of the term “dance.”

My study, therefore, contributes to our understanding of the interconnectedness of dance and city space in two ways: first, it reevaluates what one can consider dance, dance texts and addresses these scenes as if they were “dances” because the authors refer to them as such. These texts depict dance, dance-like, or pedestrian movement as suggested in the authors’ use of language—Endell’s “Menschenströme” in an unnamed square in Berlin, Rilke’s “Tanzkraft” as describing the beautiful and overwhelming power of the Veitstanz, Döblin’s “Tänzerin” Ella, Lasker-Schüler’s café who becomes an “orientalische Tänzerin.” Yet the “dancing” involved in these scenes belies the traditional ballet and balls of the nineteenth century in terms of their movement styles. These older styles of dance focused on a hierarchy of dancers, praised virtuosic, codified movement, and reinforced conventional gender roles.

Endell, Rilke, Döblin, and Lasker-Schüler were interested in breaking away from these stifling norms, exploring their own modern, “choreographic” voice and seeking ways to find representations of their ideas of dance, however, all in different ways. Endell’s depiction focuses less on the individual, detailed movements of people and more on the abstract, organic “body” they become. Instead of performing predictable and elegant motions, Rilke’s “Veitstänzer” exhibits abrupt and unexpected movements which shock and challenge the protagonist Malte. Döblin’s ballet dancer Ella fails at the battle with her modern body and represents the fall of the bourgeois body. Lasker-Schüler’s

oriental dancer café—a sensual and beguiling body as opposed to the rigid body of ballerinas—resists representation and takes on human characteristics able to soothe and comfort its narrator.

Although these four dance scenes differ to a degree concerning the way in which they break away from the older dance aesthetic, they also show similarities among each other. The authors wanted to challenge their reader by creating literary dance depictions which had not been seen before. For both the narrator/protagonist and the reader, these experimental texts are representative of the individual's ability—or lack thereof—to transition into modernity. These dance scenes are supposed to educate the reader to recognize the drastic changes that not only dancers, but all individuals in urban society have to deal with around 1900 as the lines between the dance world and the everyday become interwoven. Therefore, observing dance, dance-like, and pedestrian movement in the streets of Berlin and Paris became integrated into the daily lives of the urban dweller.

In addition, Endell, Rilke, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler were interested—to a certain extent—in depicting the everyday person with little regard to gender and social class. While the pioneers of early modern dance were mostly women—besides Nijinsky—performing solos, the authors selected groups and individuals from all walks of life who deviated from those early dancers. Endell looks at people moving about in a square paying no attention to the gender or class of his dancers and focuses on the groups' entire movements. Rilke selects an old man with a debilitating nerve condition as his spectacle. While Döblin chooses a fallen ballerina, Lasker-Schüler selects an oriental female dancer, who could resemble Ruth St. Denis, however differs from St. Denis because she envelopes a café with her movement.

Furthermore, while most scholarship focuses on how the moving body creates meaning, my study reevaluates the degree to which dynamic space plays an integral part in aesthetic representation. The theater would no longer be the typical venue for the new, modern dance as ballets had assumed in the nineteenth century. Choreographers ventured outside into the city space—gardens and museums, for example. While Endell, Rilke, Döblich and Lasker-Schüler were fully aware of this development, their dance scenes furthered the aesthetic of city space—arguably even more than dancers such as Duncan and St. Denis—by experimenting with space and aestheticizing the everyday. The urban space, therefore, took on a role just as important as the moving body as it could now be judged as a dynamic aesthetic object.

Endell's programmatic text encourages modern individuals to observe their surroundings in Berlin as beautiful as opposed to dirty and industrious. While focusing his attention on scenes in the streets, he depicts, in particular, one square in "Vor dem Café" in which streams of people are weaving among each other. This square functions as the vast space in which an impromptu performance takes place for Endell. On the other hand, Rilke's protagonist Malte follows the "Veitstänzer" throughout the streets of Paris—passing by restaurants, an errand boy, and over two bridges resulting as well in an unexpected performance. The urban space here is not static as in Endell's square but becomes a dynamic stage in which the observer also has to correspondingly traverse the city in order to stay in view of the old man. In contrast, Döblich's dancer Ella is assumed to be a ballerina, yet the focus is not on her dancing, but the internal struggle with her body. The institutional-type setting of the hospital creates a very confined space in which her daily symptoms are read by doctors and nurses. Whereas the "Veitstänzer" has a vast

city space to allow his disease and his will to battle over how the body gets to express itself, Ella cannot move outside of her hospital room as the doctors hover over her. Lasker-Schüler's narrator combines an oriental dancer and a café into one idea. This personification gives the illusion that the dancer encompasses the whole café and can create a soothing space of perpetual movement. Instead of being an "actual" human dancer on a stage, Lasker-Schüler turns her dancer into a poetic and transcendental figure embracing both space and body.

In their own ways, these four authors experimented with their use of space by surpassing the notion of simply having a dance in a garden or museum. Their dancers thoroughly interact with the everyday spaces, and the authors advantageously aestheticize the space while transforming it into a stage. While the early modern dancers choreographed their dances, these four authors create dance scenes that appear as impromptu performances to their protagonists and narrators, yet to the reader they are thoroughly conceptualized and highly stylized. The unexpected nature of these stagings adds to the complexity in reading the space as another active agent in addition to the moving body. Arguably, it is through the medium of literature in which the imagination can reach a higher level, especially with Lasker-Schüler's oriental dancer café, that it cannot attain from observation of every life and performance.

While Endell, Rilke, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler were depicting dance in their writing based on their everyday encounters, Harry Graf Kessler ventured out to not only watch the early modern dancers but also to interact with them. Through reading Kessler's extensive diaries, we witness the transition from the stifling academic balls and ballets of the nineteenth century to the experimental movements of the early modern dancers.

Having grown accustomed to attending balls, he soon became tired of them. His journal described his desire to see a newer kind of dance that embraced everyday movement. His wish was met after he encountered the abstract, degendered serpent dance of Loïe Fuller involving a long, draping costume. While he misunderstood, furthermore, the seemingly dilettante dances of Isadora Duncan, Kessler became fascinated by Ruth St. Denis' exotic dances that bordered on abstract materiality and the accentuated female form. Soon he and his intellectual circle educated themselves more about dance by acquainting themselves with St. Denis and her movement philosophy. Kessler's involvement with dance intensified as he collaborated with choreographer Sergei Diaghilev and dancer Vaslav Nijinsky in the ballet *Josephslegende* in 1914.

As mentioned earlier, Endell, Rilke, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler came to the metropolis to seek inspiration for their writing and thematicized dance in urban space. Like modern dancers of the time, who rejected wearing corsets and desired a freeing of the body, these writers also sought to break away from the old style of writing of depicting idyllic landscapes and using linear narrative structure. The city had caused the modern individual's perception to become fragmented, and writers sought to stylistically and aesthetically create ruptures in their texts. They wrote in fragments related to their daily experience in the metropolis, for example. In addition to trying to produce a way of writing that could stylistically recreate urban experiences, it should not be surprising that dance was also a part of their encounters. The influence of dance on their writing was also apparent when Rilke wrote a letter to his wife Clara about encountering a Spanish dancer in an atelier in Paris, and when Döblin wrote an article entitled "Tänzerinnen" about observing two polarized dancers in Berlin.

The goal of the four authors, one could argue, is to “choreograph” dance scenes that stylistically could not only represent a dance but also provide a permanent yet performative text. The ephemeral nature of dance resists any kind of reproduction, yet a “dance text” becomes a medium that attempts to translate visual movement and feeling into writing. Endell’s square filled with “Menschenströme” translates well visually as they begin by moving: the dance slowly builds and finishes with a flourish as the people resemble a whole, organic body. The text retains a performance nature when read aloud and creates sweeping images in the mind of its reader. On the other hand, Rilke uses the Veitstanz as a metaphor for not only the modern individual’s fragmented experience in perceiving the city but for also for Malte’s difficulty in writing—a problem that not only Rilke but Endell, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler likely experience. Rilke’s text also involves a building in tension and finishes with a grand jump as the “Veitstänzer” falls to the ground. Döblin’s ballerina Ella does not “dance” a great extent in the short story because her style of ballet is already well-known. Instead he focuses on Ella’s internal turmoil and the way in which her body and her will seek to express themselves—either through her sketch or attempt at “modern dance” at the end of the story. Döblin’s text maintains a fragmentary and clinical nature making it resemble a study that he may have seen himself. Lasker-Schüler challenges the reader to imagine her oriental dancer café, yet maintains a soothing poetry and prose language as if the reader him- or herself become swept up in the movement.

Until this point, I have approached the texts of Endell, Rilke, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler in three ways by: first historically contextualizing them within the city setting, second tracing their aesthetic (dis)continuities with the nineteenth century bourgeois

dance and modern dance, and third conducting a close reading. There are two further approaches I pursued: Susan Leigh Foster's semiotic, deconstructive approach to reading dance as well as theories of kinesthesia, empathy and emotion.

Since Foster's theory departs from the previous ideas about dance which claimed an inability to talk about dance, Foster creates an interpretive model with which to address movement according to five characteristics: framing, modes of representation, style, vocabulary and syntax. Similar in some ways to a close reading, this type of interpretation also provides another way in which to situate dances among other historical dances thereby tracing influences, purposes and aesthetics. Seemingly unconscious practices of choreographing become broken down by using Foster's method in order to note patterns, interpret and gather meaning.

For example, ballets of the nineteenth century used *reflective* and *imitative* modes of representation. Ballet dancers either performed movement which reflected itself and represented no deeper meaning or dancers performed gestural movements very similar to pedestrian movements so as to be easily interpretable by an audience. In this regard, the movements were supposed to be "beautiful" and carry the linear plot further. Early modern dances by Fuller, St. Denis and Duncan broke from this tradition by channeling their own expression into symbolic movement. Their modes of representation generally included some *imitation* but often more *resemblance* and *replication*. Their movements were supposed to *resemble* an inner feeling trying to escape and perhaps *replicate* a system of these feelings. Although Foster does not make any claims about how modes of representation can help interpret postmodern dance, one could suggest that there is little *imitative* and more *resemblance* and *replication*. However, if one keeps Gibson's theory

in mind, then postmodern dances should not evoke just one emotion but a multitude of feelings—if present—and interpretation.

If we take what is discussed here and apply it to the dance texts of Endell, Rilke, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler, then one sees that they assume similarities with both early modern, modern and postmodern dance. Therefore, these texts seem to depict dances that were aesthetically more challenging to the reader—on some levels—than the early modern dancers of their time because the dancers were more involved in their use of space. As a result of their complex representations, a more demanding reading is needed than for the dances of Duncan, St. Denis and Fuller.

Besides being inspired by Foster's dance theory to the four dance texts, concepts of kinesthesia, empathy and emotions can also provide insights concerning the reaction of the protagonists/narrators and readers to these "performances." By addressing the reception of the observer, it completes the notion of having a dance performance: first, Endell, Rilke, Döblin and Lasker-Schüler were inspired by their surroundings and some saw actual dances in the city. Second, they "choreographed" their own dances with both dancers and observers. Martin, Gibson and Berthoz's approaches from the 1930s until 1990s demonstrate a developing understanding of kinesthesia, empathy and emotions resulting in more empirical data to support past claims (ie. Martin's claim about "inner mimicry" and "contagion" were later scientifically proven in the 90s with the discovery of how "mirror neurons" function in the brain.) Their approaches shed light onto the way in which dance performances affect its observers' perception and interpretation.

Endell's "Vor dem Café" demonstrates Martin's theory of inner mimicry and contagion to a much lesser extent as no emotion seems to be exhibited in the narrator.

However, Gibson's abstraction and multiplicity of meanings plays a large role in the narrator's interpretation of the "Menschenströme" in the square. Rilke's protagonist Malte, on the other hand, demonstrates inner mimicry and movement contagion from intensely watching the old man and begins to feel as if he is the "Veitstänzer." In line with Gibson's keen kinesthetic awareness, Malte also follows in step staying equidistance to the old man, and later he has his own aesthetic realization about the man's dancing. Döblin's ballerina Ella falls in line with Gibson's bodily and spatial awareness with her body. Essentially trapped, her will and her body perform a strange and dysfunctional contact improvisation. While Lasker-Schüler's oriental dancer café soothes and sweeps up the narrator into an enveloping dance that radiates throughout the space, the narrator is not aware of her own positioning in regard to the café. In fact, the reader cannot position him- or herself into the poetic narrative because the representations are purposefully nebulous as if he or she also becomes absorbed up into the space.

These approaches incorporate a vital link to the notion of a performance: by including the reception and reaction of the observer. In doing so, they demonstrate the ways in which dances can cause the observer to both feel, empathize and—at the same time—abstract intellectually from the situation. The very fact that all four authors have a narrator or a protagonist—who watches a dance scene and whose introspective voice and feelings are established—suggests that the reader has a figure with whom her or she could possibly identify. The reactions of the narrator and protagonist to the dances also influence the way in which the reader should feel and interpret the scene. The reader becomes implicated by reading the text and also witnesses the dance in a mediated fashion.

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