Entangled Imagination

by

Kristin Heavey

M.A. (Education, Specialization in Dance), Stanford University, 1998

B.A. (Theater, Specialization in Dance), University of New Hampshire, 1991

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the

Arts Education Program

Faculty of Education

© Kristin Heavey 2026

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Spring 2026

Copyright in this work is held by the author. Please ensure that any reproduction or re-use is done in accordance with the relevant national copyright legislation.

Declaration of Committee

Name:	**Kristin Heavey**
Degree:	**Doctor of Philosophy**
Title:	**The Entangled Imagination**
Committee:	**Chair:** **Michael Ling** Senior Lecturer, Education
	Celeste Snowber Supervisor Professor, Faculty of Education
	Lynn Fels Committee Member Professor, Faculty of Education
	Stephen Smith Examiner Professor, Faculty of Education
	Shauna Butterwick External Examiner Professor Emerita, Department of Educational Studies

Ethics Statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

a. human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics

or

b. advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University

or has conducted the research

c. as a co-investigator, collaborator, or research assistant in a research project approved in advance.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed with the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this thesis or project.

The original application for approval and letter of approval are filed with the relevant offices. Inquiries may be directed to those authorities.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

Update Spring 2016

Abstract

This dissertation is a performative and embodied inquiry into the idea of “entangled imagination,” expressed through a series of dance/performance films, accompanied by diffractive writing and interviews that document the co-creation of the performances. The writing – through dancer interviews and research – provided material that is included in (and which profoundly shaped) the editing of the films. “Entangled imagination” is a practice of imaginative action that undoes the idea that the body and the world are separate. The word “entanglement” is drawn from the writings of physicist and theorist Karen Barad, who puts forth the concept that we, and the universe we inhabit, are not separate entities – rather, in our interactions (which they re-frame as intra-actions), we are mutually constructed. Barad’s “agential realism” is not an unfamiliar or new concept; my dissertation acknowledges Indigenous thought and knowledge practices that are ethically grounded in similar human-universe relationality.

I co-created with the dancers, designing site-based performances, and inviting them to respond to a variety of outdoor spaces. All of the dancers have some background, in their own dance practices, of dancing outside the frame of the proscenium stage. Research questions that emerged were: How can we imaginatively co-create consciously in the present moment, with the human and more-than-human world, and enact change in the world? What are the types of motives and necessities that drive dancers to continue to dance, beyond the motive to “perform?” What is the meaning of movement, when drawn away from the context of on-stage “spectacle?”

My arts-based research practice is rooted in performative inquiry and embodied inquiry. In that spirit, my questions are not resolved as quantifiable “outcomes.” What emerges is a series of consciously connected moments – investigations asserted through a series of rearrangements of body, mind, place and universe, enacted by several dancers/beings through their embodied, entangled imaginations – situated in particular places, experienced at particular times, intra-acting in ways that are both ephemeral and ongoing.

Keywords: dance education; embodied inquiry; performative inquiry; new materiality; indigenous knowledge practices; site-based performance; dance film; entangled imagination

Dedication

I'd like to dedicate this work to my life partner and co-creator of life and art-making (and parenting), Chris Lanier, and to my daughter, who has awakened me to the entanglement and agency of being in the enfoldment of love. And to Teo – whose presence has been felt by me every step of the way.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Celeste Snowber for her scholarship of embodied inquiry, and for continually guiding me and pushing me deeper into my own dance/movement/site-based/embodied practice. You opened space for me to process and engage with the tragedy and beauty of life as fundamental elements of my research – not separate from my scholarship.

I would like to thank Lynn Fels for helping me to be awake to all the stop moments that arise from artistic practice and awareness – and for helping to create a pedagogical context for agency and co-creation – allowing the new to emerge.

I wish to express my deep gratitude to my collaborators – and in that I include my committee – who have done so much to point me in fruitful directions, and give me generative feedback about my process and methods. Erica, Maggie, KJ, Gabriel, Stacz, Anne-Lise, Maurya – what a pleasure it has been to spend time with you, and create work with you. Thank you to my co-creator, videographer, and editor, Chris Lanier, who was present, and deeply engaged/aware, at all the performances that make up the heart of this dissertation.

Finally, I must acknowledge my family, who supported me through the illness and loss that I experienced over the course of my studies: Tom and Marylou Heavey, Susan Heavey and Jeffery Heavey. Thank you, Rose Marie and Ray Lanier, for your generous financial and emotional support. And to my circle of friends and community, who kept me connected over the ups and downs of parenting, career shifts, and health challenges – I couldn't have persisted through the lengthy inquiry known as a PhD journey without you.

Table of Contents

Declaration of Committee ii
Ethics Statement iii
Abstract iv
Dedication v
Acknowledgements vi
Table of Contents vii
List of Figures viii

Introduction 1

Chapter 1: Investigations in the Entangled Imagination 6

Chapter 2 : "Entanglements" Dance Film: Reflections/Diffractions 29

Chapter 3: KJ at Chimney Beach 44

Chapter 4: Gabriel Forestieri at Tahoe Meadows and Sand Harbor 65

Chapter 5: Maggie Stack at Tahoe Meadows 94

Chapter 6: Anne-Lise Reusswig and Stacz Sadowski at The Presidio 114

Chapter 7: Maurya Kerr at Joaquin Miller Park 138

Chapter 8: Openings 167

References 183

List of Figures

Figure 1: Erica Pisarchuk Wilson 29
Figure 2: KJ Dahlaw 44
Figure 3: Gabriel Forestieri 65
Figure 4: Maggie Stack 94
Figure 5: Stacz Sadowski and Anne-Lise Reusswig 114
Figure 6: Maurya Kerr 138

Introduction

This dissertation is a series of dance/performance films, accompanied by a diffractive text, rooted in the concept of entangled imagination Activated within performative inquiry and embodied inquiry, entangled imagination expresses an imaginative capacity that is deeply braided with the body and the world – inseparable from, and enacted through, those porous typologies. The films address themselves to breaking down barriers between the human and more-than-human world, memory and experience, past and future, loss and regeneration – using the camera's ability to collapse time and space to express these ideas formally.

Entangled imagination, as I have conceived and imagined, is simultaneously concept and practice, emergent, dynamic, embracing the material presence of body, flesh, air, granite, river, heartsong. "entangled imagination" draws breath from the word/concept of "entanglement" in the work of physicist and theorist Karen Barad, whose book *Meeting the Universe Halfway* profoundly resonated with my creative experiences as a choreographer, dancer and scholar. Barad posits that the world is not separate from us and that when we interact with the world (or, as they re-frame it, intra-act), we are entangled with the universe, a theoretical perspective that resonates with a long history in Indigenous thought and knowledge practices (Kelly,2021; Rosiek, Snyder & Pratt, 2019). Entangled imagination is a practice of imaginative creative action that undoes the idea that the body and the world are separate.

In my desire to illuminate embodied enactments of entangled imagination, I worked with dancers in a series of site-based performances, reacting to the environment in a spirit of exploration and responsiveness, to create an embodied portrait anchored in the entanglement of the lived body in a site-specific place. They are all artists who have a conscious practice of connecting their embodied experience to the entanglements with the environment outside of the proscenium stage. They are all dancers who have site-specific dance as part of their practice. The dancers were my interview participants, research participants – and most fundamentally, collaborators. Text from these interviews is woven into the final edited dance films.

The film, and the written portion of the dissertation, includes research and interviews that address the history of the area, the tensions inherent in the interplay

between human development and the more-than-human world, ongoing colonialism and Indigenous resurgence, the current effects of climate change on the ecosystem, and the role the environment plays in experiences of healing.

The first portion of this dissertation, Chapter 1, is retrospective – a way of framing and making sense of my past practice, connecting it to a network of thinkers and practitioners who have helped me understand more deeply what I was doing.

The latter part of this dissertation traces the application of that understanding to new work. The dance films I produced over the course of my studies represent new research, and new modalities, for me as a choreographer. I developed a process for performance and video production with three distinct, but integrated, phases – first, the invitation of dancers to engage in a site-specific process, with the prompt to somatically respond to the environment, which was videotaped both with handheld cameras and drones; second, a recorded interview with the dancers, to investigate their experience of that performance, and relate it to their prior work as dancers and thinkers (and in many cases, as teachers); and third, the production of dance films of the performances that integrate text from the interviews. Integrating the content of the reflective interviews into the edited films was a direct expression of performative inquiry – a way to accommodate the idea that, as Lynn Fels (2015a) writes: “Reflection is a critical element of performative inquiry, a spiraling again and again to moments of performance that give us pause” (p. 118).

In the written portion of this dissertation, I have documented this process, with a chapter accompanying each performance/film. Each of these chapters follows a common three-part format. Part one is a narrative description of the performance itself, part two is a transcript of the interview with the dancers (lightly edited for clarity and flow), and part three is a “diffractive” written response to the experience, connecting it to ideas and experiences I have investigated in the course of my research. Here I am using the word “diffractive” rather than “reflective,” after Donna Haraway (1992), who posits that the metaphor of “reflection” doesn’t accommodate the factors of difference and change that result when we engage with our experience. Diffractions are integral to Barad’s theorizing of agential realism.

Research questions that emerged were: How does my practice as a dance artist teach me about agential realism and somatic and embodied ways of being? How can we imaginatively co-create consciously in the present moment with the human and more-than-human world, and enact change in the world? More specific to my lived experience over the past several years, through the latter half of the 2010s and the first half of the 2020s, were the following questions: How has entangled imagination, embodied inquiry, and performative inquiry awakened me during the devastating losses of Covid19, climate change, neoliberal fascism, settler colonialism and our need to collectively co-create a more life-sustaining cultural imaginary? How has being awake and coming into presence in the many entanglements of life and death assisted me in co-creating new knowledge and ontological states?

This work has been deeply and necessarily marked, then, by the moods and social/political upheavals that framed and impacted my experience during my studies. Social distancing and masking, pandemic deaths on a mass scale, the George Floyd protests, assaults on democracy and the slide towards authoritarian fascism in the United States, the acceleration of the effects of climate change, institutional assaults on disability and difference, the atomization and alienation that are exacerbated by screen technologies – being palpably entangled with all of these, they are felt in the fabric of what my collaborators and I produced.

Lastly, I'd like to underline a few new questions that emerged over the course of this practice – questions I hadn't intended to address at the outset, but which insisted on themselves, from the concrete elements of praxis. They were: what is the relationship between practice and training to raising consciousness of our state of imaginative entanglement? What are the types of motives and necessities that drive dancers to continue to dance, beyond the motive to "perform" – particularly as they get older? What is the meaning of movement, when it's drawn away from the context of on-stage "spectacle?"

In the practice of performative inquiry, my questions were not answered as "outcomes," but as an ongoing dance of material arrangements, choreographed moment-to-moment in response to the dense entanglements of the present moment – as embodied by a multitude of performers, in their particular times and places. As helpfully outlined in *A performative paradigm for post-qualitative inquiry*, "research results are…

understood as emerging and performative in performative research; the results create movement in the ongoing phenomena being researched. Results are performative; they create something new" (Østern et al., 2023). The dance films and diffractive writing are a record of this "something new."

Beginning with Chapter 2, each chapter is paired with a dance film. I intend that the viewer/reader watches each film before reading the chapter, as a way of grounding their reading in the sensorial, embodied activity that produced the writing.

I invite the reader to explore with me the idea of entangled imagination. There has been a certain urgency to this work, for me – I locate the performances documented in the dance films not in the context of "spectacle," but as a necessary engagement with a variety of struggles. In the case of these particular dancers, some of those struggles include changes wrought upon the body by aging or pregnancy, navigating bodily trauma and cultural domination, and negotiating one's place in social systems that were not built to accommodate – or even tolerate – one's fundamental being-ness, or their onto-ethical presence. Which is not to say that struggle is the foundational element of the performances – you will see in the dance films many moments of joy, self-possession, and agency – moments of feeling at home in the world, in deep relationality with the more-than-human world. These entanglements spread both backwards and forwards in time to places of repair – they stretch out before us an opening that indicates what is possible for our becoming. As Shauna Butterwick (Butterwick & Lawrence, 2023) says, concerning struggle and imaginative renewal: "Imagination is core to recognizing these struggles are not natural nor inevitable, and therefore transformation is possible" (p. 56).

One thing that has come into sharp relief to me, over the course of this work, is that we can't get to a place of imaginative transformation (onto-ethical response-ability) without the awareness of our vulnerability, where there is no discreet "I" that constructs a wall safely separating ourselves off from each other. I have a profound gratitude that the dancers approached the work with a sense of humility and vulnerability, situated in their life-long practices of embodied presence. This is what Maxine Greene (2000) so eloquently writes about: "One of the reasons I have come to concentrate on imagination as a means through which we can assemble a coherent world is that imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible" (p. 3).

Imagination is not a disembodied mental process, but an element of the mind and body that is in deep sympathy with the material conditions of the universe. As the authors of *Imagination as Method* (Hayes, Sameshima & Watson, 2015) write, “Imagination is not just a cognitive process that exists within the mind, but the creative energy that links consciousness and its concrete manifestation in the world” (p. 39). And Barad (2015) takes it one step further: “Matter is promiscuous and inventive in its agential wanderings: one might even dare say, imaginative” (p. 387). New Materiality and Indigenous understandings of flux and relationality open a way of imagining with our whole being. I understand this as a place of liberation for the human and more-than-human world. I use the word “place,” being mindful of what Joe Sheridan and Roronhiakewen "He Clears the Sky" Dan Longboat (2006) have written: “Imagination has a place because imagination is a place, and because everything is connected to everything else...” (p. 369). Entangled imagination is a practice of performance that is a practice of healing, and a practice of being.

Chapter 1: Investigations in the Entangled Imagination

“There is nothing like being in the studio together,” my beloved friend (co-creator, dancer) of 25 years says to me as we meet in person after three long years of COVID-19. She had two hips replaced during that time. I have sheltered, cared for, homeschooled, and been a parent, teacher, and playmate to my girl, who has moved from child to tween. I have nurtured my aging mother with medical challenges and my friends who lost their beloved child. I have spent the most glorious time deeply engaged with the spectacular nature of the High Sierra and Great Basin in ways never before. I felt the earth breathe, bloom, and grow and experienced forest fires too large to imagine until I went outside and could not see the blue sky, replaced by a yellow soupy haze. I dance outside, I run, I walk, I kayak, I film, and I build forts and imaginary worlds with my only child who lives with epilepsy (a condition that would not do well with the neurological fallout of long COVID). COVID-19-time (strangely, like the dance studio) was a portal of the “entangled imagination,” where space, time, and matter entwine and lose their distinctions. A deeply awake space where the Cartesian split of life/death, past/future, and body/mind is undone.

One moment the phone rings, and what your friend tells you is a nightmare but real – her son died in the night. It feels like multiple lifetimes. Every moment flashes, the baby and young man, now spirit, are one. My body is not separate from the girl who needs the alive touch of connection as her child’s play is mediated by a two-dimensional flat screen. I sleep more; seven hours of sleep turns to ten or twelve – the bed a womb of safety from the terror of an airborne virus, fascism, and pandemic engulfing my country. The world is moving at lightning speed – but it was a long time coming and will be a long time going. I cannot touch my isolated mother, but I feel her heart, the phone an umbilical cord keeping her alive one more day. My partner dons goggles, gloves, and an old painter’s mask to procure the medication my daughter needs to live and quickly grabs all foodstuffs available, performing the bodily risk, hoping the virus does not infect his asthmatic lungs. The sirens are an ongoing scream. We are only a mile from the two hospitals overflowing into the parking garages. The place of hope and care that comforted me when I needed help for my daughter was a tomb of fear.

During this time (in both my reading and my living), I learned about co-creation, diffractive practices, embodied research, the stop moment and arts-based research, and the agentic nature of all matter. My exploration in this dissertation is to outline some of my learning and to connect what I have read with what I have lived – and to consciously apply it to the production of new work. My readings in New Materiality, Indigenous cosmology, the imagination, arts education, arts-based research and embodied imagination have resonated profoundly with me, helping me to make sense of my experience, not just throughout the pandemic but further back. It enlivened my understanding of my practice and multiple identities as a dancer, choreographer, educator, scholar, advocate/activist, and parent.

I begin by looking at how the classic Cartesian Mind/body split has been problematized, even at its inception, and examine some of the ways embodied inquiry has, counter to that split, grounded knowledge practices in embodied experience. From that vantage point, I trace some ramifications of that ontological shift and the consequences of framing knowledge practices as active, creative, and exploratory. Prismatically, it is a shift articulated across many methodologies, including Indigenous knowledge practices, arts-based research (including embodied inquiry, elucidated by Snowber (2016b), and performative inquiry, articulated by Fels (2011, 2015b), and New Materiality. I look at the way the “stop moment,” described by Appelbaum (1995) and expanded upon in performative inquiry by Fels (2015a), provides a model of awareness that aligns with these practices, allowing for the creation of responsive, improvisatory, and new knowledge.

Throughout this dissertation, I explore the idea of “agency,” a concept the physicist and theorist Karen Barad (2007) has expanded upon in their writing on agential realism. Barad expands the idea of agency into the non-human, or more-than-human, world. They posit that the world is not separate from us and that when we interact with the world (or intra-act), we are entangled with the universe, which, per the title of their book, meets us halfway. I understand entanglement in my body, as a dancer – the embodied knowledge that when my foot pushes against the floor, the floor pushes back in a very real way. The mind is not split from the body, and the human being is not split from the world. Boundaries are ontologically constructed divisions that disguise the epistemological state of the universe, which can be understood as phenomena that are only realized through the entanglement of action and relation.

Following the lead of Rosiek, Snyder and Pratt (2019) in their article *The New Materialisms and Indigenous Theories of Non-Human Agency: Making the Case for Respectful Anti-Colonial Engagement*, I want to be explicit about the ways that elements of New Materialism are preceded by Indigenous knowledge practices. As they write:

> Given the distinctive character of agential realism within the Western philosophical traditions (Davies, 2018) and its significant similarity with Indigenous conceptualizations of non-human agency, this lack of engagement calls for critical examination. [p 332]

I am not a subject expert in the field of Indigenous methodologies and cosmologies, but I feel it's crucial (particularly as someone who comes from a lineage of white settler colonialism, living and working in the United States) to be in dialogue with the literatures of Indigenous scholars, and acknowledge ways in which they have arrived at entangled understandings of knowing and being, long before the novelty of Quantum physics, and the Material turn within the Western Philosophical tradition. My first ideas about the relationality between the human and the more-than-human world, and how the imagination is situated within place, emerged from the teaching and scholarship of Vicki Kelly (2021) – as she writes, describing Anishinaabe wisdom teachings: "the land animates our traditional, cultural and spiritual cosmologies, as an act of imagination within place." (p. 190).

I want to avoid the particular risk outlined by Rosiek, Snyder and Pratt:

> Agential realism as it is being applied in the social sciences faces the risk of becoming merely a reconceptualization of the objects of our inquiries, as opposed to a more foundational transformation of the co-production of both inquiring subjects and objects in the onto-ethical entanglement of inquiry. [p 342]

I feel the urgency delineated by Alison Ravenscroft (2018), in her article Strange Weather: Indigenous Materialisms, New Materialism, and Colonialism, extended from the erasure of feminist materialisms from the foundation of new materialisms:

> "...[A]t least as urgent [as the exclusion of feminist materialisms] is the exclusion of Indigenous materialisms and through this the recentering of the Western-centered discourses that these theories aim to depose. Post-humanism and new materialism (and some feminist critiques of both) risk leaving the Western liberal human intact, making the "human" in "post-human" stand in for all of "us."

I have attempted, in this dissertation, to work against this erasure – not through the assumption of unearned expertise, but through the resonance I've felt with – and the gratitude I've felt towards – Indigenous scholars who have brought so much insight, and methods of being and doing, to our entangled, relational existence.

In summary, I propose that the imagination can be understood not just as a faculty, a cognitive activity, or even a cultural force – but broadly and truly, as an entanglement. I have investigated this conception of imagination through performative and embodied inquiry – and it has given me a framework through which I have produced and recorded new choreographic work. The "entangled imagination" is a lens through which I've viewed my history and artistic/ethical development; it has also provided me a method for working with dancers and recording and diffracting upon my collaborations with them. The results of that method theorized into action are the dance films that make up the artistic, investigatory heart of this dissertation.

The Story of the Cartesian Split

In some fashion, many contemporary dancers in the Western tradition have encountered the idea of the Cartesian "split" between the mind and body. It is important to note that this split, laid at the (metaphorical, disembodied) feet of Descartes, is a radical oversimplification of Descartes's philosophy (Sepper, 1996). The notion has continually been problematized and complicated, even by his contemporaries, such as Spinoza (Gatens & Lloyd, 2002). Nonetheless, the spell of disembodied thought, hierarchy, and objectification has been useful in creating knowledge and power, and acting as though mind and body are a duality is so alluringly simple. Additionally, those (mis)ascribed tensions continue to affect our institutions, physical selves, and how we dance and co-create.

I experience that Cartesian split in my own life as a force and sometimes as a set of internalized habits. Descartes' contribution to the Enlightenment moved away from a scholastic tradition of replication of authority and knowledge systems to a skeptical stance, and created an opening for individuals to think in critical ways. It is almost unimaginable to contemplate a life where I do not think critically about the ideas and knowledge I encounter. However, Descartes' conception of the imagination did separate

it from reason in ways that limited understanding, and the split is still alive and well in the ways we create our world (Sepper, 1996). In my studies and my artistic and teaching practice, I align myself with the epistemological/corporeal challenge to dualism, summarized effectively in Mary Beth Cancienne and Celeste Snowber's (2003) article *Writing Rhythm: Movement as Method*:

> For too long, the polarities rooted in Cartesian dualism posited two distinct and mutually exclusive regions of human experience: mind and body. The evolution of these binary distinctions continues to be challenged… The terminology that inscribes the body brings us to descriptions of the corporeal body, the phenomenological body, the inscribed body, the politicized body, the signified body, the sexualized body—all of which have contributed both to our conceptualization of the body and its relationship to knowledge and to our understanding of how we inhabit our bodies and perceive others' bodies. (p. 238)

I experience imagination as moving materiality. That variegated, entangled matrix is necessary for any condition of existence. Still, the practice of dance is what allows for the heightened awareness, or "wide-awakeness" (Greene,1978), that alchemizes entanglement into an imaginative act.

The first evening-length dance piece I directed was called *Civi[lies]ed*. It was about our relationship to the more-than-human world and our "soft animal body" (from the Mary Oliver poem, quoted in Popova, 2014), not the disembodied human body of the Western imagination. *Civi[lies]ed* was staged in San Francisco in the early 2000s, long before I knew the language of New Materiality. At the same time, I was writing about women in academic discourse (Belenky et al., 1986), and it was important for me to write from my experience, from the "I," not from the disembodied voice of authority. My writing was better when I came from the "I" position, which was true of my dancing. Things flowed when I was moving and wasn't trapped in the idea of a disembodied knower.

I often think of dance technique as a condition of disembodiment. In ballet, you are engaging with "technique," but you are also engaging with the actual material body, which is placed in a lower hierarchical position from the abstracted "form." There is a right and wrong way of being, something I also experienced in my early gymnastics training. In seventh grade, I had to give up because of a significant growth spurt that launched me well above the ideal gymnastic body height. My chest and hips grew even though I was thin; my upper body strength rapidly deteriorated, and my strength dropped

into my lower body and spine. Technique split me from my body. My sense of wholeness, of being a body, was ruptured. The exuberance of fully inhabiting my agency as a joyful force was redirected into a split. The home I called my body was now a physical object that needed to conform to the parameters of what I loved to do: twist, spin, leap. My "flow state" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) was interrupted as my body entered puberty. My body was now an object and not a space of my being. It was an experience of, as Iris Marion Young (1980) writes, "inhibited intentionality":

> To the extent that feminine bodily existence is an inhibited intentionality, however, the same set of possibilities which appears correlative to its intentions also appears as a system of frustrations correlative to its hesitancies.... By repressing or withholding its own motile energy, feminine bodily existence frequently projects an 'I can' and an 'I cannot' with respect to the very same end. (p. 147)

At 10 and 11, I loved the feeling of riding my bike, doing backhand springs, hanging from bars, flipping on the balance beam, and dancing. On the precipice of independence, there was freedom of flow and movement. The entanglement of speed and tenderness was the most joyous entraining with a horse. By age 13, my chest was developing, my hips wide, and the gymnastics coach complained of my diminished upper body strength, weakness, and new 5'8 frame. This critique was mirrored by confusing and unwanted attention from the college students in the town and high school seniors. I began to shrink, giving up gymnastics and dance for a while. My main outlet was with my horse, where I could be entirely physical, fully shrouded on backwoods trails, and still get the joy and freedom of being a body without fear. Reading Stephen Smith (2011) on the powerful connection between horse and rider brought those moments back to me:

> The feeling of bringing up life is, in effect, the affective register of these moment-to-moment modulations of movement responsiveness. Such feeling infuses the postures, positions, gestures and expressions of observable human movement and connects through breathing, balancing, timing and touching to the manifest motions of equine movement. (p. 2)

This is the threat of the Cartesian view that extends to the objectification and colonization of the more-than-human world, but which can also intimately objectify one's own body. It sets the material world as a separate entity, even when enclosed in your skin, rather than proposing an entanglement where we don't know where we begin or end, allowing us to, as Snowber (2016b) writes, "let the body out" (xvii). One of the

reasons the simplification of Descartes and the reification of the “split” between body and mind has a powerful agentic force is that this makes it easier to bring the body under outside control. Snowber (2016b) lists out various control modalities: “The body has been colonized, gendered, politicized, medicalized, and consumerized. We have long bullied the body to look a certain way, be a certain way, or act a certain way” (p. xiii).

Bullying disrupts our lived experience of belonging to ourselves, and the violence of that separation is a useful tool of oppression (D. Achtenberg, personal communication, June 2022). Control over the body is exercised over various groups, from small voluntary social communities and family units to institutionally ratified demographics. The mechanism comes into play at differing scales and with a vast range of force, present in personal, internalized monologues and organized state violence. Ta Nehisi-Coates (2015) has written eloquently on the “Black body,” underlining how the white power structure imposes attributes and fears onto it as if it were somehow separate from its soul, mind, and animating force. He paints a picture of what happens when the inner, lived life of the body is overrun by the social projections placed upon it to bring it to heel.

In her essay, *The Source of Self-Regard*, Toni Morrison (2019) describes the physical torture techniques of enslavement in the Antebellum South used to bring the body into submission. In the school curriculum controversies regarding the inclusion of her work in libraries and classes, one element of objection came from white readers who see the historical facts of torture as a literary exaggeration. What it takes to suppress the body’s agency is still, to many, a secret, and it is a secrecy that historical elisions and suppressions have brutally enforced. The current movement, in Canada and the US, to publicize the history of the residential schools is another push against this secrecy, bringing to the fore stories about a colonizing “education” that purported to develop the mind at the expense of the freedoms of the body. This expense began with cutting hair on the first day of arrival, extending to corporal punishment in the name of “discipline,” and culminating in death for a staggering number of Indigenous children. The 1907 report by Department of Indian Affairs Medical Inspector Dr. Peter Bryce revealed a death rate of almost 50% in western Indian residential schools.

Resmaa Menakem (2017) is working on practices to heal the effects of racialized bodily trauma. Many scholars (Barbour, 2016b; Bergonzoni, 2025; Blumenfeld-Jones,

2012, 2017; Butterwick & Roy, 2018; Butterwick & Lawrence, 2023; Butterwick & Selman, 2025; Cancienne & Bagley, 2008; Francesconi & Tarozzi, 2019; Glover, 2024; Laidlaw & Beer, 2018; LaMothe, 2015; Richmond & Snowber, 2011; Stinson, 2016; Truman, Loveless, Manning, Myers, & Springgay, 2019; Weber, 2019; Weber & Reed, 2022) are bringing practices to the classrooms in education and research that recenter the body as a place of knowledge. Set against the destructive social utilities of the mind-body split, these practices are not just an expansion of tools and modalities of knowledge creation, they align teaching with personal and social healing.

Performing Repair

Rewriting the story of a severed body and mind opens up the field of knowledge creation, knowledge practices, and ontological states. In pedagogical discourse, one gateway for this opening has been the development of Arts-Based Research. The impulse toward mending the mind/body rupture within the context of Arts-Based Research certainly relates to a recognition that knowledge and meaning in the arts are not disembodied enterprises. Artmaking has always been entangled with material and materiality. Being a virtuoso violinist depends on the activity and intelligence of the body, as in the visual arts and, perhaps, most profoundly, the practice of dance, which is situated in the materiality of being a body.

I have both been acculturated into being at war with my body, and am highly attuned to the micro-movements necessary to articulate and express through the body. Only now, in my later years, has this conversation softened. Some days I dance, lying down, using the floor as support. Some days I can leap; some days, I entrain with the trails and the trees of the High Sierras. There is no longer such a war but an entanglement. My body is not a consistent material phenomenon but a morphing, flowing, regenerating materiality of the earth. In her exploration of New Materiality, what Karen Barad calls the “thick seed of now” (Faculty of Arts, Aarhus University, 2016) is the condition of knowing and being in vital intra-action. It connects, for me, with Indigenous scholar and artist Vicki Kelly’s (2015) notion of a “living wholeness”:

> There is a subtle entrainment and profound resonance between all aspects of my life as an Indigenous scholar, educator, artist, and art therapist. I

> experience this as a complex web of reciprocal inter-rationality, a living wholeness. (p. 46)

In my piece *Civi[lies]ed*, one section, scored to the song “Hey There Little Red Riding Hood,” explored the experience of being hunted as a woman. It came from the feeling of being stalked at a bus stop late at night, detailing the lived experience of my heart rate increasing and the fight/flight/freeze experience most women have endured. By moving with the experience, I was able to cull details of the lived experience that are usually invisible: the shallow breathing, tight psoas, and muscles getting ready to explode into a run or a kick. Eyes adjusted to darkness, darting, looking for escape routes; feminism is a bodily experience. Through the choreography, I tried to bring that embodiment to the surface, out of the concealment of propriety. An act of, as Sara Ahmed (2017) might put it, “noticing something”:

> Feminist consciousness can be thought of as consciousness of the violence and power concealed under the languages of civility, happiness, and love, rather than simply or only consciousness of gender as a site of restriction of possibility. You can venture into the secret places of pain by recalling something. You can cause unhappiness by noticing something. And if you can cause unhappiness by noticing something, you realize that the world you are in is not the world you thought you were in. (p. 62)

Through the embodied practice of making a dance work, through being alive, aware and awake to all the micro-moments, your world becomes a multitude of lived matrices brought into visibility and feeling.

Techniques of Repair

I am drawn to techniques and ways of being that embrace intra-action and interweaving, collaboration, and co-creation pedagogies. This kind of praxis has been approached from several research methodologies and practices within Arts-Based Research. Arts-Based Research is a conceptual frame that acknowledges art practices (including literary forms, performative forms, visual art, audiovisual and multimedia forms, etc.) as research activities, where art-making is recognized as a way of knowing. Art-making, in this conception, is not merely an alternate method to the same ends of conventional research but rather constitutes its own paradigm, whose features are braided with aesthetics, “beauty,” empathy, and “inter-subjectivity” (Leavy, 2017, pp. 4-

6). Shields and Irwin (2020) enumerate three paradigmatic qualities of Arts-Based Research:

> Firstly, arts-based research is experiential as it examines the personal, subjective and lived experiences of the participants. Secondly, it emphasizes emergence, incompletion, nonlinearity, multiple meanings and "not knowing." And thirdly it provokes, disrupts and resists traditional ways of doing research in order to examine alternative perspectives. (p. 4)

Tom Barone and Eliot Eisner position Arts-Based Research as an alternative to the discursive biases of conventional research – and suggest that, rather than prioritizing propositional claims, it lifts subtle interactions to a level where they become legible, or noticeable: "…[A]rts based research is a heuristic through which we deepen and make more complex our understanding of some aspect of the world" (2011, p. 3).

The practice of Métissage, has been one avenue under the umbrella of Arts-Based Research, as well as Indigenous research methods, that pursues non-discursive knowledge created in relational dialogic interaction. In this practice, personal and family stories are set in relation to "official" and historical texts so that researchers can "express the interconnectedness of wide and diverse influences in an ethically relational manner" (Donald, 2012b, p. 544). Rita Irwin (2017) positions it as a weaving "third space": "Where two would be inclined to dialogic opposition, a third space offers a point of convergence—yet respect for divergence—where differences and similarities are woven together" (p. 140).

This third space is the terrain of the entangled imagination. An element of Métissage I find particularly fruitful is the creation of meaning not just through storytelling, but through weaving stories together.

Performative inquiry, as defined and conceptualized by Fels, suggests inquiry as an action site of exploration and inquiry where individuals' interactions within a space create new insights and learning. Bodies create meaning in dialogue. Performative inquiry calls us to "be awakened to the gaps and absences in the performances that our students offer as we create space for [with] them to perform in our classrooms, on school stages, in our hearts. How might performance become an action site of resistance, of resolution, of advocacy, of invitation, of renewal" (Fels, 2020, p. 15). This appears, to me, to be the praxis implied by New Materiality's "Post-humanist

Performativity," "The move toward performative alternatives to representationalism shifts the focus from questions of correspondence between descriptions and reality (e.g., do they mirror nature or culture?) to matters of practices/doings/actions" (Barad, 2003, p. 802).

Could it be that the post-qualitative method and ontological turn New Materiality calls for are realized through performative inquiry and embodied inquiry, and the wide variety of Arts-Based Research iterations? Invitations to create knowledge through experience and collaboration can be found under various inquiry practices, including Poetic Inquiry, Autoethnography, and A/r/tography. They share an image of knowledge that is not discovered or uncovered but enacted. Through enaction, creating the possibility of interrupting normative forces, even to the point of being undone. This is a zone Judith Butler (2013) described in *Dispossession: the performative in the political:*

> …[T]he point is that the human has no "proper" place to take outside social situatedness and allocation, including the exposure to the possibility of being undone. The human is always the event of its multiple exposures – both within its relatedness to others and within its exposure to the normative forces that arrange the social, political, and cultural matrices of humanness. (p. 31)

This exposure and the vulnerability of being undone in our ongoing becoming is also what makes us respond-able and agentic, as described by Karen Barad (2007): "Responsibility—the ability to respond to the other—cannot be restricted to human-human encounters when the very boundaries and constitution of the "human" are continually being reconfigured and "our" role in these and other reconfigurings is precisely what "we" have to face." (p. 392). In the space of co-becoming with the human and more-than-human world – for us, the space linking the dancer, place, and camera – we were available to the elements of our shared histories and practices. The interviews were a place of undoing and diffractive understanding, and a place where new imaginaries could emerge. The work demanded that I be present and awake to what was unfolding, not the frame or plan I brought with me. We were creating together, and the primary practice was being respond-able to the unfolding moment, the place, and each other.

How We Imagine Through Agentic Stories

In their article *Narrative Inquiry and New Materialism: Stories as (Not Necessarily Benign) Agents*, Jerry Lee Rosiek and Jimmy Snyder (2020) discuss the idea that stories aren't fixed and passive but rather agentic. What is agency in the context of stories?

> According to the new materialisms, the things of this world are simultaneously real, constituted in part by our activity, and also protean in a way that responds to our inquiry practices and evades any effort to capture them in a single representation. The term being used to describe such variable responsiveness is agency. (p. 1152)

In enumerating the various strains of thought that overlap in this inquiry into "agency," Rosiek and Snyder also note the deep precedents found in Indigenous knowledge practices and philosophy (pp. 1153-1156). The status of a story, not as a repository of words and ideas but as an active biocultural and material force, has been a fertile subject in Indigenous scholarship (Archibald, 2008; Cajete, 1994; Garroutte & Westcott, 2013; Kovach, 2009) and scholarship of Indigenous allyship (Abram, 2010; Rosiek et al., 2020). The agency of story is a theme repeatedly echoed in the New Materiality literature (Iovino, 2014; Oppermann, 2021).

Or, as Anishinaabe/Cree elder Kathleen Westcott writes: "I was taught . . . that the story is a living being. It's not an entity in the way that, say, a bear is—because it's carried on the word. The story is able to procreate through the telling, but it is not identical with the words that people use to tell it." (Garroutte & Westcott, 2013, p.68).

The Western cultural imaginary is a story, or collection of stories, with agentic force that echoes and resonates through the "spacetimemattering"[1] of today. John Powell (2012) summarizes the way these stories have created a psychological and sociopolitical sense of "separateness":

> The Western self, especially the American self, is particularly isolated and separate. This conception of the self has a history, a large part of which is its construction in conjunction with ideals that assert a radical individualism:

[1] "Spacetimemattering" is another Barad (2007) coinage acknowledging that forces that shape the universe encompass not only human and nonhuman agents intra-acting but that "spatiality and temporality must be accounted for in terms of the dynamics of intra-activity" (p.180).

> rationality, objectivity, private property, market capitalism, and race... (p. xvii)

The predominant sense of separation that is encoded in conventional Western thought situates us “outside” the world, and even outside our bodies, replicates like a virus within our imagination. When we do not see ourselves as ontologically respond-able to other agential forces, whether they are human or more-than-human, we distance ourselves from the entanglements that we are a part of. The feminist new materiality project is laboring at bringing us into intimate contact with our material ontological agency, beyond culture, representation, and language, to a fulsome engagement with the human and more-than-human world. This sentiment has been broadly expressed as the “material turn” (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Coole & Frost, 2010; Gatens & Lloyd; 2002; Thorpe & Clark, 2020).

Braiding a New Imaginary

We are not separate; we are not just entangled with each other. We are interweaving with the world. In Joe Sheridan’s and Roronhiakewen "He Clears the Sky" Dan Longboat’s (2006) seminal paper and presentation, *The Haudenosaunee Imagination and the Ecology of the Sacred*, he warns of the consequences of creating and engaging with our ecology from the locus of an imagination that sees itself as separate, arguing this illusion, or reproductive fantasy is a theory of mind that poses an existential threat to our world. He casts the issue not as a problem of the imagination but a problem of habits:

> In believing illusion to be truth, the guilt rests with modern habits rather than with imagination. Imagination is showing us the way to the quintessential human condition—the paradise of one’s surroundings and one’s place there. Aberrant imagination is a hired gun creating the very problems it seeks to resolve, thereby legitimizing its continued existence. (p. 379)

Vicki Kelly (2021) situates restorative imagination as a “co-imagining” rooted in Indigeneity:

> Reviving Indigenous artistic practices, as sites of co-imagining through constellations of co-creation, is part of ecological and community-based reconciliation and healing. Key to this process is the act of reciprocal

> recognition, a core practice that fosters ethical relationality, helps cultivate our Indigeneity, and honours the circle of life. (p. 183)

The acknowledgment of the relationality of our entanglements implies imaginative ethics, which resonates with Barad's (2007) repeated turn to ethics: "What is needed is a post-humanist ethics, an ethics of worlding" (p. 392).

How do we acknowledge our entanglements to divert ideologies of separation? How do we cultivate our capacities for bringing our entanglements closer to the surface of our consciousness? Scholars and artists have approached this through various interrelated ideas and names such as flux, relationality, and improvisation. This attention to the relationship to flux is a different ontological orientation, a different story of how we are showing up. As Dwayne Trevor Donald (2009), a scholar descendent of the Papaschase Cree, writes:

> When one sees the world in this way there are two general premises that result. One is that the constant flux process of energy means that everything is related through the cyclic nature of energy flows. The second is that we must look at the world holistically and search for regular observable patterns in nature as a way to make sense of the world and our place in it. (p. 13)

Without being too heavy-handed and blurring distinctions between Indigenous practices and art-based practices, I have found dance that comes from the intra-action between the living world and the living body to be a fruitful imaginative entanglement, explored in the scholarship of Embodied Research. I feel the sense of flux in this passage by Snowber (2020):

> I step lightly here, as there are others walking, birdwatching and cycling. I know I am always in a co-creation with the natural world. On other days, I am on a path hugging the sea, where pebbles, rocks and remains of the past dapple the coast. The earth and sea before me are asking for a spontaneous duet. This is not a planned and choreographic duet, nor does it take a long time. I open to a consistent movement practice of short visceral responses, tiny dances in nature... I respond through my artistic practices of dancing and writing. In a small duration, I am left changed. In responding to the intricate details of wind, grass, stone and water, I am transformed to what is possible. (p. 28)

When choreographing and dancing, movement is never the same twice. Fully inhabiting our sensuous entanglements means that every moment is new. This was most vivid for me when doing risky complex partnering. My practice in contact

improvisation[2] helped me when I would "miss" mid-air. Being caught taught me how to find a new pathway to landing, knowing my dance partner so well I could entrain and find the path to fall safely or reinvent in the moment of performance. Even if the adjustments were minor and imperceptible to the audience, they are essential skills to dancing because our material sensuous entangled body is always changed moment by moment. This openness to the liminal body and imagination allowed me to dance and play with the embodied imagination. The new was always present in the moment to play with.

The agential force of other beings has shaped the neuro networks in my mind, culture, biology, movement, and language. I am what Frost (2016) would call a "biocultural creature" and what Braidotti (2019) might term "intelligent and self-organizing matter," assuming "radical immanence" (p. 32). Openness to flux, and a facility with improvisation, is a way of shifting attention not only to what is but to what could be.

Poise, The Stop Moment, The Call to Attention

I was introduced to the "stop moment" through Lynn Fels' (2010) work in performative inquiry. As a dancer, I resonated with David Appelbaum's (1995) exploration of the concept of "poise" in his book The Stop, "Poise is a balanced concentration immediately prior to action. It is the a priori of a self-aware act" (p. 14). This concentration is cultivated in the practice of dance. The quality of attention and awareness is what allows us to be available and responsive to the stop:

> Between closing and beginning lives a gap, a caesura, a discontinuity. The betweenness is a hinge that belongs to neither one nor the other. It is neither poised nor unpoised, yet moves both ways. It is the space that is the primary subject of my interest. It is the stop. (pp.14-15)

While making work, notably partnering, I would ask dancers to follow an improvisational prompt, "Explore flying quickly, then falling." I would watch for the gaps, the moment that something new would emerge, bodies iterating in the material now.

---

[2] Contact Improvisation emerged in the United States in the 1970s with Steve Paxton as one of the primary originators. It is characterized as a postmodern dance form where two or more dancers improvise and explore unscripted movement together, maintaining continuous contact, shared weight, and momentum.

Breakthrough moments were a key to creating the opportunity for the new. Sometimes the smallest micro-movement would unleash a resonance and open a new space, a fresh entanglement. As I mature as a choreographer, my job is to be poised to be respond-able and be aware of the gaps. Having the privilege to work with extraordinarily technical dancers, this awareness needed to be even more heightened because their highly trained, prescribed/inscribed movements were so precisely articulated the gaps were less visible or felt. Everything "looked" incredible, but it often would not resonate. This is why minding those micro-moments when something arrests my attention is a critical practice. My whole being must stand at attention.

I hear that call to attention, embedded in pedagogical practice when Frantzich and Fels (2018) describe Embodied Theater Ecology:

> ETE invites individuals to experience and become absorbed by the unknown through acts of creative availability, awakening, and embodied languaging. ETE recognizes that we each carry stories that are hidden, forgotten, and often unrecognized within us and that given time, attention, and attunement these stories find ways, through the availability of the individual, to tell themselves. ETE investigates what it means to un-do rather than do, inviting the individual into sensory receptivity and availability. (p. 274)

And what is more important to our relationships–be it parent, teacher, scholar, dancer, or creature – than to be available/poised? The child's micro-moment when they have had a bad day (still guarded, their expression flashes a sadness), knowing to stand at attention to create a space of hospitality, for the tears just under the surface, a place to be held. I find Arendt (2006) very moving in her writing on education grounded in the "fact of natality" – framed as an act of love toward children and not an act of reproduction, but renewal:

> …[T]he fact that we have all come into the world by being born and that this world is constantly renewed through birth. Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world. (p. 193)

Catching My Balance: Implications for a "Non-Stabilized Knowing"

Inquiry through the arts engages the co-creation of new entanglements. As envisioned by Østern et al. (2023), in *A performative paradigm for post-qualitative inquiry*, knowledge is encountered/enacted in an ongoing state of relationality: "[K]nowledge is knowledge-in-becoming as the constant creation of difference through researcher entanglement with the world. Learning/be(com)ing/knowing is performative, always inbecoming…" (p. 278).

This is performance grounded in a deeply relational embodied practice, awake and situated in the ecological materiality which undoes the lines of time and space. Embodied knowing isn't merely a different order or genre of knowledge emanating from a different locality. The body is both a receptacle of and an agent for experiences (both states coexist at once). The body doesn't stop at the body. It is a sort of interface between the inner and outer, acted upon and acting upon its environment. Just as the mind can't exist independently from the body, the body can't exist independently from its environment (Damasio, 2018).

Embodied inquiry, in its acknowledgment of action and re-action (or intra-action), implies knowledge practices that are not stabilized but exist in a state of iteration and re-iteration. Those iterations aren't a process of fine-tuning perceptions to apprehend objective and stabilized knowledge. The intra-action is the practice of knowledge itself. The approach, such as it is, is not toward knowledge already "out there" in the world but toward new knowledge *created through inquiry, receptivity, and co-creation intra-action*.

Lynn Fels and Kirsten Frantzich (2017) frame performance not as a stabilized product of rehearsal and intention but as an emergent activity grounded in the body:

> PI investigates through embodied explorations the individual and communal scripts we perform, how individuals are performed by their environments, the interplay between our bodies, imagination, and memories, in relationship with others, and how performance as an action site of inquiry, learning, and reflection can lead to new understanding, new ways of being awakened. (p. 273)

Imagination, in this scheme, is not a projection of inner images to the outer world or a reproduction of the past (or of our desires) projected into the future. It is an ontological state of perception and awakening. It is a sort of table-setting for experiences

and encounters we haven't yet anticipated. It is profoundly communal and vulnerable, opening space for change, transformation, and re-invention seated in an ethic of radical hospitality as Fels (2010) demonstrates:

> Derrida advises that we must learn to be willing to offer others the gift of unconditional hospitality, a welcoming that does not expect nor anticipate another's arrival, but awaits the stranger who has not yet been imagined. Derrida's words caution us not to impose expectations, nor seek to shape the other into something or someone recognizable, nor to make presumptions, nor to seize authority, and in doing so, demand reproduction of that which already is. (p. 5)

In my practices as a dance artist, teacher, parent, friend, and lover, my willingness to be vulnerable and co-create rather than prescribe or tell is where I can most create well and be fully awake and alive in the embodied imagination. When my daughter imagines a world where gender, race, and sexuality are not fixed identities but fluid, it makes me realize that she has openings that were unavailable to me, when I was her age. I am excited at the possibility of all she can become and create, and she opens space for me to co-create with her.

Entanglements and Time: "Portals" to Elsewhere, Elsewhen

While making dance, I often have dreams, visions, and insights. Cajete (1994) speaks of how "dreaming was recognized as a way of creating and understanding the essential nature of relationship within and outside oneself" (p. 144). I have the sensation of navigating portals that connect different states of time.

Dance troubles the idea of chronos-time and the nature of materiality. What appears as material, as something separate, stable, and empirical, is a moving phenomenon through time and space (LaMothe (2015). We often attribute dance to its ephemeral nature, but all matter is both ephemeral, diffractive[3], moving, and changing.

[3] Donna Haraway (1992) was a pioneer in proposing "diffraction," rather than "reflection," as a metaphor for strategies of thinking that focus on difference and change. For Haraway, diffractive methodologies offered an escape from "the illusion of essential, fixed position" (p. 300). Barad (2007) extends and elaborates on diffractive methodologies as being "respectful of the entanglement of ideas and other materials" (p. 29). Per Cher M. Hill (2017), "Diffraction… as a metaphor for inquiry involves attending to difference, patterns of interference, and the effects of

Hanging a painting, interacting with a sculpture, or hearing a piece of recorded music, gives the illusion of stability, but it is an illusion.

With my dancers, I was co-choreographing an evening-length piece called “Full Scale” during the invasion of Iraq in the early 2000s. With a sculptor, I created two hanging scales that recalled the scales of justice in an abstract form. They were apparatuses that dancers could hang from and spin through the air. I worked with a diverse cast of dancers and performers. One performer was of Middle Eastern descent and had to travel often for work. He said that, when he was in the TSA line, he could often pass for someone who looked like they were of Mexican or Hispanic descent. However, once he spoke his Iranian name, he would be pulled out of line and sent to a secondary inspection, where he had to endure strip searches and other interrogation methods, sometimes causing him to miss important flights.

We talked about his experiences and created a section of the performance where he was entangled with TSA workers and was taken through a dehumanizing search process. He hung from the pyramidal “scale” and was stripped down to his underwear while the TSA agent spun around and examined him. It ended with the image of him suspended and his shirt pulled over his face.

It was an image that seemed to extend itself into the future when the horrific images of prisoner abuse were released from Abu Ghraib. Prisoners were humiliated and anonymized in the process of abject dehumanization. The dehumanizing language of torture and the exposure of the bodies of young Middle Eastern men was portrayed everywhere. Those images seemed to be out there, coming into terrible focus, like a projection of an abusive imagination finding its way to material reality.

I thought of those brutal images when reading Barad (2010) on time:

> The past is not present. ‘Past’ and ‘future’ are iteratively reconfigured and enfolded through the world’s ongoing intra-activity… Phenomena are not located in space and time; rather, *phenomena are material entanglements enfolded and threaded through the spacetimemattering of the universe*. (p. 261)

---

difference-making practices. Diffraction creates something ontologically new, breaking out of the cyclical, inductive realm of reflection” (p. 2).

This piece also had blindfolded “justice” figures, their white costumes designed with knots going down the spine, like clenched vertebrae. The dancers moved with occluded sight, sensing each other on stage, climbing onto the spinning apparatuses, and gyring through the air. There was an element of danger and a sense of vertigo. We felt we were wrestling, in some small measure, with the danger of the moment.

These images from Abu Ghraib were waiting for us in the future, but we had the disconcerting experience of time catching up with us while we were still working.

When I created a piece called “Solitude” in the early 2000s, before 9/11, I was working with the idea of the Furies, mythological Greek creatures that would take revenge on behalf of people who had been killed. The dancers who embodied the Furies, wearing long black dresses, were standing atop televisions (not immediately visible, covered by the black fabric of their costumes). The screens were only revealed towards the end of the piece when the dancers stripped their skirts, revealing the bright static snow.

At the time, I felt a sense of cultural deterioration that things were not right or in balance. San Francisco was deep in the first Tech boom. In the five years I lived there, it went from a city where artists could live and work to a place where the artists were being pushed out. We were protesting and occupying buildings because many dance spaces were used for the ubiquitous start-up. I felt less of the queer-art-multi-cultural intra-action I had in my early years. My body felt heavier than it did in the wide-awake grittiness of the early days. Many dancers fled to Germany, and the Black and Latinx neighborhoods were sharply experiencing rolling gentrification. My privileged entanglement of being educated at Stanford allowed me to exist in the city because I worked at the intersection of arts and technologies, new money, and philanthropy. But the neoliberal ethos was foreshadowing what would take over the world in ways that were present but not entirely imagined.

As part of the set, I had two couches, one on the stage floor and one suspended in the air. There was no bottom to the couch for the airborne one, but a trapeze was installed in it, and it could swing like a boat. The visual scheme mimicked the idea of apartments stacked atop one another (with no actual ceiling or floor between them). I felt I needed material objects to intra-act within the space. These were elements of staging

and props, but as part of the practice, I wanted to bring them into the stage space to feel how we as dancers could react to them and discover the physical and symbolic properties that we could respond to. Their presence heightened the tension of the material intra-actions and revealed the agency of things we move with.

There was a section where dancers wore life preservers, and the hanging couch was turned into a ship on the high seas, swinging back and forth as if being churned by waves. There was a sense of emergency, drowning, and the undeniable feeling of Western democracy in decline. When I was creating the entangled pieces of this dance, what was not in focus yet were the threads extending from this moment to the past and future. The show opened two weeks after 9/11. The three elongated Furies that towered in front of the audience, standing on the TVs, their long black dresses mimicking evening gowns, looming as if on stilts, seemed to invoke the towers that fell on 9/11. The piece ended with the image of a dancer suspended from the ceiling, slowly descending from above, wearing a life preserver and groping futilely at the air, an unintentionally chilling reflection of the bodies of the people who jumped from the towers as they burned.

On our first rehearsal on the evening of 9/11, the cast of 12 dancers, aerialists, musicians, and riggers was shocked and distraught. Although we had been working on the piece for over a year, the resonances with the moment were undeniable.

Dance, to me, has always been a way to experience material phenomena, entanglement, and diffraction. From here, I can experience narratives, reverberations, and truths at the edge where I can sense “being” becoming undone, as Barad (2010) stated:

> *Quantum entanglements* are not the intertwining of two (or more) states/entities/events, but a calling into question of the very nature of twoness, and ultimately of one-ness as well. Duality, unity, multiplicity, being are undone. ‘Between’ will never be the same. One is too few, two is too many… Quantum entanglements require/inspire a different sense of a-count-ability, a different arithmetic, a different calculus of response-ability. (p. 251)

My body awareness becomes highly focused and awake when performing, as Abram (2010) discusses in *Becoming Animal*: “Other animals, in a constant and mostly unmediated relation with their sensory surroundings, think with the whole of their bodies” (p. 189). I think with my whole being and beyond what we call the limits of my bodily

boundaries. I am *thinking* with the other bodies in the space, whether in a duet, solo, or group section. I am aware of the human and more-than-human creatures in the audience. I am whole and alive, and my ability to respond is heightened[4]. Being able to respond with one's whole self in relationality to others allows a genuinely co-collaborative process to hold a space where re-imagination can occur. *Where the new, the old, and the now become one.*

My previous experience of qualitative research in the social sciences, in relation to the US school system, led me to recognize the parameters and limitations of a ready-made concrete world. My reading of New Materiality scholars, Indigenous scholars, and arts-based researchers who – through various ways and worldviews – have sought to imagine, conceptualize, articulate, narrate and/or enact meaning has helped me to articulate what I now understand as a dynamic, relational, interactive world of engagement and meaning-making. What I feel has been missing in my experience of institutions of higher education and centers of power is the recognition that we need not continue to search for *what is* because *what is* is continually being reconstituted and remade. In these troubled challenging times, we, as a society, have not paid enough attention to what we are creating. We must reimagine and re-create with deep sensitivity to all our relations, bringing our whole selves to the challenge.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to engage in my research, which has helped me connect threads between many of my life's different phases and modalities. Indeed, beyond making sense of my experiences, it has helped me experience myself and my communities (both human and more-than-human) in a porous and holistic way and open space to imagine in an entangled web of life. Moreover, my studies have given me a rewarding framework to produce new choreographic work, inspiring me to invite dancers into outdoor site-specific environments, with the prompt to respond to the space.

My journey set into motion an embodied inquiry that took place on terrains of sand, snow, rock, dirt and grass – at high elevations in the mountains, at the edge of lakes, in back yards, among trees. To document and perpetually re/create the

[4] Because of this practice of thinking with my whole body, in collaboration with other bodies, I can facilitate and collaborate with large groups of people. I have facilitated many planning sessions with groups of teachers, artists, community members, and philanthropic organizations.

performances offered here, I collaborated with a filmmaker who used handheld cameras, and a drone – which provided unique opportunities of perspective and scale to visually connect the dancers' bodies and the environments they are iterating with. The following chapter tells the story of our first exploratory performance – or said another way, our performative engagement with entangled imagination.

Chapter 2 : “Entanglements” Dance Film: Reflections/Diffractions

Film link

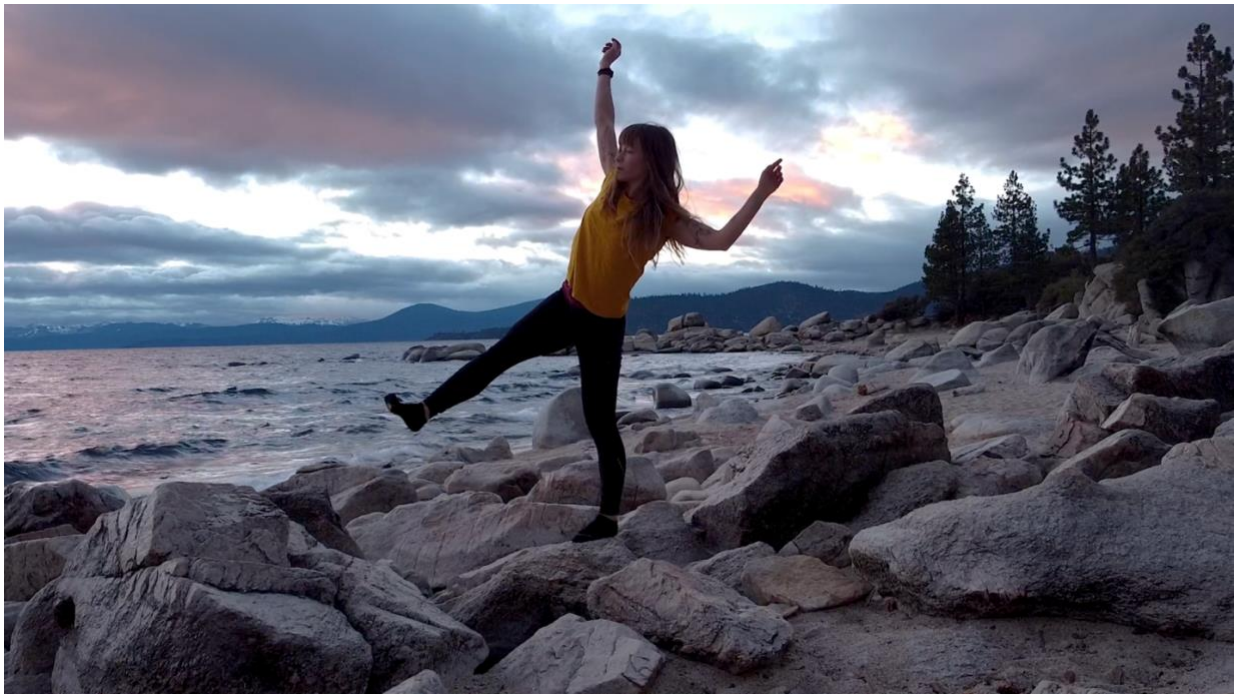

Figure 1: Erica Pisarchuk Wilson
[Image Description: A dancer, in an orange shirt and black tights, balances precariously on a rock at the shore of Lake Tahoe. In the background, along the shore, are some pine trees and bluish mountains. The sky and water are faintly colored pink from the rays of sunset.]

Introduction[5]

Early on, in the COVID-19 pandemic, having the grace to live near vast wild places in the Sierra and Great Basin high desert, we would pack our family and dog and explore remote places. Living in the gap that Hannah Arendt talks about – poised in the heightened and uncertain interstice between past and future (Arendt & Kohn, 2006) – time slowed, and our entanglements[6] became visible and felt. We began capturing moments in the gap, through photographs, writing, performance, and video. A feeling of expansion and interweaving with beauty were an essential piece of survival and staying "awake," in the heightened sense that Maxine Greene writes about (1978). Momentarily disengaging from doomscrolling, frantically researching disinfectant supplies, food delivery options, and masks was not only an act of survival, but one that provided regeneration – a space of healing where our child, through the entanglements with the natural and more-than-human world, began to create a new world.

This seed, this awakeness to what Karen Barad calls the "thick seed of now" (Faculty of Arts, Aarhus University, 2016) was the genesis of the film project, called "Entanglements." My training as a dancer, choreographer, had taught me to be awake to moments of entanglement in dance. My partner Chris and I began to be awake to those moments in our adventures, and our resonances to our tiny home – our garden, our little dance parties in the living room. Joy was not a luxury, and it became more vivid amongst the desolation and destruction, death-cult fascism, sirens, and unimaginable losses.

The film was an outgrowth of these experiences. I was not directing or choreographing – I would become present, deeply "entrained"[7] with the world. Awake to temperature, soil, trees, dirt, the sound, the creatures, the levels of perspective.

---

[5] As stated earlier in this dissertation, each chapter from here going forward grows out of the production of a dance film, and the viewer is intended to watch each accompanying film before reading the chapter.

[6] Throughout this dissertation, I'm using the term "entanglement" in reference to Karen Barad's usage: "To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence" (2007, p. ix).

[7] I'm using the word as Stephen Smith defines it: "the process whereby two systems of certain oscillating functions fall into synchronous patterns, say, of breathing, or with respect to their heart

First choreographic/performance experience: Erica in the woods

Erica Pisarchuk Wilson, the first dancer that we worked with (outside our own family), was not only a skilled dancer, but had found relief and nurturance living next to Lake Tahoe, and running the trails near Mount Rose. She needed to move her body with intensity, but she'd been forced out of her habit of creating in the studio with others. She was attuned to the landscape, to listening to the rhythmic repetition of her feet hitting the soil, feeling the wind and being aware of where her body was – not in an open, unencumbered studio, but in relation to the more-than-human world.

Erica is an embodied creature who lives and breathes dance and movement, and creates a web of artists around her, making art constantly, connecting and producing in multitudes of ways – whether through dance films, multidisciplinary happenings, dance parties, or performances. Deeply self-possessed, she has the ability to be present in her body and natural surroundings. She has an appetite for the multiplicity of what it is to be a dancer-artist-musician-healer. This ability to take her training and focus and practice allowed her to be awake to the world. This is a practice that not all dancers possess. There are highly trained artists who are not able to be awake to their entanglements, to partner with the mind, the tree stump, the rock – to see and recognize all the world as a dance, as movement, and to recognize that movement is the primary force – what Fraleigh terms "matching" at its most expansive limit (here summarized by Robert Bingham):

> Matching is not about imitating but about attuning to subtle rhythms and qualities flowing within a given intersubjective field. In somatic partner work, such attunement might entail following and supporting a movement process with gentle touch or through nonjudgmental witnessing. By articulating a philosophy of matching while simultaneously widening the lens of inquiry to include nonhuman nature, Fraleigh suggests that practices and dispositions oriented to matching can extend beyond somatics and dance studios to include the living earth itself. (Fraleigh, 2018, p.41)

The first day that we worked, Chris Lanier, my partner, brought his drone, and we also used our iPhones to video. We had originally wanted to meet at the base of Mount Rose, the top of which is 10,000 feet in elevation, where we had filmed before – we'd

---

rates. Entrainment occurs invisibly, mostly pre-consciously, as energy becomes balanced between the two beings" (2011, p.14)

wanted to echo and retrace some of our prior entanglements – but when we arrived, the snow was too deep to access where we had been before. The new iteration of place and space had changed and shifted. So we met down the hill, 2,000 feet lower, near Lake Tahoe, where the snow had melted.

There was a trail of red clay and a creek leading from the mountains, from snowpack, to the largest alpine lake in the North America. A lake created by both fire and ice – and earthquakes. On the path, there was a mound of dirt, cleared near a garden, sitting on the college campus (Sierra Nevada University), which was in flux. Half of our colleagues had been fired, and the land and school were acquired by the larger University; a community of deep and meaningful entanglements had been reconfigured. Some connections had been severed. The Indigenous Washoe people lived on the land here in the summers, gathering pine nuts and fishing in the lake. In the winters they traveled to the basin (where we live now), where the great Truckee River flows from the mountain lake.

From the top of Mount Rose, which Chris had climbed years before, you can see the lake that lives on top of the world – and butterflies dived where the air was thin. Earlier, when we had escaped apocalyptic wildfire smoke, the place where we were filming was at risk of incineration. The current system of “prescribed burns,” clearing the density of the forests so that when wildfires occur, the blaze doesn’t have the fuel to become overwhelmingly powerful, derives from the practices of Indigenous peoples. They weren’t “managing” the forest, they were part of the forest – not inhabitants, not dominators, but collaborators within the entangled system of the human and more-than-human worlds.

Because Erica was a runner, we wanted to incorporate running into the piece. We set up a shot where she was running on a path, with the drone following her, and then preceding her. During the exploration of drone “chasing,” we found a mound of loosely-packed dirt, about 6 feet high – piled up by maintenance. I asked her to run up the mound – then seeing her on the mound, which resembled a nest, I asked her to dig into the mound. I was thinking of all the people buried in the ground over the pandemic, returned to the materiality of the earth. The nest image was something I already carried, as something that spoke of weaving a home, and speaking to the grief of losing a child –

our oldest, dearest friend had lost her child, some months before. She told me that animals bury their children, digging a hole to cover them with earth.

Erica was able to bring the intention of grief and burying into her entrainment with the earth. The wildness of grief. The friend who'd lost her child screamed when she found him lifeless in his bed, and her neighbor, from Turkey, came to her home when she heard her. When she arrived, she immediately began to wail, which is the tradition in her country. Erica nestled herself into the cavity she had dug with her hands, and came to a posture of fetal rest. I later thought of a line in *Landscapes of aesthetic education*: "And it is in listening to parts of us which may be difficult that we have the opportunities to receive deep knowledge" (Richmond & Snowber, 2011, p.33).

One of the ironies of the idea that we are separate is that we are literally made up of the stuff of earth; the complicated entanglements of that chemistry are not readily visible. Nor is the constant movement of that material through our body and consciousness. The idea of being around and above the mound with the drone lead us further into the woods. We had begun shooting late in the day, so we only had an hour or so of light remaining. We moved to a small pool of light that would be gone in the next few minutes. Before shooting, I showed Erica the footage of my daughter dancing on the beach in San Diego, where my brother lives, and we had escaped to during the summer of apocalyptic smoke – during the wildfires that had endangered the spot we were currently shooting on. My daughter was not at all prompted by me to dance – I'm not even sure that she thought of it as dance. But after being trapped in our house for weeks, she had a spontaneous, joyous embodied response to being in sunshine, clear air, and her beloved ocean.

Erica was able to entrain with Callie's movement of freedom and surrender after being locked down and trapped in her house because of the poisonous smoke (its toxicity couldn't really be quantified by the air quality monitors because the level of particulates were so high). Erica had not been able to leave the area because she was working, and was caring for her animals – but needed to be ready to escape, if the fire ranged too close.

We found a spot where she would be absorbing the embodied "visceral imagination" (Wiebe & Snowber, 2011) Callie expressed in the video, and bringing it to

the place she was now inhabiting. All of these interconnecting strands of experience, time and place, melted into what Karen Barad calls spacetimemattering, Barad elucidates that time (and what we call "the past"), can in fact be changed by current actions/reactions/intra-actions/entanglements.

This moment with Erica felt like spacetimemattering, resonating between the escape to San Diego, the lived experience of being in a natural disaster, and then being and interacting with all of these pieces in the moment, on the land. All of this taking place in the last few minutes of sunlight on the forest floor, with Chris dropped to the ground with the camera so that the sun itself was interrupted by Erica's body in movement – eclipsing and revealing it, catching it in the net of her hair, taking on its golden hue – this sun, which had glared red through the wildfire smoke, unnatural and unnerving in its polluted atmosphere.

I experience time and space very differently when directing[8] – I become hyper-attuned and sensitive to small nuances that can have a large effect (as Elliot Eisner (2002) writes about in relation to arts learning). Erica, although we don't work together all the time, reports that she loves working with me – not because I give her fabulous movement, but because our entanglement/entrainment is a peak or "flow" experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Rebecca Lloyd (2015) furthers Csikszentmihalyi by exploring the emergent bodily roots of flow:

> "Orienting toward an exploration of emergent flow with a focus on bodily action and interaction is not something that I simply find interesting, it is a phenomenon that I am living and have been living for quite some time, particularly in the past 2 years of my life when all sense of predictability has left. (p. 29)

Lloyd goes on to say that this exploration goes to the very root of her being.

This piece was different from our prior experience together, where we used improvisation to create movement for a choreographed dance film for director Gary Mairs. Here, in this moment, we were entraining with the multidimensional nature of time and space. We were attending to the ontology of the thick seed of now. She moved, capturing, echoing, reflecting Callie's movement – capturing an essence, a quality, a

[8] See the distinction between chronos time and kairos time in Celeste Snowber's *Dancesong* (2020, p.28)

resonance that only dancers who attuned to the entirety of their ontological state and relationality can do. In Erica's movements I feel the "coming-into-consciousness" that Kimerer LaMothe describes:

> Dancing, in the vision offered here, is an *emergent phenomenon*. It emerges out of bodily movement as a form and expression of bodily movement that is also a sensory self-consciousness of that bodily movement. As such, dancing is inherently dynamic. In every moment dance is a continual coming-into-consciousness, as well as a dissolving of consciousness. (2015, p. 7)

In our exploration, we found a stump that was roughly the size of Erica's body as she curled in a fetal position – and echo of how she'd buried herself in the dirt earlier. We had Erica lay there and Chris pulled out up high with a bird's-eye view. This feeling for me resonated with the loss of my friend's child – both the return to being held in the earth and being a baby in his mother's womb. Staged here on the tree that was, and the rings that documented the tree's life. Environmentalists are able to decipher the entanglements – snow, drought, beetles, sunlight, water, soil quality – through examining these circular rings. I think of time more like the ring of a tree, than like the straight line of often depicted in the Western imagination. When I plie or uncoil my spine, it is not the same as when I was 20, but there is resonance in memory and vibration, a circling back, as if I am touching that earlier time and space.

Second choreographic/performance experience: Maggie at her home

Although I've only met Maggie a few times, we are deeply entwined through our history of dance in the San Francisco Bay Area. Our overlap (of friends, dance companies, dance spaces, choreographic lineage, dance training) is thick. And we have an immediate resonance in our practice and what we value. We resonate in that we left the highly charged hyper-expensive Bay Area to create family. We also have both taught at the University, but our entrance there has been through professional work and not a purely academic approach to dance. We are also parenting during a pandemic and we've discussed, at length, our experience of harm from the professional dance world, and our desire and love of the practice of dance, and how we both need to be engaged with it – but in new, healthy ways that don't always already exist.

Maggie is an exceptionally articulate, fast and compact dancer. She spent five years as a very young dancer in one of San Francisco's most nationally-recognized modern dance companies – and toured the world. Although her body type is not conducive to what has traditionally been the ballet aesthetic, she has a deep love of training in that form. She studied with one of my beloved ballet teachers, Summer Lee Rhatigan, who danced with Alonzo King LINES Ballet, based in San Francisco. I had worked with many of those dancers as a choreographer, or working within the GYROTONIC® movement system, which I taught to modern and ballet dancers over many years in San Francisco. Maggie exudes a love of movement, and watching her immediately makes me want to move my body. We both discussed and experienced how our bodies' shape and weight changes when we're not dancing and constantly dieting. Maggie somehow did not lose her soul or passion for dance when her body would shift through pregnancy – the natural weight gain that happens when you're not dancing 6-10 hours a day. When she had her first child, she posted a short video of dancing right before she went to the hospital to give birth. This is something that I greatly empathized with, on a bodily, spiritual and intellectual level. Maggie continued her practice in way that I often abandoned. I would disassociate with my body when it changed, rather than continue to explore the dimension of a changing body, or an aging body – partly because I had lost many pregnancies, and did not have the experience of giving birth. In some ways, those experience had me leave my body, my practice, and my creativity.

After my daughter came through adoption, I had thought I would return to my choreographic career, but just when that re-entry would have been a possibility, she developed epilepsy, and keeping her well and safe became the primary focus of my life. So entering the space of Maggie's back yard, weeks before her due date, protecting her from COVID-19 by using masks and distance, was very thick with meaning and resonances. It was a heightened, awake space.

Maggie expressed her love of working with us. Partly because of our shared history, flowing from her knowledge of my work and the people that I have worked with – but most profoundly, she felt she was seen in her being, and in her continual movement and change as a dancer, as an artist, as a soul. This receptivity that I bring to my work, the ability to see and witness the presence of a dancer, for them to be able to reveal and open safely, is my primary practice – and it's what I have practiced for 30 years. The

difference now from when I was young is that I have less interference. I no longer think my job is to shape another, but to deeply intra-act with the phenomena of the moment, my ontological beingness, which is shaped by breath, awakeness, receptivity. I go into a timeless stream where everything is vivid, and I literally feel the kinesthetic experience of being with the dance.

During the pandemic, my husband and I began paying attention to the birds in our immediate environment. My partner had always been a little more awake to the hawk that lived in our tall pine tree, as well as the small birds who made their nest in our ivy along the front porch every year. But now, with time slowed down, and our environs constrained, the species we cohabitated with were more present. Our home here was our neighborhood, our city, the vast lands that surrounded Reno, the Great Basin, the Tahoe Forest, the hidden High Sierras. I was no longer flying to Canada, or jetting to the Bay Area for work. I was slowed down. I had also been relegated to Reno somewhat hesitantly when I was trying to nest myself here 14 years ago. I had been pregnant when we had started to move, to start our family.

The week before my husband graduated from University, heading toward a teaching job – our plans seemingly falling into place – there was no heartbeat in the womb. But we continued to feather the nest. After grieving, we decided to open to adoption, creating an open space in a nursery that we converted from an in-home office. I began gathering things from Craig's list – every type of baby gear. Although I was continuing to make dance, and work, it felt a bit hollow. I was in the liminal state (while writing this I am hearing a bird squawk outside my window). I had the most adorable home, and adopted my dog Kota as a rescue – an English Lab that looked like a pitbull, because he had been starved in the back yard. He jumped in my car, and he saved me while I waited for the most lovely creature, my daughter, to arrive. Golden-skinned, jet black hair, blue eyes, elegant and joyful from the start. Always pleasant, except for when we put her down, and we had to release her from being held in our arms. My husband and I, for the first four months, were happy to oblige her in comfort and contact.

When meeting Maggie, my husband and I and my now 11-yr-old daughter brought tree branches we had cut down from our yard that had nurtured us and provided so much joy in the last 10 years – playhouses, gardens, fairy birthday parties, wild barbecues. We brought these branches with read leaves, twigs of butterfly bushes that

attracted butterflies in the spring and kept our indigenous bees busy all summer – my daughter wouldn't even allow me to use vinegar on the weeds because the dandelions were the first food in the season for the bees that pollenated our garden. She, more awake and aware than I of the biosphere we inhabited. She once corrected my husband and me, saying it wasn't our land, it was the Washoe's.

So we brought our foliage to meet Maggie, who has raised her son for two years in COVID (he's two – too young to get a vaccination), and although Maggie was vaccinated, she could not get boosted, and would not be eligible till her due date. We wore N95s, tested, and the drone was our eye. Being with Maggie always felt like homecoming. We built a large nest, not as a true nest, but as a trace of a nest. Metaphors can sometimes be too on-the-nose, but I wanted to invoke the circle, the containing of what is most precious in the circle – the nest – the stump – the uterus.

Maggie had a large rolling 1940s backyard, including a cement area with a basketball court, children's chalk drawings on the surface – there were also hula hoops, various toy cars, seating areas, and a sloped green lawn. She had an obscured pathway where rocks and trees created the feeling of a secret garden or forest. Maggie was very pregnant; her movement, and the movement of her soon-to-be baby, were vibrating and circling. Maggie, when not pregnant, is known for her vibratory speed and virtuouso movement. She was the youngest member of ODC Dance Theater, where virtuosity, technique, theatricality are in high supply. But Maggie also was adept at sinking into a moment, and being present with where her body was. We had her begin in the nest. Maggie improvised with the eye of the drone above her. Although it was late fall/early winter, leaves were the primary environmental dominating force. Maggie was entangled with her child; where did she begin, and the child stop?

Maggie's 2-year-old had only lived during the pandemic; early "mommy and me" groups and large social gatherings were not part of his experience. But the new imaginary landscape of slowed down time, and intimacy with one's family was not only deprivation – it was also, strangely, a generative space of imagining together in a more deeply intimate dreamspace. We will never forget our time in nature together, our picnics and kayaking and hikes with wildflowers in the High Sierra. Our dog, Rosebud, leaps and jumps when in true nature, and not just on a neighborhood walk. Her excitement of being in the wild expanses of the sublime makes her quake and jump with an undeniably

embodied joy. Within the zone of social distance and alienation, we all had these moments of freedom, where just being in a place fills one's body with energy, light, restoration.

Maggie was able to bring an intimacy and presence with her duet with the drone. We moved, after the nest, to an improvisation on the basketball court. The assignment was for Maggie to bring her body into the circle of a hula hoop, a circle in a circle – her belly making it difficult to fold into the fetal position. The breeze of the drone's propellers spinning blew her hair.

The drone itself is a camera that extends itself into the activity of the space, because the propellers are always pushing the air. Capturing the leaves on the lawn, it also blew them away – among branches, its eye doesn't merely look, but in close proximity, sets things to quivering. It has become an ideal camera for these moments of intra-action – not just responding, through the pilot, to the movements of the dancers – but stirring up the environment it's embedded in.

One of the tragedies of US capitalism's collision course with the COVID-19 virus was the way the entanglements of capital and children met. Mothers left their jobs in droves to care for children – some fathers, but the numbers were undeniable in terms of who would actually be providing care. It was also true that childrens' safety and wellness was not centered. Casinos were left open, while schools were shuttered – business was centered, while high quality masks and PPE were nowhere for teachers and health workers– and certainly there was no special protective equipment created for children. Our family and Maggie's, because of class and the type of work that supported our families, were able to ride out much of the pandemic in relative safety. But not all children and families were so lucky – particularly poor children of color, many of whose parents worked on the frontline – and many of those parents did not survive, creating the largest number of orphaned children we have seen. One thing that we never discuss is capitalism's inability to respond to what is real, what is material, what is alive. Children are no longer workers on a farm, adding to the economic stability of families – they use tremendous resources. The only benefit to capitalism is when their parents buy stuff for them – but beyond that capitalism, of course, is not interested in their thriving or survival Children, too, are inducted into the status of "homo oeconomicus," as Wendy Brown (2015) terms it:

> To speak of the relentless and ubiquitous economization of all features of life by neoliberalism is thus not to claim that neoliberalism literally marketize all spheres, even as such marketization is certainly one important effect of neoliberalism. Rather, the point is that neoliberal rationality disseminates the model of the market to all domains and activities … configures human beings exhaustively as market actors, always, only, and everywhere as homo oeconomicus. (p. 31)

Third choreographic/performance experience: Erica at the lake

We filmed again with Erica at Hidden Beach, on the shore of Lake Tahoe. And again, we had no pre-planned choreography or improvisational score – the assignment we took for ourselves was to respond to the space, the light. I asked Erica to run along the beach with abandon. At one point she traveled, stepping cautiously, along the boulders and rocks that projected onto the beach, balancing wordlessly from one point to the next. Chris followed her precarious movement with the drone. It was close to sunset, and a large boulder, set at the water's edge, cast a long shadow. The drone tracked Erica moving out from the silhouette of the boulder, her arms breaking the line of shadow, as if life were erupting from the stillness of the rock.

When we reviewed the footage, certain shots seemed to speak to one another. Erica, crouching, set against evening clouds, seemed to suggest a bird, connecting up to the imagery of nests. The way she curled herself up recalled the way Maggie curled herself up inside the border of the hula-hoop. The shadowed boulder, startlingly, recalled the curve of Maggie's gravid belly. And Erica's silhouette emerging from the boulder became an image of birth – an emergence from womb or egg. The image hadn't been staged as such – we were responding, at the time, to conditions of light and shadow, following the forms that the evening seemed to be arranging for us to inhabit. We entered into this piece from an attitude of "resonance," and in recording those resonances, it allowed us to notice linkages we weren't conscious of in the moment – giving us the gift of a perspective where we could sense/witness those moments, woven together in a matrix of echoes and association. In some ways the resonances in the moment of performance seemed to lead us to notice other things in the world, outside the performance – as when Chris caught a glimpse of brightness atop the apple tree in our back yard, and discovered there was an abandoned nest there – and realized he

could record it with the drone, from the same vantage point we'd been able to capture Maggie in her nest in the yard.

Diffraction

In many ways, the past few years have been years of reaction – the pressures of the pandemic, the political tilt towards fascism, the environmental catastrophe of climate change were all threaded through each other, threaded through my experience – and flowing through me, a part of me, woven through my thoughts, my actions, my lungs, my heart, my dreams. My daily response to that entanglement was sometimes blurry, sometimes intense, and directed in a persistent way toward survival – trying to manage the situation from one day to the next, talking about it with my friends and family, cleaning masks and scheduling vaccinations, checking the local transmission rates, monitoring the number of COVID cases at my daughter's school, wiping down the groceries before letting them into the house – all the daily interventions directed to our family's health, spreading outward in time, with no clear limit or ending-point.

Collaboratively creating the dance piece was a way of amplifying some of those entanglements, and becoming more conscious and awake to them, through the process of becoming awake to the moment-to-moment fluctuations of the environment, and the moment-to-moment actions and reactions of the dancers I was working with. Entanglement is a feature of our existence, but not always a part of our consciousness – it's through each other, and through attunement to our living environment, that we arrive there.

I understand myself as an artist-scholar. Where I am most alive and glean the most insight is through my embodied practices. COVID-19 awakened me to the power of my own practice and deep entanglement with the mystery of being a material, moving creature. A creature that rose from earth materiality continually dances, merges, with other matter. I will eventually decompose and recompose in the constant imaginings of entangled matter.

Dance is so much about inhabiting, and *being*, moving material imagination. Dance is often overlooked as an art form because of its ephemeral quality – which

makes it harder to stabilize, to copy, to extend into a market of salable objects. But in fact this ephemerality, the quality of constant re-creation, re-making, of constant loss and rebirth, connects us to the texture of existence. I feel fortunate to be a part of the longstanding impulse to take dance out of the theater, the stage, and bring it out into the world – as a dancer, choreographer, and engaged in the longstanding scholarship in this area (Barbour, 2004, 2016a, 2019, 2020, 2025; Barbour & Hitchmough, 2014; Candelario, 2023; Deby, 2021; Fraleigh, 2004, 2015a, 2015b, 2018a, 2018b, 2019, 2020; Hunter, 2005, 2015, 2019, 2021; Kieft, 2022, 2023; Kloetzel, 2013, 2015a, 2015b, 2024; Kloetzel & Pavlich, 2013; Snowber, 2014a, 2016b, 2018, 2022, 2024). This is a practice/method partly encouraged by the mobility of technology, allowing us to bring cameras and drones along with us, to capture and refract our movements, to situate the gestures we make in different places, perspectives, and matrices of images. It has allowed me to move dance into the natural world in an authentic and responsive way – not using the environment as a "set" or backdrop, but actually responding to the natural world in its varied moods and states – not just to perform there, but to encounter it there. I've had the title of Barad's book, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, ringing in my mind ever since I read it – the revolutionary concept embedded in its pages is that the more-than-human, non-material world has agency, and as we extend ourselves towards it, it extends itself toward us. Or really, the way I've phrased it is insufficient, because it implies a separability that disguises the fundamental inseparability of the exchange. And yet it does feel like a "stepping towards," even if it's impossible to step towards something that envelops and interpenetrates you from all sides. What I've been cultivating in myself is a heightened awareness of the Universe's agency and immanence, its call – in an attempt to step out to meet the Universe in a state and ethics of wide-awakeness.

From the experience of making this film, I developed a flexible structure for continuing this embodied and performative inquiry. The remainder of this dissertation documents that process, wherein I worked with dancers in site-specific dance to make more films. As a way of examining and surfacing the interior, cognitive/linguistic experiences of the performers, I conducted interviews with them about their experiences (connecting it to their past and ongoing somatic practices), and text from the interviews was woven into the edited films. All interviews were lightly edited for flow and clarity. I also have adopted a common format for writing about the experience – each chapter

begins with a narrative description of the filmed performance, followed by a transcript of the interview, and then a diffractive look at the experience, linking it more broadly to my research. Each dancer had their own particular relationship to the entangled imagination, a performative/biographical lens through which to relate to the concept – those lenses include queer ecology, “worlding” as a practice, motherhood, duetting with a partner, and connecting dance practice to racial and social justice. The dancers were generous with me, opening themselves in very thoughtful, vulnerable ways. I am indebted to them for their fulsome, engaged collaboration – not just through the performances, but also through the ways they have deepened and diffracted my understanding of the entangled imagination. This work is one of deep entangled co-creation and becoming between, dancers, videographers, editors and scholars, playing in the entangled imagination.

Chapter 3: KJ at Chimney Beach

Film link

Figure 2: KJ Dahlaw

[Image Description: A dancer is lying sprawled on a sandy beach at Lake Tahoe. They are wearing a brown jumpsuit, with their arms, emerging from the short sleeves, covered in bright red thermals, and a blue kerchief is around their neck. Impressions of their fingers can be seen in the sand, and there is a glint of sunlight shining on their glasses.]

KJ at Chimney Beach: Narrative

It was forecast to be a cold morning. Temperatures were predicted to be 23 degrees Fahrenheit to a high of 40, with possible snow. KJ had driven from the Bay Area the day after Thanksgiving to co-create in the entangled imagination. We had chosen the site of Chimney Beach on Lake Tahoe, the unceded territory of the Washoe. The beach is to the south of Incline Village, a bastion of wealth. There are no income taxes in Nevada, so Incline attracts billionaires, where they keep “summer homes” to shelter their fortunes. It's also the site of what used to be Sierra Nevada University, now a part of the University of Nevada, where my partner and I both have taught.

KJ and I collaborated on a piece in 2016, about grief, when KJ taught at UNR in the dance program. At the time, KJ was coming out as a lesbian and was separated from their husband; our children attended the same school at different times. With Chris, we created a short film piece, with all our children cavorting/dancing under the apple tree in our back yard. KJ was embarking on an MFA program in the Bay Area, where my dance and choreography was centered for many years. We entangled in so many ways, artistically and spiritually, as dancers, mothers, choreographers.

KJ is a highly trained and physically adept dancer and mover. Before they left for their MFA, they were grieving their identity, while also being in the state of great excitement for becoming who they were, and evolving. I was in a state of grief as well, still continuing to lose my identity as a Bay Area choreographer who had evening-length performances, and was now a mother – my child was living with an ongoing medical condition, one that called for my creative consciousness and care, a different type of living choreography. The dance time that KJ and I had together in the studio was a balm for both of us, a place of great creativity and connection where we were both able to create, in a space of liminal possibility, for both of us.

We hiked down a mile trail to the water, and when we arrived at Chimney Beach, it was cool, but the sun was very high – it was 11 a.m., and the Sierra Sun was strong – it felt close by. There was low humidity, bright blue skies and zero wind. No one was there. We had Lake Tahoe and Chimney Beach to ourselves – it felt out of time and out of space. We found an area between a giant rock, and rock formations in the water.

Lake Tahoe was created geographically with both ice glaciers and volcanoes. Chimney Beach is so named because of a rock chimney that stands on the sand – the remnant of a long-abandoned house. At this moment the peace was otherworldly and profound. We both felt joy to be here together in immense beauty. We began to create a scene, or a score, with the place, ultimately arriving at three scores. In the first, we worked with creating a line and circle carved into the sand by KJ. The sand area felt connected to the womb. We worked with crawling in and carving that space, bounded by the rocks and the water.

We discussed a second score, jumping off her ideas of "desire," where they would have been rolling over the rocks, grinding against them – referencing the way water rolls over and grinds against rocks. This was tied to their reading of the book *Matter and Desire*, by Andreas Weber, which discusses the erotic, generative force embedded in those relations of matter. Though when we arrived at the promontory of rocks extending out into the lake, we took a different approach.

The third score we discussed was about moving in the water, and KJ merging with the water. I was a bit apprehensive about this, because the water was dangerously cold. It was right on the cusp of winter, and the waters were getting colder – so I wanted to be attentive to them, and not create a situation where they would approach anywhere close to hyperthermia. These three scores emerged more from KJ's desires than from my own sense of direction. I wanted to see what was emerging for them within that environment – because they had spent so much time near that place in the past, it was extremely rich.

The movement ended up being tied to three locations in this area, which I will explain below.

Location 1: Beach and approach to water

KJ started on the beach meditatively, beginning by sitting and looking out on the water, breathing calmly. They began with an attitude of contemplating, drinking the place in, settling into it, and into their body. We did two filming passes of the score – first, with the drone, and second with Chris using his phone, up close. I'm not sure to what extent

KJ had to “edit out” Chris from their experience – on the one hand, the close-up footage allowed us to capture KJ’s micro-movements of relaxing, settling in – glances of the eyes, inhaling and exhaling. It’s debatable whether the exclusion of the cameraperson from KJ’s acknowledgement represents a sort of artificiality, a “performance” of aloneness, or if it rather constitutes an authentic documentation of focus, of directing oneself towards oneself, and the more expansive environment. There is a tension, or a dance here, between the fact of the entanglement of the cameraperson and drone, and the performative acknowledgment of that entanglement.

KJ’s movements of carving through the sand, scooping it, letting it dribble through their fingers, began at a measured pace. The further they pushed the sand, the more intense and frenetic the movement became – the movement became more effortful, traversing a gestural space of exploration and play to one of destination, and construction. From the vantage point of the drone the design their body carved was much more legible – a large, irregular circle perhaps thirty feet in diameter, echoing the elliptical forms of the boulders that lay on the beaches and in the waters of Lake Tahoe. After KJ’s effortful work of “construction,” they returned to their seated posture of contemplation.

After looking out over the expanse of water, KJ wanted to physically approach the water, and Chris positioned himself in the water to capture their approach from the POV, as it were, of the water itself. KJ went to the lake in a crawl, staying horizontal, and scooped the water in their hands, KJ’s pleasure evident in their face, lit by the reflections cast off the water. Because of the crawling, it has some of the sense of the time-worn image of a desert traveler finally coming to an oasis, though KJ was entirely free of desperation – it was just a scene of delight, of pleasure taken in the sustaining coolness of the lake. Chris captured close up images of KJ’s fingers, tattooed with the letters “THEY” on one hand, “THEM” on the other, luxuriating in the clear water.

I had to observe this beach-bound part of the score at a distance, which was strange for me. Because I wanted to be out of the footage, and the space was so open (both to the drone and the hand-held phone), I was hidden at the perimeter of the action. I saw a little bit of it, but mostly was unable to see – though I did feel a sense of connection, a certain vibratory feeling, a connection across space. This is something I experience a lot as a choreographer – even if I can’t see the dancers, I feel them – I feel

their energy and feel them moving. I feel a sense of entrainment with dancers, the way two systems begin to oscillate and synchronize – our frequencies aligning and becoming one. This matching of frequencies is, more than any ideas of ideal or beautiful movement, the motive and aim behind my creative practice.

Location 2: The Promontory

The score among the rocks turned out differently than we discussed. Chris has been at Chimney Beach with a drone before, teaching a class on drone videography. To the right of the chimney (facing the water), there is a promontory of stones jutting out into the water, studded with a few tall pines. Sometimes people jump off the rocks there, into the water. The rocks make a strong line for the drone camera to follow – a strong compositional pathway, where a student had captured a satisfying shot. The drone could pass tree trunks, and then follow through to the end of the mound of stones, out to open water.

KJ found a relatively flat-topped rock on the promontory. The movement wasn't the grinding action we had discussed – because of the height, their movement was somewhat constrained – a small "stage" of a sort, about ten feet in diameter, if that. The connection KJ had with the rock was mainly through their feet, and their body was mostly vertical, framed against the blue of the lake, the blue of the far mountains on the opposite shore, and the blue of the sky. The trees interfered with the anti-collision sensors of the drone more than Chris had anticipated – it got "stuck" in the air a couple times, but he was able to make three clear passes on a straight line along the rocks and past KJ – the camera moving beyond them, to take in the expansive blue landscape, with the sunlight vibrantly dancing on the calmly rippling water.

Location 3: The Cove

On the other side of the promontory was a small, beautiful cove. The promontory itself, and a semi-circle of boulders at the water's edge, serve to partly enclose a pool of water. KJ wanted to enter it – as I stated above, I was concerned about hypothermia, and if KJ's core temperature dropped, it would have been a long hike back out to the car,

and then an extended drive to any medical assistance. KJ knows the area and understands the risks, but I didn't want them to totally submerge themself in the lake. KJ kept upright, keeping their trunk (and their organs) out of the water.

Here, KJ was able to work from rock to rock along the shore, and to do some of the grinding and sensual work we had talked about, stretching, embracing and curling over one particular, smooth rock that emerges from the pool. They did a lot of work with the rippling of the water, splashing in it with their legs and arms – this was a return of that sense of play in movement, where they'd started with the sand on the beach. Through their feet and legs, KJ absorbed the coldness of the lake, and felt a tingling in their lower extremities for the remainder of the day (which they found delightful).

I was interested in the bird's eye view of the activity that the drone provided – the way KJ's splashing in the water rippled outward so visibly, radiating form their figure to the edges of the enclosure. There was a visual harmony between that, and the interaction of the water and one of the boulders that was mostly submerged in that pool. The water level was just at the apex of the boulder, and created little sweeping waves across the top – so that while the boulder wasn't moving, it was still sending out ripples from its top, as small waves lapped over and around it.

In our interview, KJ would mention that she felt no desire to "perform" or be "spectacular" in that space – to show their physical mastery and acuity. Rather, they felt the permission to simply exist there. They moved, not out of a sense of athleticism, or to test themself against the challenges presented by the environment – but to encounter the environment, in an ethic of co-mingling and participation. I myself emerged as a dancer at a time where physically testing oneself, and stepping into physical risk, was pursued with a sense of aesthetic excitement. I still see the value in pushing physical limits, but really framed this day – and our experience with the natural world, which isn't set up for the convenience or comfort of the human body as a dancing entity – situated from an ethic of concern and care.

KJ at Chimney Beach: Interview

KH: Let's just start by asking if you could describe your response to the site-specific performance we worked on today.

KJ: My physical response to being in the sand and the water and on the rocks at Chimney Beach was, first of all, one of spaciousness. I could feel my nervous system dropping down just being in the presence of such magnificent beauty, and it was a really peaceful day; there was no wind, and the sun was out. For the first while, we were alone on the beach, so I had a sweet experience of feeling grounded and able to just be present, presenting it in my body and in connection with the natural world, in her midst.

I could feel different sensations at different times as I connected with different landscapes. There was a time when I was submerged in very cold water, which was a delightful sensation. I could feel some deep cold coming up through my body. It was so beautiful and lovely to connect with the water and just play with my body in the landscape.

It was very peaceful for me. It was meditative, as I allowed myself to be present and respond to the rocks, waves, sand, and textures. I tried to just be present with how my body wanted to respond and move and not “perform” too much. I tried to experience myself as an animal, and in relation to the environment.

When you drop down into a more present meditative state as a mover, what kind of physicality, consciousness, or ways of being are possible for you?

There are infinite possibilities. There aren't limitations on what might emerge when I drop into presenting with my animal body in relation to the matter around me… I tried not to be prescriptive or perform anything but just have a genuine response, so it felt wild and unknown.

There's possibility for new patterning… a new relationality with my body in contact with the earth.

Could you talk about the practices that you're engaged with both socially and as a dancer, that you brought to this place?

Well, my body is white, trans, and non-binary, and my body is queer, and I have a whole host of movement lineages. I'm 42 and have a lot of ballet training, 37 years of ballet dancing, and I've been working as a contemporary dancer for over 20 years. In recent years, I've been studying somatics, body-mind centering, and Feldenkrais, and I've also spent some time exploring Gaga[9], improvisation as a practice of play, and connecting with unknowing and disorienting. All those things feel true in my body and in my movement.

I've also spent a lot of time connecting with the natural world, and I've spent a lot of time in this particular place, around Lake Tahoe. So, in a way, it felt a lot like coming home because I spent many years returning to those shores. I was in quite a reflective space today coming to Chimney Beach because I have so many memories of myself in different iterations of my life in this particular place, around Lake Tahoe.

Before I came out, my ex-husband and I spent a lot of time here. We conceived our first child in Incline Village, and then we spent a lot of time with our young children there, so I have so many visceral memories of this place and connections to past parts of my life. Being there and connecting with the landscape brought back a lot of body memories for me.

Could you talk about the scores you used?

We did three different scores today, and they had different emotional and body experiences.

The first place that I explored was the sand, and I really felt like I was burrowing into the earth, searching for my home. Carving into the sand with my body a circle around myself, that had a somatic experience of searching for myself or searching for my belonging. I had done so much of that work in my life in that place, because when we came to Lake Tahoe I wasn't typically working – it was a time where I was able to be reflective. There was a lot of journaling and reading and searching, as someone who

[9] Gaga is a movement language developed by Israeli choreographer Ohad Naharin, former artistic director of Batsheva Dance Company.

was coming out of a lot of internalized homophobia and Christian repression, which is also woven into my body from my upbringing and from my ancestry… and so I felt a lot of connection to that, finding my body burrowing in the sand and carving out a space for myself, which was a lot of what my late 20s and early 30s were about.

So it felt really profound for me. I felt both connected to grief and to life. They are connected through the soma and the living body. I can't separate my mind and my interest in queerness. I've been studying erotic ecology in recent years and have been influenced a lot by Andreas Weber's book *Matter and Desire*.

I can't separate those inquiries from my own living experience in my body of my own queerness and my own desire, or even my gendered understanding of myself as liminal – in-between binaries of inhabiting.

I'm really invested in the gender fuckery inside of my ballet practice, breaking down the binaries and opening the space just for a practice of embodiment of different states, which I actually think is available even inside of defined movement practices like ballet. The man's role is very spacious – very athletic and strong, and they fly through space. They also do the lifting and partnering.

The woman's movement is very underneath itself, and takes up much less space. There are lots of little steps, and it's all underneath oneself rather than traversing the space. And they also seemingly get passively manipulated in partnering.

I see ballet as drag because we're playing these roles and telling stories. It's very performative, and it goes to extremes of performance – with full makeup, and very elaborate costuming. The performance of gender can be very extreme, and I find it delightful and playful in a sense. I like to approach ballet as a place to be able to explore different states, and teach everybody all of the roles. And that gives accessibility to any of the particular states that you want to be in. So you can, if you want to, explore femininity – or lightness and softness and graciousness, gracefulness, beauty – you can have that feeling in your body, and you can play in that space.

So I personally like to play inside of it. Often, when I teach, I wear men's ballet tights, and sometimes I wear a packer, because it's a funny part of the performance of men's ballet.

What are the possibilities that you have in terms of your entanglement with ecology in that place? Because it's different than somebody who hasn't had those experiences.

How I understand erotic ecology is the idea that that the ecosystem is in relation with itself, and particles of matter long for otherness – that all of matter has a desire for the other, and that it can only exist in relationship with each other. Matter is being shaped by otherness, in a sense. In the ecosystem, matter is shaped by rubbing up against, and grinding, and penetrating and shaping. Water is in the process of shaping the rocks through constant rubbing up against them, and that's how they're transformed through time, just through that relation.

One lens of looking at the ecosystem is that it's longing for the reproduction of itself, that it's all interrelated and it's virile. Bees are spreading pollen, and even humans in a sense – my own body today, I'm also a participant in the generativity of the natural world, because as I was interacting with the matter around me, I was also spreading seeds. I was planting and I was pushing the earth in different ways. I like to believe that humans have a lot of destructive tendencies, but they are also an important part of the ecosystem, and that my participation and connection with the natural world also benefit the natural world. There's some kind of symbiosis, and I'm needed.

Destruction is also part of the need and the longing, because new life sometimes can't grow unless some things are destroyed and made space for.

I find meaning in the belief that my longing for connection with the living world is matched by the living world's longing after me. It just has to live in a place of unknowing and believing – I could be wrong, but that's okay. We're all in relation… It helps me to try to be attentive, and listen the needs and desires of the natural world around me.

I consciously try to break the dominant patterns in my body. I have lots of dominant patterning of white supremacy because I'm a white person, half German and half Norwegian. I come from Christian supremacy as well, and was raised with all of that patterning. Without even realizing it or knowing it, I had to learn to see the dominant patterning in me, because it was so dominant that I just took that as normal. Part of my own work to dismantle white supremacy is starting inside of my own self. I have a movement practice of trying to disrupt dominant patterns.

I have tried various approaches. There isn't one way to disrupt the thing. There are many ways that we can disrupt our patterns. It requires consciousness to do so because they're so automatic. An important part of the disrupting is first to name them, see them, and make them visible – then trying to find new patterns.

It's probably a lifelong [practice], because dominance is so prevalent. Do you think that there's a possibility for dance training that is not about domination?

Yeah, I do. That's partly why I like somatics. I approach dancing from a place of exploring the interiority of the body, attending to the body, listening to the body, learning the body, embracing the uncertainty and unknowing of the body – rather than approaching the dominance of the body.

One of the questions that emerged for me while listening to you talking is about modern dance, which I think would [frame itself as] fighting against domination. But if you look at who studies modern dance, who funds modern dance, it's still very much white and an elite class.

I agree with you. Modern dance's history was a rejection of ballet. Yet it was codified in such a structural way that it replicates dominant patterning. It just created its own form of dominant patterning.

I think for me in particular, relating to my practice of disrupting patterns, one of the very strong patterns that I've really had to work to disrupt has been the pattern of heteropatriarchy, and my own struggle with internalized homophobia and internalized transphobia. I find that my queerness, and my transness, my desire and longing are reflected in the natural world. I find myself more at home and more at ease in the wild, in my queerness, because of the ways that the natural world is in itself queer space. It's so full of variation, a wild abundance of multiplicity, that it is the only place where I can feel completely myself. And there's a way I get to let go and abandon myself in a unique way in the interaction with the natural world.

There's this way that this landscape where the edge of the water touches up and goes in between the rocks, and it's in-between, different. It's an interaction of matter, creating a liminal feeling in my own place of belonging, where I can see myself. I can be

in a receptive place with the world there, and we both come away changed, and that's a really beautiful interaction.

It was about the possibilities.

It was the fact that when we got there, it was just otherworldly in a way that we didn't expect. It was predicted to be really cold today, and so our expectation was “Oh, it's gonna be freezing,” and so we were going to wear a lot of clothing. And the sun was intense. We didn't feel the level of cold. There wasn't wind; it was just so stunningly beautiful, and there wasn't much pushing in our relationality. It just sort of felt more in a flow state.

And even when other people came, it didn't feel intruded upon that much.

Yeah. I got to practice surrendering, letting go, and trusting what would emerge. There was a certain kind of high, being awake and present.

How did you feel about me being there?

Well, I can feel your trust because I felt like I had permission. There was permission to just be present, and that was a really good feeling.

[At one point] I wanted you to go down to the water's edge, and I was really compelled by your hands in the water. And then you were also excited about your tattoos on your hands. Could talk about that moment?

Yeah. It felt like a significant pose. It felt very womb-like, almost like an umbilical cord stretching to the water. I was doing this burrowing movement that was, if I were to think about it (which I wasn't), it's kind of a head-tail [movement], and I was leading with my head, like I was birthing, or like I was going through the birth canal. When I got to the water, I reached with my hands. I do find that significant. Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, founder of Body-Mind Centering, talks about her study of embryology. That originates first from her [idea that] we see what we want and then we reach with our fingertips. That is an expression of our longing, of our desire. I do that a lot, I play with that idea often in my practice – exploring my desire and what I want by seeing what I wish, and reaching for it. And so I reached for the water, after spending this time carving and burrowing into this circle of becoming, or of self-belonging. I'm reaching for the source; water feels so

much like the source of life in many ways…We need water to survive; it is a precious resource in danger on the planet. It feels like our life force.

It felt like an organic thing that happened. I think it started when we were coming up with a score[10]. We were responding to the environment, but we were also responding to all these other narratives about the environment. For me, the desire piece of the interaction seemed stronger than the narratives that we could create.

Yeah, you're right. We did discuss different qualities of movement exploration, and then when we got to it, they did shift.

The world is not safe. We can control far less than in a prescribed space, like a dance studio, where everything is level and flat. I found that to be interesting. I got invested in what felt interesting to me, which was: how can I play, going up to some of my edges of what felt safe, in a place that isn't safe in a way?

One thing I want to note – while I am certain that I stirred up seeds and moss, and probably some of the fluids from my own body seeped into the body of water, one of the ways that I feel changed – even right now – is that can feel the parts of my body that were in the cold water – I can still feel it up to my thighs. It feels like some of my inflammation is gone. I have arthritis in my body, just from over-use of my body, but right now I have this the sensation where it feels kind cold, still.

And that's just delightful. It really changed me. That's a tangible way that I can feel changed by that interaction.

Being in that environment, we had to be aware of our homeostasis.

That's precisely another way that we disrupted patterns of dominance today: because there was a letting go of control. There's less control because we're interacting with uncontrollable space, right? So we couldn't control the movement so much.

[10] A “score,” in choreography, maps a set of guidelines or instructions for improvisational performance. It provides a structure that allows for exploration and entanglement with the present moment.

We had to attune through awakening the senses, which we did just for survival, right? We automatically attune more with our hearing, seeing, and proprioception, because we're on unbalanced ground. So all of our senses are heightened. And the dance creates itself through this interaction. It's more of a dance with the environment and just navigating it in the body.

Practice enables you to respond and co-create in the moment in the same specific way.

I guess what I'm learning and continuing to learn is to trust the instincts of my body and myself, that whatever wants to emerge is the right thing. It's very common [for dancers] to have a litany in your head, constantly talking to yourself about what you want to do or what you just did, or judging yourself, or trying to do something interesting. I think it's a learning edge for me to allow myself to let whatever comes out to just be enough, to be the right thing, and to trust that it is.

You know, I didn't do anything spectacular today. I don't think I was impressive in any way. I wasn't using my full facility or pulling out any technical tricks. I think I'm on a continual growing edge of radical self-acceptance. I get to be alive and present in the moment.

I believe that we can experience transcendence, or the experience of dissolving into something more than the self, through great beauty and through art. I can only believe that, that in itself is a good. And that the landscape itself enjoyed the dance that we did together today.

KJ at Chimney Beach: Diffractions

UNDOING PATTERNS

> We do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because we are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming.
>
> — Karen Barad (2003, p.29)

I don't know if I've ever seen Lake Tahoe as peaceful as it was that day – presenting itself with so many grand elements of the world (great expanses of water, steep inclines of mountains, a broad openness of sky), and at the same time, generating an atmosphere that felt otherworldly. Perhaps it was the sensation of being at once in the world and outside of it that suggested zones of liminality – that, and the embodied personal history KJ brought to the place. The time they alluded to in their interview, the time of their transition from "Katie" to "KJ," coming out as a lesbian and exploring their gender identity, was the time we met and started working together.

We met in the space of queerness, where we both felt at home – a place where our full selves could co-create and unfold. Though I have identified as she/her, my dance communities were queer in San Francisco, the Bay Area, New York, and Boston. I know the pressure of conformity, along gender, racial and ideological lines, in small towns – my first experiences of unconstrained queerness were urban ones, social spaces that had been created by communities of affinity and mutual support. KJ embodied, through their "performance," something more primordial. I think of Sara Ahmed, writing: "The question of orientation becomes… a question not only about how we 'find our way,' but how we come to 'feel at home.'" (2006, p.7)

"Coming to feel at home" is not a passive act, but an act of creation. KJ mentioned their studies of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, and her practice of Body Mind Centering[11] – and I took KJ's experience at the lake to be an act of "centering" in that sense: "a process of balancing, not a place of arrival. This balancing is based on

[11] A practice rooted in the embodiment and application of anatomical, physiological, and psychophysical principles, using movement, touch, voice and mind.

dialogue, and the dialogue is based on experience." (Cohen, 2022, p.1) Home, too, is not a simple matter of arrival.

The practice of entangling is, in part, a practice of undoing. I admire KJ's self-conscious effort to undo their patterning (and I, too, have strived to unwind my own patterning). We are somacultural entities engaged in "unsettling" (Kuhn, 2024, p.23) "white-body supremacy" (Resmaa, 2017). I think we found a way to generative disruption at Chimney Beach, in the sense that Cheryl Pallant approaches the word in *Ecosomatics: Embodiment Practices for a World in Search of Healing*:

> Of particular interest are the experiences that disrupt habitual ways of sensing and perceiving, which lead to challenging assumptions. Disruptions are a crossroad, an occasion of heightened senses and thought, consciousness asked to reorient. (pp.16-17)

Part of my lived practice as a human is to escape the control of my body through the culture of the male/female binary. My time with KJ opened space for me to begin to consider desire as an embodied and agentic force – and to consider what Kimerer LaMothe (2012) terms "the wisdom in our desires," in which "We find the freedom not to react through patterns of sensation and response forged in the past; we find the creativity to make new patterns, and re-create ourselves." (p.18)

QUEER NATURE

> [T]he task of a queer ecology is to probe the intersections of sex and nature with an eye to developing a sexual politics that more clearly includes considerations of the natural world and its biosocial constitution, and an environmental politics that demonstrates an understanding of the ways in which sexual relations organize both the material world of nature and our perceptions, experiences, and constitutions of that world.
>
> – Carolina Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson (2010, p.5)

Barad's concept of "queer performativity" (Barad, 2011) conceives of nature as being essentially queer, down to the level of atoms – making the case that the fluid and dynamic nature of reality invites us to move beyond fixed and essentialist views of nature, and nature/culture binaries. The emerging field of Queer Ecology creates a

conceptual framework for revealing the queerness of the natural world (Seymour, 2020) challenging the anthropocentric and heteronormative assumptions that have dominated environmental discourse, providing necessary alternatives for an ethical and sustainable coexistence on our planet (Accetti, 2021; Anderson, 2015; Bauman, 2015; Cuomo, 2016; Foster & Kerr, 2024; Mortimer-Sandilands, 2008; Russell, 2021; Seymour, 2020; Wang et al., 2016).

Part of the pleasure of working with KJ on this piece was getting a sense of these conceptual frameworks in a truly embodied way – KJ not just intellectualizing or reading her way into that experience, but actually experiencing it, or co-creating an experience of it. On one level, I experienced KJ's carving a circle in the sand as a carving of womb space, and in-between space of generative possibilities.

Eight years ago, when Katie was transitioning and becoming KJ, I held a space for their becoming, creating a queer place where desire and reinvention were opened – it was both a generative and pleasurable space. I was making a piece about grief. I had lost a queer "brother," Franco, too young. It was very sudden and shocking – he was a strong, healthy man, whisked from life by an aneurism. The last time I saw him, he was larger than life, playing the part of the (non-biological) "Uncle" with Callie, who was then two years old, shortly before she started having seizures. He had confessed that he was going through a dark night of the soul – his desire was strong to become a parent, but it wasn't clear how to bring that into being. The use of quotation marks around these traditionally-biological categories (brother, Uncle) is an indication of the queering of language that naturally emanates from queer communities – not bounded by direct lineage, but defined by relationality. He genuinely was kin to me and Callie.

Franco was an Uncle to Teo as well, who passed six years later than him, in the same courtyard where the aneurism struck Franco. They passed through the same portal. The courtyard was part of a queer cohousing community in Berkeley, California; we had discussed there are many ways to parent. Indeed, I believe parenting isn't bounded by the physical plane – Franco went first through the portal, the threshold, and I believe greeted Teo on the other side.

That place of passing (as I now sometimes feel that courtyard space) holds so many pathways – so many energies of love, grief, desire and becoming – it has become

a sacred space for me as well. Loss is the other side of desire – entangled desire always contains that connection to danger, exposure. Helene Cixous (1976) is eloquent on the risks of desire, in particular when expressing and writing from the body). My dearest friends, who lost their child Teo, have not survived the loss alone – it has been in a queer, multi-dimensional, earthly and more-than-earthly space that has sustained them – spun from a web of community. My friends tell the story of how their life has been about building community within an LGBTQ+, disability and multi-racial space and place. This has been not only an act of survival, but of flourishing. Their resilience continually poses the question to me, in various iterations and co-mixtures of pain and joy: what does it mean to imagine well in a place of queerness, love, and desire?

EROS AND ECOLOGY

> Eros is the life force, which breathes and enlivens us to the life that wants to be lived in us. When we are vibrantly alive we know eros in our cells.
>
> – Celeste Snowber (2016b, p.31)

KJ's engagement with Weber's "Erotic Ecology," that interpenetration/entanglement between the self and the world, strung on the thread of desire, resonates with Celeste Snowber's work on eros throughout her writing; I remember reading Snowber's dissertation early in my program, and being moved by her invitation to bring my own desire for love and embodiment into my work as a scholar, artist and human being – the invitation to treat my lived experience not as a collection of separate categories, but as a whole. This was further amplified when I was invited in her class and my doctoral studies to bring my body and my lived experience to my work – not to talk about dance in a disembodied way, but actually write in the thick of it, from an embodied place. I felt welcome to explore scholarship that embraced the physical and the metaphysical, the sensual and the spiritual, in the human experience (Batson, 2013; Bettman, 2021; Bickel, 2020, 2022; Catten-Schmid, 2016; Eddy, Williamson & Weber, 2014; Fraleigh, 2018a, 2018b; Fraleigh and Williamson, 2015, Granger, 2010; Halprin, 2014; Hartley, 2015; Kraemer, 2013; Laidlaw & Beer, 2018; LaMothe, 2012a, 2012b;

Maclaren, 2014; Snowber, 2017, 2019, 2007, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2018, Snowber and Bickel, 2014, Williamson, 2016).

I connect this broad scope of allowed experience – showing up not as simply a "dancer," or a performer armed with the habits and pathways of a particular technique – to KJ's relating that what they did at Chimney Beach was not really "performing." They were not there to show up, on the sand and in the water, as a dancer – but rather they were using dance as a means to access a relational state of being. KJ was participating in the "eros of the everyday":

> You are rejuvenated in the eros of the everyday. What wisdom, knowledge and experience do your senses have to communicate to you? How does sound, colour, light, texture, touch and smell inform your moments? What does sensuous knowledge have to teach and how can you trust your senses as a place of wisdom? (Snowber, 2016b, p.12*)*

One of the questions this investigative process of "performance" in the outdoors has put into relief for me is: how do we extend the "uses" of dance – and can it be an act of "embodied activism" (Johnson, 2023) "reveling in the wonder and mystery of the body as we also honor its limitations, pains, and challenges" (p. 116). What happens when we shift dance from an arena of spectacle – a demonstration of physical mastery and exertion – and instead open it as a territory of awareness, being, and mutual care (care for one's body, and the world)? In some ways, filming these outdoor experiences displaces the spectacle of the body to the world the body inhabits, inviting an audience to vicariously witness the body and world in dynamic relation.

ENVIRONMENTALISM THROUGH EMBODIED RELATIONALITY

> The prevailing ethos of new materialist ontology is… more positive and constructive than critical or negative: it sees its task as creating new concepts and images of nature that affirm matter's immanent vitality.
>
> – Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (2010, p. 8).

KJ holds that the Earth desires them and that they can be useful to, and loved by, the land. They belong to the land through a relationality, a reciprocity – as David

Abrams (2010) defines it in *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology*: “reciprocity is the very structure of perception… Sensory perception is this ongoing interweavement: the terrain enters into us only to the extent that we allow ourselves to be taken up within that terrain.” (p. 58)

Here we have “a body is in continuous dialogue with the environment,” (Pallant, p. 15), the necessary condition for Ecosomatics,” as Cheryl Pallant situates the term. So much of mainstream culture positions environmentalism as an effort of “saving the planet,” which positions us as outside of the planet in some sense – caretakers of a separate earth, with the egotism and fanciful superiority that implies.

I personally feel a need, a deep desire for, a connection to our planet that is rooted in our embodied inner subjectivity, an embrace of our more-than-human selves. We cannot exist in our current configuration, living unconsciously with what we breathe, drink, and shelter with. The joy of entangling better with nature may be a more fruitful way to co-create a planet that can continue to sustain human and more-than-human life – rather than coming from a place of only scarcity and catastrophe. As Jude Walker and Shauna Butterwick (2023) write in *Education to change the world: Learning within/through social movement*, in clear-eyed balance:

> All aspects of lives and livelihoods are affected by the climate emergency, and to respond effectively, we must confront and address patriarchy, settler colonialism, neo-colonialism, neoliberal globalisation, imperialism, racism – all the ideologies that negate life and together contribute to exacerbation of the crises. But to do this we need to educate/activate differently, not through the head alone, but also through heartfelt actions which bring laughter and joy (p. 4)

Catastrophe will happen to us all on the planet – perhaps collectively, certainly on an individual level – change and loss are crucial, inextricably embedded features of our universe. How do we entangle with both catastrophe, and the possible? I’m grateful to KJ for their generosity, and also for leading me to Weber’s writing, which resonated strongly with me, in the web of my research into entangled imagination. This passage, in particular, rang out to me:

> There is only one immutable truth: No being is purely individual; nothing comprises only itself. Everything is composed of foreign cells, foreign symbionts, foreign thoughts. This makes each life-form less like an individual warrior and more like a tiny universe, tumbling extravagantly

> through life like the fireflies orbiting one in night. Being alive means participating in permanent community and continually reinventing oneself as part of an immeasurable network of relationships. (Weber, 2017, pp. 35-36)

That sense of openness, porousness, on both the social and biological level, seems so necessary to our present condition. It should also be said that the understanding of holistic, deep relationality has been central to many indigenous knowledge systems and cosmologies – the interdependence embedded in the concept of "all my relations" (Cajete, 1994, 2019; Carpena-Méndez, F., et al, 2022,; Donald, 2012a; Grimm, 1997; Kelly, 2020, 2021; Muller, Hemmings, & Rigney, 2019; Perez & Longboat, 2019, Sheridan & Longboat, 2006).

Perhaps it seems strange, writing on KJ's experience at Lake Tahoe, to connect it with catastrophe – when the experience itself emerged from such an atmosphere of expansive peace (not exclusively, though – I should note the passage of KJ burrowing through the sand, which had a frantic, almost desperate tenor to it at times). One lesson I've learned from my queer communities is that it's very useful, and very healing, to undo the categories that so efficiently wall us off from each other and our environment – categories of behavior, of social position, of prescribed and proscribed desire, of sharply bounded familial relations. If we must negotiate with catastrophe (and we certainly must), we can't effectively do it alone, as atomized individuals – but instead as Weber's "permanent community," in a process of continual reinvention.

Chapter 4: Gabriel Forestieri at Tahoe Meadows and Sand Harbor

Film links: Gabriel on Land and Gabriel in Water

Figure 3: Gabriel Forestieri
[Image Description: A dancer in an orange shirt and dusty blue pants in curled over on the dirt ground, very close to the camera. He is curled over so far that his head, tilted downward, makes direct contact with his bare right foot.]

Gabriel Forestieri at Tahoe Meadows and Sand Harbor: Narrative

One gift of this dissertation is that it has allowed me to reconnect with, and reframe, a project I undertook with Chris and the dancer Gabriel Forestieri, a decade ago – a project whose video portion was abandoned, at the time, because of some technical issues. We had invited Gabriel to come out to Reno/Tahoe in 2014 to dance outdoors in the area. Gabriel had already established a practice, which he called "worlding," which took him to various outdoor spaces, where he would collaborate with local performers in response to the place. I had been interested in inviting dancers to my local landscape, to respond to the environment here, to be captured with photography and video – Gabriel seemed to be a perfect fit for the endeavor, which I had titled "A Body in a Place" – wanting to investigate that interchange between a particular human form and a particular environment. I was interested in performance as an embodied response to place. I was also, having been cut off from the urban dance community in my move from the Bay Area to Reno, with its infrastructure of dance spaces and festivals, trying to re-invent a creative dance practice that I could engage with in my new "locality."

We fell into something of a rhythm for Gabriel's stay at Reno/Tahoe. We had the option of housing him in the dorms at Sierra Nevada University, but he preferred to stay at our home, I think partly because the landscape in which he was performing was so stark, massive, and – to some degree – overwhelming. Gabriel would have breakfast and do his routine of morning meditation on our back deck, and then we'd venture out to see what we could capture. We did some exploratory forays in a nearby State Park, Galena Creek, at the foot of the Sierras. And then we took three full filming days around Tahoe – partly in the Tahoe Meadows, a part of Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest above Lake Tahoe, and partly in the Lake itself, at Sand Harbor Beach. Each day we would return home, and over dinner, review the footage we'd shot. On his last day with us, we conducted an on-camera interview about his experience here and his "worlding" practice.

After he left, Chris began editing the footage together, making some promising headway – it was time-consuming, partly because the process had been free of pre-planned or replicable choreography. Though we had Gabriel repeat a few actions – such as running and tumbling down a hill – there was no pre-planned continuity of movement

that would necessarily link one edit to the next. It was more like editing together a documentary than a scripted fiction film, with all the elements of discovery – and the lack of a storyboarded architecture – that this metaphor implies. After one long sequence and two more brief passages had been put together, Chris's editing computer had a hard drive crash. Fortunately, the raw footage had been backed up, but the master edit file had difficulty connecting with the clips, and starting the edit from scratch again seemed a daunting task – the video portion of the project was ultimately left by the wayside.

Working on this dissertation inspired me to go back to the footage, and the editing software had improved over the intervening years, making it possible to connect the raw footage more easily. We began to reassemble the footage and edit more sequences together – we also produced a transcript of the old interview. We had kept in touch, a bit, with Gabriel over social media – he had extended his worlding practice into underwater dance. The beautiful, dreamlike clips he posted through his official Instagram account, @projectlimb, showed him suspended in a blue atmosphere, breath held, drifting and flowing through the aquatic element in which he was submerged. It seemed an extension of the dancing he had done with us in Lake Tahoe – and, indeed, the seeds of my dissertation seemed to be planted there in the old footage we'd captured, and the interview we'd done. Dance as an embodied, experimental experience, dance as an investigation of, and resonance with, the landscape – it was all there in what we had collaborated on, long before I'd developed the language of "entangled imagination" to think and communicate about it.

There was even the element of having Callie as a "movement-instigator," as when we used the footage of her dancing on a San Diego beach for Erica to respond to when we made the first dance film in this series, for my comps. In this case, I had given Gabriel a note to introduce trembling, or shaking, into his movement. We were deep into the management of Callie's epilepsy at that time. By 2014 we were past the worst of it, having found medications that helped suppress her seizures – though the management of that medication, alongside her growth (with their changes in body weight and brain chemistry), was always an ongoing negotiation. The fear and the trauma that attended to her condition still colored a tremendous swath of my emotional and psychological life. In retrospect, I feel that "handing off" those physical tremors for Gabriel to embody – almost a form of psychological transference – was an attempt to use and performance to metabolize that trauma in some way, or at least to externalize

and grapple with it. Gabriel performing those tremors in the water was particularly fraught – being in the water is among the most dangerous places to be during a seizure. Rather than instinctually expelling water and air from the lungs, the unconscious body can draw the water into the lungs unimpeded, and can quickly drown – or the person can "dry drown" even after being removed from the water, because of that intake of water into the lungs. The water remains a place of heightened alertness when we're with Callie, and our efforts to create safety and "guardrails" around her in that context (for instance, when she goes on class trips where they are near or in the water) are an ongoing project.

Inspired by the old footage and the recent work Gabriel had been doing in the water, I reconnected with him and set up a follow-up interview to unpack his current practice, where the sense of a dancer being "entangled" with a place was so visible and tactile. What follows is the narrative of our first collaborative outdoor experience together, and then excerpts from the 2014 and 2024 interviews. For the "diffractive" section after the interviews, I've considered both the work we did together around Lake Tahoe and the ways in which Gabriel's ongoing practice shed light on the concept of the "entangled imagination."

Tahoe Meadows: The Dusty Plain, the Hill

One area we found in the National Forest above Lake Tahoe, near Tahoe Meadows, was a relatively flat, dusty plain dotted with scrub brush. This spot was probably the closest natural analog to a "stage," providing Gabriel with a wide, relatively unobstructed range of movement. At times he was at rest, lying on the ground as if on the edge of sleep, or lying horizontal by a force of exhaustion – at times he was athletic and expressive, running, twirling, or jumping. The energetic movement was at times playful – the way a child might traverse space, meeting openness with velocity. More often, there was an intensity that felt very fraught. In the other two spaces we explored – a water pool at Lake Tahoe, and a tall rock formation slightly deeper into the National Forest – he drove his body up against the boundaries that rocks and boulders provided for him. Here, he seemed impelled to turn in on himself, twisting, folding himself up so that, for instance, his head rested on his foot, or he gathered his legs into his trunk with

his arms. The stretches of exertion were often followed by a posture of rest or collapse, with hard breathing, audibly pulsing out of his nostrils. Both Chris and I filmed, Chris closer in, and myself at more of a distance.

The dust was a very present element, almost an insubstantial, shifting partner. At times he grabbed the dust and hurled it away from him, making brief dirty clouds that were swept away by the wind. His clothes were smeared and dulled by the beige dust. We found a hill and did multiple passes of him charging down, or falling down the hill. Chris waited with his camera towards the bottom of the hill, and Gabriel would crest the top from the other side, sometimes preceded by the bright cloud of dust he was kicking up. He zigzagged, twirled and somersaulted down the incline, a dervish cloaked in dust – as he got closer to the bottom of the hill, he would slow somewhat and keep closer to the ground, spinning on the plate of his back, rolling and grasping towards a gravitational resting-point where, again, he could expel his taxed breath through his nostrils. It became athletic for Chris, on camera, as well, as he tracked Gabriel's improvised trajectory – sprinting backwards to keep him in close camera view, equally enveloped by the dirt and dust. He cracked his knee against a rock on one pass and found it bleeding at the end of the commotion; in the raw footage, Chris can be heard breathing hard behind the camera, though if you didn't know it was him, you might think the pulse of respiration was coming from the tumbling form on screen.

Sand Harbor: The Pool

Sand Harbor is a state beach – one of the most popular beaches at Lake Tahoe in the summer, and something of a traffic headache to locals at that time – cars in line for access in the morning are often backed up onto Tahoe Boulevard, the main route running along the east shore of the lake. Sand Harbor attracts 1 million visitors a year, a number far in excess of its capacity. Before European incursion, it was a fishing spot for the Washoe tribe – during the Comstock mining era, it was a place where lumber cut around the lake was towed to the Comstock Mining District, where the wood was used to buttress mining shafts.

The nearest section of beach, once you've gotten through the toll, is a semicircular area ringed by smooth boulders jutting from the water. We went just north of

that section, behind that first perimeter of boulders, where there was a slightly more secluded area – a smaller ring of boulders, forming a porous circular pool. People were out, recreating, but there was at least an imperfect privacy where Gabriel could perform.

He started in the pool, floating, sometimes face up, sometimes face down in a dead man's float. He laid on one smooth, round boulder that emerged from the waterline, an island that could accommodate exactly one person. He dangled his arms and limbs into the water; small fish circulated in the pool, cautious around his points of contact or intrusion into the water, darting in and out of the space.

Gabriel worked with splashing and stumbling in the pool, staggering from one boulder to the next as if he were existentially bound by the encirclement of rock. Ripples emanated from his activity and rebounded from those encircling rocks, the light patterns on the underwater sand quickly becoming complicated with overlapping diffractions. He performed a series of backward falls into the water and shook and trembled in the pool, violently expelling air from his lungs in a fountain of bubbles. Chris and I had GoPro cameras that could film underwater, and we filmed very close, moving above and below the water as Gabriel slipped back and forth between the elements of water and air. Occasionally, someone in a bathing suit would wander by, perhaps with an inflatable under their arm – I think at least once we had to reassure someone that everyone was okay, and that this was just a performance, because if someone came upon Gabriel struggling in the water, it looked like he was genuinely drowning. At one point, a park ranger came by and asked if we were filming commercially, in which case we needed to stop – but we assured him, truthfully, that we were non-commercial videographers, experimenting with our cameras, and he departed and let us continue.

At the edge of the encirclement that projected furthest into the lake, tall boulders leaned against each other in an almost architectural formation – they formed a triangular gap through which the open water of the lake could be accessed. From certain angles, they almost looked like they were balancing on top of the water. The sunlight sent vivid ripples shimmering up their smooth sides. Gabriel submerged himself in that area, turning under the water, bracing himself against the stones.

At some point he climbed onto a large boulder with a flat top, and performed a series of slow movements – arms stretched upward, laying flat and then standing up,

projecting his arms rigidly to the side, crossing his arms in a W across his chest, head thrown back – moving so slowly from pose to pose he resembled a statue, laboriously sloughing off its immobility. A bright white cloud, streaked with blue, was blooming behind him, seemingly tuned to the same slow clock – its gradual unfurling across the blue sky had the same deliberate pace. I don't know if he was aware of the cloud, but it framed him like a spotlight, formed of water vapor instead of light.

Tahoe Meadows: The Rock Formation

On our final filming day, we returned the Tahoe Meadows, and walking a little further into the space, came across a bulbous rock formation, perhaps thirty-five feet tall at its highest point. Gabriel examined that formation from top to bottom with his body – it felt like an embodied exploration, with Gabriel scaling the rock, curling up inside cracks and crevices, leaning against the irregular surfaces and echoing those surfaces with his own bodily shapes – grasping the rock, laying on top of it, embracing it as if he could adhere to it and become one with it. Reddish-orange lichen picked up the color of his shirt. One of his first interactions with the rock formation was to sprint towards it, and scale it with unbroken momentum, instinctually finding a route up to its tallest point.

As I remarked in our 2014 interview, there were times where his physical expression recalled activities that could be understood by codified frameworks – here there was a pose that looked like yoga, there was a maneuver that looked like rock-climbing, and there was a flourish that looked like "dance." But all of these modes were, it seemed to me, subsumed into a method of exploration – an attempt at knowing that rock formation, that place.

Gabriel Forestieri at Tahoe Meadows and Sand Harbor: Interview

Note: I conducted two interviews with Gabriel, a decade apart – they are presented below, chronologically.

Interview 1: 2014

KH: What started your interest in staging dance and performance in the outdoor environment?

GF: That's a hard question to [answer], but I can put it in context. Growing up, I often felt alienated and had a hard time with social violence, and I would go to summer camps for most of the summer in the state of Michigan. During those times, I would feel the most connected, or at peace with myself, when I was not around people – but around wilderness. I had an experience one time on a kayaking trip where they left me on an island by myself for about six hours. I felt a sense of belonging, which I had been lacking in my own personal experience. So those are very strong experiences, and it made me into an adventure lover, or at least a "wilderness outdoor lover". Even though I spent most of my time in cities and around people, those experiences were some of the strongest [I've had]. And then, as I got into performance and dance, [performing] was always inside. And it sort of became disconnected – this love of art and this love of wilderness.

I had a strong experience working in San Francisco with *Americorps*, where we turned a parking lot back into a salt marsh. It was extremely powerful to watch something actually be changed, a real transformation. That was huge for me to witness and be a part of. But at the same time, even though I continued to do work in the park, part-time, I danced the other part of the time. And that was always inside, always in a studio, always in theaters. There was very little connection. That's why I started Projectlimb, which is the name of my dance organization.

I started by working on themes that had to do with the earth and the world, like water issues or biotech, even terrorism. But in the end, it's always just – my opinion. And it still didn't feel like I was really connecting in a real way, as I have experienced it emotionally and personally, being outside or in the outdoors. And so finally, I just decided to start working outside, taking the work outside. And in the end, I realized that I

needed to develop a practice for working outside. Because if you want to work with the world, then you have to learn how to include the world. Otherwise, you're just doing the same thing you were doing in the studio, and it would be best to stay in the studio.

You can probably trace it back to the 60s in San Francisco – performances that are made to be done outdoors, or outside of the box of the stage. Did you see anything while you were in San Francisco – or elsewhere – that helped you unlock that, or to give you permission to do that?

Videos, lots of videos. I saw old works of Meredith Monk[12], for example. Project Bandaloop[13] was big in San Francisco. Although was inspiring, it still wasn't exactly about "being in the world" to me. It still felt like installation somehow. Most of the work that I saw that was outside – I saw Ice Car Cage,[14] which was great – but it still was installation. And often I find that's what most people do outside. They may be site-specific, but they're installations. Although I did see Jennifer Munson's migratory work where she followed the birds. She came to California, and I remember she was tracking the birds; she was involved in this whole *process*. That was definitely inspiring.

Can you unpack that a little, and describe what that project was?

The migratory bird [project] was where she took a group of dancers, and she followed the path of – I forget which species it was – of a migratory bird, from south to north[15]. I believe that's the way she was going. I only saw it once. I followed it a little bit – she was doing educational components, and at the time, I was also doing environmental education as a part of working in the parks. The dance component was about being outside and creating inspiration from bird choreography.

What do you mean by bird choreography?

---

[12] Meredith Monk, based in New York, is a choreographer, composer, dancer and singer who has been a pioneer in interdisciplinary performance.

[13] Project Bandaloop is dance group that has used climbing technology in both indoor and outdoor spaces for site-specific performance as an expression of "vertical artistry."

[14] A parking lot performance by collaborators/performers Jules Beckman, Jess Curtis, and Keith Hennessy, built around a moving car with no driver.

[15] This was part of the BIRD BRAIN project – an overview can be found at https://birdbraindance.org

The choreography birds do when they fly. There's a kind of unison they have that is completely independent of unison. I don't just mean the V's you see in geese traveling. But just in general – the way the birds have amazing choreography. For example, I think they call it “murmuring” when they have thousands of sparrows or swallows – it almost looks like cells. Then, of course, even a pelican or seagull – the way that other birds respond to each other or make patterns in the air. There's a kind of unison, but also an independence. It's not necessarily symmetrical.

Can you unpack a little bit more of what your practice is? I know that you call it worlding.

I have a definition, which took me years to get to, actually. Originally, I realized, very early on, that naming was a real hindrance to including – because the second you name something, you stop your relationship, or at least you stop all of what your relationship could be,to whatever it is. Trying to find a name to express something that was mostly about not naming felt critical – but, of course, branding is a thing, it helps people to give them a name, and so finally I came up with “worlding,” which is actually from Pythagoras. The reason I like “worlding” is that there's a sense of participation; it's not fixed. The world is worlding me, but I'm also worlding the world, so there's participation in that. So here's my definition: “worlding” is fully inhabiting the body in space, while constantly refreshing all relationships, without naming any aspect of experience, as a means to share identity.

Constantly refreshing relationships is about – once I did that, it doesn't mean I stopped doing that – “Okay, I felt my body, done.” It's a constantly changing process because, of course, my body is different, and the space I’m in is different – everything around is different, it's constantly changing. The “without naming” is also about naming the experience – it can't be “good” or “bad,” or even things like “wet” or “cold” – all those ideas bring in so many other concepts that I'm trying to free myself from, so I can just fully experience with all my senses and body this space, in this moment.

And then the last thing is – a means to share identity. That part, for me, is not that I feel like I become a tree, or the tree becomes me – but in the places that I touch with that investigation, I share part of my identity with whatever it is that I'm researching that relationship with, when I don't name it. And then I'm not just in this little box of

dance, that's only what I know how to do. I have the whole world there supporting dancing.

How has your worlding practice affected not only your work – but you as a person? How has that practice changed your relationship to others?

The practice affects how I see people. I'm trying to constantly allow people to be more than what I see in that first moment. And actually, I don't want to get to choose my dancers. I send a net out, and people come. That is intentional because it feels strange to say – “Okay, I’m gonna include the world, but then I'm gonna choose who gets to include the world with me.”

Which doesn't mean that I don't want to work with people who have training or skill, but at the same time, there's a fascinating thing about saying – “Okay, you really want to work? If you'll come and work with me, then we can do it and find the way.” And that practice of not being able to do exactly what I know how to do with that person is incredibly enriching.

I'm in this process of creating work – that's all I really do – I wander different places, and make work in different locations. Completely different people. Completely different cultures. [I’ve realized] the whole thing is the worlding. That the whole life thing is the worlding, and not just that moment people come watch. When I’m in a rehearsal, when I'm talking to people about what I'm doing, organizing the classes, riding around the city trying to find the space – all those things become part of it.

The spaces you danced here – it seems like a different environment, because you’re usually working in urban spaces. How did working in these non-urban spaces feel different to you?

I have to be near a city just to have enough wood to make the fire. I mean, I can't be by myself in the woods and make a piece. There’s not enough support. I end up finding spaces that are highly unprescribed. They're not quite urban. Well, they can be quite urban, but they're liminal spaces, spaces that are in between uses. You can't point it say: I know what that is for. So it's not usually in a park – “Oh, okay, I'm here, I’ll sit on a bench.”

It’s more like – “Oh, this *was* something. And now I'm not sure what it is.” And in fact, often the spaces that I'm using, I've shared them with a lot of homeless people. That's not intentional, but I end up being there because I'm looking for spaces that are slightly off the corporate domain. I don't want the use of the space to be so clear. When there's something open about the use, people have a different ability to disconnect, and actually see the people interact with nature, with the nature of the space, in another way.

Can you give a concrete example of a space that exists in this liminal state?

One was called Escaleras de Forestier, which was originally built for the World's Fair. It was a really beautiful bunch of staircases that go up this hill. But that was 100 years ago, and now it's kind of uncared for. There are some people that go there, but most of the spaces are crumbling and falling apart, and like I said, homeless people live there. Most of the tourists don't go there because there's a funicular that goes to the top of the hill, and there's a road that goes to the back. So this front side is not very well-tracked. In fact, some people came and said, I've lived in Barcelona all my life, and I've never been here.

People would often be unsure – they're unsure what I'm doing there. And they're unsure not only *why* I'm there – but, like, what's the point? They can't frame it, which I like. “What are you doing? Dancing, or tai chi, or doing yoga – or are you doing meditation or – or what are you doing?” And the second they know, they leave. Everyone watches and is interested until they name it. The second they go, “Oh, they're doing yoga,” they leave.

How did you respond to the spaces here?

It was pretty fast, to be honest – usually I have more time in the space. I find the space, and then I spend all day there [every day] for a month. So I was making things quickly [here]. But the intensity of the spaces allowed me to enter something else – there was a kind of rawness to them that I felt made me more vulnerable. This was also from difficulty factors of sun and altitude and holding my breath and holding in the water – all those things create that kind of personal experience. I don't have to *do* that. I'm not making that happen. That happened because that's how my body was responding.

I had no desire to create the “perfect moment,” but allowed [things] to arise through my sensation. For me, there's a dial of thought and sensation – the more you're in thought, the less you’re in sensation, and the more you're in thought, the less you're in sensation. I'm always trying to bring that dial into sensation so I can feel more of my body, connect more to the space, and I'm doing less of the editing, less of the controlling, less of the meaning-making, which takes me out of the moment, takes me out of the space. In a way, it helped me do that better because of the extremity of the situation – I can't think so much if I'm falling down a hill, with dust everywhere. I can't think so much if I'm just trying to make sure that I'm breathing or if I'm freezing.

So, is worlding dance?

Worlding is not *only* dance, but because that's my frame, it's how I encounter it. Although I feel like movement is very important to it – you could definitely practice [it] on a hike. I find that fully inhabiting sense of the body is very important. And that to me is easiest, or that expresses itself more completely, in a dance situation, because there's a certain freedom in movement you're allowed to make. Whereas in hiking, if people start doing something weird, your hiking buddies might get a little awkward. That's what I love so much about dance – there's a freedom in the dance frame to inhabit your body in ways that no other named situations allow for – you know, tai chi, or qigong – those are all traditional practices, and so is dance. But dance has an allowing for something else to also come up out of that.

I think that's the thing is, it's a way for me to explore my body's experience of the world in a more complete and original way, because it's happening *now* – how am I *now* in my body my whole body in this moment. I could take all that and then go and do yoga – but I find that if you allow the body to respond any way it wants, it's an easier way to touch that feeling. That's like a wisdom of the body that I'm trying to understand. The wisdom that's digesting my food and circulating my blood and dealing with my hormones and taking all my experiences and making it into one – it's way more intelligent than just Gabriel Foerstieri – front brain. My “ideas” – great. It's sort of small, actually.

Did it feel like you went very quickly into a survival mode in those spaces?

Yes, I think that's what I was trying to get at with “vulnerability” – the rawness of the state, it’s not a beach, it's not a shady hillside, it's gravely, dusty, steep, sharp rocks

– or it's cold water surrounded by huge boulders that also are sharp, or it's steep. So there's a kind of roughness – it's a different feeling. There's a physical reaction to that – alertness, or "How you can deal with this?" Although, ironically both those places are places that people go to recreate. We had the people in bikinis that were sort of out in the shadows, but they're framed [the space] because they have all this support around them. It could change very quickly – if there was no parking lot, or bathroom, right? If they didn't have a comfy car to go back to.

I should say also in fairness, we did insert a theme – which was this shaking theme. The second we started putting this fetal shaking in, it's very emotional. This comes in from the movement. I wasn't generating sadness or pain or fear, but the second I started doing that movement, there's a kind of intensity of emotion that comes out. So that that's part of the frame that you brought, or that we brought together.

Is the connection you've felt to dance – is that the same connection you feel to the wilderness?

The more I'm feeling my body, the more I'm connected to the earth. The wisdom of the body is the wisdom of the earth. I don't think they're separate. The earth made the body. 3.8 billion years – that's an incredibly long time of transformation. That's not for five weeks or for a hundred years, or for a whole lifetime. That's nothing next to 3.8 billion years of time spent together, developing and creating all of these different systems and organizations that are made for a place, which is the earth. And that's what the body is – a record of all of that history. It's encoded in our DNA.

Could you describe Ice Car Cage? And maybe use that to expand upon what you said –how that was like an "installation?"

I don't know if I'm qualified. But Jess Curtis and Jules Beckman, and Keith Hennessy – they took a gigantic block of ice, and a cage, and a car that they have on a loop – they set the steering wheel and had the car in an orbit, and then they would dance with the car. The ice slowly melts and they sort of destroy the car and the cage. They work with these three elements. It's really powerful – it's amazing. It was super beautiful, creative, imaginative, and powerful work. To me, it's like you have an idea – which is mental, it's your concept. You bring it in, you set it up, you organize it. Even

though it's outside in the parking lot, it's not really with the world. You've created your own world that you're then inhabiting – which is what theater is, often.

And this is completely different when you're working outside – and I just enter a space to see what's there. Including the people that just randomly come through, because they're public spaces. I don't cordon off who can come in. So lots of people enter who are not part of the show. They don't know what's going on. They enter into the scene, sometimes they disrupt the scene. Sometimes they take over the scene for a moment. I don't even control the focus, that much, of the audience. I have some slight arrangement of how I want them to view it, and I ask them to follow a certain person, or I use different techniques to get them to follow. But it's much more about participation rather than creation.

Is there anything else you wanted to say – that you think it's important to communicate?

Just that – I feel like we're so estranged from the earth, and we're also estranged from our bodies. Most people think of their bodies as a thing that carries their brain around. Maybe it's different when they have sex, but that's about it. I think that the act of awakening the intelligence of your body is super important for our evolution as a whole species. This is my "political" thing. I think dancers have a responsibility –most dancers are super mental with their bodies, which is so weird. And I feel like dancers, if they can't be in touch with their bodies, then we're really in trouble.

An image that came up while you were talking about the body and the world, and the amount of time that it has taken us to evolve, is the rapid extinction of so many species and so many systems in this time.

Yes, and our seduction by monoculture – we're so in love with monoculture. For example, when I look at fields in America – or, everywhere – those giant one-crop fields, all I see is a complete lack of creativity, and a complete disinterest in what the Earth's wisdom is – a complete denial of everything that is our nature, and a complete domination by ego and mental control. One idea, one idea, one idea. It's absurd and completely destructive.

How would you change the training of dance, where it comes from the idea of the dancer as a tool, dancer as an expression of somebody else? What would an alternative look like in your mind – or in your experience?

Well, it would include way more time for the dancer to be themselves, and to really understand what that means. It would be a practice of discussion and finding out their own internal, somatic, sensorial being. Not only being judged on their ability to make a shape or form that's always external – but [involving] a real intense search and development of their internal awareness of their own sensation – not just an image.

I think that's a human thing that we're losing, that we need to find. And there are many ways to do it. Dance is one way. It's just a good way.

Interview 2: 2024

KH: I was wondering if you could just start by telling us about your practice in water and how you got there, because it's fascinating.

GF: Do you know Chisa Hidaka? They have a project called the Dolphin Dance Project, and I met them through the contact community in New York City. Chisa had this experience with dolphins, and they invited me out there, and I went and had this experience of dancing with dolphins. It was amazing, but also really challenging.

I was a swim instructor and a scuba diver, I was a lifeguard and I liked to be in the water, and was comfortable in the water – but I'd never done anything underwater like that. They wear a mask and fins and snorkels and they kind of imitate dolphins in their bodies. The practice means you have to wait for the dolphins to arrive and then – you're not the only ones doing that, right? A lot of people want to swim with the dolphins. And it felt weird to me. I think what they do is really ethical and I appreciate it, but it just for me personally, it started to feel strange, this hunt for the dolphin. And the thing with the fins and the mask and the snorkel, didn't really – I was interested in what the human body, by itself, would be.

That was also the first time I went freediving, was on that trip. I had dived below the surface snorkeling many times, but here I was actually going out with people who freedive. And the very first thing that happened is somebody dove down in front of me without warming up, shot up to the surface, and blacked out. Somebody had to save his

life. He started having a loss of motor control – a really extreme kind of experience. So my first experience freediving was – “Oh, I don't know about this.”

But then, I was doing the Worlding and practicing in many places. I had been dancing with water – with waves, often on beaches. I had just been in Ibiza, and I started doing more thinking about the body, moving around in the water. I decided to make a film with someone, that we shot half in Finland and half of it in Ibiza. That was the first time I had really filming myself and someone else. And that was when I was like – “Oh, there's something really, really interesting here, and I need to do a lot more of it.”

That's when I started really practicing free diving, taking courses. In 2017, I became a freediving instructor because I wanted to teach. Really the only art I do now, in the sense of dance, is that practice in the water. It's very addicting – it's an endless research, because it's new, and you're always with your limits, and challenges that you don't have in a dance studio.

I think my practice of dancing underwater is really the same as my worlding practice. It helps you, because you have to lower your state to be underwater. Freediving is only sport without adrenaline. It's not something you get hyped up for. You have to really slow yourself, get into another state, be calm and relaxed. And then, also, the movement – hydrodynamics, and orientation and buoyancy – all those things inform movement.

And I don't think I've ever had a practice, before that, where I watched myself all the time. Dancing underwater – I'm filming myself. That's how I know what's going on. I've watched myself dance underwater a lot – which is not the most fun all the time. There’s lots of room for self-loathing there. But you learn something about what you're doing.

It's quiet in a different way. It's weightless. Your movement is tensegral. You have to move from your own tensegrity, which is interesting – without gravity. You can spiral on yourself. There's some pushing against the water. Swimming is not dancing – and I recognized very quickly when I was swimming. For example, I noticed synchronized swimming hand movements to slightly change course. Why? These small little hand motions that were unnecessary – I noticed those.

A desire to suddenly be in a different position – why? Is it because you aesthetically decided? But actually it was fine, if you're learning to follow and partner with the water. And that goes back to the Worlding thing, which also comes out of contact [improv]. All that practice with contact and that *relating*. From that – relating to the ground, to the gravity to the other body, it's pretty easy to expand that to the world – and it's the same thing with the water.

Why, in your languaging, do you differentiate your worlding from your current practice?

I don't think there's really a separation. I mean, there's a separation in the sense that it requires different skills. The free diving aspect is specific. You have to equalize, you have to hold your breath, have to deal with your buoyancy. You have to *be different*. You're not the same thing underwater that you are [on land].

I think that was one of the big attractions. A lot of times, the worlding – and I probably mentioned this 10 years ago – was this thing about not just being me. This participation was like, it wasn't just Gabriel's dance, Gabriel dancing – it was this shared identity, this shared exploration or research. I was connecting to something else, and partnering with that was participation. That's super clear underwater. That it's not just you. There's literally the weight from the water on top of you, and that's what's causing the pressure. So – I wouldn't say it's different.

In terms of working with water, it seems like that makes that interchange between the world and yourself really apparent. And you have to be really conscious about it, to just preserve yourself. I was curious if that's part of the attraction – could you unpack that a little bit more, in terms of interacting with the world? Could you describe the water more, as a partner?

I have a hard time claiming to understand anything. But in my experience, I have understood in my limited perceptions that I only have so much attention, and if I put that attention towards my sensations, then I have less attention for thought. And if I have more of my attention on my sensation, then I'm more able to be present and connect with the world, and share in that event, which is *now*, which is that "co-creating" thing.

I always wanted to teach the [freediving] course, calling it “Surrender to the Hold,” because there's something really interesting about that practice of hold. Even the word, right? “Hold your breath.” You're going underwater. There’s a stopwatch, an anchor – however you want to say it – you're going underwater, but you've got to return. You're not supposed to be down here. You're a tourist. So you always have this thread that's connecting you back to wherever you started from.

But you have to surrender that, in order to stay. That doesn't mean that you can let go of your hold. Fully surrendering is kind of joke. That's not possible. Even physically, you have to hold the air in at some level. Otherwise, you'd just exhale. And you also have to control your equalizing as you go deeper, which is a different but very amazing somatic practice. I think the real art of free diving is equalizing, actually. It's amazing what people can do. And the small control, the sensitivity you start to have with your tongue and the pharynx and larynx and the cheeks, it's pretty amazing.

Has your research brought you to our evolutionary relationship with water?

Thirty meters is sometimes called the failure depth – because the residual volume of your lungs [is so small, due to pressure]. If you go deeper, [people thought] that means you're going to crush your alveoli in your lungs. That was what they were afraid of early on with freediving. But then they discovered something called the mammalian dive reflex. If you put your face in cold water, your heart rate will drop about 20 beats per minute. Cold water, pressure, and holding your breath triggers the mammalian dive reflex.

It sends the blood from the extremities to the center. For example, that means the lungs fill with blood – so instead of just being full of air, they're full of blood. And so they can withstand the pressure – that's why people can go so deep and not have terrible barotrauma – as long as they're relaxed. That takes a lot of adaptation. It's really mind-blowing the pressure that people can withstand – not withstand, that's not the right word – they *adapt* to it. I think adaptation is really the right word, because it's not about withstanding. It's about *connecting*, finally.

Also, the spleen will release oxygenated blood. And then also that oxygenated blood gives you a lot longer breath hold. There’s that tribe in Southeast Asia that they studied – they've been freediving for hundreds and hundreds and maybe thousands of

years, and they actually have spleens that are twice the size of an average human's, because of that practice. So they're truly adapted to being underwater.[16]

I'm really interested in the state that you get into so that you, where our consciousness and our practices allow us to imagine and be in a different way. Could you talk a little bit about what that means for you in the water, and how that has opened different possibilities for you?

I definitely haven't achieved state of full acceptance with where I am – it probably would make all the practices better, but unfortunately I'm not there. That being said, the reason I think I am so attracted to it, and don't ever stop, is because almost always I'll have some moments where I'm just permeable, and the event is really shared. And the movement of the light with the movement of the reef, and the movement of the water and my movement – I'm not thinking about what shape I'm making, I'm just fully involved in that moment. That's like release. That's the real magic for me, and when that happens it allows me to discharge a lot of my trash, noise (mental and physical) – and gives me a lot of rejuvenation to be in the world.

Could you talk about the "spectacle" part of it? You use video as a method of self awareness, self critique, but also it allows you to share things. It allows you to connect with an audience that otherwise – you'd have to have a bunch of people with scuba gear, I guess, to watch you.

I believe that it's a beautiful practice – and I think a lot of footage I see underwater is also a hundred percent male gaze. It's usually women in thongs and long fins shot from behind – I call it the "sea butts." I would like to give an alternative to that and say – "Look, there's this other practice," and I would also like people to make more and do more things in the world, underwater. I wouldn't say I'm political, but I've always been in love with the earth. And I want to share that relationship, and put that relationship out there. "What about this," you know?

Also sharing is also part of my identity – sharing it helps me feel like I'm in relation [to others] as well, rather than just having this private thing. It's the same thing, teaching these courses of underwater dance. I don't need to do that right now. I have

[16] The Bajau people, studied by Ilardo et al. (2018), in the journal Cell

another job I could just do – and not do that. Never tape myself, and not share anything. But it feels important to share, to have a conversation, and to continue the dialogue – and have someone else come and then do their research –what are you going to make, and how are you going to contribute to this practice? And hopefully give it to more people – then I can watch it evolve.

One of the things that I have always admired about your practice is that you were really conscious of what you were doing, including things that could have been risky – you know, you don't mess around with, for example, rolling around on a rock that's really high. I didn't have a ton of fear – "Oh, my God, he's going to roll off that rock."

There's still this thing – what you're doing is not without risk. There's a consciousness and a very strong technical, or awake, attention to detail. And an understanding of what you're doing, and not having to be spectacular at the same time.

Yeah, there's a full physical participation. I think that's partly just temperament. I'm just, like, excitable. Someone who had a lot of energy, wanting to really feel alive – and that life often meant being in nature.

Since I was very young, nature has made me feel safer. Being outdoors always made me feel safer than being with a lot of people – I always felt much more nervous with that. I felt very judged when I was young, as I'm sure a lot of people do.

Did you feel like your physicality was a part of the judgment? Did you feel like your desire to be active and having a lot of energy was part of it?

Yeah, physicality. I think also my whole shape – and being judged about how I looked. There was a physical embodiment there, of feeling judged. And then of course dance training – God, that's so much about judging how you look and what you're doing. It's hard. It's a hard thing. And I've always been someone who felt a little bit on the outside, personally. Never quite – you know, a round peg square hole sort of situation, all the time. That's part of it, too. That freedom to fully be present in my body and fully interact with my whole being – and my faculties – and engage with this space – is still just so satisfying.

Gabriel Forestieri at Tahoe Meadows and Sand Harbor: Diffractions

WORLDING AND FLUX

> Constant flux and motion generate concepts of energy waves/spirits. Movement and flux of energy waves, in turn, generate a perception that all is alive and animate. The constant transformation, deformation, and restoration results in a 'spider web' network of relations out of which arises the concepts of interrelationship which are summed up in the saying "all my relations."
>
> – Leroy Littlebear, (2009, pp. 9-10)

When I heard Gabriel define his eco-somatic practice as a "worlding" practice, it reminded me at first of Western phenomenologist Heidegger, and the many Western philosophers who have applied concepts of "worlding" to various fields of inquiry. The history and lineage of worlding are beyond the scope of this dissertation. In Gabriel's definition of worlding – "fully inhabiting the body in space, while constantly refreshing all relationships, without naming any aspect of experience, as a means to share identity" – what resonated for me was the Indigenous philosophy/cosmology/knowledge practice articulated by scholars like Leroy Little Bear, Gregory Cajete, and Margaret Kovach, called "flux" (Cajete, 2004; Kovach, 2009; Littlebear, 2009) – where all phenomena are in motion and relationality to each other, so that there's no stability. Rather, there are transforming, transmuting entanglements within a place and ecosystem. The world is in constant movement.

Donna Haraway (2016) also has resonance with Gabriel's definition of worlding. She articulates the concept of "making kin" (staying with the trouble), engaging in relationships with companion species, objects, ecosystems, and concepts (Swinkels, 2018). She decenters the concept of the world as a site for human extraction and towards one of co-becoming in a complex web of relationality (Swinkels, 2018; Khoja-Moolji, 2017). For Haraway and Gabriel the world is not fixed, but a place of being co-shaped and reshaped. This connection to deep time, love for the planet, and lived humility in being part of co-becoming, I believe, is a direct result of his deep practice with the lived world and his porous soma. This is a part of the breathing, watering world he is in constant movement with.

ISLANDS

> While studying modern, ballet, Haitian, and Kathak techniques; making dances to perform in theaters, classrooms, and churches; or performing solo and with various companies, I had learned that dancing opened in me the kind of experiences described by others as “religious”—experiences with names like connection, flow, transcendence, and overpowering love. Dance was my core. My passion. My connection to the divine. I also knew that more than anything else, time spent in the natural world inspired me to dance. It catalyzed in me a sensory shift in which impulses to move come alive.
>
> – Kimerer Lamothe (2018, pp. 123-124)

In listening to Gabriel's experience of social violence as a child, and his experience of belonging and connection on the island where he was left for five hours – and the genesis of the deep long practice of worlding – so many complicated, diffractive images, memories, lines of scholarship and practice emerged for me. The image of the island, as refuge and place of contact – a zone of transcendent experience – emerged from our exploratory work in the field, with Gabriel’s encounter with the rock formation. I only heard Gabriel’s story about the island afterward – and I suspect he didn’t have that direct memory in mind when he was dancing on and around the rocks. But after re-reading the transcript, and reviewing the footage, the connection seemed very clear. The “island” in Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, and the island in memory, seemed to be a place of “religious” experience, as Kimerer Lamothe (2018) writes about it in *Back to the Dance Itself*.

I met Gabriel in San Francisco in the early aughts. I had started a dance company after completing my Masters at Stanford University, with collaborators from the dance and education program there, and had cobbled together 12 more passionate dancers from the dance scene in San Francisco, to start Element Dance Theater.

Gabriel was a stunning dancer. We both studied ballet, modern dance, and contact improvisation. I was teaching and studying GYROTONIC® at the San Francisco dance center, where we both were studying, performing and choreographing. We were

in the same stream. I saw him perform with Scott Wells Dance Company[17]. Scott is an incredible choreographer who combines contact improvisation, flying and release technique in his work. It was extraordinarily athletic, full of daring – and a little dangerous. One night I was at a contact jam in Oakland, California at the Noodle Factory, where Gabriel was living and rehearsing.

The Noodle Factory was established by the people that had started, and funded, Burning Man – the BodyCartography Project, a company that explores somatics and ecosomatics, founded by Olive Bieringa and Otto Ramstad, were the Noodle Factory's resident dance company at the time. During the jam, Gabriel was improvising. One moment took my breath away. Gabriel was running full speed, flying through the air, and somehow he jumped and inverted himself, so that his head was facing towards the floor, his feet straight up in the air, as if doing a handstand – but he was flying upside down in the air towards another dancer, who caught him, and then Gabriel flew over his shoulder, and the other dancer flew backwards and up. They were spinning around, making vertical lines through the air, as if doing back aerials – but together. I asked later on for Gabriel to repeat this movement during rehearsal because I was so stunned by it, but it wasn't something that he could recreate. It was from improvisation, it was a moment, and there was great daring and risk within that moment.

INTERSECTING COMMUNITIES

> To say that life and art are entangled is to propose not only that we make art out of life—that life, so to speak, supplies art's raw materials—but further that art then works those materials over and changes them. Art makes life new. We become something different in an art world. And crucially, our world has always been an art world.
>
> – Alva Noë (2023, p. xi).

I invited Gabriel to be a part of my 2002 dance production, Full-Scale. We were working with sculptural couches, one on the ground and one hanging from the ceiling in

[17] The Scott Wells Dance Company, based in San Francisco, is noted for collaborating with movers outside of the dance community, including skateboarders and boxers.

the air. I wanted to see what Gabriel could do with the couches flying through the air, his athleticism.

Gabriel was not only dancing, as he mentioned in his first interview. He would show up to ballet class or modern class at the San Francisco Dance Center in the morning, and then he would ride his bike in the afternoon 30 miles to the headlands in Marin County across from San Francisco, traversing the San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge. He was working in education and restoration projects. His love of the earth – the genesis of his worlding practice on the island as a child – was still deep within him, still a part of his practice. It was an ethic of his to be in "good relation" with the earth (Cajete, 2015, p.286). He would then ride his bike 30 miles back to rehearsals to perform. Most of us at the time were also making work, as well as working in other people's projects.

Gabriel was rehearsing with us three or four days a week. His love of movement and relationality was pure and true. The way that he engaged with the couch, with the aerial work – it was complete exploration and purity. It was, per Smith and Lloyd (2021), a "manner of feeling alive": "Movement, as the primary focus of inquiry, is less something to which consciousness is directed and more a manner of feeling alive and living with verve." (p. 1) As he talked about in his 2014 interview, he was less interested in content. I was interested in content. I was interested in big ideas showing up on stage – I was interested in spectacle. I was interested in the complexity of everything happening at once. It was connected to a movement in Dance Theater that Gabriel nodded to – companies like Contraband, Circo Zero, and Project Bandaloop, which were all knocking down some of the constraints of the traditional dance stage. As Gabriel said, when this work broke out of the traditional constraints of the black box stage, some of it still had the feel of an "installation" – a feeling of projecting movement and images into new spaces, but not necessarily *encountering* those spaces (this is painting with a broad brush).

Where Gabriel and I overlapped was our love of relationality. I always encountered dancers in the place of relationality. I wasn't interested in putting work on them, based on my idea and vision. I was interested in the relationship. What did they bring? What were they interested in? My work was something like a collage, but it was all an entanglement – an entanglement of who showed up, who practiced, who was with me. It was truly a community, a complex community of people that enjoyed being with

each other. We strove toward a “wide-awakeness” with each other, in the sense that Maxine Greene (1977) writes – where wide-awakeness strives “to move others to elevate their lives by a ‘conscious endeavour,’ to arouse others to discover — each in [their] own terms — what it would mean to ‘live deliberately’” (p.120)

It wasn’t absent of conflict (nor was it absent of romances). Sometimes there was conflict about who was going to be choreographing certain sections of the performance. It was an entanglement of complexity (as all entanglements are).

Gabriel eventually left and went to New York to study at NYU and continue his dance practice. But as he says in his interview, he was to a certain degree flung out because he felt limited by the four walls of the dance studio, of the proscenium stage, of the black box. It wasn't so much about being out of San Francisco, but it was about being in contact, in relationality, with the wider world.

One of the things that Lynn Fels (2010) discusses is “hospitality” – who enters, and how do you greet the unexpected visitor? Gabriel has a beautiful sense of openness to the visitor. He could be quiet – he was more interested in depth than he was in superficial talk. It wasn’t surprising to me that he has integrated a sense of invitation to his practice – not only performing in public places, and inviting any passersby into the experience – but putting out “open calls” for performers in the area to participate.

I also find it interesting that he reached out to the more-than-human world as collaborators, building work from observing birds, and dolphins – reaching out for relationship with “companion species” (Haraway, 2008, 2016), while maintaining a reticence toward crossing boundaries with them (his reluctance to “hunting,” or searching for, the dolphins). To me again, this goes to the receptivity, the place of how we greet. I find reflections of this in Smith’s (2011) consideration of human/horse “co-domestication”:

> This common upwelling of life that enlivens inter-action and focuses the energy of another animate being offers us the impression of synergistic “intra-action” (Barad, 2007). More than just thinking of “withness” (Shotter, 2006) in terms of two beings interacting with one another in certain places and at certain times and afterwards going their essentially separate ways, there remains the impression that the human trainer and the horse have somehow been changed by the very manner of their mutually enlivening, energizing, focusing exchanges. The “intra-acting practices” of groundwork

> and liberty training illustrate expressively “how learning and adapting to being with each other is a form of co-shaping and co-domesticating of each other” (Maurstad, Davis, & Cowles, 2013, p. 324) (p. 7)

The reality of greeting him in our home changed the work. We were living and being together on that magical week a decade ago in the Sierras – eating food together, having him with my young daughter. Now he is a father himself – staying and practicing his work in one place, as opposed to being an itinerant choreographer. But we still share hospitality, a welcome, in and through weaving our lives together. Chris, Gabriel, and I have shared many meals many times together in San Francisco, in the Sierras, and hopefully in Italy next summer.

POROUS BODY AND EARTH

> Just like mind can never exist or function without the sensorial input of our physical body, so too is our understanding and transmission of meaning dependent on our environment. We could speak of another continuum, a loop without beginning or ending. Meaning arises not only through physical responses such as increased adrenalin, heart rate and blood pressure, pain or other signals from the nervous system but also through external sound waves, gestures, textual objects and technology. Quantum physicist David Bohm described this interconnection between body and environment in terms of ‘soma significance’. He underlined how meaning is derived from our environment, while equally our environment is a ‘somatic result’ of the meaning we attribute to it (Bohm 1985).
>
> – Eline Kieft, Dancing in the Muddy Temple (2022, pp. 121-122).

Looking back at the footage we shot, I got the sense that Gabriel was using his full body as an instrument for understanding his environment – whether it was the rock formation, the pool, or the water itself. There is a pervasive sense of measuring the bounds – the circumference of the pool, the height of the rock, the depth of the water. In his bodily embracing, tapping, touching, it’s as if he’s sounding out those places where his body can meet the earth, and in his exertion, it’s as if he’s sounding out his body’s limits in space. He is living in the “animal body,” the “primary instrument of all our knowing” (Abram, 2010, p.8). Perhaps “limits” is the wrong word – I don’t get the sense that he’s defining boundaries – those encounters with the physical materiality of the world feel more porous – a conception aligned with Adrian Harris:

> Like Bohm and Ingold, Adrian Harris too sees the local environment and the physical body as dynamically related, and any boundaries between them as porous. His enactive process model illustrates that "our being-in-the-world is bound up with the immediate environment and that embodied cognition draws upon that space as a source of material to think with" (Harris 2016: 144–5). (Kieft, 2022, p. 123)

This interchange between the body and the world also connects to the work of Vicki Kelly (2014), where she talks about the interrelationship between the planet and place as an indigenous scholar and as an artist – and what it means to entrain with the earth though art practice. For me, this is what Gabriel is awake to – what he discovered on the island and is still discovering moment to moment. He talks about not being political, which I think is interesting, because he often is very political in his ethics. I think what he is getting at is how he is ethically, ontologically, changing every moment – and being awake and responding in the moment, to what is most ethical within that moment. And this is very different from being ideologically centered. "Paying attention" to the world, somatically, implies a certain ethical relation to it:

> I shine my curiosity and experience empathy in my connections to others and the world I perceive; I cultivate these somatically (affectively) in dancing and performing with others and through an ethics of relational attentiveness. How I pay attention to the world in its multiplicity has ethical implications. In attending through performance, I can dance toward the earth with gratitude. (Fraleigh, 2018a, p. 14).

Another thing Gabriel's performance – and his ongoing underwater practice – brings into relief for me is that this aware, entangled co-creation with the world is not without risk. I've had my own experiences with risk – working with Elizabeth Streb[18], integrating circus arts and high-flying aerial improv in my own dance company, – as well as dealing with highly-charged social/political issues. Risk was an inherent part of my practice as both a choreographer and a dancer. This type of creativity is essential for co-imagining futures beyond what has been – the risk to be something different and unknown, and not controllable.

Risk foregrounds the questions: How do you show up? How do you be open, and remain open? bell hooks said to john powell, if you're going to bridge, you have to be willing to be walked on (powell, 2025). hooks was talking about bridging social

[18] Elizabeth Streb is a New York-based choreographer and performer, whose work projects an extreme physicality, embracing falls and collisions as part of dancing, with a daredevil ethos.

groups, but I think the metaphor can extend even further – a jumping-off point for bridging the more-than-human world.

You're creating a bridge with your body. You're risking yourself to bridge with others who are different. Acting on the desire to belong is a sort of risk-taking. At Tahoe and its surrounding environment, Gabriel created a clear, embodied image of that risk – sprinting up the rock formation, cartwheeling headlong down the hill. In his current practice, breath held, he is enveloped in an atmosphere of risk – which he had negotiated through long hours of study and training. In that enveloping atmosphere, in time that appears to be slowed down, he gives the impression of being unconstrained, weightless.

Chapter 5: Maggie Stack at Tahoe Meadows

Film link:

Figure 4: Maggie Stack
[Image Description: A dancer in black clothes is standing in the snow, with a ridge of bare willow branches emerging behind her. Her shirt is speckled with snow, and her dancing has churned up the snow behind her. Her head is turned to her right side, cradled in her bent right arm.]

Maggie Stack at Tahoe Meadows: Narrative

After working with Maggie on the short dance film for my comps, "Entanglements," I had the opportunity to work with her again on a piece for the Reno Dance Festival, which was later adapted into a section of the dance film for this dissertation. For the filming of "Entanglements," Maggie was very pregnant – the Reno Dance Festival would be her first performance as a professional dancer since the birth of her child – part of that often-fraught negotiation, for women artists, between their identities as mother and artist. Maggie co-produced the Festival with one of the other dancers who had appeared in "Entanglements," Erica Wilson – she also choreographed work for the festival, and performed in several pieces. Throughout the process, I could feel the tension in her – the pull of the home and the pull of the stage, each making its demands.

The piece I developed with her was called "Entangled Winter," and was partly a response to the extremely heavy winter we were experiencing at the time – by the end of the 2022-23 season, there was an accumulation of 723 inches, the second-highest recorded snowfall ever recorded in the area. In Reno, there were waves of accumulation and melting, and evidence of tree branches breaking off from under the weight of the snow, gathered by the sides of the road for pickup and disposal. But up at Lake Tahoe and Truckee, accumulation piled on accumulation – we had friends who had snow rising to their second-story windows. In the town of South Lake Tahoe, a supermarket roof collapsed. It felt relentless.

The elements of a score I suggested to Maggie were tied to the sense of weight and overwhelm that came from the snow. We started with expressions of playfulness, of joy in snowfall – then feeling overpowered, buried. We worked with spiraling motions, with vertical emergence. She worked her way up to a kind of vibratory intensity, finally spent, at the end, horizontal on the floor. She was a joy to work with – receptive to movement ideas, with a real ability to "drop down" into a feeling or expression. We rehearsed both in the studio and in her home.

Chris had taken footage of the snow coming down from under a streetlamp at a convenience store, when it was falling thick and slow in large flakes. He layered the footage over itself to create a gradually thickening blizzard, which we used as a

projection for the performance. Testing the projection in our living room at night, it turned our living room into the interior of a snow globe, with flakes gliding across the walls, furniture, and bookshelves. Also, as a test, he layered it over footage we shot of Maggie rehearsing in her living room – another way of invoking a sort of domestic snow globe – bringing into these spaces of warmth, comfort, and shelter a ghost-image of icy, accumulating precipitation.

That sense of the domestic bulwark against the elements being, ultimately, permeable – not being able to keep the outside, outside – was the emotional foundation of the piece. Maggie and I talked about this modern element of motherhood, thrown against the context of the ongoing and escalating climate catastrophe. That sense of being buried wasn't just about the snow – it was tied to the momentum of motherhood, pushing forward, trying to protect your child, bringing them into a world that feels increasingly inhospitable due to our impact on environmental equilibrium. How do you create family and community in the middle of an ongoing catastrophe? How do you shore up a feeling of "home" when the foundation seems to be eroding out from under you?

The performance itself went very well – Maggie entered the stage with fierce focus and energy.

In February, when the snow was thick on the ground, we went up near the Mount Rose Summit to bring some of the choreography into the "real," exposed winter landscape. We were taking advantage of a window of availability, both in an immediate and a more prolonged sense. In the immediate term, her children were set up with child care, so we could break out, grab some coffee, and head up the hill. In the more prolonged term, Maggie was going to attempt another pregnancy, at which point she would be more physically reserved. For the moment, she could push herself a bit, express herself with an abandon that was only concerned with herself. We parked at Tahoe Meadows and ventured a short distance into the area. It hadn't been hiked over yet – the snow was smooth and pristine, and as Maggie ventured into the landscape, she was marking it with fresh tracks. To enter the landscape, you had to leave a trace, evidence of your passage.

Maggie made her way toward a small hillock, a graceful protuberance smoothly rising from the plain – the snow having equalized all the little details of dirt, rock, and foliage lying underneath. Here Maggie encountered the first modifications to the choreography imposed by the particulars of the environment – the snow's surface was a fine, icy crust that broke under the weight of her boots, sending her feet down into powdery snow at variable depths. The swift traverse of her body across the stage couldn't be reproduced here. To move forward, she had to trudge with an up-and-down, stop-and-start determination. When she reached the center of the small hillock, she used it as a sort of platform and anchored herself there. She began kicking the snow and digging into it – she hadn't intended to repeat the sort of nest-making activity she did in her yard for our first dance-film for my comps, but it seemed the most sensible way to deal with the constraint of the snow.

Part of our strategy in filming has been to film movement with the drone, and then, when possible, to go back and film similar movement in close-up, so that in the edit, we have access to both senses of scale. With the iPhone model Chris had, close-ups have to be truly physically close up – within inches – and he told Maggie that, if she happened to kick or hit him, it was ok, he wouldn't take it personally. From my vantage point, outside of the frame, I was able to watch Maggie dancing, and Chris reacting to her – dodging, weaving, and at a couple of points falling through the crust of the snow and tumbling, and adjusting the shot from that suddenly low vantage point. It seemed to be truly a duet being performed, though the partner would be physically invisible, hidden on the other side of the camera.

Maggie Stack at Tahoe Meadows: Interview

Note: the text has been synthesized from two separate interviews

KH: Could you tell me about your dance practice?

MS: I'm a choreographer and producer. When I was five, I decided I was going to be a dancer. I never questioned that, which I think made it possible for me to dance, in a way, because I don't really believe in talent; I believe in choices. I think talent might just be the thing that we decide to do over and over again in life. For me, dance was just it. And I never faltered from that idea or path – or whatever you want to call it.

When I was five, my parents took me to the Pittsburgh Ballet. And I got a classical training at Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre. From there, I went on to an apprenticeship, then I got injured. I went to Skidmore College, where I had a newfound love for dance. They had other things that I was going to study, but I came back to dance because it's the one thing that I know and love – my greatest passion. I fell in love with this thing, “movement practice,” as opposed to just ballet.

Summer Lee Rhatigan from the Conservatory of Dance in San Francisco came out during my senior final semester. She became a mentor and invited me to come and study at the San Francisco Conservatory of Dance – and I left for San Francisco a week after graduating with a suitcase and a pillow, and I never looked back. She changed the way that I moved, so that I was able to fuse this deep understanding of ballet with modern and contemporary movement. She introduced me to everybody in the Bay, and I had this amazing decade-long experience of project work. I can't remember what year it was, but I got a job with ODC – I basically got the job that millions would die for, with health benefits and all of those things. I was able to have the experience of a real professional company for years.

And then I was injured in my neck and my spine – I still am [injured]. And I quit ODC because there were some unhealthy things going on there. I've been grateful for all of the professionalism they gave me. And I got married, traveled the world with my husband, came back to dance, and then moved to Reno for no particular reason – just space/time/family, and I dance here.

I'm a co-producer of the Reno Dance Festival. I teach at various locations in Reno, including UNR as a guest artist. I also guest artist at other places around the country, and I've done small projects with people here and there – with you, Erica Wilson, Cari Cunningham, a couple of Reno people – because we have a small community here, small but mighty.

Could you describe your response to the site-specific performances that we co-created and documented?

I'll rewind, if it's okay, to the first time we got to work together –with Chris, filming in my backyard when I was super pregnant. It was my second pregnancy. It was during COVID. I was very big, and we talked about building a nest. I got to crawl into my own backyard and see it in a new way. How do I move within my own space, build it up, and break it down?

Then we got to be in the studio [to work on a piece for the Reno Dance Festival]. There can be a hard line between studio work [and outdoor work] – you need a certain floor to do certain things that are super physical, especially when you want to try them, and you're my age, and you have injuries. It's not like when I was in my 20s, and I'd do backflips off chairs – I'd do anything – throw myself off of a cliff – and now I'm a lot safer with my body. I'm not trying to prove anything to anyone physically, as a dancer. So there was that experience in the studio and in creating, where I got to be physical and push some limits – but I didn't feel any pressure.

When we created the piece [for the festival] last year, we had so much snow – it was breaking records. In Tahoe, the snow was coming up to people's second floors. I was just wondering if you might talk about that –call out some of the things we were thinking about.

For me, as a dancer, that was the inspiration that I was given when asked to come up with movement material. It was really scary for all the people in Tahoe, with roofs caving in. We had a long discussion about the feeling of weight and the feeling of something being heavy. What does that feel like as I walk through space, and this imaginative side of entanglement? As an artist, you imagine things. We create something out of nothing.

For me, just the title, “Entangled Winter,” had so many somatic beautiful responses in my body. And then also, there were our spatial limits, right? [Rehearsing] in my house, I could only do so much physically. Then in the studio, we got to bust out and do things differently. You have to adapt to your environment. But this imaginative idea for “entangled winter” was what we started with. And then we got to experience it actually outdoors – you have to expect the unexpected, right? I had no idea what that would feel like until I went into it. That's why I love getting out into nature, because it's just completely unpredictable, and you have to go with the flow. That's part of being entangled, right?

Like you said, that particular winter was really, really heavy. So we ended the piece on stage with the weight of months of snow on top of me – and how can I move underneath that weight, which brought me down to the floor line on my back – completely pounded down. And then [in the meadows] it wasn't snowing, it was a gorgeous day – the snow was heavy at my feet. It was pulling me down to the earth, not on top of me. I actually didn't bring that feeling – it didn't really exist in that hour of that day with that weather.

Could you talk a little bit about your experience dancing in the snow in the meadows?

First of all, I think the Tahoe area is – at risk of sounding corny – one of the most beautiful places on earth. It's very easy to be inspired by being in that area. It's so pretty and big and vast – and sort of beyond human understanding. It's one of those awe-inspiring, jaw-dropping places. To dance in that place – I feel gratitude, and it feels like a privilege. And then how often do you get to intentionally go into nature and be like, “I'm going to make a dance. I'm going to do an art thing with two artists who are brilliant, who have camera technology to add to it, and thoughts of their own on what to do?” That in itself is so yummy – as I like to say as a teacher.

The elements themselves that day – [the snow] was crusty on top, but still soft in the middle. So when you dropped in, you didn't know how far you were going to drop in. It was like a glacier of untouched snow, which is magical. But there was also a little bit of fear dropping, because you don't know how deep it is. I'm small – what if it's taller than me? That's how people die, you know? The trudging through, movement-wise, adds a

whole challenge. I love challenges that I truly can't control, because I'm so controlled that it feels nice to just be like – “Well, um, can't move. Have to move somewhere else.” I remember feeling like my legs were stiff and then above the knees, being able to navigate, but not wanting to hurt myself – because I now have this rule where I don't really try to hurt myself, whereas in my twenties I was constantly trying to hurt myself.

And then the heaviness of getting stuck – you get stuck in the heaviness there at the bottom. It was unstable. Once I got the hang of it and stabilized, on top of it, I could be really crazy. If you want to dig – which was interesting, you had me dig a nest with the first video project, so it came poetically full circle in a way that I don't think you anticipated. Nor did I. [I didn’t think] “I'm going to dig a hole.” Walking, to me, can be a dance. Being forced to walk – sometimes it's hard to be forced to do a pedestrian thing, but that was beautiful. I remember the air on my face and the breeze in my hair – only a few cars going by, so the lack of city noise or extra noise is always beautiful, and really affects how you move when you have that space and freedom.

How was the cold?

The cold was fine. I'm desensitized to – I hate to say it on record –slight abuse as a dancer, because I've been asked to do crazy things, and in my 20s, I didn't realize that some of the things were like – don't do that. You could really hurt yourself. You guys would never ask me to do that. I've been asked to do way crazier things – and then realized – no, that's actually really bad.

I don't even remember the cold. My toes went numb, remember? That's a problem I have – poor circulation in my fingers and toes. Sometimes when they get cold, they turn white, and I can't feel them at all. And that happened a little bit. I was like, okay – time out. But I can dance with no toes.

[Horrified] Oh my God! Now, I believe that you were pregnant at the moment that we were up there. Or maybe it was right before. And I was interested in some of the imagery of the nest, and then you pulled in snow, like this little snow baby, into your body –you were playing with the snow, and you brought it into yourself. That compelled me – compelled by the digging and the nesting within the snow. Did that emerge from you? What were you feeling?

I remember I couldn't go very far because my feet were literally stuck. If I wanted to move a leg, I would have to pull it out and then put it back in – so I couldn't spatially tombé pas, you know? I couldn't move, and so for me it was like – where do you go from here? – as an exercise, or out of boredom, maybe? But more so, I wanted to play with the snow and make movement with the snow – I was kicking it and throwing it as well, and then also bringing it in, because I realized I ran out of snow – ran out of places to go – and so I had to bring it back in. So I don't think I was necessarily thinking about any particular grabbing or anything – but as soon as you said "keep digging," for both of us, it was like – nest, click.

If you're spending time in the studio and we develop movement there, and then we take it to the site-specific place, it's still entangled. That studio is still somewhat present in that practice, right? You show up in the meadow with 30 years or 33 years of practice as a dancer.

I'm never without my practice. I believe we're walking stories of ourselves. Because my identity and who I am are so entangled with being a dancer, I bring all of my technique and all of my practice [when I'm] fully embodied. When I hear you talk about Karen Barad, [I think] – how do I embody my true self, or my true soul? That's something that I will aspire to do every day. I think there's a longevity of dance and movement – if you can truly let your soul dance, your soul can dance forever. Your body may not be able to, or these other parts of you may not be able to. But in the moment I'm working currently, at my age, I have to bring all of the pieces of myself with me, and embody what is there.

I find that I move best when I'm not thinking. It's not improv – to me, improv is thinking very deeply. I'm really thinking about all the different ways my arrows can point. And in technique, I'm definitely thinking. When I'm choreographing, I'm thinking; when I'm teaching, I'm thinking. But what's beautiful about going into nature is – maybe I'm thinking – but I'm focused on something entirely different, and I'm just moving. I'm bringing all of those [trained] parts with me, so I don't know if I can truly embody my deepest self.

Often [I'm moved] in the most subtle of dance ways – I'll see, you know, a 99-year-old woman dance and I'm like – that is the shit. Or I'll see a kid dance and – that is

the coolest thing I've ever seen. I love professional dancers, I have respect for them – but it doesn't really resonate with me much anymore. So that idea of going out into nature adds an element that's completely unpredictable and completely without bounds, and we can't control it – and that's an easier way of finding that soulful embodied [self]… as an artist, I don't think I get there necessarily, but it's fun to try.

If I take you to any space and drop you in and say, "Here's the prompt," you are going to drop into a deeper place of entanglement with whatever that prompt is, whatever that space is. What are some of the things that allow you to do that?

What allows me to drop into that – I'll call it "movement investment," or "immediate investment" – whatever the prompt is, if you're asking me to move, that's never an empty ask. I can take so many things from that. I mean, I can start with my left toe, or I can start with my ear, and I'm immediately invested and committed. It's the one thing that I know how to do. Because that's how I relate to the world. The entanglement is always there to drop into.

I'm a very visual person. I remember the details – when I leave, I could paint this room exactly the way it is. As a dancer, I really use metaphors – visual metaphors – to get to where I'm going. For instance, at the top of the mountains – the horizon of the mountain, if you will – you can see the outline of a perfect Christmas pine tree at the very top. You can see all of them lined up; they're like little guys on the battlefield. I like to tell my dancers – imagine if they were moving. If you could see them move, how big would you have to be, how outrageous would you have to dance, to be the moving tree on that little horizon peak? That's a metaphor that I use when I want to feel really big.

One of the big tools is metaphor. Summer teaches a lot in metaphors, which is very helpful, because it takes you away from it being very technical – to this sort fun or interesting way that, to me, is more relatable. I can think about that longer than I can think about the true anatomy of my hip bone.

What are you doing if you don't call it "thinking" – or is it a different type of thinking?

For the Reno dance festival – that was the first time that I had performed since I was a mom. I'm in such a different place now, both in my body and in my life. It felt so weird. It felt both wonderful and joyous and lovely – and this has nothing to do with you – but also both really icky and weird. For the first time, I wasn't able to be free and totally myself on stage, because I'm not a free person. I'm a mom. I have two beings that were at home, both going through sleep regressions, and no matter what happened in that performance, that was more important.

All through my 20s as a professional dancer, all I had to think about was myself. I trained myself, I worked on myself. When I performed, I had nothing else to do but perform. And so it felt kind of weird. I told Perry – “I just don't know what happened.” I kind of blacked out. I don't know what happened, but it happened. I couldn't have told you what I did [on stage,] but I know I did everything.

It seems that being able to inhabit yourself and authentically communicate is essential as a dance artist and as a mover. Knowing your parameters is also essential. As a choreographer, I did ask people to do intense things, and then I would ask "Are you okay with that, and are you willing to do that?” I have always been very interested in the human being that was there. For me, being able to “with-ness,” as Barbara Bickel (2020) and Bracha Ettinger (2001) write about, is important. It's not just witnessing, you're entangling with compassion in relationality to the person. That is what creates safety; you have to be willing to be with whatever is emerging in that space.

I think aesthetically I'd be lying if I didn't say sometimes when I'm moving, I’m thinking about what it looks like, because but I'm also a visual artist. I've given up on feeling bad about that. Okay, I do want, I do want to look good, and I do want to make things look like something, even if it's not “good” – I also like the ugly and the dirty and to me that's the same thing. Making it look “good,” or making it look like anything, is the same thing.

I wasn't necessarily the right person to be in a repertory company, as much as I had all this training and I really wanted to make it. I don't think a repertory company was right for me. That's what ODC was, and that's fine. I didn't necessarily fully acknowledge that because it's a one in a million life-changing job. I was just like, “Oh, I can do

anything.” But I think I'm the worst at a repertory company, because it's basically replicating. It makes me think of what you talked about, with technique and replication. I'm actually a great technician, and I love replicating things. But they asked me to replicate were things that I wasn't necessarily interested in.

I want you to talk about being a dancer and a mom, and the continuum there – and how you're continuing your practice throughout motherhood. You are producing, you're teaching, you're performing, you're doing projects. Could you talk about what your experience of that is?

My current state is I feel like my body has been hijacked. I felt the same with my other two [pregnancies], too. I love kids, but I haven't had easy pregnancies. It was a beautiful thing going through pregnancy, and getting to do it one last time – I would always say, in this “cool” way, that I didn't care what other people thought about my body – I'm so cool with it. I didn't actually mean it. I thought I actually meant it, until I had my body fully hijacked, and I had to give my body up to a whole other natural thing that had nothing to do with me. You feel like shit. It's like this beautiful, wonderful thing – but part of me just has to give up on any sense of control. Which is a really awesome thing. It's the one great experience I've had out of it.

It's not great the way that your body is treated – it's just not fun. My other two pregnancies were horrible too, but then you get this beautiful child. So it's like: okay, who am I kidding? A – I'm not going to complain. And B – it's the one time that I'm like, fuck it, I can eat whatever I want, look however I want. I really truly don't care. That's so cool. And it's also sad.

When you go out into the environment you're relinquishing control of the flat floor and studio – you're not in the studio, you're reacting to things. I'm curious if there is a connection there, where you see the value in that. Both as a parent and as a mover.

It might be the most valuable lesson of my life, relinquishing control. It's really tough for me. I'm really controlled. I have control issues, for better or for worse. And so it's really, it's really, really tough. I still do a regimen every day, to keep myself in a certain amount of shape, even though I don't have to, right? To your point [about dancing in nature,] I love that kind of relinquishment of control – that to, to me, is artistry.

That's joyful, but it's also just me. It's just me in nature. It's different when it's me in the world. When it's me with other people, or when it's me and my kids – relinquishing control as a mother is so tough, because I have these other people involved. Ironically, if you try to control your kids, it makes it a lot harder to parent, right? But with my kids – I could really mess them up. I want them to be kind. “Do not hit. We do not hit” –and then when they hit again, what is my reaction? It's controlling because – you know, what the heck, man? Like, buddy, why are you doing crazy things? Every time you're afraid that your kid isn't going to learn.

I remember, at the Reno Dance Festival, feeling there was a lot of tension there, between you as a performer, and you as a mom.

I remember it was the first time that I had performed after becoming a mom. For the first time I was a mom performing, and so for the first time I was not alone performing, if that makes sense. It was almost this weird out of body experience that was totally different. I felt like a different human soul and body. I almost had a panic back because I was like – “I don't even want to do this.” All I could think about was the kids. Rocky had had a really rough day at school that day. He was throwing chairs or something. And I felt like a failure as a mom. That's all I could really think about, and I was like, “Why am I here? Why am I spending time on myself right now and dancing?” For the first time I realized like what a selfish thing being a performer is, in this weird way. I've been training my body, and it's been all about me becoming a dancer and what kind of imprint I was going to make on the art world, and what kind of dancer I was going to be, and in what company I have a resume about me and a headshot of my face – it's all about you.

Is movement performance for you? Is it awareness? Is it aliveness? What are you negotiating?

It's all of those things. I wish I had more time and more space, both figuratively and literally, to go to that place. But I think as a mother, I can't right now. I know that someday, if I'm lucky enough to live longer, Perry and I are going to travel the world again. I hope that I can, in any capacity, still move. I'll be damned if I can't take ballet class every single week for the rest of my life. Someday I can't wait to go back to the mountains of Nepal and just move with the wind for no one.

Maggie Stack at Tahoe Meadows: Diffractions

JOUISSANCE, TECHNIQUE AND LIVED PRACTICE AS A PORTAL OF THE EMBODIED IMAGINATION

> I, too, overflow; ... my body knows unheard-of songs.
> — Hélène Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976, p.76)

At first glance, Maggie's technique would lead you to believe it was a conduit for her jouissance in dancing (Cixous & Clement, 2008). However, this technique is an entanglement from her embodied relationality with the living world that predates her technical dance training. I will discuss later how her dance technique and practice contribute significantly to her embodied imagination on the stage, in site-specific dance performances, in communities, and family creation. For now, I would like to take a moment to remember where her love of the embodied experience began. In our interview, a moment that stood out to me was when she said, "I knew I wanted to dance as a young child, and that it was what I was going to do."

Maggie is fire. Her joy of embodiment is power. The joy of embodiment comes before her training and epistemic knowledge (this relates to Ben Spatz's (2015) framing of training and embodiment in What a Body Knows). Maggie can take a "stop moment" (Applebaum, 1995, Fels, 2015), reflect, and think through her embodiment of a moment in an instant. In rehearsal or site-specific improvs, you can say, "Yes, make that moment more *melting*." She can embody that movement again in iteration after iteration. Although Maggie identifies herself as a "talker," her primary knowledge/ontological practice is non-verbal. Her ability to take a linguistic prompt and translate it into motion and performance is superb. In her embodied expressiveness, I see her intelligence extended beyond the linguistic frame: "the parameters of language are not the parameters of knowing" (Ross, 2004).

Maggie's jouissance for dance was the fuel for engaging in dance training, something that, as Ben Spatz (2015) carefully shows, can be liberatory or oppressive within the realm of performance and the performative. Maggie described her dance technique as liberatory, a source of empowerment – which then became oppressive in

her work with professional dance companies. Shapiro, Hennessy, and others discuss the liberatory capacity of dance education and training, but also the trap of embodied dance practices when performed without a liberatory somatic lens (Hennessy, 2014; Shapiro, 2016). Splitting object and subject, and viewing humans as objects, is ubiquitous in our culture – continuing echoes of the Cartesian Imagination. It certainly is an ensconced aspect of dance training – its pervasive pedagogical impact is beyond the scope of this paper, but suffice it to say it lives on in dance studios across the United States and the Western world. When I was training as a dancer, I was identified as a dancer to be utilized by a choreographer. We now often refer to dancers as "dance artists," a partial linguistic corrective to that subservient model. Sherry Badger Shapiro (2016) talks about this kind of ethical repositioning in *Dance as Activism*:

> I shared with them that in South Africa, just as in the United States and in so many other countries, girls and women are often valued by their physical appearance, as an object. And, in the field of dance, bodies are often 'used' simply as an instrument of the choreographer. So here in this process, the dancer is valued not simply as a 'body,' but instead her experiences are valued, and this makes it possible for us to reposition ourselves in turns of power. (p. 29)

What is truly fascinating is how Maggie managed to retain her wholeness with her technique, deepening her practice and her availability to entangled imagination. She is deeply connected to the materiality of her own body, her children, other dancers, the world, and her community. As she says, she will dance for her whole life, and her embodied expansion of ontological and epistemic knowledge has much to offer the world, as does her capacity to drop down and access that mixture of technique and practice, as elucidated by Spatz (2015).

MOTHER DANCER

> The time-space and duration of pregnancy is the originary matrixial coemergence, but a similar transubjective coemergence can also be awakened in each contact. While connecting, we are also transconnecting.
>
> – Bracha L. Ettinger, (M)Other Re-spect: Maternal Subjectivity, the *Ready-made mother-monster* and The Ethics of Respecting (2010, p.7)

One area of particularly deep interest to me is what happens to us when we become mothers in this particular space of dance-making and art-making, this entanglement. Maggie discusses how much she invested in the individualized dance artist that she was. It was all about *her* development, *her* performance, *her* technique. This was a mythology – her entanglement with other bodies is what created the moments, but it was framed for her as the activity of an individual. And I would say she was objectified as a machine. It's interesting to me that our metaphors for the way that we talk about philosophy show up in the way that we interact, in the way that we can actually shift to embody and entangle and imagine better, as Blumenfield (2012) urges us to do, in the cultivation of "aesthetic consciousness": "a bodily imaginative, intuitive, cognitive practice for knowing the world around us" (p. 106).

Ettinger (2001) also suggests a different model, grounded in an understanding of our essential interconnectedness, connected to the co-becoming essence of motherhood – which is a co-emergent matrixial borderland space of imagination, of entangling with the human and more than human world. The womb space, the co-becoming between the child and the mother, is a way, a model, for imagining, embodying, and for creating dance.

Bracha Ettinger's "Matrixial Border Space" expands the Lacanian definition of subjectivity. Ettinger sees our ontological state as always being in relation to others in a shared place of co-becoming. The idea of the autonomous individual resonates with the Western Imagination of the artist as an individual, brilliant – and endlessly productive. It leaves little room for a mother artist. Maggie talked about all the time she invested in becoming the individual dancing artist, an artist who was sometimes mistreated in her youth, and not held as a relational co-becomer, but as a machine. Ettinger's idea of metamorphosis, which undoes the sharp edges of boundaries of self and others, allows the mother artist to continue to unfold and become an artist. The idea of the dancing body as a machine and tool has dire consequences for beings who dance. Matrixial theory, feminist New Materiality and performative and embodied inquiry emphasize the relational and co-transformative nature of embodied and lived experience. This opens space for the creative expression of the mother artist where connection and the entangled nature of becoming allows for healing and an act of stewardship (Badham, 2013; Bickel, 2012, 2022; Ettinger, 2004, 2006; Ghadim, 2020; Kaiser & Thiele, 2018;

Léonard, 2020). Maggie hadn't read Ettinger, but I felt her living the contradictions that Ettinger was trying to address. They were contradictions that I lived, as well.

Like Maggie, I also was a full-out, full-time choreographer and dance artist for a decade and a half, when I wanted to become a mother but was unable to, through years of miscarriages and infertility treatment. I would get up at seven o'clock in the morning, work as a consultant, take classes, teach, and then direct my own dance company and dance with others. It was a 15-hour day. It was long, grueling, and a passion, but it was certainly not sustainable. I thought that I needed to give up my dance career after I became a mother when illness and other challenges of motherhood struck – I thought that all of that intelligence, training, and practice had to go away, because I could not achieve what it was to be a dancer and choreographer in the traditional model of big cities, touring, constant grant writing – if you took a break, you were over.

Maggie also discussed this: she felt split when I put "Entangled Winter" on her, and she appeared on stage for the first time since becoming a mother. She said, "This doesn't feel meaningful to me. I should be with my children." And yet she brought so much to that performance (not only as a dancer, but as a mother – the depth and intensity of feeling she drew on was directly connected to her inner life, her inner being, as a mother). What do we lose when we imagine the artist as an individual, not part of a constellation or an entanglement? What do we lose when women are shut out of spaces and places because they cannot contribute their knowledge practices anymore, because they are not able to show up in the same way, but perhaps in a more fulsome way? Can we allow people to transform, transmute, become different, and still contribute outside the phallocentric model of artistic creation? I think that this is a huge component of the imagination, and a crucial framing for lifelong engagement with an art form.

I am different as an artist than I was before I was a mother. I care about different things. I want to show different things. I want to contribute in different ways, now that I have had the embodied experience of co-becoming and entangling with all sorts of limitations. I would say my compassion is deeper and wider. I would say my ability to be receptive, to see , and to allow is greater. I am more awake to stop moments where there are possibilities to try something different and go in a different direction.

Mothering or parenting are not particularly gendered. I think that the binary, as Ettinger (2010) discusses, is not true. It's not about binary categories. It's about co-becoming, and that doesn't mean ignoring maleness or gender in any form. It means expanding what can become in relationality and its attentiveness to relationality. Moreover – again, we circle back to Indigenous practices, to Cajete (2015, p. 292) in his view of education – his conception of how community and relationality are a spiral, not, in fact, a line.

EDUCATION LIBERATION

> To be an artist is to create forms, grounded in lived experience, which express knowledge and meaning – forms that will touch others. This is why I believe that these lessons are ones that we must teach young people who will be artists, arts educators, and audiences/arts supporters of the future, who will be creating the art we live *with* and the world we live *in*.
>
> – Susan W. Stinson, My Body/Myself: Lessons from Dance Education (2015, p. 165)

I'm glad that, as an extension of her life as a dancer, that Maggie is a dance teacher – the affection towards, and love for, her students is evident when she talks about them. I feel like her teaching gives her an opportunity to correct her own training – to treat young dancers in a different way than she was treated. This reminds me of the way generational trauma is often addressed – changing an abusive parent is usually an intractable endeavor, but you can be different with your own children, and take your lessons forward that way. When aesthetic practice and pedagogy aren't just about aesthetics, but are about relationality, it can be put "in service of Creation," as Bickel and Fisher (2022) explain, summarizing Ettinger:

> Bracha L. Ettinger's ethical ordering of things in the matrixial order is in contrast to the Phallic Order. She proposes we utilize creative practices and art-making in service of Creation, which includes a holarchy and hierarchy. For example, in the matrixial order, one first attunes to and develops aesthetic aspects, and second, integrates the aesthetic with ethical movement and actions, and finally, integrates both the aesthetic-ethical with inquiry for application to the political domain. This order is sacred. (p. 215)

One of the features of oppression is the lack of movement and bodily autonomy. As I write this, in 2024, my 14-year-old daughter has fewer rights to bodily autonomy in the USA than I did as a 14-year-old girl. I am someone who could have died from an ectopic pregnancy I experienced if I had not had emergency medical treatment to save my life from internal bleeding. Ectopic pregnancy is a leading cause of maternal death. It can feel like a contradiction to explore and embody the Matrixial sphere when the dominant culture is moving in the opposite direction.

However, that is only if we stay in the binary frame, instead of a state of co-becoming and place – whereas, as Haraway (1990) states, "one is too few, and two are too many" (p. 219). Because our oppression, more often than not, is situated in the body and confinement, a vast area of co-becoming as a source of deep epistemic and ontological knowledge has been unexplored. As my advisor and mentor Celeste Snowber said to me after a difficult medical time with my daughter – when our kids are not all right, we are not all right. This is true for me in my embodiment. I resonate with Sherry Shapiro's (2016) acknowledgment of "embodied existence" as a locus of relating to others, and ultimately, social action:

> I have been able to re-flesh the dancer to an embodied existence through a choreographic process that makes connections between feminist work and a liberatory pedagogy forming with activist intentions. With my students, we critically examined how we feel about; live in, with and through our own bodies. It is to be noted that, as women, it is in our bodies that we primarily experience who we are, and it is in our bodies that we struggle with issues of self-acceptance, affirmation, social action, and how we relate to other women. (p. 23)

I would listen to my daughter to see if she was having a seizure. I am still asking her "are you okay," all the time. They say this creates an insecurity in people living with epilepsy – constantly checking and asking if they are okay. But this attunement, tracking, and awakening to the fragility of another are in my body and hers. Learning to co-become whole while living with an unpredictable and still quite mysterious condition is a dance. Yes, you can climb the tree to this height; yes, you can ride a bike, yes you can walk around the mall with friends. I will be with you and create a meaningful life in this moment of entanglement – we will rest together, go to the water or the mountains, and create worlds. As Nell Noddings (1984) writes: "I receive the other into myself" (p. 30).

After my closest, oldest friend's son died tragically, I remembered that I was not keeping my daughter whole for the future, but for this moment. If you co-create art just for the moment of public performance, your work, in my experience, falls short; the entangled rehearsal space of tracking and attuning must be in the moment, full out, fully real now – now is alive. This need for focused awareness is even more heightened for the site-specific work. As Fraleigh (2015a) discusses, “Affect attunement, as interpersonal exchange with tactile-kinesthetic matching is a way of listening to the body and moving in harmony with another person.” (p. 78) Attuning to where the dancer is – are they safe? It is important to track the actual entanglement they are engaged with, not the improvisational score.

In both Bickel’s (2022) and Ettinger's (2001) work, the power of art to heal is always present. In fact, in many ways, I identify as a healer more than an artist at times, but there is no need to bifurcate the two. My daughter has taught me endurance in living in the unpredictable now and the need for healing in every moment.

Chapter 6: Anne-Lise Reusswig and Stacz Sadowski at The Presidio

Film link

Figure 5: Stacz Sadowski and Anne-Lise Reusswig
[Image Description: Two dancers stand straight, facing a building at the left edge of the frame. Behind them are some manicured bushes and a green lawn with long shadows cast by trees, some of them palm trees.]

Anne-Lise Reusswig and Stacz Sadowski at The Presidio: Narrative

We arranged to meet in the Presidio, where Anne was currently working at a Pilates studio. It is one of the areas in San Francisco that is open to drone use without prior clearance – though we found some ambiguity about that regulation (more on that later). Originally a Spanish fort built in 1776, it has had its longest tenure as a US Army headquarters, beginning in 1848 after its seizure by the US Military during the Mexican-American War and ending in 1991, when it housed units sent to Iraq during Operation Desert Storm. After that, it has been maintained and managed by a trust, in collaboration with the National Park Service. It was an assembly point for troops during the Philippine-American War, and headquarters of the WW2 Western Defense Command (the Civilian Exclusion Orders that sent Japanese-Americans to internment camps were signed there). Now the buildings are a mix of commercial and residential spaces, as well as museums and educational exhibition spaces. The grounds encompass a military cemetery, as well as a pet cemetery that memorializes the remains of deceased pets of military families that were stationed there.

The buildings and landscaping create an ordered, restful atmosphere – leaving one to contemplate the functional distance between an army barracks and a Pilates studio, for instance. Richard Henry Pratt, the architect of the Indian Boarding School system in America (his most famous quote, “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man,” succinctly summarizes his pedagogy of cultural erasure), died at the Letterman Army Hospital. In its place now stand offices for Industrial Light & Magic, Lucasfilm Games, and Lucasfilm Animation.

We began at the Civil War Parade Ground, a long rectangle of perfectly manicured grass flanked along one side by tall palm trees, and along the other by low Mission Revival Style buildings. The ground was perfectly flat and even, originally prepared for military parades and exercises. While Anne and Stacz were warming up, and Chris was setting up the drone, a park ranger came by and indicated that drone flights were not allowed. Chris pulled up a Presidio web page that stated the Civil War Parade Ground and the adjacent Main Parade Ground were open for drone flights. The ranger claimed the information was inaccurate, but indicated that he was about to go on his rounds, and would be out of the area for about 20 minutes. So after he departed, we quickly got to work.

This was the first and only instance where we were working with fairly structured choreography – Anna and Stacz had been developing a duet, which they had invited me to see some weeks earlier. The partnering was very relational – easy to read as an intense, but fractious entanglement. There were moments of need and desire – and also contempt and revulsion. Across the lawn, there were embraces, pursuits, and various moments of stasis where they faced each other, struck still as statues. At times, one would collapse, and the other would hold them up. It ended on a note of rupture – Anne making violent repositionings of Stacz's arms and torso, then turning and walking resolutely away from him. There was only time to do one pass with the drone, which Chris suspended in the air above them, the camera looking directly down. The footage highlighted their shadows as much as their bodies – stretched out on the textured canvas of the grass. Then Chris videoed a second run-through with his phone, weaving in and out of the choreography.

Afterward, Anne and Stacz performed some more improvisatory movement on a sidewalk at the edge of the parade ground, walking and stopping, engaging then disengaging with each other – like an old married couple, physical comfort and annoyance swapping places at the turn of a dime. They continued their improvisations at the arched wooden doors of one of the Mission Revival-style buildings. They walked up to the door and stood facing it, never looking directly at each other. Anne would reach out to Stacz, placing a hand on his back or shoulders, then Stacz would respond, leaning in to Anne – and then, after some back-and-forth, they would return to their separate stances, staring blankly ahead at the closed doors, just inches from their faces. After a few rounds of these interrupted intimacies, Anne again closed the performance with a gesture of abandonment, turning and walking off, leaving Stacz at his mute post, staring forward at the wood grain as if dumbstruck.

The last performance they improvised at the Presidio was in front of an Ordonez cannon, displayed to one side of the Parade Ground. It is a trophy of the Philippine-American War, captured from the Filipino insurrectionists during this early exercise in American imperial expansion, which led to the deaths of an estimated 200,000 Filipinos. The US established concentration camps and utilized torture in its colonial campaign – the canon itself was delivered to the Presidio grounds by William Randolph Hearst, whose newspapers propagandized in support of the war. Chris shot the improvisation through an almost-square hole cut into the metal support of the canon. The hole framed

the action a bit like an old-timey photograph. It's hard to imagine what scenes were visible through that frame over the course of the canon's existence, before it was converted to a silent piece of statuary.

Anne-Lise Reusswig and Stacz Sadowski at The Presidio: Interview

KH: Anna, would you talk a little bit about your impressions of the space on that day? I know that you work in the area, teaching Pilates. So you can talk about that relationality, too.

AR: I drive through that area every Saturday to go to work. So I'm really familiar with that area, but I don't usually go there to do anything. I just go through it to go to work. It's a kind of a passing through to get somewhere else. It's a very beautiful place, I just never had lot of time to explore it. So it was nice to explore it in that way.

There were moments of moving on the grass that were really lovely. It's always lovely to work outside and feel the sky above, and how infinite you feel reaching up, when you're reaching up to the sky. Interacting with the buildings and dancing in front of the buildings was more improvisational – more about interacting improvisationally with Stacz.

Our relationship has been such a long relationship, it's very easy to dive into improvisation with Stacz because I feel we speak a language without talking – through our bodies – because we've interacted for decades with our bodies. It's a really lovely, comfortable, exciting experience because we don't have to think about it. I don't have to think about it too much because there's so much structure, there's so much foundation [underneath it].

You spend so much time in your earlier career perfecting your craft, and when you get older, you realize that it's great to do that, but the real meat of it is the relationships that you build, and the connection that you have in those relationships, that create things that aren't perfect – but are so much more than perfect.

That's what we've been working with, and that's what we've been focusing on when we work together.

We really enjoyed what we brought into it – performing on the grass, which was a piece of a duet that we've been working on for a long time. We changed it quite a bit in the way we were dancing it, but also the way that we mentally approached it.

KH: I think one of the reasons why we chose to use that duet as a as a skeleton of an improv was that it is a practice that you're using – you're using some structure, and then you're moving away from that within the improv. I had a question about that. I call myself a choreographer, but I'm not really a choreographer so much as a facilitator of movement experiments that end up being formed or filmed. It's not about giving you steps. It's about giving you problems and then reflecting back to you. So if you could talk about that structure, my coming in, and then how we worked with it at the space, that would be great.

SS: I think it's methodology and philosophy. From the choreographer who wants everybody's pinkies to be exactly right, to the choreographer where you feel more like a facilitator – I think these are just processes and philosophies of choreography that all lead to the same end. What I felt when Anna and I got back together – we just felt, after our break and after we'd somewhat recovered – is that we just wanted to move again, and we'd like to dance for dance's sake to some extent. We did initially talk about performing a bit, and we did wind up performing a bit. Honestly, part of my motivation for performance was the validation I felt from it.

That validation was very motivating. It worked. But there was a certain point, after we did one or two performances, where I didn't really care about performing. I even told Anna – I'll perform, but I really don't care about it. Feeling the need to perform, to be validated – it was gone. And the end result was that the movement, the experiment, and the movement itself became interesting.

It's the same reason people dance at parties, I think. Some people dance at parties to show off, some people dance at parties just for the joy they have in dance. In some ways, that's all that was left for me – the fascination with movement and also what it means when you're no longer trying to impress people.

What it looked like did still matter, but only in the sense of communication, in the sense of expression.

KH: Talk about the time that we were working together – our entanglement and our practice. We were practicing from the early aughts till around 2008, 2009. We were almost at it full-time, rehearsing three days a week at least – and then

we'd have some epic intensives. We were also all performing on and off at different times with our collaborator Eric Kupers[19], the director of Dandelion Dance Theater.

SS: I was also doing theater on the side on top of that. It was a madhouse. First of all, we were working seven days a week at our regular jobs – and then our rehearsals. As you get older as you can't do it that much. That's only by the power of youthful vigor. At this age your body doesn't recover. When we did our dance piece three days in a row for an Eric Kupers performance recently, we were pooped. And it was just seven to 15 minutes of dancing!

That also changes how you look at things. Our work has also become quieter in the sense that we are no longer pushing for the experience that we developed in the first meeting. Part of the entanglement was that we met through your company, you invited me to perform, and you started pairing me up with various dancers, but Anna and I really clicked. So you put us together more because we had good energy when we danced together. And that made the possibility of the history [we developed together].

But after that, we both had to have a strong enough friendship or a strong enough interest in still moving together. We both reached a burnt-out point, where we stepped back from Dandelion – from accrued injuries, exhaustion, any number of things. That was about 10 years ago, right? Maybe a little more.

KH: More like 14.

AR: You stepped down first, I think. Then I had my back injury.

SS: I did not last very long after that. It was rough because I was in a pattern where I thought I was supposed to do this. And it was very unsatisfying, and being at rehearsals felt frustrating. Dance had run its course for me, which surprised me because I really thought I was going to dance, dance, dance, dance. I quickly came to terms with

[19] Eric Kupers is a professor of Theatre & Dance at CSU East Bay and co-founder, with Kimiko Guthrie, of Dandelion Dancetheater. His work focuses on the intersections of inclusive dance, music, storytelling, community ritual, and spiritual practice.

that – “I've danced. I've done a ton of dance. It's OK to stop. You don't have to be anything but yourself, and what you do doesn't always define you.”

But that experience is, I think, what developed the possibility of us reuniting again. We started to occasionally get in contact, just to say hi. And we just both wanted something more.

KH: Anna, could you talk a bit about that period of time when we were working together, and how that entanglement worked? It wasn't about one company or one vision, but it was about an entangled community of practice – and you both have talked about how that was the most dynamic time for you, creatively.

AR: Right. We started dancing together right after I got here from New York. I really didn't know many people in San Francisco, except for Eric, from college. Then we started working together. We had a close friendship, and your company, Element – we were all very close. For me, that's the most important part of the process, the relationship. It's not the movement.

Eric and I had known each other since college, and when I came back – we ran in the same circles, but we weren't super close. We became closer and it became a deep friendship, as well, that continues today. Stacz and you and all these other people became really dear friends for me. With Eric’s company, Dandelion, it was the same thing. The most satisfying work for me is the one where I feel close connections with people – I can then dive into vulnerability with my community, and it's about the community.

When I have an emotional connection, I feel the most connected to those people, and I can dive into my movement in a way that's much more satisfying. With a lot of other companies, it was very superficial; it was about the movement. It wasn't that I wasn't friendly with those people, but it wasn't a deep friendship. It wasn't a deep relationship. That's always been the most important thing for me – that I feel very deeply connected to people I'm moving with, which is why I think there have been these longstanding entanglements with you, Kristen, and Stacz and Eric, and other movers in that world.

After I stopped dancing, I reached out to Stacz when I was ready to move again, after my injury. I missed seeing him. I wanted to try to move again, but I also just missed my community. I felt like I had lost my family in a way. I had a new family, with my Pilates world, that I had to create after I couldn't dance.

Our friendship had always been in movement and so, of course, it made sense to keep moving together. And I always enjoyed moving with Staczy like so much. I think that reengaging our friendships through movement – before he moved physically away from California – allowed us to continue our important relationship as friends, long distance. I don't know if that would have been possible if we hadn't rebuilt that connection through our bodies. We had lost each other.

KH: When we were seeing people regularly – three days a week minimum, but most weeks it was more than that –it was both physical and emotional. The making of work is a very creative in-the-moment process that does end up on stage – but I almost think of it now, from this older perspective, like – we created all of that infrastructure of performing just so we could all get together and create and move together, and be physical and love each other, really. It's a tasty treat to see people do amazing things on stage with their youth and beauty and all of that – but it's not a satisfying dinner, like when I see really connected people and there's something really deep going on, and they're going to places that I haven't seen. That's satisfying in a different way, and that was the sort of thing I felt we engaged in, to some degree.

SS: Dancers can develop a physical intimacy that's very unusual. You get a degree of this with actors, and I'm sure musicians, but – I equated it to this – we are in a dance company, and it's strangely like we're each other's pets.

I say this because when you have a dog or a cat, you can unabashedly hug and snuggle and ruffle them without them getting too annoyed.

KH: They don't fight you.

SS: They don't get too annoyed. They're pretty happy with it. And it felt that same way – even in my most standoffish [moods], I still allowed a high degree of being poked, prodded, leaned on – and everything else.

So it's a very unusual relationship, in that there is a level of physical intimacy that doesn't naturally occur in other contexts. When you're in a dance company, and then to suddenly have that stop – it definitely would take a period of adjustment to get used to it. You're just physically intimate [in a way] that does not happen in any other realm.

I think we'd probably find martial artists and sports athletes, in some ways, are very similar to dancers in this respect. You're so used to being in your body, you get a certain sense of proprioception, a tactile sense of where things are. Like, when Anna's leaning on me, I can tell where her weight's shifting, where she's moving, and I adjust accordingly – I just take it for granted. In some instances, athletes are breaking that boundary and smashing into you, competitively and aggressively. You get a different sense of how you relate to people in dance. Sports are so competitive. With dance, I didn't feel like I was really competing with anybody I was dancing with. It was a collaborative effort, a mutually collaborative effort.

Catching people out of the air – which was more of what I did, lifting and catching people – I don't know why I always took such great satisfaction in that simple act. Sometimes, in my normal life, people could get a bit touchy with me, and it can quickly become uncomfortable – not creeping me out, but just annoying.

And for some reason, the relationship you develop in movement, working towards a goal together in the movement, changed that quality [in me]. So it was easier to connect with the people because of the artistic movement. Without that in context, I don't know how I would feel about getting in contact with everybody.

KH: I think the way that you were communicating with bodies [had to do with] safety, wasn't just like – "I'm going to catch you." I feel like you kept her safe in multiple dimensions. And I think she kept you safe in multiple dimensions.

SS: Thank you for bringing that up – you did make me realize there was a quality in all of us, as caregivers.

So, for example, it wasn't just catching Anna in the air – but it was also making sure she felt safe in the process of being caught. I think it's the movement, something about movement allows access to a higher experience. Dance offered the most unusual platonic intimacy you could have with a group of people, and nothing like it compares.

KH: We trusted each other in our deep animal bodies, because we took a lot of risks physically, and we spent a lot of time together, and there was a culture of care. The more interviews I've had, something that's emerged is this deeper level of interacting with the world, and [how it relates to] your unique neurobiology. It almost allows for a heightened level of it. What's interesting is that in the West, we've bifurcated higher consciousness from the animal body – but I feel like it's our animal bodies, and our attunement and our deep practices within our animal body, that allow us [access to] transcendence. We are completely entangled, and we're fully in our animal bodies. And I think that our "neurospiciness" has allowed those things to happen.

AR: What you're talking about – the "neurospiciness," which is for me, you know, being hyperactive and probably ADHD – I think I had difficulty connecting, and the only way that I could really calm myself was being physical. And when I was physical, and I was calmer, I was able to connect to people in a deeper way.

When I'm just sitting and having a conversation with people, it's more difficult for me to connect because my brain is very busy, and it's uncomfortable. I only really felt comfortable when I was moving. And so then, of course, if I'm only comfortable when I'm moving, it makes sense that I find my deeper connections through movement. It didn't really matter if I had Cunningham or I had ballet or I had Pilates.

It was more that it was a need to connect. I think the other aspect of what you guys were talking about – I think it's hard for people to understand what we're doing, and how it works. For example, when we did Eric's piece – it was a scripted piece that was about his childhood – and I had a duet with Julia Hollas that was very sexual. And my husband – he wasn't my husband then, we had started dating – he came and watched that duet, and it really triggered him because he couldn't understand that that didn't mean anything. He couldn't understand how I could connect with her in that way, that seemed so powerful and not be sexual. I think it's really interesting for people – we're special, in that we can connect so intimately, and it's not sexual.

KH: This is interesting to me because – is it that we can go into our sexual energy without actually acting out sexually? I don't think it was fake what you were doing with her. I just think that you were able to drop down, be there, be fully

present with her, and then not be in a sexual relationship with her. You were able to connect, you have access to your physicality, your psychological, emotional, spiritual self through this embodiment. Where, for most people, being sexual is the only area that we're allowed to be intimate and physical with each other, in this society.

AR: I think that it's something that's special about us, that we have that ability to be physical, but we also have the ability where it's not just about the physical. This isn't with all dancers. With certain dancers, you're able to not only do the physical movement, but you're also able to do the emotional movement. And that emotional journey doesn't necessarily have to mean what it looks like for you to go there.

When I used to dance with my boyfriend at the time, Eric, with Dandelion, it was really intense because we did have a relationship. But it was different – it was intense physically and emotionally when we danced on stage, but it wasn't like we were having sex on stage. It was still different. But I – for some reason – always felt like I could connect to people in a very deep, emotional way. And I don't think any training has anything to do with that. It's great to have training, and it's great to be able to do a pirouette, but it's a very different skill.

KH: Anne, you were very technically trained. But I think that there was something that connected your emotion, your emotional expression, to your ability to articulate. And I'm just going to push back a bit and say that I feel like your training allowed you to articulate in such a deep way. The things that you were feeling could be clearly communicated because you had an arsenal of training that allowed you to articulate things.

AR: I needed to move because I was so unhappy. And so I moved a lot because I was really unhappy. And because I moved a lot, I acquired a lot of technique. It was just a way of working out my brain, because I had no real tools to express all the sadness. 100% of my being was put into my dance, and I didn't have a lot of other things that engaged me – I wasn't interested in, you know, hanging out, or this or that. I acquired these skills, but it wasn't really to acquire them; it was to avoid being absolutely miserable all the time. And then I had the skills to express and articulate what was inside

better. And then as I was able to work through some of that over time, I was able to be not so miserable.

It was a way of processing my brain over decades, processing my brain out of the chaos of my childhood, and the ways that I was born, chemically – to have difficulty focusing, and have difficulty expressing, other than through moving my body. I was very shy for a very long time. I wasn't comfortable in my body until I started dancing. It was such a necessity that I dedicated my full being to it, and that because I dedicated my full being to it, because I had to – then I was able to do more with it.

KH: I think the difference between this work we're doing, and some of my earlier work is that in my earlier work I had visual ideas, and there was a lot of ideas around content. But the relationality is what it actually emerges from. The content created a container, but it was really what emerged from the relationship that made it. I love you guys.

SS: Let's be in touch.

AR: Yeah, take good care.

KH: Take good care. See you later.

Anne-Lise Reusswig and Stacz Sadowski at The Presidio: Diffractions

PAST PRESENCE

> The past is not present. 'Past' and 'future' are iteratively reconfigured and enfolded through the world's ongoing intra-activity. . . Phenomena are not located in space and time; rather, phenomena are material entanglements enfolded and threaded through the spacetimemattering of the universe.
>
> – Karen Barad (2010, p.261)

When I invited Stacz and Anne-Lise to work with me on this project, they were eager and seemed to understand the concept of the 'entangled imagination,' and the ideas of agential realism, performative inquiry and 'embodied inquiry' immediately. These were not just words to them but practices that described their lived experience. Now was a time to reflect on these deep research practices and knowledge created over 30 years of practice and co-emergence. They had been engaging in partner practice and choreography together and working with Eric Kupers. They are both very involved in teaching Pilates and other somatic healing modalities. They deeply valued continuing to dance and choreograph in their private practice together outside of conventional rehearsal and performance, and then when we got together, they said, it was nourishing and generative to reflect together. Anne stated, "We can come back together to heal." Performance had taught us how to engage our agency to co-create with each other in the more-than-human world to heal – Sondra Fraleigh indicates ways that somatic engagement fosters that process:

> When I became acquainted with somatic methods to cultivate performance and awareness, I saw something incredibly special. I could pay attention in the moment and explore various paths toward solutions of problems, whether they presented in my day-to-day life or in performance. How magical. I came to understand that people don't need to get stuck in one way of doing something; we can be the agents of our own self-learning and healing; we can change and grow, always. (2015a, p. 66)

Anne and Stacz had performed in my dance company for at least a decade, and then I took a break when I moved to Reno. Still, we continued working together, doing commissioned work with Dandelion Dancetheater and then working on a film with director Garry Mairs with Anne and bringing them for art residencies to the Reno area at

the University of Nevada, Reno. Our work was constantly morphing and changing, but the most intensive period was between 2000 and 2012.

We were in our late 30s towards the end of our time together in San Francisco, although we continued to collaborate and make art in many ways. When Anne expressed the idea of coming together to heal, it was a powerful concept that transcended time and space. It was a testament to the entangled generative power of our collaborative work. We were not only artistic collaborators, we were each other's family and friends. Holding each other through great loss, injury, and illness. As I write this, Anne-Lise is mourning the loss of her father, who passed last week, and Stacz and I care for our senior mothers. These threads are always present, and we have an ease that is physical, spiritual, and artistic. We can drop in and ground together, even on a Zoom call.

For me, my experience in performative inquiry (as articulated by Fels (2015b) and influenced by Applebaum's (1995) stop moments, and Arendt's (1961) conception of the Gap between past and future) was the practice Stacz and Anna engaged in through their embodied inquiry. In the Zoom rehearsals, even with that technical distance, we were able to feel moments that arrested our attention – heightened moments that caught us in their clutch. It's a quickening, a melting moment of meaning, and I would ask them: Could you dwell here longer? Can that be more staccato, quick, or slow? They would iterate in finer and finer expressions, and awaken an aligned, entangled consciousness of co-creation. This practice is alive throughout all the varied approaches utilized between dancers, choreographers, and artists – a community of performative and embodied inquiry in the entangled imaginative field of possible moments. It is a generative space of new imaginaries.

I read a meme on the internet about how neoliberal authoritarian capitalism wants us to think of capitalist innovations, but doesn't want us to imagine possible alternatives. Maxine Greene (1995) tells us that art teaches us to imagine that things could be different, and Eisner (2002) allows us to have agency over our imagination. Snowber (2016) implores us to let the body out, so our imagination is fully lived and expressed. In *Undoing the Demos*, Wendy Brown (2015) lets us know how seeing ourselves as individual products, and not embodied entangled beings, keeps us a brand and dismisses our agency. Fels' (2011) concept of performative inquiry calls our

attention to the moment where we are human and connected – and have choice in how we move through a moment that ripples across both past and future.

PARTNERS, PAST AND PRESENCE

> [R]hythmicity [is] an essential communicative dimension… [R]hythmicity is the dimension of tangible affectivity wherein self and other do not stand apart distinctly and differently but meet, match, and merge with one another in motional responsiveness.
>
> – Lloyd and Smith (2024, p. 176)

I was really interested in thinking about entanglement through the lens of partnering, and a lot of the work we had done in the past was built out of partnering practices (this is also true of the work they did with other companies – they were often paired together, as sympatico movers). Through Element, we leaned into both contact improv and set choreography (using them to inform each other) and did a lot of work to develop the kind of safety needed – physically, emotionally, spiritually, psychologically – which Stacz and Anna had built over time.

Creating that level of safety creates in turn a sort of intimate relationship that is physical – it's hard to think of other practices where you're so deeply tied, physically and intimately, responsive to the soma of your partner – than in these sorts of dance practices. As adults, in Western culture, and in the United States in particular, people don't have contexts to be physically intimate in such a deep, profound way, without it being a sexualized space. So much of our physical activity is narrowed into certain types of relationships – dance provides an avenue for a physically trusting, incredibly somatic, sensitive space of co-collaboration.

I found the article "Salsa Rhythms and Soul Connections," by Rebecca Lloyd and Stephen Smith, to be insightful in this area. Though the article focuses on Salsa dance, its insights range through all dance forms that engage partnering. The authors use the term "Reflexive Motional Inquiry" to describe "motile conversation" that extends beyond simple nonverbal communication. What arises is far deeper, and more transcendent,

than mastering dance movement. The authors frame “motile conversation” as crucial to the development of the self, which emerges from relational processes: They reference Kenneth Gergen (2021) who posits personhood as a fundamentally relational development: "It is out of relational process that what we call the person takes form." (2021, p.22)

This sort of embodied conversation and attunement is what I see when I see Anna and Stacz dancing. When they are in relation to each other, they become more themselves.

MOVEMENT OF THE BODY TOWARDS WELL-BEING

> Copoiesis takes place while creating through fragilizing the self to the unknown other, awakening the self and other by virtue of sharing. Through [Ettinger’s] articulation of the matrixial gaze, as a compassionate gaze that welcomes the other, we are thus offered the occasion for seduction into life. Matrixial theory restored my prior understandings of what art and artworks create.
>
> – Barbara Bickel (2020, p. 8)

It is a short distance between relational processes and the act and art of healing. Many people require, for our own health and sanity, the proprioceptic feedback that comes from intimacy and trust – and dare I say love – between people over a long period of time. This is something of a charged territory, with the heightened awareness of all the problems that can come with it – with the increased consciousness that has come as a result of the #metoo movement, and increased scrutiny about harassment.

Today, there’s more awareness of good boundaries and how they can be upheld to create genuine safety. In the early 2000s, we were working with these concepts, but not as explicitly. Stacz, Anne and I were lucky in that we were open to express what we were comfortable with, and not comfortable with – in order to go deep, and create the level of trust that was necessary to do the kind of work that we were doing. The ability that we collectively developed, to be able to situate oneself in the moment and to be able to iterate relationally across a lifetime – and to articulate that in a really physical way – was palpable on the day that we did the piece at the Presidio.

They danced with an *awareness*, in the way Daria Halprin (2014) uses the word:

> When we move with awareness, and when we move with the intention to express, release and transform our experiences and perceptions, then movement will change us. This is its inherent nature. (p. 97)

Repair is encoded in this co-created action. Dance becomes both a metaphor for, and an enaction of healing – the movement is directed to a "shift toward health," as Fraleigh (2018) writes:

> Healing is discernible change or movement of the body towards well-being, a kind of 'righting' dance the body does for us, one we can access, when we pay attention to the insights of silence in consciousness and allow the body to shift towards Health. (p. 36)

The healing aspect of what we were doing is particularly interesting to me, because it wasn't something we explicitly addressed beforehand. Anne alluded to this healing element in the interview, looking retrospectively back, alluding to the idea that we may not have been conscious of it. Still, we were coming together for this deep, intimate work of healing each other. And looking even farther back into our history of collaboration and performance, it perhaps unlocks a truth about what we were doing, beyond dancing together – we were in fact entangling in, and co-creating in, an imaginative landscape, where we had deep intimacy and trust in the art creation process, articulated through an intense physicality.

In our early years, we were deeply immersed in dance and performance, rehearsing and studying full-time in addition to working the jobs that sustained us. We were intensive makers of work; our identity was that of artist/dancer, but we were also deeply involved in healing modalities, which were integral to the Bay Area dance community. It was profoundly embedded in the art ecosystem there. We practiced many somatic modalities – I taught GYROTONIC®, studied Feldenkrais through Augusta Moore's Ballet Class, I studied Yoga with Sri Louise[20]. Many of my colleagues and professors studied with Anna Halprin, and I continued exploring BMC with Bonnie

[20] GYROTONIC®, or the GYROTONIC EXPANSION SYSTEM®, was developed by Juliu Horvath. It is a method uses specialized equipment to support the entire person through opening energentic pathways by stimulating the nervous system, and increasing range of movement, strength and flow. Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais invented the Feldenkrais Method. The method utilizes gentle movement, engaging and focusing individuals in a discovery process to find ease in living and movement.

Banbridge Cohen. Later, Stacz and Anne both taught Pilates[21]. Many choreographers were practitioners and healers as well as being dancer/artists, and ritual was integral to many practices and performances, most notably Sara Shelton Mann, Anna Halprin and Eric Kupers[22]. We worked extensively in contact improvisation and somatic studies, so we were all part of a sort of collective art-making and healing community. This braiding of dance and somatic practice has a history of insightful scholarship that explores the historical, cultural, ecological, and educational dimensions of this entanglement (Eddy, 2002, 2009, 2016; Fraleigh, 2018a, 2018b; Fraleigh and Williamson, 2018; Kieft, 2022; Ross, 2007; Weber, 2009, 2019; Whatley et al., 2014).

So Anne, Stacz and I have always been conscious of an entwined, entangled practice of dancing and healing. But time has shifted the balance – or at least the consciousness – of that entanglement. At this stage of our lives, we've all met obstacles, dealt with injuries, and had to reconfigure the motives and meanings of performance. We've all had various retreats and reacquaintances with performing, and on each return, I think, it brings greater focus on the core of what we are doing – as Miranda Tufnell (20177) writes:

> Perhaps the most important aspect of what movement and creative expression can do is to reconnect people with what they love and has mattered to them in their lives. (p. 5)

In the interview, I was moved by Anne's assessment of her relationship to technique. Barbara Bickel (2020), considering the relationship between gift and discipline, writes:

> Art understood as a relational encounter with life can lead to the gift of compassion in the presence of trauma, not limited to those professionally trained in art. Art is foremost a birthright we have access to at any time we choose. Art then calls us to develop disciplined practices to acquire technical skills and abilities to express spirits' gift. (p. 5)

---

[21]Pilates utilizes specialized equipment designed by Joseph Pilates to engage the mind-body connection, fostering core strength, body alignment, and overall strength and flexibility through a series of coordinated movements and breathwork.

[22] Sara Shelton Mann has been a dancer and choreographer for over 50 years. From 1979 to 1996, she directed Contraband, a San Francisco-based company known for immersive performances. Her work is collaborative and interdisciplinary, focusing on improvisational movement scores and theatrical experimentation. Anna Halprin (1920-2021) founded the San Francisco Dancers' Workshop, and was a key figure in American postmodern dance, known for her experimental approach and challenging of modern dance conventions.

For Anne – and I relate to this myself – technique is almost an aftereffect of something more fundamental: it's a tool to regulate oneself, and salve the discomfort (and outright pain) that can result from the basic conditions of inhabiting the world.

SOMATICS AND SOCIUS

> Dance is still widely regarded as a vital tool for healing, transformation, connection, celebration and storytelling, especially among Indigenous cultures whose dance traditions are central to their ways of being and knowing (Eves 2004; Keeney and Keeney 2013; LaMothe 2015; Vinesett et al. 2015; Tangen 2016; Escobar and Quintero 2016). For such cultures, dance is not simply a casual recreational activity but rather a core pillar of one's spirituality and identity, both of which give meaning to life.
>
> – Brittany Laidlaw (2021, p.96)

Another thing the interview with Anne and Stacz underlined for me was how porous, and mutually energizing, our dance community was. We were all part of a mix of cross-cultural knowledge creation, involved in a web of interconnectedness. Anne and Stacz discussed at our early meeting that it was one of the most vibrant times of their careers, because we were working with each other and with Eric's Dandelion Dancetheater full-time, sharing shows, touring together, in deep relationality and constant co-creation. Eric made me a better performer and director. Anne-Lise was an exceptional technician and teacher, who was equally a choreographic artist in her own right. I had the vision, the inquiry and ability to work with many artists interdiciplinarily. We rehearsed and sometimes toured together – traveling to New York with Dandelion Dancetheater's production *Night Marsh*, and to UC Davis and LA. This was also the time when I was working with some of the other dancers that have shown up in this dissertation work – Gabriel Forestieri worked with the two of us, and Maurya Kerr (profiled in the following chapter) worked in some of our early works, and also worked on a film project with myself and Anne. This sort of cross fertilization and knowledge creation was something that naturally occurred in our time together, and there was a deep abiding intimacy in the way that we worked. We weren't neighbors, we were a "socius," as Michael Hayes (Hayes, Sameshima & Watson, 2015) outlines it:

> These individuals and groups work to generate forms of living within their own communities. Moreover, they engender certain qualities like situating their work in a particular place but always exerting a global consciousness. They live lives and conduct work that is for the purpose of building a socius that is infused with the values of community, hope, and possibility. Friendship, love, beauty, and compassion are the values that drive their work and my imagination of them. To call them citizens or global citizens does not capture the depth, beauty, and social force of their work and their lives. (p. 44)

My choreographic style was one of deep collaboration, where I would sometimes provide prompts, ideas, or movement phrases. Still, there was latitude for people to co-create in the arena of our rehearsal space. I was often told that I was the “big picture” person – holding the three-ring circus together in cross-collaboration. Eric also had this sort of vision, a way of being that allowed people to have a voice, although it had a different inflection – we both had our own styles. We were very interested in each other's work and deeply supportive of each other. We were both interested in Idoing more than “putting on a show” – we were interested in engaging with movement as a method for creating community, for coming together to collectively make sense of our lives.

And beyond us, connected by performers and performance spaces and interlocking affinities, we were part of an expansive network of dance companies and people exploring dance theatre and performance art, site-specific dance, contact improv, ballet, and modern dance, and they were all moving together in what Barad calls the thick seed of now – a fertile garden of knowledge creation and the active embodied entangled imagination. This knowledge was co-created, emergent, and shared across a web of relationality. The personal, the performative, the political, and the community activism were all agential fractals diffracting in what we called the San Francisco/By Area dance community.

VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE ENVIRONMENTS

> At the root of site-specific dance, there rests a judicious mixture of dissatisfaction and curiosity – dissatisfaction in the limitations of the proscenium stage and a deep curiosity about the possibilities in reframing the body in alternative contexts.
>
> – Melanie Kloetzel (2019, p. 28)

I'll close this section with a few words in relation to the site of the performance – the Presidio in San Francisco. We chose it partly as a matter of convenience – because Anne works on the grounds, and it's one of the few places within San Francisco city limits where drones can be used without going through a burdensome permission process. That said, the Presidio is a potent, powerful place. It's a central focal point for the United States' extension of military empire – as mentioned in the narrative section, a place of training and coordination for the US Army from 1848 through 1991. Since then, it has been managed by a Trust and by the National Park Service, as an area of recreation, historical remembrance, and use by private companies. The well-manicured grass rectangle where Anne and Stacz danced was the Civil War Parade Ground, where soldiers marched and trained. The Presidio as a whole stands on the unceded territory of the Ramaytush Ohlone peoples.

In contrast to the other places we arranged for the dancers, this was a very bounded, "tamed" space. There were no negotiations of surface or safety in the prior places, where the unevenness of the ground, or environmental elements such as water or snow had to be taken into account. The greatest negotiation with the "environment," as it were, had to do with the human management of the space – when we were told the Presidio's website was incorrect, and there were restrictions on drone usage, so we had to get the drone in the air between rounds of inspection by park workers. The element of the environment that loomed largest, perhaps, was immaterial – its history. Despite the museums and the collection of historic canons on the grounds, it was a history that has been resolutely pacified. A seat of war planning is now a place for picnics and recreation. Victoria Hunter (2015) writes eloquently about the ways the history of sites can inform movement within them:

> Through a process of existing in the space, becoming present and receptive to the phenomenological essences contained within the site the individual absorbs and intuits the site at a fundamental level. Disused or abandoned sites, however, inevitably carry with them a sense of the past pertaining to the lives of the previous occupants or the former usage of the site. These resonances may be informed by factual information discovered through pre-production research (as in the Beneath project) and by architectural and functional components remaining in situ. The lived space of place then becomes informed by the individuals' awareness and presence in the space in the here and now combined and negotiated with an awareness of the past. (p. 98).

The duet Anne and Stacz performed wasn't frontally directed at the history of that space – but it's impossible for that presence not to influence it in some way, or to inform my reading of the movement (and in fact it influenced my choice of score for the finished film, which drew on recordings by military bands). They appeared to be negotiating something very personal and intimate on the surface of that tamed history – and the inflections of desire and conflict, the outbursts of intimate violence (Anne rudely repositioning Stacz's body, pushing away his head in hard rejection), seemed to carry a wider significance than some personal conflict between two people. The moments when they stood "at attention," in stillness on the lawn, inevitably recalled the stillness of soldiers called to attention.

That sense of riding upon an echo recalled, for me, a piece we had all worked on together in 2008, called The Mapping Project. It was a collaborative piece, this time in pairing with the dance company Navarette X Kajiyama[23]. It was a piece where we worked with dancers to connect to the experiences of their grandparents in World War II, and contemporary immigration across the US/Mexican border. Anne's grandparents had emigrated from Germany to Canada (her father still had PTSD from surviving a bombing in Germany). Both my grandfather, and Stacz's grandfather, had fought in the Pacific Theater. We also worked with a dancer whose family was of Jewish descent, who had fled Russia for the US; we had a dancer of Japanese descent, whose family had known people who survived the bombing of Hiroshima; and we also worked with a dancer whose Chinese grandparents had survived abuse at a Japanese internment camp. To some degree, this was happenstance, a result of our web of relations in the Bay Area – we hadn't put out a casting call to represent all these sides of the conflict, where nearly everyone's grandparents had been, in terms of national conflict, at war with each other. And yet here we were, the descendants of mortal enemies, coming together in collaboration, to dance together.

And not just to dance, to but understand, to some degree, how we had all arrived at this place and this moment. I would say that, for me, we never reach this place of

[23] Founded by José Ome Navarrete Mazatl and Debby Kajiyama, Navarette X Kajiyama (also known as NAKA) is an experimental performance group, involving collaboration with several communities, including the Latinx transgender community, Bay Area-rooted Mexican-American and Japanese-American communities, and San Francisco's community of Argentine Tango dancers.

perfect healing – but it's a way of co-becoming. The more that we can bring our whole selves to that experience ("place" in its social, relational, political, environmental, historical and spiritual dimensions), we enmesh ourselves in a web of being and knowing. The performance was, in large part, exploratory – asking that place what it might bring to those movements and relations – to haunt them, to infuse them with its "presence," as Melanie Kloetzel (2019), in "From Recontextualization to Protest: 50 Years of Dance Practice in North America" would have it:

> [S]ite was no longer a mere background or frame that became noteworthy through the powers of art. Rather, site had become a singular place that could facilitate an egalitarian exchange between humans and the environment, offering both a new frame for the dancing body and a fertile and layered ground that would infuse the work with its presence. (p. 29)

In all honesty, I feel I have yet to really unpack or unwind the echoes that I felt in the Presidio, and in that performance – both as co-collaborators with a long history together, and also as citizens of this country and that place. It is an infused moment that I will continue to think about and return to, to ask more questions, and follow its echoes. It has already been placed, in my mind and my history of self, as an act of healing. I don't know how far that energy of healing extends itself – it's easy to think, on that pacific lawn, that it is in tune with some sort of reclamation, or retreat from harm – military bases turned to peaceful lawns, as swords are beaten into ploughshares. But I'm aware that the mobilizations of force and colonization haven't disappeared – they've been redistributed, and moved elsewhere.

Chapter 7: Maurya Kerr at Joaquin Miller Park

Film link

Figure 6: Maurya Kerr
[Image Description: A dancer stands in a green and wooded area, wearing a black sleeveless shirt. In the immediate foreground is her fist, pointing downward. Her head is tilted to the side, and her eyes are directed toward her fist. Her expression is neutral and calm.]

Maurya Kerr at Joaquin Miller Park: Narrative

I have known Maurya for 27 years. She is a stunning dancer and human, and our entanglement has always been intense and vivid – many of these entanglements were diffractive and seemed to exist outside our usual ideas of time and space. I met Maurya at the San Francisco Dance Center, where Alonzo King LINES Ballet had its home, and Maurya was a dancer. We both studied and taught GYROTONIC® at White Cloud San Francisco. I had recently graduated from Stanford and started a postmodern dance company with a group of dancers from the same program. I invited Maurya to dance in our first evening-length show. My first performance showed my greenness as a choreographer and dance artist, but the ideas were interesting to her. Maurya was deeply curious and generously supportive of my work. Many seasoned professionals would have looked down their noses at my fledgling work, and many did. But as Maurya discussed, putting effort into things in the material realm reaps the rewards and creates diffraction across time and space. I will say that my willingness to embody passion and engage in rigorous practice attracted many incredible artists into my orbit.

For some reason, Maurya and my family's timespacemattering is deeply felt and expressed. Maurya and I didn't see each other very frequently outside of rehearsals. Still, there were certain points of contact, having to do with Callie, that were profound and intense – and the two share a certain demographic history, as light-skinned Black girls adopted into white families. One point of contact involved a three-legged cat named Luka, who played a part in bringing Callie to our family. Luka showed up on Maurya's doorstep as a kitten, on a rainy night – he had a congenital disability that rendered one of his hind legs footless, looking something like a fuzzy chicken wing, the leg ending in a small bald point that was prone to cuts and abrasions (it was later removed surgically by the veterinarian). As Maurya relates in our interview, she has always had a strong impulse to care for abandoned animals – at the time, she wasn't allowed to have another cat at her apartment, and she reached out to me to see if I would adopt Luka. Chris and I had recently lost our previous cat to a brain tumor, and were a bit reluctant to "replace" him with another cat. Still, we drove over to Maurya's apartment, and were immediately taken by the diminutive, lopsided kitten, and took him in.

Later, when Chris and I were preparing to adopt, one of the tasks at the adoption agency was to create a photo album with pictures of ourselves, our home, and our

family. The album was made available to mothers creating an adoption plan, so they could get a sense of the adoptive family, and see if they could visualize their child being raised in their home. Callie's birth mother remarked to us that one of the reasons she chose us was the picture of Luka – something about our care for the beautiful, three-legged creature made it possible for her to imagine we'd take good care of Callie. Adoption was linked to adoption.

The other intense intersection between Maurya and Callie was a tonic-clonic seizure Callie had while we were visiting Maurya at a GYROTONIC® studio in San Francisco. Callie was four or five – it was the first time we took her to the city, where she could walk. The studio was downtown, and I remember feeling somewhat overwhelmed among the pedestrians on the sidewalk. I had found San Francisco to be a pretty manageable city when I lived there, but I think I was vicariously feeling some of Callie's reaction to the bustle – all the tall people going this way and that, in an ever-flowing crowd.

We entered the studio, Chris holding Callie's hand outside the door where we were to meet Maurya, and the moment Maurya opened the door, Chris felt a tug on his arm, as Callie lapsed into unconsciousness, arcing floorward, spinning gently in Chris's grip until she was horizontal. We attended to her and brought her into one of the empty massage rooms in the building, where we laid her on a table until the seizure passed. We were anxious, watching her eyes move restlessly under her closed eyelids, waiting for her to return. After she came to, Maurya told us, "You guys were remarkably calm." Chris replied: "Believe me, if it had been helpful to freak out, we would have freaked out."

slow dark dances in Berkeley

Maurya choreographed (or "curated") the performance *slow dark dances*, which I had the chance to see in February 2024, in an iteration that was staged as part of the conference *Imagining Beyond Authoritarianism: Race and Gender in Our Times*, organized by The UC Berkeley Center for Interdisciplinary Critical Inquiry, the International Consortium of Critical Theory Programs, and the Berkeley Art Museum and

Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA). In various museum spaces at BAMPFA, Black dancers slowly danced together, swaying from side to side and holding each other.

When Maurya posted about the conference, I was ecstatic, as embodiment, imagination, and how we dream beyond and together are among the core investigations of this dissertation. Many of the scholars at the conference were ones I had studied, so I immediately made arrangements to attend the conference and participate. When I entered the space, I was immediately moved by the young Black dancers slowly moving within the museum. My visceral response to the softness, intimacy, care, and beauty was a sensation of melting, the way that I feel when I had my Black daughter. Instead of bracing myself in my body, and fight, flight, or freeze, against the threat, racism and gender pose against my child and me, there was a softening. Entering the conference where the speakers were, I took a seat in the front row, where many intellectual luminaries would follow. But I had passed through the liminal zone of softening, so my heart was opened, and my breath was a little calmer. I'm always a little tighter in my breath, walk, and verticality when I'm in urban environments. The conference talks I attended were brilliant in many ways, as people discussed their practices, interventions, and theories.

The dancers were dancing all day during the conference, at different locations in the museum – I saw them in an open space at the bottom of a long stairwell. Built-in chairs were around the perimeter. There was no music – and perhaps ten dancers moving in the space. At times, dancers asked people in the audience if they wanted to dance with them as partners – as Maurya said in our interview, many declined.

Some of the intellectuals speaking had a discussion in earshot, during which they expressed some fear and reluctance to participate in the invited dancing. I was immediately invited by a young woman whose smile, openness, and tenderness made me want to weep. This melting sensation throughout my body, the tenderness I feel in my intimate relationship with Blackness, to be expressed tenderly and publicly, was almost a flooding feeling. We swayed slowly, both of our arms around each other, and our heads almost touching, resting on each other's shoulders. I can still feel this as I write this. There was a dropping down, a shared breath and a vibration of love in the body. The weeping sensation was a liminal moment of love in terms of how we embody imaginal futures. When we disengaged or finished, we nodded and smiled. I felt like I

had received an incredibly generous gift. It was also performance as an interruption of form, per Lynn Fels (2011): “Knowing that form is embodied action, simultaneously suspect, and accountable, and that we may through its interruption, reshaping and/or destruction come to new understanding, invites us to identify performance as a generative action-space of inquiry and learning.” (p. 340)

As the interview discusses, I did hold back my tears, creating tension in my eyes and throat. I caught Maurya’s eyes – we hadn’t seen each other since before the pandemic. We immediately embraced. I thanked her and told her it was spectacular, and she thanked me for coming. I did tell her that I didn’t want to take her out of the moment by catching up, but I think my stepping back was also part of the flooding of overwhelm I was experiencing. I left after watching for a few more minutes, and I didn’t see any of the conference presenters attending. This level of embodied imagination and tenderness can be a great risk to perform. The cartesian cudgel still splits the heart, mind, viscera, guts, organs and flesh. As I left the area, my parting image was of people watching from above, at the top of the stairs, afraid to descend.

The Performance: Joaquin Miller Park

For her section of the thesis film, we selected Joaquin Miller Park in Oakland as the location. It’s one of the few places in Oakland open to drone flights without prior authorization, and it seemed to offer a literally poetic resonance – Maurya had been recently publishing and winning awards for her poetry. Miller was famous as a poet, known in particular for his collection of poems *Songs of the Sierras* (1871). The park was purchased from Miller by the Oakland Parks Department in 1919; prior to that, it was a 70 acre property Miller had acquired, planting over 70,000 trees on the property, and erecting monuments to (among others) Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

A short way from the parking lot where we’d agreed to rendezvous, we found a sloping trail that descended among a green canopy of tall, slender trees. There was something shielded, protected in the space – a pocket of verdant quiet. We had brought Callie with us, and she settled in a small nook just off the trail, where she sat on a blanket and read.

When Maurya arrived, she exuded calm composure, though there had been recent upheavals in her life. She liked the space we had arrived at; before beginning, she told us that she had been dealing with abandonment trauma, that she had recently identified as being tied to her early relinquishment. She wanted us to know that those feelings were up for her and would probably come up in her performance. And, in fact, shortly after she began moving, waves of grief seemed to move through her – head bent down, shoulders shaking, a weeping without tears.

Most of her movements were slow and deliberate – crouching, reaching, turning. Her arms, wiry and articulate like her thin fingers, bent in sharp angles. At one point, she formed a fist, held it rigidly out at the end of her right arm, and circled it in the air – her eyes were fixed on its circuit with a sort of dispassionate regard. She gave the impression of someone watching themselves, to see what they would do – from her first, her thumb sprouted, and she spiraled, following its curve around herself. Her fingers pressed into her eye sockets – at one point, she made a sort of telescope with her two hands and peered through it, looking into Chris's camera. Chris used the drone for a couple of drifts down and up through the tree canopy – Maurya extended her hand into a ragged pool of light spilling through the leaves, as though palpating it.

At one point, Maurya asked Callie if she'd like to join her in the dance, and Callie assented. Callie stepped into the space – a flat area next to a twisting tree – and stood there. Maurya stood behind her, sometimes mirroring her posture – for instance, her right arm down at her side, her left arm clasping it at the elbow, from behind her back. Maurya did some metronomic swaying, like a shadow cast behind her, pivoting along the arc of a faintly swaying light source and watching quietly, faintly responding as an echo might.

We ended up by the parking lot. There was a cross-section of a tree-stump set upright in that area, which Chris had spied as a potential frame – circles had emerged as a pattern or structure in several of the prior videos. This arrested circle of cumulative growth seemed to call out to that. Maurya stood in front of the rings, draped with the shadows of foliage from other trees above, and again moved slowly, deliberately – as in the shaded area before, staying in one place, and moving from that point of rootedness. Her arms curved a bit more in their extensions, as if mimicking the curve of the rings behind her (the cross-section was roughly the height of her body). She ended by circling

her arms in front of her, in a motion that suggested reeling in something to herself – perhaps reeling the surrounding air in toward her body. Behind the stump, passers-by walked through the frame, unaware of the performance taking place on the other side of the cross-sectioned wooden disc, whose radius encompassed more than a century's worth of concentric growth.

Marya Kerr at Joaquin Miller Park: Interview

KH: Could you give me an outline of your training and practice across the various modes you work in – dancer, choreographer, producer, teacher, activist – and have I left anything else out?

MK: I'll start with my dance training because it's the longest part of my life. I trained with Pacific Northwest Ballet in Seattle. And I trained there from Creative Movement until I got into the company. So, I started at seven, got in the company when I was eighteen, danced in Balanchine companies for five years, and then quit dancing because it was so toxic and unhealthy. I thought I had retired because I didn't think I was going to be able to be safe and dance – and then I ended up joining LINES [Ballet] when I was twenty-four.

I had a twelve-year career with LINES dancing, and have been with the organization for thirty years now (which is insane) as a dancer and then as an educator. That's the only thing I've really gotten training in. Other stuff has been just learning as I go.

I've always loved to write. I was writing as a little girl. I just found some poems that I wrote when I was young, when I was at my mom's place last year, and it's kind of wild. It's always been a natural expression for me to write, and I used to write poems for my family for Christmas. That was my gift – I would write everyone in the family a poem. But I don't have formal training in writing but I do have – I've heard other writers refer to it as a poor man's MFA. I've taken lot of writing classes. I have a writing group that I've been a part of for many years, and I feel like everything I've learned about writing has been through this “school” in terms of craft and control. It's not just expression. The same with dance, you have to have the form to get free.

As a filmmaker – it’s been totally ad hoc, off the hook – I transitioned to film because of the pandemic. I had a premiere scheduled for March of 2020. And we were like, oh, we'll just postpone it a few weeks – as we all thought. That was a premiere that was going to happen at Counterpulse, called BLACKSTAR. And I ended up transitioning to film with that project and fell in love with the medium.

I ended up making another movie, Saint Leroi, a couple of years later. I find it a fascinating medium because the possibilities are endless in terms of editing, in terms of how you put things together – the fact that it's snippets that you can weave together to create a larger narrative. It feels like a much more powerful medium for me, particularly to talk about blackness, than the proscenium stage, and it's also been really fun to learn as I go. I have no idea what I'm doing in all the best of ways. My co-editor also had no experience, so we're really finding our way. I feel like what we've been able to produce is unique, because we don't know what it's supposed to be, or what the limits are, or what the expectation is. I feel really lucky to have stumbled into something that's allowed me to create nascent pathways.

And I will say I don't consider myself an activist. I feel like there are people who are activists for a living – that's their work. I think it's Alice Walker who says activism is my rent for being on this earth. It's the rent that I pay for being a human in the world. So, yeah, I consider myself to be an active human, but not an activist, because I feel like there are people who really dedicate their lives to that. That's not my primary vocation, but it is a way that I see the world. If that makes sense.

Curation also just sort of happened. I think I was asked to curate because of my active stance in the world, in the dance world, and being outspoken around issues of anti-racism.

A few of the dancers that I've interviewed have had formal training – some with ballet as a primary practice, and some in Cunningham, or Contact and Release. For some of them, their earliest professional dance company experiences were highly toxic – and it seems like they are in various forms of recovery from that.

I think ballet has tended to be more toxic because of the obsession about fitness. I know that across the board, many people in any sort of professional dance training have struggled with that obsession with body. When the Me Too movement started happening, or became more known, a dear friend of mine, who also had really toxic ballet experiences – we were talking and she realized suddenly – “Oh, my God, Me Too – our entire dance training was completely exploitive.”

I realized looking back, my entire early professional career, I was harassed every day. It's so ingrained in the training. I was harassed every day at work, and the reason I chose to quit dancing when I was 22 was because I had been told by my director that I need to lose weight, and I became seriously anorexic. Anorexia is one of top killers of women in the United States and I had to leave if I was going to survive.

I was 20 pounds under this weight when I left the company I was dancing for, and one of my vows when I joined LINES was: "If Alonzo[24] says anything to me about my weight, I'm out of here." I knew that I was not going to be able to handle that.

I think particularly, too, with ballet companies – particularly the legacy of Balanchine, the directors are fucked up because Balanchine fucked everybody up. He was really misogynistic. He married – what? – three or four of his dancers. I think the legacy of that abuse has really continued. I was the recipient of that trauma being passed down.

And I didn't receive any of that, dancing with Alonzo, but I had my own trauma with him. A different kind of trauma. Any time you have someone in a position of power, there's bound to be challenges. And I will say that it's been really important for me to reclaim my confidence, once I left the company. For whatever reason, dancing with the company didn't bring me confidence. It took me sort of getting divorced from Alonzo, and coming into a different kind of relationship with him, to come into a better understanding or a better appreciation of my gifts as a dancer.

Would you mind sharing a few of your gifts?

That's such a hard question. We can all share what we suck at. I think that I can go deep. I'll just leave it at that.

I will leave it at that. Then I'd love to, as we go on into the interview, maybe ask a question or two about it. Some of the non-technical somatic language might be "tracking" and certainly "presencing" – I have been calling it "dropping down" – dancers who can go into any place and drop down into presence.

[24] Alonzo King, Artistic Director and co-founder of LINES Ballet.

Yeah. And I think another word I say is plummeting.

What is “plummeting” to you?

It feels like this beautiful anchor dropping down to the essence of what needs to happen – diving deep, instead of splashing around in the pool. It's going to the heart. Getting down to the meat, or the essence of the heart – or the why – in a physical way, in an embodied way. Our bodies are our minds. I believe that we're dancing our minds and our imaginations, and that's what I love about dance.

This is something I try to teach, too. You're not just limbs moving around – that's not particularly interesting to me, and continues to uphold the supremacy of a certain kind of body, because we just want to see that kind of body. If we're just going to see a body moving around, society still prioritizes a certain kind of body. But if we're seeing an imagination at work, it's a very different criteria.

One thing that's super important, in terms of teaching – it’s an incredibly important part of my practice and my being – is that you want well-rounded humans dancing. You want to see people have experiences in the world, and go see art and read books and understand poetry and have experienced the world. If I'm dancing my mind, my mind needs to be saturated and abuzz with what's happening politically, artistically – all of those things.

Getting entangled with your environment – as you're talking about – is crucial to becoming a beautiful artist. I always tell my students – I don't care if you become a dancer. If you do, Amen. But my role as your educator is to help you become a better citizen in the world, to be kind, to be generous, to be empathetic – all of those things that we want to see in dancers, that's what we want to see in humans. If you happen to dance, that's the cherry on top. But that's not my goal at all.

What is it about training and practice, and particularly the way that you're teaching, that helps us entangle better? I'm thinking of a less racist world, a liberated world, and where we're connected to the environment – and undoing white supremacist capitalist neoliberalism.

If I just sort of sum up my teaching credo in a sentence, it'd be fall in love with effort. I think you can't go wrong with that. By effort, I also mean practice.

If you fall in love with it – regardless of what you think the outcome is – what an amazing world we'd have.

I think there is a “bystanderness” that happens in class, and in the world too – like, when it's my turn, I'm gonna put out, but when it's not, when I'm behind the scenes, I'm just gonna stand there.

You have to be hoping that students will develop the curiosity that they want to work on something, no matter what – no matter if the teacher's watching them, no matter if they get the part – just engrossed in this problem or this puzzle. If I write poetry, regardless of whether I'm going to be published or not, something's going to happen to me, and that transformation in me is going to help the world.

Could you try to recall your experience of your performance in Joaquin Miller Park? What was your experience of the two spaces you worked – among the trees, and then in front of the tree stump by the parking lot? This can touch on sensory impressions and what you've responded to in the moment. I know as you indicated to Chris and me before you started, there were some responses to adoption trauma that has been coming up for you.

I can speak more to the first one, in the trees. I feel like the tree stump didn't have as much resonance for me. We had talked about adoption – well, it's not adoption trauma, it's abandonment trauma that has been up for me. I was very aware of Callie as a creature in the world.

I think I was mainly aware of my concern and my hope for Callie. Part of why I talked to you guys about what was going on for me was because I hope that she can avoid this abandonment trauma – this space in me that's dictated a lot of what I've done in the world, and how I've reacted – and hoping that she can be spared some of that, I guess.

If it's too sensitive, you don't have to go there – but I'm wondering how you negotiated that abandonment trauma physically. There seemed to be some shaking – movement that was connected to weeping. Also, there was reaching out – you had a fist that you were circling in the air. And I'm just curious if those

movements were negotiations of that [abandonment] as an experience – that's how I read them.

Those have been movements of me negotiating my experience before I knew I had the experience. I've been doing those movements for years – shaking as a form of release, or a fist, or reaching – that's my body language. That was my body language before knowing I had PTSD around abandonment, and after – if that makes sense.

The vocabulary, physically, language-wise, it's all been there – but with recognition and without recognition. None of that felt new to me.

I don't know if you've experienced EMDR as a modality [to address trauma]. Obviously there's talk therapy, but I feel it's beyond words. Having read about early trauma, it seemed there is a dearth of literature. Maybe you have found more about the best way to provide care…

In terms of abandonment trauma, from what I've researched there is not a ton of information – but I think because it's pre-verbal trauma, you need non-verbal avenues to access it. That's my sense. Because it happened before you even had language – before consciousness. The act of birth in itself is violent, then adding being taken away from the body that you've known – it's incredibly violent.

That's helped me understand – my earliest experiences were incredibly violent. It's important to remember that when you're talking about kids who have been abandoned – it's violence. We expect kids to just adapt to their new home. It's insane. We're all just surviving our trauma. We're all traumatized and just trying to make it through.

Do you think that dance helps you in terms of processing any of the trauma through the body? How do you find your work as an artist helps you with the trauma that you carry?

Well, I didn't know I had trauma until last year, which is just phenomenal. I will say that writing has helped me more than anything, in terms of my awareness of working through it. Of course I think that being in my body helps, but my body carries a ton of the trauma, as bodies do. I'll say I've been doing ketamine therapy, and the embodiedness of that has been very helpful.

Could you talk about your project, slow dark dances, describing the project through the conception to performance. I was really interested in this sense of hesitancy among the audience that you experienced at the conference. It illustrated the gap often exists between the academic in-the-head practice and embodied practice.

There was a collaboration that was happening with visual artists and movement artists with Aggregate Space Gallery and I was asked to do an installation with Richard Nelson. As part of my response to his work – he's an Afrofuturist artist – I did a slow dance in a dark room. People were allowed to come in, six at a time, and just be there – and there was a beautiful soundscape. That was how the idea was born of *slow dark dances*, because it not only was an amazing experience to do, but also audience members were like: I could have watched that for hours. And as I'm growing my practice as a movement maker, I'm much less interested in “presenting,” and much more interested in installation, or creating experiences for both the dancer and the audience. I'm perpetually confused by movement on stage – like, what are we doing? What’s happening?

I’m trying to offer entrances into states of being, for both mover and witness. And so I thought this would be an amazing thing to do – just to have black people slow dancing and so that's how the idea got born. And then pandemic happened, and it was many years in the making, and it was super exciting to have it happen at BAMPFA. It first happened in December of 2022, and then you saw the iteration in February of 24.

I'm always interested in unsettling whiteness. There are so many ways to do that. The obvious way is by force. And I'm interested in doing it through softness and intimacy – and also forcing whiteness to recognize the multiplicity of blackness, that's it’s not always in resistance to whiteness. It’s just that we don't see a lot of examples of black intimacy. And when we see it, it's in this codified [image] of blackness, that white America can accept. It's very racialized, as opposed to just – black people doing a thing.

Black dance, whatever that moniker is, to me, black people dancing. So it's every kind of dance. Alvin Ailey has become very known for “black dance.” But I'm a Black person dancing, so it's Black dance. And I'm a Black person creating, so what I create is

Black dance – I'm interested in continuing to push the strictures around what Blackness is and can do and can be.

To speak more to the reluctance of people to join in – I'll say mainly it was academics at the conference. I think people are terrified of being witnessed, and softness. I was amazed by the reluctance and I probably shouldn't have been. But I still was – especially because verbally, in pre-performance conversations, people had been like: "I can't wait to join."

And then literally it was like – there's no way of putting my body in that position even though the entire weekend [the conference was organized] around transformative ways of being in your body. I think academia in general very disconnected from the body. Even in dance programs you can see people talk this amazing game – people have this amazing language around "this is what the piece is going to do," and it doesn't do anything like that.

I will say one of the most impactful things around slow dark dances, particularly in the first iteration in 2022 – but it happened as well this year – was the amount of young women, mainly young black women, who – in the public portion of the slow dancing – wept. it was incredibly moving. It made me realize the power of it, and how desperately we need that, especially as people of color – to have spaces to be soft and to be held.

I remember, I was like: "Oh my God, this is such a big responsibility." I'm opening up these floodgates of softness for people who haven't been allowed to experience it. This is why we were doing the project, but I was also aware of – I don't know that I have the resources to handle this. You know what I mean? I've opened up the door, but can I actually help people go through the door and survive?

I want to offer freedom, but then – okay, what do we do with freedom? It's been a really meaningful project for me as – I'll say – as a curator of the experience.

It was very profound for me. I have feelings of my own, I know my situatedness and I know my whiteness and the weight of that in relationality to this intimacy and beauty that was happening – being invited into that, I did feel

like weeping. I wept later – but I held it because I have a lot of self-consciousness around "white tears" – how they can be to deflect whiteness.

Just so you know, I wouldn't have considered your white tears to be inappropriate in that moment. We all need softness, right? I think that's why sex is so misused. We're trying to fucking get tenderness. We don't know how to do it, and that's the only avenue, socially, that we're really shown.

It was opened to anyone who was in that space that they could slow dance – and you invited us, right? We were sitting there, and then somebody invited me both times.

It was advertised as a public slow dance, but people don't know what that means. So I told the other dancers to just offer. Race never came into it, because there was this realization that we all need the tenderness. I was like: just offer. And so many people said no, which is amazing. Some people were like – I don't know that I can handle it. The hesitancy was interesting, but I think everyone who accepted was really grateful, even though it was scary.

I will say I think that this project might have been born as a reaction to my abandonment trauma, without me knowing it. I wasn't held for the first five weeks of my life. And so maybe that's part of my attraction to this kind of thing. I desperately wanted to be in that kind of relationship with another body – because I didn't get it. Of course, I got it once I was adopted, but, you know, those are formative weeks. In a way, I feel like in all of my choreography, I'm trying to recreate an intimacy that I didn't get.

There's dance as a primal movement need, or question – and then there's dance as spectacle. With all the dancers that I've talked to, there's been a negotiation of dance as a way of connecting with the world. It gets complicated when you professionalize it, it because people want different things from you. And I think all the dancers I've interviewed have come up with different strategies to get back to that original impulse, that started them dancing.

One of the goals with slow dark dances, is to really act in opposition to the spectacularization of Blackness. Blackness is either cloaked in hyper visibility or

invisibility – at the polar opposites of zenith or nadir. What's the middle ground? I want to make Blackness completely normal – I'm interested in normalizing Blackness.

The reaction to abandonment – you said you just came to this realization that this was a driving force in your psyche about a year ago. What actually made it come to the fore? What made you realize it?

My relationship. I've always had outsized reactions to relationships ending – or not even relationships, but potential relationships. It's always been really outsized. A friend told me - this is your kryptonite. People knew it, but I didn't know it. I mean, I knew it, but I didn't know it. It was a relationship that was continuing, but the trigger was happening daily. And I was like, Oh, this is a thing. I would say I was at the most risk I've been in, emotionally, in my life. And I've been in a lot of emotional risk. Before I was like, Oh, I have some abandonment issues – and now I was like, oh – no – I have PTSD. I'm having panic attacks and I can't sleep and I can't eat and I'm having diarrhea all the time. I'm in a perpetual fight or flight reaction right now because of the circumstance.

Was it the physical reaction that really made it explicit?

Mentally, I was like, okay, what is going on? But physically, my body was like: no fucking way. I felt like I was getting abandoned every day, and reliving like my birth story every day in my body, even though intellectually, I was like: I'm not being abandoned. My body, as one therapist put it – "Your body thinks you can handle it now." I was like, I disagree [laughs]. Why is this happening now? I'm in my 50s. And they were like – because your body thinks you can handle it. And I was like – well, we need to have a conversation.

Entrainment is talked about as an ability to attune to or entrain with other bodies. That's one of the biggest things – how can you have relationships if a parent can't attune to you? Bessel van der Kolk (2014) talks about European Western culture not having these ritualistic or artistic processes that are used to process trauma – like shaking, or wailing – doing these different rituals to, in fact, process trauma through the body.

I think that whiteness has no culture. If you're raised in white America, there aren't cultural dances. There aren't cultural songs. I was just in Maine and at a

residency, and once a week they would have a community singing event – an Appalachian tradition. Within certain parts of whiteness, there is singing as a way of life. Definitely, in African cultures, dancing is part of life. In lots of African-American traditions, singing is a part of how you grow up – but, culturally, whiteness is bereft – we are lacking that – I was raised in whiteness as a transracial adoptee –I was missing that type of embodiment, and artistry, in how I was raised.

To kind of switch gears, I do think – even like Luka is part of my abandonment trauma. I save animals, and I have since I was a little girl. I am incredibly attuned to the abandoned of the world, and have been from the get-go. That is part of how I've dealt with being abandoned, without knowing it. I cared deeply for my stuffed animals and wanted to make sure none of them ever felt alone. I had lists of who got to sleep with me, who was at the foot of the bed, who was in bed with me, to make sure that none of them ever felt the pain of being abandoned.

It's too bad that it's caused by trauma, but that's really where we all need to be.

Absolutely. We're all forged by trauma, and some react horribly. I mean, see the white nationalist movement – they're all completely traumatized. But instead of going through softness, they're going through violence, because they were never taught how to –this is not news – but men are not given any tools to deal with softness or to deal with hurt. So they become violent.

I just wanted to say – I never understood it before, but I always felt like hugging you. I wanted to hold you, emotionally – not in a paternalistic way.

I think a lot of women in my life, who are my age or younger, have that reaction towards me. A lot of people feel the need to mother me. Not in a patronizing way, but I think there's a sense that I need care.

You were not only needing care, but you had an open – you could say it felt like a wound – but it was also an open energetic pathway for tenderness.

Where the wound is, is where the light is, right? If you actually negotiate your wounds, there's an incredible fucking beauty in that. I'm the artist I am because of what my life has been. We're all the sum of what our experience is. I have this tattoo, “stay

soft," for a reason – because I'm not. I have to work at it. I am not soft. This is my reminder. My defenses are generally very up; they should be as a woman. It's not a default. It's not a very comfortable place for me to be. That's where I want to be.

Marya Kerr at Joaquin Miller Park: Diffractions

BODY MEMORY

> Yes, and the body has memory. The physical carriage hauls more than its weight. The body is the threshold across which each objectionable call passes into consciousness—all the unintimidated, unblinking, and unflappable resilience does not erase the moments lived through, even as we are eternally stupid or everlastingly optimistic, so ready to be inside, among, a part of the games.
>
> – Claudia Rankine (2014, p. 32).

The instinct I felt to hold and soothe Maurya while we were taking workshops in GYROTONIC® to become certified teachers (to support our underpaid dance jobs, and also – like many dancers – out of our deep attraction to somatic healing) was not a mistake. I remember her telling me that my touch was intense. This was not unusual for me. My main teacher in GYROTONIC® would often send me ballet dancers who weren't just trying to keep fit, but who were injured and needed healing. My physical empathy has always been strong – I was always involved in caring for ill relatives and our animals – even as a young child, people would share their pain with me.

Maurya's story at that time – years before I had engaged in a transracial adoption – was that her adoption experience was wonderful. She was particularly close to her adoptive mother. It surprised me, at Joaquin Miller park, when she told me how deeply her experience of abandonment had marked her – though in my own experience, and in my readings, I was deeply aware of the ways in which the body can be a contained for inherited trauma (Batson, G., 2017; Hooks, 2000; Payne, P., Levine, P. A., & Crane-Godreau, M. A., 2015; McGreevy, S., & Boland, P., 2022; Van der Kolk, 2014; Wells-Wilbon, R., & Estreet, A. (Eds.), 2021).

This diffracts and reflects my own experience of being an adoptive mother. Unlike Maurya, I was in a deep relationship with my daughter's birth mother, taking her to appointments in the months leading up to Callie's birth. And we were in the room during my daughter's birth. As Maurya talked about in her interview, all birth is violent. For me, much of my experience of being a mother is of buttressing our child against violence and trauma – and I feel an overwhelming flood at moments of trauma and

danger, knowing that I can't, in fact, always protect her from physical, emotional, and spiritual harm.

Callie always wanted to be held, and if she awoke while laying her down to sleep, we would need to begin the process of settling once again, from the beginning. What Maurya wanted to communicate to us was to acknowledge and create space for abandonment to be traumatic. I found it unsettling – the idea that, despite the attention, love, and care exerted to protect Callie, pain could still come, decades later. But I was also grateful for the insight, the reminder to be mindful of the very lived trauma of adoption for herself and her first mother (Batson, G., 2017).

Celeste Snowber has talked about why she needed to write and dance from the body, because it's easy to get into her head. This has been my ongoing lived experience. My friend, who is an MD, joked with me – when Callie was going through her initial treatment – that I had probably read more about epilepsy than the doctors I was seeing. I would bury myself in literature on all possible treatments, as if the disembodied intellect could prevent what was brewing within the flesh, and how it entangled with the mind and soul.

Maurya also – as she was awakening to herself as a choreographer, teacher, and to her own lived trauma housed in her body – gave me essential information about other kinds of embodied trauma. When Callie was three, she told me to read Claudia Rankine's CITIZEN. Like Coates, Baldwin, and Morrison, Rankine (2014) was adept at the turn of phrase that transmitted ideas with a physical immediacy – like the past "turn[ing] your flesh into its own cupboard":

> The world is wrong. You can't put the past behind you. It's buried in you; it's turned your flesh into its own cupboard. Not everything remembered is useful but it all comes from the world to be stored in you. Who did what to whom on which day? Who said that? She said what? What did he just do? Did she really just say that? He said what? What did she do? Did I hear what I think I heard? Did that just come out of my mouth, his mouth, your mouth? Do you remember when you sighed? (p. 61).

Maurya once posted an article (I've lost it since then) about how white people who have intimate relationships with Black people are not actually living the same experience – and as much as there is love and intimacy, the embodiment of whiteness in the soma can still do harm to the ones we love. Resmaa Menakem has written on this

(2017). Whiteness is a virus entangling culture, soma, consciousness, and unconsciousness. There has been pushback on the work “unconscious bias,” because frankly, this is just too easy, too circumscribed.

When Maurya and I were talking, we discussed how I’d emphasized Callie’s identity as being Black, but I also said I wanted her to be able to have all parts of her racial identity – European, Indigenous. Maurya quickly responded that Blackness can contain everything. It is, of course, a cultural construct – but it is a construct that can be vast and expansive, not reductive. Whiteness, in particular the white masculine, is often constructed as an expansive identity – endless in terms of knowledge production, creativity, free speech, power, and the privilege to make, mark, and name. Maurya’s simple words made me realize that, despite my intellectual study and love of Blackness, I was still falling prey to the precepts of racial identity – instead of expanding my perception that Blackness can contain all things.

BODY WRITING

> The process of writing from the body and creating poetry provided tangible data from the intervention workshops, and I encourage writing from the body as an integral method for retrieving unique narratives. A further poignant discovery from this research was the understanding of movement as a universal language. In this way, we used somatic exercises to move beyond spoken language and communicate through immediate spatial relationships.
>
> – Fae Wolfe (2023, p. 228)

Celeste Snowber, though extensive work on writing from the body (Snowber 2012, 2014a, 2016a, 2016b, 2018, 2022) but most potently through her coursework and mentorship, has explicated the power not only for healing but theorizing and philosophizing the flesh. I’m still deeply within this discovery process. Writing the dissertation, for instance, is most challenging not in the research (interviewing dance artists, creating films) but in the actual act of writing – which is sometimes physically painful. The diffractive writing and field notes can flow but some of my trauma has come from my own struggles with audio/visual processing issues. From a young age, I would write poetry and journal. My vocabulary and intellect were often lauded, but paper-to-pen has always been a bit terrifying.

In Celeste Snowber's doctoral course in Arts-Based Educational Research, I was able, for the first time in my life, to bring my whole lived experience as a dance artist, intellectual, researcher, mother, and human to class. Dancing, breathing, and writing created a new experience that was whole and truly embodied. There were moments of grief and ecstatic connection and lived wholeness. I was working on a piece with a colleague about Blackness, motherhood, dance, and gardening. It was a poetic inquiry, embodied inquiry, and duo autoethnography. I spent hours in my own practice in a small Airbnb and in the parks around Burnaby, moving and writing. I would get together with my co-enquirer, Kessey Jemmott; we would drink tea, dance, garden, and cry, interrogating the fullness, beauty, and challenge of our lived experience of Blackness and our embodied writing practice.

At the end of the semester we performed this piece for our class – it opened up a sacred space to discuss anti-racism, beauty, love, and things that are often kept silent. It opened a space for inquiry that I had not experienced in my long career as an art education evaluator for 20 years. Later, our work was published as an article (Heavey & Jemmott, 2020). Celeste's embodied inquiry has transformed my writing practice and how I relate to and get entangled in the world. As Carolina Bergonzoni (2022), another scholar in my cohort, has written: “My writing becomes part of my dance, my pen becomes an extension of my body; writing becomes a practice of transformation, a way to arrive at a different place in my body, in my inquiry, in my creative process.”*)*

Lloyd and Smith (2015) also challenge us with their Motion-sensing Phenomenology, to stop distancing oneself from the practices that constitute our research. "We aim at a kinaesthetic sensibility where a researcher cannot stand back and seek meaning via visual means but arrive at phenomenal understandings through activity immersion" (p. 3) This, too, connects with Snowber’s (2014b) enfleshed theory of "visceral creativity.” I would say that healing, dancing, walking, playing tennis, dog walking, mothering and hiking in the Sierras are all profoundly healing – and all are intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually sites of the entangled imagination. The writing that emanates from this exploration often crystallizes insights that would have passed through the liminal experience. My habit of being stuck in the Cartesian spell that we live in, which also seems to be melting around us as I speak, can heal with the practice of writing from the body. They allow me to do what Maurya calls a "conscious anti-racist practice." I think of the Cartesian spell as a way to keep Sleeping Beauty asleep. I know

that sleeping is dangerous for our world if we entangle ourselves unconsciously with our internalized racism, misogyny, and neoliberal instincts. e

I get the sense of Maurya's writing (2023a, 2023b, 2023b) as a linked practice with her moving – it comes out partly in the way she talks about her movement, the sort of linguistic vocabulary that can attach itself to it – where movement is akin to "vocabulary," or constitutes, as she framed it, her "body language." And it comes through in her poetry, where the words and images appear vivid, muscular, tactile. They unearth the "unique treasure" that Barragan (2023) writes about: "Somatic movement artists and practitioners have the unique treasure of understanding the oneness of feeling, thinking, willing, sensing, and moving, based upon the aliveness of the soma, which does not separate the essential elements and actions that constitute its life." (p. 182)

Separating language from movement is another one of the tricks of the Cartesian split – as Snowber (2016b) points out, "Language comes from the physiology of breath and tongue, saliva and sweat. Breathing requires inspiration and expiration and so do our words" (p. 44). The impulses that move us (literally and figuratively) to communicate are sometimes so buried they precede thought, precede words and premeditated gesture – it takes the whole body to bring them into contact with the world.

TOUCHING INDETERMINANCY

> There is no pure touch. Touch is an indeterminate multitude and distance at once.
>
> – Maud Lannen (2022, p.177)

It was stark the way Maurya announced it: "I wasn't held for the first five weeks of my life." Metaphor is telling here – in this listing of touch's primacy in human development and health, anthropologist Ashley Montagu is referenced for melding the sense of touch with motherhood itself:

> So why is touch important? Why and how is it part of our ecology? Touch is crucial to infant development. '[C]hildren need touch for survival' (Field 2003:5). Adults need touch too. Tactile stimulation triggers the production of feelgood hormones – oxytocin, endorphins, dopamine and serotonin –

> essential for the body's well-being and survival. Touch is the first sense that the human embryo develops in gestation (Rice 2001; Montagu 1986: 4), as such skin, the touch organ, becomes 'the basic reference point for all the various sense data' (Anzieu cited in Lannen 2020). Montagu (1986) writes that touch is 'the mother of the senses' imbued in all others. (Lannen, 2022, p.169)

I don't know that I directly understood it while I was watching and filming Maurya in Joaquin Miller Park – it came into focus more after the interview – but so much of what she was enacting had to do with touch. I think it wasn't so apparent to me because she was alone in that space, under the trees – reaching, searching, her arms at their utmost extension – sometimes the hand at the end of the arm clenched in a fist, a simultaneous proffering and denial. Of course, she wasn't truly alone, among the living trees, offering up her palm and fingers to the photons streaming from the sun, per Maud Lannen (2022) "always already in contact," with others and with her past and present self:

> Indeed, we are always already in contact, touching across distance, be it spatial or psychic. The personal is not just political; it interacts dynamically and shapes the relational structure of the collective and the world – its meshing and textures. It shapes and determines others' access to human rights, their freedom of movement. It shapes their own dance and the dire state of our environment. (p.175)

Stephanie Springgay (2022), too, has written eloquently on the multiple valences of touch: "Touch is a conceivable and concrete expression, but it can also be imperceptible and imply proximity that can be felt but not measured." She underlines the paucity of attention paid to touch in socially engaged art – and that takes us directly to *slow dark dances,* which was a space for intimate touch and touch at a distance – of the personal and social entanglements of touch – of offerings, and hesitations, and refusals.

DANCING IN THE DARK

> Let's face it. We're undone by each other. And if we're not, we're missing something. If this seems so clearly the case with grief, it is only because it was already the case with desire. One does not always stay intact. It may be that one wants to, or does, but it may also be that despite one's best efforts, one is undone, in the face of the other, by the touch, by the scent, by the feel, by the prospect of the touch, by the memory of the feel.
>
> — Judith Butler (2004, p.19)

Maurya's *slow dark dances* provided, in such a simple and direct way, an opportunity for us to be "undone" by each other. That was both the promise and the threat posed by the dancers at the conference. Angela Hume (2016) summarizes Claudia Rankine's critique of Black bodily "expendability": "Between the most daily of discriminatory microaggressions and the entrenched forms of structural racism that facilitate them in the first place, Rankine suggests, black bodies are rendered increasingly deindividuated and expendable." (p. 80) The dancers in *slow dark dances* insisted (intimately, gently, but with the authority of their embodied presence) on themselves – in their individual and irreducible integrity.

When writing *about slow dark dances,* I feel I have to put "performance" in quotation marks, because the performance was rooted in the sense of conscious being – a purposefulness, an awareness of entanglements. It seemed less performance than, as Maurya (2023a) put it in her own article *Dismantling anti-Blackness in ballet: Pedagogies of freedom*, "enactment": "Because racism is so purposeful and conscious, so must our responses be to destroy it. Because racism is an exhaustive, bodily, entrenched praxis, so must anti-racism be a radical, experiential, transformative enactment." [25]

Intimacy with purpose, love with purpose – it recalls bell hooks (2000) on love: "We do not have to love. We choose to love. Since the choice must be made to nurture growth, this definition counters the more widely accepted assumption that we love instinctually." (p. 36) There is risk involved with this – not the least, a risk of productive discomfort.

Being in an auditorium surrounded by brilliant intellectuals and artists from diverse perspectives and lineages is a comfortable space for me to inhabit. I can feel the energy and ideas enter through my head and filter through my body – my lower back and sacrum require adjustments from the pooling blood in my pelvis as I sit. My heart is not absent, but my mind is much more active. My shoulders are tight, my fingers and toes are cool. I can feel the internalized splitting, the (dis)embodied Cartesian

[25] See also Frantzich and Fels (2017), in their conception of Embodied Theater Ecology, investigating "what it means to *un-do* rather than do, inviting the individual into sensory receptivity and availability." (p.274)

resonance. Not all lecturers or writings put me into this space. But sometimes I feel the allure, the seduction of the false belief that my intellect and knowledge can stave off the social/intellectual construction of race, which sweeps my daughter and me up into its structure as a matter of course.

I came to the *Imagining Beyond Authoritarianism* event not only because I love and respect Maurya, but also the intellectuals featured as speakers/presenters (many of whom are quoted in this dissertation). But when attendees were talking in hushed tones, debating whether they were going to participate in the dance, I felt a trace of fear in those whispers. I must admit that a seething rage was welling in my body – it felt personal. Watching the young beautiful Black dancers I immediately saw my daughter's future in them. I wanted to dance with them, I wanted to "bridge," desperately, in the way john powell uses the word ("a practice where members of different social groups are not only brought into contact, but build social connections and rapport" - https://belonging.berkeley.edu/practice-bridging). At the same time, the rage wasn't just directed at what felt like a rejection of Blackness, but came from a recognition that connecting softly across the bridge was travel over profoundly difficult terrain[26].

It brought to mind Hope Mohr's (2021) piece "Dancing Around Race," which takes a sharp look at race in relation to performance in the Bay Area dance ecosystem:

> Part of shifting cultural power is inviting difficult conversations. An artist commons should be a safe space, but not necessarily a harmonious one. It can be chaotic and fractured. Culture itself is messy. One aspect of white supremacy culture is the "right to comfort (the belief that those with power have a right to emotional and psychological comfort)," so discomfort, especially on the part of white people, is often a prerequisite for cultural change.

Part of the difficulty is the difficulty of intimacy, and the charge embedded when crossing the line between performer and audience in such a direct way – making room for, as Snowber (2018) writes, "knowledge as intimacy," where dance "becomes not only

[26] As Crenshaw (1989) illustrates in "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex Discrimination," the fear of bodily entanglement is layered, intersecting, and flowing in multiple directions. This was true of many of the reluctant intellectuals who also inhabit multiple identities and intersections of gender identity and racialization. The entanglement was complex, not only addressing the Cartesian split, but also encompassing institutional norms, race, identity, class, power, gender identity, and sex.

representation, but a continual place of inquiry" (p. 255). Dance, in this context, is a call to attention, to participation – accountability from the head down to the toes. And it's also a preparation for the future, per Jude Walker and Shauna Butterwick (2015): "Sowing seeds of laughter, kindness and dancing in the crevices of the old is one way of preparing for the future" (p. 7).

Maurya, and other Black artists and Black women friends in particular have nudged me into embracing the discomfort of whiteness. If entanglement is simply a description of our state of existence, and entangle imagination is an attempt to bring consciousness to that reality, the status of whiteness in the American imaginary of race is predicated on an outright denial of consciousness. Its social power derives, in part, from a suppression of entanglement, a denial of relationality. Against that construction, I have found ways to entangle with the legacies of racial hierarchy, violence, and my ongoing privilege – *slow dark dances* gave me one such opening, or passageway. One major motivation for embracing discomfort is my embodied knowledge that the unconsciousness of white supremacy does violence to the one that I love the most. My colleague in this Arts Education program, Sandeep Glover (2023), sharply expresses the toll of living under the cultural cloud of white supremacy: "I am beyond tired of having to oscillate between these boxes, of code-switching like a chameleon to fit into boxes that were designed to compress my chest far before I took my first breath." (p. 156)

There's no shame spiral with this – but the ability to be in/with it, a powerful somatic practice. Discomfort is accepted as a form of awareness, a prickling of the conscience and consciousness (as Haraway (2016) puts it, "staying with the trouble"). It causes, even necessitates, a shift. In *slow dark dances*, I experienced a concrete affirmative social space, a dance toward belonging – whose wider social ramifications have been outlined by john powell (2024):

> One of the practical implications is that we cannot create true belonging in a world in which everyone is clinging to their selves as currently constructed. Nor can we ask people to abandon their existing identities, submitting themselves to an ontological death. We need to lean into our multiplicity and co-create new and varied identities that can knit people together in novel ways, and offer social spaces and experiences that affirm these connections. (p. 11)

The invitation that the dancers offered was one of fluidity – not a rejection of self, but a fluidity to self. Touch, after all, is not a metaphor of entanglement, but the enactment, the thing-in-itself.

Chapter 8: Openings

As a way of suggesting new ideas and openings emerging from my dissertation, I turned to my conversations with my filmic collaborator, Chris Lanier, who recorded all the performances in the dance films, and who has known several of the dancers for decades, having worked with them for set and projection design through my dance company Element Dance Theater. I assembled a series of quotes from my research that were pertinent to ideas we explored and discovered over the course of this project, and used them as a jumping-off point to unpack our experience – a diffractive exchange about the whole scope of this embodied inquiry into entangled imagination.

KH: I am going to be in conversation with Chris Lanier, who is the videographer, filmmaker, and co-editor who I worked with on this film and inquiry. Chris, could you just start us off with telling us a little bit about yourself and your background?

CL: Sure. I am a teaching professor of digital art at the University of Nevada, Reno, and I have been in the digital space as a teacher, and as a filmmaker and as a designer, for several decades now. So I cover a lot of bases in terms of what I do, but doing animation and video art has been a part of my practice for a long time. We have also collaboratively brought the video into performances over a course of decades. This project for your dissertation, I think, really focused the use of video as a way of unpacking or sharing performance in ways that have been pretty novel for me, and pretty exciting to be engaged in.

Great, and full disclosure, we are also life partners and co-parents – so we've worked closely as artists and collaborators across many dimensions of life in lived experience.

What we're going to do today is we're going to have a conversation. I have been in my research in conversation with many scholars across many fields and I have gathered a few quotes that really stood out to me and I've invited Chris to be in conversation with me about that and as we think about our collaboration and work over the last couple of years. I'm going to start by reading a quote and then we're both going to respond to that in conversation.

Let me start with a quote from Fels and Ricketts (2015), from their article BodyHeat Encounter The quote comes from an exploration of the encounter between a videographer and a dancer, examining what learning emerges from that relationality:

> **These distinct roles of spectator and performer unfold in an extraordinary way, as the videographer morphs into co-performer within a shared performative space. (p.4)**

Can you start us off, Chris, regarding your experience as a videographer?

This project is something where I'm out in the field and it's very responsive. I move around a lot. I know when Maggie was performing in the meadows, I was using an iPhone 7, which does not zoom in very far with the lens. When I moved in for the close-up shots, I basically told her, "You know what? I'm going to be in really close here." And if you smack me or the camera, I'm not going to take it personally. But that's just the zone that I'm in.

And as somebody who's worked in documentary a little bit, I really framed these films as documentary films because in most cases, the choreography was not pre-planned. We had an improvisational score. We had an idea about the space where we were filming, although sometimes we had to make last-minute changes because of the weather and terrain.

I'm there to notice what's going on and to respond in that moment. Sometimes I have an idea of where people are going, or people will do a sequence of movement, where they'll do a similar sequence of movements multiple times, so I can get them from different angles. But it's really just discovering what's on the fly and I have to really be engaged with as a "noticer" in the moment, which I find fun.

It can be a little nerve-wracking, hoping you're not going to miss something that's important or frame something in an improper way, or be looking at the wrong thing at the wrong time. It is a heightened kind of connection – what is this person doing at this moment and how can I frame in a way that seems to underline the emotional or the psychic quality of that moment? It's a very open-ended improvisatory performance that really does activate my whole body because I'm down on the ground, I'm falling over in the snow and trying not to fall off of rocks and things like that.

Yeah, you had a lot of highly embodied experiences during the filming, and I also was having my own embodied experience because I would be collaborating with the performers. We were all in a very embodied practice but in a different way. I was in a place of deep reception and witnessing and awakeness because I was not actually videotaping, but I was presencing[27] with the performers.

With Gabriel and Maurya, you were actually a videographer, too.

Yes, that's true. I did do some videography, which did really put me into a different space, I have to say, in the way that I was seeing them was through a camera instead of through my entire sight. And then sometimes I had to actually move away so that I was out of the shots. I was also seeing you duet with the performers – you were actually moving in and around where we were.

I left a little blood on the hill with Gabriel. It actually shows up in the final edited film. There's a shake of the camera that I know is my knee hitting a rock.

What are some specific place-making art possibilities, using the drone?

Using the drone is interesting in that I think it gives more space for the dancers to encounter the environment, right? Both of us have to be out of the shot – or we don't have to be, but we've chosen to be out of the shot. I think the dancer is aware of the drone because it makes a lot of noise, but usually it's at a fair distance from them, which I think gives them space to act and react in a way, just purely because of their distance from the lens.

But it does make it challenging for us because I know for you, you wanted to watch them, but you would have to hide behind a rock or a tree, so that you wouldn't be involved in the shot.

There's an element of performance in that – except for maybe Maurya – they all acted as if the camera person wasn't there, or that the drone wasn't there. I have a

---

[27] I'm using "presencing" here in reference to Theory U's use of the term (Presencing Institute, 2025), bringing together "presence" and "sensing": "Presencing means to operate from the emerging future: sensing, tuning in, and acting from one's highest future potential—bringing to life the future that depends on us to bring it into being."

feeling that, for the dancers, they felt that it would be a barrier to the audience to acknowledge a camera was there. There was an element of them “performing” as if they were alone in those spaces. What are your thoughts on that?

With Maggie, I felt that there was a duetting that happened with you, because you were so close to her physically. And a little bit, I felt like there was a presencing with KJ as she was crawling down to the water's edge. I felt like there was a deeper level of acknowledgement of another being – and then, we’ve had discussions afterward about them feeling as though they were being held. I felt like there was a connection in terms of being witnessed.

So I don't think there is a performative aspect, as much as a witnessing entanglement. I think this goes to the heart of the dancers talking about not “performing” and being spectacular, and it had to do with being held and being witnessed in their entanglement with the space and place and relationships that we had. I feel like it was an entanglement in that way – that there wasn't an ignoring of the camera, but it was an exploration of what that was. Oftentimes you are on stage and you're being witnessed, but there's a pushing out of your energy towards the audience and less of a “beingness,” and being received.

Part of my impression was that this feeling of dancers not having to be spectacular, not having to do “stunts” that demonstrate their prowess – was that it was the environment, the world around them, that filled in that space of the spectacular, right? They didn't have to do cartwheels on top of a rock (although Gabriel at times got there) – the beauty of the surrounding environment, the waves, the trees, the expansive space – that gave a sense of aesthetic pleasure. I’m not going to call it “spectacle,” but a “spectacularity” that will put the audience in a state of awe. When the world is what you're duetting with, that takes off the pressure a little bit, because the world will fill that sense of awe that that you're attempting to invoke. Does that make sense?

Yes, it does.

One piece that I did want to nod to was the connection to what Gabriel said about videoing his underwater practice – where he needs the technology of video to have an audience, because he can't have people hold their breath with him. Perhaps he could have people with scuba gear witness him, although it would be different. It would have a

very different feeling. So video is a necessary vehicle to connect his experience to an audience and I think that's true of the work that we've done here. If we invited people to witness what the dancers did, it would be very different.

The next quote is from Linda Hartly (2014). She's discussing authentic movement, and she had just taken a group of people through an authentic movement experience, and she's talking about the reflective process. I wanted to talk about our diffractive and reflective experience, both in the field videotaping, and the experience of interviewing the dancers – and how they iterated across time and place through different forms and different expressions.

> **At the end of the movement time, they each share their experiences, describing the movements, sensations, feelings and images that arose. Seeking to be true to themselves, they come into a relationship that holds compassion, acceptance, authenticity and clarity at its heart. Sometimes difference is clarified, and the mover can experience her own sense of self more clearly as mover's and witness's experiences differ. At other times, their experiences converge and a moment of attunement, of shared understanding and connection, can be felt. Both can be healing for the mover, and revealing for the witness. (pp. 81-82).**

As a choreographer this really goes to the heart of my practice. It has always about attuning with the dancers and having that stop moment as Fels and Ricketts write about – allowing for the surprise moment, and being present for that, and being awake to that. That is where we co-create in the entangled imagination. That doesn't necessarily mean only engaging in creative reflective practice – it means embracing an embodied diffractive practice, it means being able to hold difference and being able to be enlivened and engaged and electrified by the diffractions, and to co-create within our diffractions.

One thing that the interviews brought, and that interests me about this project, is bringing the actual cognitive, mental, linguistically-involved content of what the dancers are doing to the forefront of the performance.

When those pieces from the interview are brought back into the films, you get a real sense of the dancers as not just moving beings, but as thinking beings – beings whose movements are expressions of thought. A lot of times like dancers are mute when they appear on film – there's this idea that they're there for the audience, for your

amazement, performing for your interest. There's a default that cuts off their interiority in some ways. And I've been really interested in how interiority is very much foregrounded in these films.

This really connects to Snowber's work on writing from the body. It makes me think of thinking from the body, or speaking from the body – because movement is thinking, right? All thinking is embodied.

Early on my career, I remember there was somebody quoting a choreographer saying that dancers are like paint for me to make my painting. And I was horrified at this idea because it cut off the agency of the dancer. Shout out to my committee and my advisors, in that I was always being pushed to write from my body and from my practice.

The next quote that I'm going to ask about and discuss is from Alva Noë (2023). He writes:

> **It could seem fanciful and romantic, unscientific, even ridiculous, to hold that art and philosophy have the power to emancipate us, not from the reality of organizational together, but from the particular habitual loads of being that make us up now. But this is my claim, art and philosophy are the ways that we reorganize ourselves. (p. xii).**

I can't imagine my life without the practice of movement and dance. This is how I make sense of my relation to the world and being alive. And I think that this emerged through every single one of our interviews – every dancer needed to dance, to reorganize themselves within the quantum field, within their way of being.

I think it's accurate to say that this is not something that you were hunting for, but it emerged through the process. That probably has to do with the age of many of the dancers – which I think gave them a reflective attitude towards their practice of dance. Gabriel talked very much about dance as a way of organizing his experience. And Maurya talked about coming to terms with her abandonment trauma – how it showed up in her movement before it showed up in her conscious mind. Anne and Stacz have both had to retreat from performance for a while, but felt the need to do it, again, to organize their experience and make themselves comfortable in their own skins. And Maggie, trying to kind of reconnect with herself as a dancer, after being a mother. I think all of

them had felt some sort of rupture, at some point – and it became clear to all of them that performance was really not the end, right?

A lot of them felt, I think, abused at some level, with that kind of performative dimension of what they were doing – but did not want to leave the practice because the practice was more fundamental than the performance. Do you think that's fair?

Yes. Another thing that really resonated across the interviews was something about training – which you could say allows us to have the ability to articulate and be awake to certain sensations, and gives us the ability to entangle well – which is not devoid of trauma and limitations.

Alva Noë's notion that "our world has always been an art world" also seems relevant, breaking down the separations between art and existence. Maurya spoke beautifully about this – about in her teaching practice, how she works with many young professional ballet students, and they are eager for, hungry for, extraordinary feats and beautiful expressions of the body and technique – and what she cares about is: what kind of human being are you going to be?

I think all the dancers that we worked with, they don't dance to be impressive dancers, right? That has been a part of their experience and their training. But I think all of them dance to be better humans.

The next quote is from Ruha Benjamin's (2024) Imagination: A Manifesto:

> **What if . . . imagination is not only a muscle we can stretch and strengthen, or a skill we can practice and hone? What if our imagination is also a sacred space where we can connect with ourselves, our ancestors, even future generations . . . a place where poetic knowledge can emerge? Social activism typically fixates on material demands (for good reason) as a prerequisite to dismantling intersecting infrastructures of domination, and critical education usually challenges people intellectually as a prerequisite to informed action. But what about our spiritual needs? (p. 131)**

Reading this quote, it's very interesting because if you took out "imagination," and insert the word "dance," it still makes sense.

I think we're at a moment where there is some confusion about political action, in terms of what is going to be effective. Do the patterns of political activism and social activism that we know historically, are they suited to the present moment and the present circumstances? There's a questioning in the general body politic in terms of what constitutes genuine, effective political action.

And here's always been a debate about the use of art in terms of material social reality, right? Is it something that really can move political reality, or is it seen as something that operates at a purely symbolic level? I wouldn't want to make a claim that a dance can move material political reality, but I also believe that those moments of connection and engagement – and joy, and repair – they really are crucial for sustaining us and girding us for things that we have to do. I do think there's value in having connected, embodied experiences that are authentic, that are real, that are connected to a place in a time – especially now in this digitally mediated era that we're in, where activity and body and place all seem to get alienated from their origins, and converted into purely symbolic activities.

And it's something that is endemic to many indigenous practices and cosmologies. Vicki Kelly (2015) wrote about this – here is a quote:

> **I have heard it said of Indigenous drummers and singers of songs that they created songs while walking the land; the melodies are heard as emerging from the landscape. And when they are sung strongly to the ecology of a place, the creatures of that place respond. When these songs are sung in ceremony at a feast hall with members of the community, dressed in their full regalia, drumming, singing, and dancing, the land is evoked and present in the longhouse. In that moment the people, their culture, and the land are one. (p. 61).**

It's almost like a recognition and an awakening. I resonate with this practice in the way I experience my feet on the ground where we filmed, and the echoes that still vibrate in my being.

I would say our political moment seems very driven by an attempt at controlling the cultural imaginary and imaginaries of domination – this idea that we have an idea, and we assert the idea and we have a supremacy of ideas. And this is opposed to a humble situated imagination that is not a fixed place, but a moving imagination – one that is iterating and changing, very much like the cycles

of nature and earth, and cycles within our bodies and our hormones and our minds – which is a cosmology of imagination that would open up worlds for us.

It seems to me that it's not sufficient for effective political change, but it's necessary for it, meaning that doing a dance performance or a dance related to a place is not in and of itself going to have echoes that are going to change policy. But if we don't have those connected experiences, I think the change that we might agitate for really isn't going to be effective, because it's not coming from the grounding of our felt relationship with the world. We can't save the world from outside it – as if it's just the subject of our idealism, right?

That goes beautifully with this Bayo Akomolafe (2017) quote here:

> **There are no beginnings that appear unperturbed, pristine and without hauntings. And there are no endings that are devoid of traces of the new, spontaneous departures from disclosure, and simmering events that are yet to happen. The middle isn't the space between things; it is the world in its ongoing practices of worlding itself. (p. 12)**

I feel like this quote matches where we just were – being comfortable with being in the middle within the state of unknown, and being surprised and opened. I do think that our process was very generative, in that we did work together in a performative inquiry, and the performative inquiry continued through the interview and the diffraction – and they were entangled.

The performances were not to arrive at a perfected expression, the way you might work towards something to be "perfected" on stage. We had an end point in that we wanted to edit it into a film, but we weren't iterating to perfect something for an ultimate unveiling. The sense of the "middle" was an active place. That's actually where these performances took place. They weren't rehearsals or something else – that middle space is sufficient, right? It's not a half step towards something, it is the thing itself.

Yes. It's making me feel very verklempt – as you were talking and I was thinking about the middle, and I was thinking – I'm actually little beyond the middle of my life, right?

Also, doing a PhD program later in my life, I joke that – when I was younger, when I was dancing and I was going to graduate school for my masters, I

felt it was less complex. There was a way in which I could throw myself into things without this sort of complexity of life – in terms of caring for a child who has medical issues or taking care of elderly parents, dealing with impending fascism… we were dealing with the early aspects of that within our culture. But the middle is enough – that is something that emerged with all of our dancers. The practice was enough.

I'm realizing this even as a parent, as my child is going into high school. I'm looking at her adorable middle school and seeing these young children – and how quickly the middle goes, right? I'm always thinking about what choices I'm making now that will get her to a place, a destination. And really, it's the middle. It's always the middle.

So let's talk about the ethical dimension. I'm going to quote Elizabeth Gross (2017), talking about Spinoza and the ethics of our ontological ethical engagement – her book is . The Incorporeal: Ontology, Ethics, and the Limits of Materialism:

> **For Spinoza, an ethics and a politics follow directly from and are immanent in metaphysics; the better one understands the universe in its complexity, in the connections that link each thing to every other, the more adequate is one's ethical relation in and to it. An ethics does not spring directly from our understanding of the world. Rather, it comes from our affective bonds to and connections with other things in the world, relations that enable us to enhance or diminish forms of life. Providing a reading of Spinoza's Ethics from the perspective of its ontological commitments may help open up ways in which his ethics and politics, and our own, may be developed in fuller depth. (p. 7)**

For me, entangling with the dancers and their reflections within the moment allows me to have a vast embodied knowing, in terms of my ethics. It's not knowing about the world, but being in the world and being open to and aware of its complexity – it allows for insight and awareness to grow.

Part of the thing about this concept of entangled imagination is, fundamentally, it's just a description of the way things are. It's just a way of reiterating the fact that everything affects and influences everything. And that we can't separate ourselves from our contexts. But what this practice that you're involved in is about, is that it's another

step to be aware of that, or to be conscious of that. I think it's accurate to say that that is the state of reality, and it's also accurate to say that our human conscious minds do not accept that as a given.

The imaginaries where we are situated have definitely influenced that. I think our lived experience would be very different if there wasn't this Cartesian influence – we may have a different idea about what the cosmos is. One thing that Dr. Celeste Snowber writes about and talks about is allowing students to bring their whole selves to the classroom – and how that can be messy.

Ruha's talks a lot about digital algorithms, and the narrowing of what is possible, within the way that we're designing conversations and digital spaces. We're in a extreme period of time right now in the United States where the silencing is chilling, across educational institutions and, social media platforms, and in all of our spaces – it is is a radical act to allow people to bring their whole selves to a dissertation, to creating art to being a body in the world. It has been deeply transformative for me as a human, and I just want to thank you for engaging in this process.

This last quote is from a scholar and philosopher from the book The Life of the Imagination, from Jennifer Anna Gassetti Ferenci (2018):

> **Imagination contributes not only to freedom but to the ethical responsibility freedom entails, allowing us reflection on our possibilities so that we can imagine being or acting or even feeling otherwise than we are and do. Imagination allows us to consider different potential modes of response, rather than merely to react immediately, unreflectively, to pressures of a given situation. In so doing, imagination may provide us the liberty to shape our interactions, to change ourselves or the surrounding world—not with some wave of a magic wand but in and through the circumstances at hand. (p. 11)**

Nothing could be more present than that. In this moment that we're living in, in the United States and in the world, part of the challenge is the challenge of grand narratives – the idea of one story, or a unifying story, that explains everything – or that will solve all the problems that are vexing us. It's so tempting and desirable, but it's also not possible. It is the embodied imagination that is situated in a specific place and time where we actually do the work of ethically

engaging – by being as fully awake and conscious as we can to the human and more-than-human world. I think philosophy is pointing us, in this instance, towards an embodied imagination where we can be ethical in our relationality.

I don't know if you'll be self-conscious about this, but I feel one reason that the work is interesting to me grows out of the ethical relationships that you have with your dancers. All the dancers came to you with real openness – that's both true in terms of the movement and in terms of what they felt comfortable disclosing about themselves in interviews. And I think what made it possible for them to go deep was the fact that they knew that you were going to hold them in their full stature as human beings. You weren't inviting them out there to do tricks or to show off, or to give form and flesh to some movements or choreographic ideas that you had. All of them really wanted to engage with you because they felt that you could hold them and see them in their full selves. And that to me is an ethical relationship. It's more than just a choreographic relationship, it's an ethical relationship to your dancers.

Thank you. I think a question for me is – in the films and in the dissertation – how do we organize ourselves well? Part of that is allowing the other to be their full self and to be fully present.

I'm going to close with this quote by Celeste Snowber (2022) from her book, *Dance, Place and Poetics*:

> **Moving the body in communication with a natural world allows for our whole beings to become a portal – the entrance to the interior castle and a window to a deeper ecology. Deep ecology meets the deep body. This is not just a philosophy, but also a lifetime practice to which we are invited, whether we are dancers or divers, lawyers or lighthouse keepers, scholars or sailors. The body is central to how we move, live and are given life. Connecting to the flow of energy through our bodies, however named – heartbeat, chi, breath, eros, god, spirit, energy – is what animates life. There are as many ways to inhabit site-specific performance as there are performers. To experience the body as a portal is to allow and welcome all the connections between place, ecology, spirituality, and physicality. (p. 90)**

What about that resonated with you?

Well, first I think the word "portal" very much resonates. Celeste has been so influential to this dissertation, in the idea of bringing the whole self to the work.

And also staying grounded in terms of our relationality to, and being a part of, the planet – not being separate from the planet, but really being an integral part of it. There was no need to separate place, spirituality, and physicality.

I think I've been aware, both through the work and also in activity outside it, of art practice being a way of raising consciousness and elevating experience of connection to place. In my classes – whether it's landscape drawing, photography, videography, anything where students are out in the natural environment – I often frame it, particularly for non-art majors, as not really aiming for the end product. It's great if you come out with a drawing that you're happy with, or a photo that you want to show other people. But that's really not the purpose of the activity. The purpose of the activity is to connect you to the natural world and to slow yourself down and to absorb it. And I find the students really get it.

It's not the only way to have that experience. Hiking or just being out there, resting, can give you those qualities of experience. But if you're sitting down and drawing a tree, you're spending time noticing that tree and being in that space with that tree, moreso than if you're just walking down the path and passing it by. Something about the intention to artistically engage with your surroundings elevates the experience of it.

There are extreme limits to our cognitive capacity to understand all the ways in which we are entangled in any moment. But being conscious of it has a value. There's the value of pleasure, but it's also the value of grounding us, and putting us in relation to the world that we're dependent upon.

What does that awareness open up, in terms of consciousness? Snowber (2022) speaks in terms of deep ecology needing "deep body." Consciousness – what we talk about in terms of cold cognition – is a very, very small part of what is happening within our being and our relationality. We are, in fact, a "portal," in that we're bringing the complexity of the world to consciousness. It is impossible to fully grasp, but it is impossible to be fully conscious – our consciousness can't fully grasp what is happening, but to be awake and available and present for it – that, to me, is a deep heart of this practice.

Openings: Diffractions

The work I have been engaged in, during my studies at Simon Fraser University, has been deeply meaningful work for me. I have spoken, earlier in this chapter, about art practice as a way of "organizing experience," and this dissertation—writing, co-editing the films, engaging through inquiry and interviews my practice and the entanglement of body and dance – has been an organizing act for me, a way of instigating experiences, and engaging them, that helped me make sense of these past years, which have been shot through with hardships and challenges – on both a personal and global scale.

My work has given me embodied practices, language, ontological orientation and methodological approaches that I know I will apply to future work – and in some ways, I feel I have just reached the beginning of a new creative voyage. I hope any readers may find useful practices here as well – and most fundamentally, an invitation to imaginative entanglement.

The "stop moment" at first seems to hold a privileged space – standing out as an exception to the ordinary flow of time and perception, with a preciousness that often stems from rarity. I've found, however, that this process has been replete with stop moments, and this written dissertation reproduces only a fraction of them. The dance films, in a way, are a method of preserving them as a catalog of gestures and responses that I can return to, with a clarity and precision that memory rarely affords. Many of these moments, retrievable through the footage, are unplanned micro-moments of negotiation between the body and the environment that enfolds it. I think of KJ's laugh and smile at the edge of the water, as a small wave leapt up and sprinkled her face with cold droplets. The way ripples spread from Gabriel's floating body in the shallow pool, rings under which small fish darted on their daily errands. The way Maurya brushed aside a vine hanging from a tree branch, a green tendril that seemed to, in its encounter with a slowly moving arm, begin to twist into an unintended caress. Maggie excavating and gathering snow to herself – in a moment that didn't find a place in the final edit, at one point bringing it to her belly, as if cradling a child made of frozen water. Erica crouching, balancing, perching on a rock, drawing herself in like one of those rounded boulders herself, balanced precariously like the top stone of a cairn.

And these stop moments didn't just emerge in the flow of performance – they emerged, as well, in my conversations with the dancers, in my readings, even in written correspondence. As Lynn Fels (2015c) writes, "A stop moment offers awareness of possibility; through reflection, we come to consider new possible choices of action in interaction with our environment, context, relationships, ourselves, recreating the worlds we create" (pp.511-512). I think of the profound effect Anne and Stacz had on me, explaining our time together in San Francisco as a truly fertile and generative experience with a duration that had persevered across time and space – a duration that was, in fact, ongoing.

That past time and space is not actually over, it is moving, dancing within and through us. An email Gabriel sent, saying the video and chapter made him feel deeply seen, moved me very much. The gap of a decade, between the initial filming and our second interview, dissolved or upended habitual, day-to-day and year-to-year time. I'm aware that that gap allowed me to see the footage, and arrange the footage, differently – and, I think, more perceptively. The decade had filled those movements with a potency of meaning, or at least it gave me the perspective to grasp that potency. There was a unity of reflection and immediacy that was present in all my collaborations – but the extension of the timeframe made that interplay more evident. This consciousness of creative entanglement is a way to experience time differently – perhaps, even, to "undo" time at the level of imaginative consciousness.

I have just laid down at the base of the apple tree in my backyard, grounding my body under the shade on a hot High Sierra summer day, at 2 pm (here in time that is not quite undone). I am struggling with the "I" of this chapter. Then I remember Barad and Kelly's undoing of the "I." The experience of co-creating with long term dance collaborators has affirmed what I have always known: there is no "I." "I" have always been uncomfortable in the space of being ontologically configured as The Choreographer, The Scholar, The Mother, and so on. The ontological playground of entangled imagination is a quantum space where those divisions are contingent, provisional – not illusory, exactly, but endlessly open to revision, negotiable to the very root. What do we lose when we do not have access the stop moment, or the embodied experience of entanglement?

In this moment in history – where, in the United States, fascism is rising in ascendency, attempting to narrow our agency to one bounded by cruelty and fear – I feel the need, most acutely, for a shared field of belonging. The process of working on this dissertation, of extending myself to these dancers and scholars, to the environment in its varying altitudes and moods, has been far more than an intellectual exercise – it has been the expression of a crucial desire, an extension of the "I" into "We." That extension is a creative act, one that I believe is interwoven, by its nature, with the act of healing – and the desire to describe, in some measure, the features of an "entangled imagination" is an attempt to understand processes and conditions of healing. Imaginative entanglement is one where consciousness and healing dissolve one into the other. We are the earth, we belong to the fabric of the cosmos and of consciousness – we are the universe becoming conscious of itself — an embodied performative entanglement of imagination.

References

Abram, D. (2010). *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology.* Pantheon Books.

Accetti, C I. (2021, April 26). Repoliticizing environmentalism: Beyond technocracy and populism. *Critical Review*, 33(1), 47-73. https://doi.org/10.1080/08913811.2021.1908023

Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Duke University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2017). *Living a feminist life*. Duke University Press.

Akomolafe, B. (2017). *These wilds beyond our fences: letters to my daughter on humanity's search for home*. North Atlantic Books.

Alaimo, S., & Hekman, S. (Eds.). (2008). *Material feminisms*. Indiana University Press.

Anderson, J E. (2015). The ecology of power: Queerness and food studies. *Johns Hopkins University Press*, 61(1), 168-176. https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.2015.0010

Appelbaum, D. (1995). *The stop* (Vol. 1). SUNY Press.

Archibald, J. A. (2008). *Indigenous storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit*. UBC Press.

Arendt, H., & Kohn, J. (2006). *Between past and future*. Penguin Books.

Arlander, A., Barton, B., Dreyer-Lude, M., & Spatz, B. (Eds.). (2017). *Performance as research: Knowledge, methods, impact*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315157672

Asma, S. T. (2017). *The evolution of imagination*. The University of Chicago Press.

Badham, M. (2013). The turn to community: Exploring the political and relational in the arts. *Journal of Arts & Communities,* 5(2), 93-104. https://doi.org/10.1386/jaac.5.2-3.93_1

Bagley, C., & Cancienne, M. B. (Eds.). (2002). *Dancing the data* (Vol. 5). Peter Lang Pub Incorporated.

Bainbridge Cohen, B., Nelson, L., & Nancy Stark Smith. (2012). *Sensing, feeling, and action: the experiential anatomy of body-mind centering*®. Contact Editions.

Barad, K. (2003). Posthumanist performativity: Toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28(3), 801-831.

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke University Press.

Barad, K. (2010). Quantum entanglements and hauntological relations of inheritance: Dis/continuities, spacetime enfoldings, and justice-to-come. *Derrida Today*, 3(2), 240-268.

Barad, K. (2011). Nature's queer performativity. *Qui Parle*, 19(2), 121. https://doi.org/10.5250/quiparle.19.2.0121

Barad, K. (2015). Transmaterialities: Trans*/matter/realities and queer political imaginings. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, *21*(2-3), 387-422

Barbour, K. (2004). Embodied ways of knowing. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 10. https://doi.org/10.15663/wje.v10i1.342

Barbour, K. (2016a). Place-responsive choreography and activism. In E. Emerald, A. Garcia, & R. Rinehart (Eds.), *Global South ethnographies: Minding the senses* (pp. 127–145). SensePublishers.

Barbour, K. (2016b). Embodied values and ethical principles in somatic dance classes: Considering implicit motor learning. *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices*, *8*(2), 189-204.

Barbour, K. (2019). Backyard activisms: Site dance, permaculture and sustainability. *Choreographic Practices*, 10(1), 113-125.

Barbour, K. N. (2020). Environmental and site dance in Aotearoa New Zealand: Tracing the legacy of Alison East. *Dance Research Aotearoa*, 6, 51-72.

Barbour, K. (2025). Field works. In V. Hunter, & C. Tuner, C. (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Site-Specific Performance* (pp. 42-55). Routledge.

Barbour, K., & Hitchmough, A. (2014). Experiencing affect through site-specific dance. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 12, 63-72.

Barone, T., & Eisner, E. W. (2011). *Arts based research*. SAGE Publications.

Barragan, R. (2023). Decolonization from root to bloom: A somatic movement approach to reconnect with the essence of our sentient body. *Cuadernos de Musica, Artes Visuales Y Artes Escenicas*, 18(2), 180–189. https://doi.org/10.11144/javeriana.mavae18-2.drsb

Batiste, M., Bell, L., Findlay, I., & Henderson, S. (2016). Afterword. In *Visioning a Mi'kmaw humanities*, Cape Breton University Press.

Batson, G. (2013). Sharing creativity through the mirror neuron system: Embodied simulation through dance: Changing currents in education and public life. In L. Book (Ed.), *Creativity and Entrepreneurship* (pp. 66-76). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Batson, G. (2017). Human origami: The embryo as a folding life continuum. *International Journal of Prenatal and Life Sciences*, 1(1), 1-20.

Bauman, W A. (2015). Climate weirding and queering nature: Getting beyond the anthropocene. *Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute*, 6(2), 742-754. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel6020742

Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind*. Basic Books.

Benjamin, R. (2024). *Imagination: A Manifesto* (A Norton Short). W. W. Norton & Company.

Bergonzoni, C. (2022). *A ravine of in-betweens: The body, dance, writing into the excess*. [Doctoral dissertation, Simon Fraser University]. Simon Fraser University Summit Research Repository. https://summit.sfu.ca/item/34905

Bergonzoni, C. (2025). Salting the curriculum: Dance as a living Currere into identity, knowledge, and belonging. *The Currere Exchange Journal*, *9*(2), 97-104.

Bettman, C., Bloch-Atefi, A., Day, E., Hsi, T., Loewenthal, D., Tudor, K., (2021). Psychotherapy practice, education, and training during the coronavirus pandemic: Members of the editorial board of the Psychotherapy and Counselling Journal of Australia share their experiences. *Psychotherapy and Counselling Journal of Australia*, 9(1).

Bickel, B. (2012). Decolonizing the divine through co-a/r/tographic praxis in matrixial borderspaces. *Visual Arts Research*, 38(2), 112-125. https://doi.org/10.5406/visuartsrese.38.2.0112

Bickel, B. (2020). *Art, ritual, and trance inquiry*. Springer International Publishing.

Bickel, B. A., & Fisher, R. M. (2022). *Art-care practices for restoring the communal: Education, co-inquiry, and healing*. Routledge.

BIRD BRAIN: A Navigational Dance Project. (n.d.). www.ilandart.org. http://www.ilandart.org/dance-projects/bird-brain-migrations/

Blumenfeld-Jones, D. S. (2012). *Curriculum and the aesthetic life: Hermeneutics, body, democracy, and ethics in curriculum theory and practice*. Lang.

Blumenfeld-Jones, D. (2017). Wild imagination, radical imagination, politics, and the practice of arts-based educational research (ABER) and scholartistry. In M. Cahnmann-Taylor & R. Siegesmund (Eds.), *Arts-Based Research in Education* (pp. 48-66). Routledge.

Braidotti, R. (2019). A theoretical framework for the critical posthumanities. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 36(6), 31-61.

Bresler, L. (2004). *Knowing bodies, moving minds: towards embodied teaching and learning*. Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Brown, W. (2015). *Undoing the demos: Neoliberalism's stealth revolution*. Zone Books.

Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing gender*. Routledge.

Butler, J., & Athanasiou, A. (2013). *Dispossession: The performative in the political*. John Wiley & Sons.

Butterwick, S., & Roy, C. (2018). Introduction to finding voice and listening: The potential of community and arts-based adult education and research. *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education*, *30*(2).

Butterwick, S., & Lawrence, R. L. (2023). Stories of hope, imagination, and transformative learning: A dialogue. *New directions for adult and continuing education*, *2023*(177), 51-60.

Butterwick, S., & Selman, J. (2025). Process and performance: Matters of quality in community-based theatre. *Art/Research International*, *9*(2), 418-438.

Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of indigenous education*. Kivakí Press.

Cajete, G. (2004). Philosophy of native science. *American Indian thought*, 45-57.

Cajete, G. (2015) *Indigenous community: Rekindling the teachings of the seventh fire*. Living Justice Press. Kindle Edition.

Cajete, G. A. (2020). Indigenous science, climate change, and indigenous community building: A framework of foundational perspectives for indigenous community resilience and revitalization. *Sustainability*, 12(22), 9569.

Cancienne, M. B., & Snowber, C. N. (2003). Writing rhythm: Movement as method. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(2), 237-253. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800402250956

Cancienne, M. B., & Bagley, C. (2008). Dance as method: The process and product of movement in educational research. In P. Liamputtong & J. Rumbold (Eds.), *Knowing Differently: Arts-Based and Collaborative Research Methods* (pp. 169-186). Nova Science.

Carpena-Méndez, F., Virtanen, P. K., & Williamson, K. J. (2022). Indigenous pedagogies in a global world and sustainable futures. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly,* 53(4), 308-320.

Cixous, H. (1976). The laugh of the medusa. *Signs*, 1(4), 875–893. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3173239

Hélène Cixous, & Clément, C. (2008). *The newly born woman*. University Of Minnesota Press.

Coates, T. N. (2015). *Between the world and me*. Spiegel & Grau.

Collier, C. (2013). *Recovering the body: A philosophical story*. University of Ottawa.

Coole, D., & Frost, S. (2010). Introducing the new materialisms. *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, 1-43.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1997). *Finding flow: The psychology of engagement with everyday life*. Basic Books.

Cuomo, C J. (2017). Sexual politics in environmental ethics. In S. Gardiner & A. Thompson (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of environmental ethics*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199941339.013.26

Damasio, A. (1994). *Descartes' error: Emotion, rationality and the human brain*. Putnam.

Damasio, A. (2018). *The strange order of things: Life, feeling, and the making of cultures*. Vintage.

Donald, D. (2009). Forts, curriculum, and Indigenous métissage: Imagining decolonization of Aboriginal-Canadian relations in educational contexts. *First Nations Perspectives*, 2(1), 1-24.

Donald, D. (2012a). Forts, colonial frontier logics, and Aboriginal-Canadian relations: Imagining decolonizing educational philosophies in Canadian contexts. In Abdi, A. A. (Ed.), *Decolonizing Philosophies of Education* (pp. 91-111). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-687-8_7

Donald, D. (2012b). Indigenous Métissage: A decolonizing research sensibility. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 25(5), 533-555.

Eddy, M. (2002). Somatic practices and dance: Global influences. *Dance Research Journal*, 34(2), 46-62.

Eddy, M. (2009). A brief history of somatic practices and dance: Historical development of the field of somatic education and its relationship to dance. *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices*, 1(1), 5-27.

Eddy, M., Williamson, A., & Weber, R. (2014). Reflections on the spiritual dimensions of somatic movement dance education. In S. Whatley, R. Weber, A. Williamson, & G. Batson (Eds.), *Dance, somatics and spiritualities: Contemporary sacred narratives*, (pp. 159-94). Intellect.

Eisner, E. W. (2002). *The arts and the creation of mind*. Yale University Press.

Ettinger, B. L. (2001). Wit(h)nessing trauma and the matrixial gaze: From phantasm to trauma, from phallic structure to matrixial sphere. *Parallax*, 7(4), 89–114. https://doi.org/10.1080/13534640110089276

Ettinger, B L. (2004). *Weaving a woman artist with-in the matrixial encounter-event*. SAGE Publishing, 21(1), 69-94.

Ettinger, B.L. (2006). Matrixial trans-subjectivity. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23, 218 - 222. https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Matrixial-Trans-subjectivity-Ettinger/c4b5c1ccfacc2eb8aaafcb345fb8cdcc328ad174

Ettinger, B. L. (2010). (M)Other Re-spect: Maternal subjectivity, the ready-made mother-monster and the ethics of respecting. *Studies in the Maternal*, 2(1), 1-24. https://doi.org/10.16995/sim.150

Faculty of Arts, Aarhus University. (2016, December 8). *Karen Barad: Troubling time/s, undoing the future* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/dBnOJioYNHU

Fels, L. (2010). Coming into presence: The unfolding of a moment. *Journal of Educational Controversy*, 5(1), 8.

Fels, L. (2011). A dead man's sweater: Performative inquiry embodied and recognized. In S. Schonmann (Ed.). *Key concepts in theatre drama education*. (pp. 339-343). Sense.

Fels, L. (2015a). Woman overboard: Pedagogical moments of performative inquiry. In S. Walsh, B. Bickel, and C. Leggo, (Eds.) *Arts-based and contemplative practices in research and teaching: Honoring presences*. (pp. 112-123). Routledge.

Fels, L. (2015b). Performative inquiry. In E. Vettraino & W. Linds (Eds.), *Playing in a house of mirrors* (pp.151-174). SensePublishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-118-2_11

Fels, L. (2015c). In Schonmann, S. (Ed.), *International yearbook for research in arts education: The wisdom of the many – key issues in arts education*. (pp. 510-514). Waxmann Verlag GMBH.

Fels, L. (2020). Winter's walk: All the light I hold in this moment. *LEARNing Landscapes*, 13(1), 15-21.

Fels, L., & Ricketts K. (2015). BodyHeat encounter: Performing technology in pedagogical spaces of surveillance and intimacy. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 16(9), 1-24.

Foster, E., & Kerr, P. (2024). Queer/Green collaboration as a radical response to climate crises: foregrounding the green stripe. *Global Political Economy*, 3(1), 73-91. https://doi.org/10.1332/26352257Y2024D000000013

Francesconi, D., & Tarozzi, M. (2019). Embodied education and education of the body: The phenomenological perspective. In M. Brinkmann, J. Türstig, & M. Weber-Spanknebel (Eds.), *Leib–Leiblichkeit–Embodiment: Pädagogische perspektiven auf eine phänomenologie des leibes* (pp. 229-247). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

Fraleigh, S. H. (2004). *Dancing identity: Metaphysics in motion*. University of Pittsburgh Press.

Fraleigh, S. H. (2015a). *Moving consciously: somatic transformations through dance, yoga, and touch*. University Of Illinois Press. https://muse.jhu.edu/chapter/1586816

Fraleigh, S. H. (2015b). Phenomenologies in the flowing live present. *Dance, Movement & Spiritualities*, 2(2), 141-158.

Fraleigh, S. H. (2018a). *Back to the dance itself: Phenomenologies of the body in performance*. University of Illinois Press.

Fraleigh, S. (2018b). Talking to tremors: Somatics in dance, dialogics and silence. *Dance, Movement & Spiritualities*, 5(1), 33–45. https://doi.org/10.1386/dmas.5.1.33_1

Fraleigh, S. (2019). Canyon consciousness. In K. E. Bond & S. Gardner (Eds.), *Dance and the Quality of Life*, (pp. 23-44). Springer Nature.

Fraleigh, S. (2020). We are not solid beings. *Asian Theatre Journal*, 37(2), 464-489.

Fraleigh, S., & Williamson, A. (2015). On dance and phenomenology: An essay interview with professor Sondra Fraleigh, University of New York. *Dance, Movement & Spiritualities*, 2(2), 199-217.

Frantzich, K., & Fels, L. (2017). Embodied theater ecology: Illuminating the gap through bridging depth psychology's encounter with performative inquiry. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 46(3), 272-281. https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2017.1371668

Frost, S. (2016). *Biocultural creatures: Toward a new theory of the human*. Duke University Press.

Garroutte, E. M., & Westcott, K. D. (2013). The story is a living being: Companionship with stories in Anishinaabeg studies. In J. Doerfler, N. J. Sinclair, & H. K. Stark (Eds.), *Centering Anishinaabeg studies: Understanding the world through stories* (pp. 61-80). Michigan State University Press.

Gatens, M., & Lloyd, G. (2002). *Collective imaginings: Spinoza, past and present*. Routledge.

Gergen, K. (2021). *The relational imperative: Resources for a world on edge*. Taos Institute Publications.

Ghadim, M R. (2020). Nomadic art therapy: A contemporary epistemology for reconstructed practice. *Art Therapy*, 38(3), 127–136. https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2020.1746617

Glover, S. K. (2023). Fleshing out the embodied potentialities of positionality. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 30(2), 154-162. https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004231176100

Gosetti-Ferencei, J. A. (2018). *The life of imagination: Revealing and making the world*. Columbia University Press.

Greene, M. (1977). Towards wide-awakeness: An argument for the arts and humanities in education. *Teachers College Record*, 79(1), 119-125.

Greene, M. (1978). *Landscapes of learning*. Teachers College Press.

Greene, M. (2000). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change.* Jossey-Bass Publishers. (Original work published 1995)

Grosz, E. (2017). *The incorporeal: Ontology, ethics, and the limits of materialism*. Columbia University Press.

Halprin, D. (2014). Body ensouled, enacted and entranced: Movement/dance as transformative art. In Whatley, S., Weber, R., Williamson, A., Batson, G. (Eds.), *Dance, somatics and spiritualities: Contemporary sacred narratives* (pp. 87-114). Intellect.

Haraway, D. (1990). A manifesto for cyborgs: Science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980s. In *Feminism/Postmodernism* (1st ed., pp. 190–233). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511570940.007

Haraway, D. (1992). The promises of monsters: a regenerative politics for inappropriate/d others. *Cultural Studies*, 295-337.

Haraway, D. (2008). Companion species, mis-recognition, and queer worlding. *Queering the non/human*, xxiii-xxxvi.

Haraway, D. (2016). *Staying with the trouble (Experimental futures)*. Duke University Press. Kindle Edition.

Hartley, L. (2015). Embodiment of spirit: From embryology to authentic movement as embodied relational spiritual practice. In Weber, R. Williamson, A. Batson, G. Whatley, S. (Eds.), *Dance, somatics, and spiritualities: Contemporary sacred narratives*. (pp. 9-34) Intellect.

Hayes, M. T., Sameshima, P., & Watson, F. (2015). Imagination as method. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *14*(1), 36-52.

Heavey, K., & Jemmott, K. (2020). Cinders: A duoethnography on race, growth and transformation. *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education*, 32(2), 103–119.

Hennessy, K. (2014). A choreographer's notes on making a dance about the economy. *Performance Research*, 19(5), 56-60.

Hill, C. M. (2017). More-than-reflective practice: Becoming a diffractive practitioner. *Teacher Learning and Professional Development*, 2(1).

hooks, bell. (2000). *All about love: New visions*. William Morrow Inc.

Hume, A. (2016). Toward an antiracist ecopoetics: Waste and wasting in the poetry of Claudia Rankine. *Contemporary Literature*, 57(1), 79–110. https://doi.org/10.3368/cl.57.1.79

Hunter, V. (2005). Embodying the site: The here and now in site-specific dance performance. *New Theatre Quarterly*, 21(4), 367-381.

Hunter, V. (2015). *Moving sites*. Taylor & Francis.

Hunter, V. (2019). Vernacular mapping: Site dance and embodied urban cartographies. *Choreographic Practices*, 10(1), 127-144.

Hunter, V. (2021). *Site, dance and body: Movement, materials and corporeal engagement*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Ilardo, M. A., Moltke, I., Korneliussen, T. S., Cheng, J., Stern, A. J., Racimo, F., de Barros Damgaard, P., Sikora, M., Seguin-Orlando, A., Rasmussen, S., van den Munckhof, I. C. L., ter Horst, R., Joosten, L. A. B., Netea, M. G., Salingkat, S., Nielsen, R., & Willerslev, E. (2018). Physiological and genetic adaptations to diving in sea nomads. *Cell*, 173(3), 569-580.e15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cell.2018.03.054

Iovino, S. (2014). Bodies of Naples: Stories, matter, and the landscapes of porosity. In S. Iovino & S. Oppermann, *Material ecocriticism*. Indiana University Press.

Irwin, R. L., Beer, R., Springgay, S., Grauer, K., Xiong, G., & Bickel, B. (2006). The rhizomatic relations of a/r/tography. *Studies in Art Education*, 48(1), 70-88.

Irwin, R. L. (2017). A/r/tography: A metonymic métissage. In M. R. Carter & V. Triggs (eds.), *Arts education and curriculum studies* (pp. 139-149). Routledge.

Johnson, R. (2023). *Embodied activism*. North Atlantic Books.

Kaiser, B M., & Thiele, K. (2018). If you do well, carry! The difference of the humane: An interview with Bracha L. Ettinger. *philoSOPHIA*, 8(1), 101-125. https://doi.org/10.1353/phi.2018.0005

Kelly, V. (2015). To see, to know, to shape, to show: The path of an Indigenous artist. In B. Bickel, S. Walsh & C. Leggo (Eds.), *Arts-based and contemplative practices in research and teaching*, (pp. 46–65). Routledge.

Kelly, V. (2020). Living and being in place: An Indigenous métissage. In E. Lyle, *Identity Landscapes* (pp. 185-196). Brill.

Kelly, V. (2021). Radical acts of re-imaging ethical relationality and Trans-Systemic Transformation. *Engaged Scholar Journal: Community-Engaged Research, Teaching, and Learning*, 7(1), 183–202. https://doi.org/10.15402/esj.v7i1.70759

Kerr, M.(2023a) Dismantling anti-Blackness in ballet: Pedagogies of freedom. In Mattingly, K., & Iyun Ashani Harrison (Eds.), *Antiracism in ballet teaching*. Taylor & Francis.

Kerr, M. (2023b). *Tommy_noun*. C&R Press.

Kerr, M. (2023c). *Muttology*. Small Harbor Publishing.

Khoja-Moolji, S. S. (2017). The making of humans and their others in and through transnational human rights advocacy: Exploring the cases of Mukhtar Mai and Malala Yousafzai. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 42(2), 377-402.

Kieft, E. (2022) *Dancing in the muddy temple (Studies in body and religion*). Lexington Books. Kindle Edition.

Kieft, E. (2023). The way of the wild soul: A map for embodied and nature-based spirituality. In N. Colin, C. Seago, & K. Stamp, *Ethical agility in dance* (pp. 279-283). Taylor & Francis.

Kimberle, C. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics, *University of Chicago Legal Forum,* 1(1989): 139-167. http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8/

Kloetzel, M. (2015a). Bodies in place: location as collaborator in dance film. *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media*, 11(1), 18-41.

Kloetzel, M. (2015b). Site-specific dance in a corporate landscape: Space, place, and non-place. In V. Hunter, *Moving sites: Investigating site-specific* performance (pp. 239-254). Routledge.

Kloetzel, M. (2019). From recontextualization to protest: 50 years of site dance practice in North America. In Barbour, K. N., Hunt, V., & Kloetzel, M. (Eds.), *(Re)positioning site dance: local acts, global perspectives*. (pp.25-50) Intellect.

Kloetzel, M. (2024). Decolonizing site-specific performance methodologies: Preliminary steps. *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 34(2), 187-210.

Kloetzel, M., & Pavlik, C. (Eds.). (2013). *Site dance: Choreographers and the lure of alternative spaces*. University Press of Florida.

Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: characteristics, conversations and contexts.* University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing.

Kuhn, R. (2024). *Somacultural liberation*. North Atlantic Books.

Laidlaw, B. (2021). The ecological imperative and function of dance: A literature review. *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices*. 13(1). 95-111.

Laidlaw, B., & Beer, T. (2018). Dancing to (re) connect: Somatic dance experiences as a medium of connection with the more-than-human. *Choreographic Practices*, 9(2), 283-309.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the flesh: The embodied mind and its challenge to Western thought*. Basic Books.

LaMothe, K. L. (2012a). 'Can they dance?' Towards a philosophy of bodily becoming. *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices*, 4(1), 93-107.

LaMothe, K. L. (2012b). *What a body knows*. John Hunt Publishing.

LaMothe, K. L. (2015). *Why we dance: A philosophy of bodily becoming*. Columbia University Press.

LaMothe, K. (2018). As the earth dances: A philosophy of bodily becoming. In S. Fraleigh (ed.), *Back to the dance itself: Phenomenologies of the body in performance* (pp. 123–140). University of Illinois Press.

Lannen, M. (2022). Touching across: Performing new dance ecologies through dialogical choreographies. *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices*, 14(2), 165–182. https://doi.org/10.1386/jdsp_00085_1

Leavy, P. (Ed.). (2017). *Handbook of arts-based research*. Guilford Publications.

Léonard, N. (2020). The arts and new materialism: A call to stewardship through mercy, grace, and hope. *Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute,* 9(3), 84-84. https://doi.org/10.3390/h9030084

Lennon, K. (2015). *Imagination and the imaginary*. Routledge.

Levine, P. A. (1997). *Waking the tiger: Healing trauma: The innate capacity to transform overwhelming experiences.* North Atlantic Books.

Little Bear, L. (2009). Naturalizing Indigenous knowledge: Synthesis paper. *Canadian Council on Learning*. Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre.

Lloyd, R. J. (2021). The power of interactive flow in salsa dance: A motion-sensing phenomenological inquiry featuring two-time world champion, Anya Katsevman. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 13(6), 955-971.

Lloyd, R. J., & Smith, S. J. (2024). Salsa rhythms and soul connections. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 30(2), 175-181. https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004231176094

Menakem, R. (2017). *My grandmother's hands: Racialized trauma and the pathway to mending our hearts and bodies*. Central Recovery Press.

McGreevy, S., & Boland, P. (2022). Touch: An integrative review of a somatosensory approach to the treatment of adults with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. *European Journal of Integrative Medicine*, 54, 102168. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eujim.2022.102168

Mohr, H. (2021). *Shifting cultural power: Case studies and questions in performance (The NCCAkron Series in Dance).* University of Akron Press. Kindle Edition.

Morrison, T. (2019). *The source of self-regard: Selected essays, speeches, and meditations*. Knopf.

Mortimer-Sandilands, C. (2008). Queering ecocultural studies. *Cultural Studies*, 22(3–4), 455–476. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380802012567

Mortimer-Sandilands, C., Erickson, B., & Hoopla Digital. (2010). *Queer ecologies : Sex, nature, politics, desire*. Indiana University Press.

Muller, S., Hemming, S., & Rigney, D. (2019). Indigenous sovereignties: Relational ontologies and environmental management. *Geographical Research*, 57(4), 399-410.

Newen, A., De Bruin, L., & Gallagher, S. (Eds.). (2018). *The Oxford handbook of 4E cognition*. Oxford University Press.

Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education.* University of California Press.

Noë, A. (2023). *The entanglement*. Princeton University Press. Kindle Edition. Othering & Belonging Institute.

Oppermann, S. (2021). New materialism and the nonhuman story. In J. Cohen & S. Foote (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to environmental humanities*, (pp.258-272). Cambridge University Press.

Østern, T. P., Jusslin, S., Nødtvedt Knudsen, K., Maapalo, P., & Bjørkøy, I. (2023). A performative paradigm for post-qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Research*, 23(2), (pp. 272-289)

Pallant, C. (2023). *Ecosomatics*. Simon and Schuster.

Payne, P., Levine, P. A., & Crane-Godreau, M. A. (2015). Somatic experiencing: Using interoception and proprioception as core elements of trauma therapy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, 93.

Perez, M. A., & Longboat, S. (2019). Our shared relationship with land and water: Perspectives from the Mayangna and the Anishinaabe. *Ecopsychology*, 11(3), 191-198.

Popova, M. (2014). Mary Oliver reads her beloved poem “Wild Geese.” *The Marginalian*. https://www.themarginalian.org/2014/09/24/mary-oliver-reads-wild-geese/

powell, j. a. (2012). *Racing to justice: Transforming our conceptions of self and other to build an inclusive society*. Indiana University Press.

powell, john a, & Menendian, S. (2024). *Belonging without othering*. Stanford University Press.

powell, john. (2025, January 22). *Video: Bridging to belonging*. Othering & Belonging Institute. https://belonging.berkeley.edu/video-bridging-belonging 5

Presencing Institute. (2025). *Presencing: Leading from the emerging future*. https://www.presencing.org/presencing

Rankine, C. (2014). *Citizen: An American lyric*. Graywolf Press.

Ravenscroft, A. (2018). Strange weather: Indigenous materialisms, new materialism, and colonialism. *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, *5*(3), 353-370.

Richmond, S., & Snowber, C. (2011). Landscapes of aesthetic education. *Cambridge Scholars Publishing*.

Rosiek, J. L., Snyder, J., & Pratt, S. L. (2019). The new materialisms and Indigenous theories of non-human agency: Making the case for respectful anti-colonial engagement. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 26(3-4), 331-346. https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004198301

Rosiek, J. L., & Snyder, J. (2020). Narrative inquiry and new materialism: Stories as (not necessarily benign) agents. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 26(10), 1151-1162. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800418784326

Ross, J. (2004). The instructable body: Student bodies from classrooms to prisons. In Bresler, L. (Ed.), *Knowing bodies, moving minds* (pp.169-182). Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Ross, J. (2007). *Anna Halprin: Experience as dance*. University of California Press.

Russell, J. (2021). *Queer ecopedagogies.* Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-65368-2

Sepper, D. L. (1996). *Descartes's imagination: Proportion, images, and the activity of thinking.* Univ of California Press.

Seymour, N. (2020). *Queer ecologies and queer environmentalisms.* Cambridge University Press, 108-122. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108699396.009

Shapiro, S. B. (2016). Dance as activism: The power to envision, move and change. *Dance Research Aotearoa*, 4(1), 3.https://doi.org/10.15663/dra.v4i1.53

Sheridan, J., & Longboat, R. H. C. T. S. D. (2006). The Haudenosaunee imagination and the ecology of the sacred. *Space and Culture*, 9(4), 365-381.

Shields, A., & Irwin, R. (2020). Art making in arts-based educational research dissertations. In B. Andrews, *Perspectives on arts education research in Canada*, Volume 2 (pp. 26-46). Brill.

Smith, S. (2011). Becoming horse in the duration of the moment: The trainer's challenge. *Phenomenology & Practice*, 5(1), 7-26.

Smith, S., & Lloyd, R. (2021). A practical introduction to motion-sensing phenomenology. *Revue PhénEPS / PHEnex Journal*, 11(2).

Snowber, C. (2002). Bodydance: Fleshing soulful inquiry through improvisation. In C. Bagley & M. B. Cancienne (Eds.). *Dancing the data* (pp. 20-33). Peter Lang.

Snowber, C. N. (2012). Dancing a curriculum of hope: Cultivating passion as an embodied inquiry. *Foundation for Curriculum Theory - JCT: Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 28(2). https://doi.org/10.63997/jct.v28i2.369

Snowber, C. (2014). Dancing the threshold from personal to universal. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 15(2).

Snowber, C. (2014b). Visceral creativity: Organic creativity in reaching arts/dance education. In J. Piirto, *organic creativity in the classroom: Teaching to intuition in academics and the arts* (pp.253-266). Routledge.

Snowber, C. (2016a). An embodied Currere: Dance, poetics, place and site-specific performance. In M. A. Doll (Ed.), *The reconceptualization of curriculum studies* (pp. 137-143). Routledge.

Snowber, C. (2016b). *Embodied inquiry*. SensePublishers, Rotterdam.

Snowber, C. (2017). Dancers of incarnation: From embodied prayer to embodied inquiry. *Théologiques*, 25(1), 125-138.

Snowber, C. (2018). Living, moving, and dancing. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *Handbook of arts-based research*, (pp. 247-262). The Guilford Press.

Snowber, C. (2019). Spirituality and dance. In L. Zsolnai & B. Flanagan (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of spirituality in society and the professions* (pp. 404-411). Routledge.

Snowber, C. (2020a). Dancesong. *Dance, Movement & Spiritualities*, 7(1-2), 27-34.

Snowber, C. (2020b). Enfleshing soulful inquiry. In S. Richmond & C. Snowber, *Landscapes of aesthetic education*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Snowber, C. (2020c). Fragments of the body, landscape, and identity: A dancer/poet's terroir. In E. Lyle, *Identity landscapes* (pp. 69-82). Brill.

Snowber, C. (2022). *Dance, place, and poetics: Site-specific performance as a portal to knowing*. Springer Nature.

Snowber, C. N. (2024). A poetics of the sea. *World Futures Review*, 16(1-2), 86-89.

Snowber, C., & Bickel, B. (2014). Companions with mystery: Art, spirit, and the ecstatic. In S. Walsh, B. Bickel, & C. D. Leggo (Eds.) *Arts-based and contemplative practices in research and teaching* (pp. 67-87). Routledge.

Spatz, B. (2015). *What a body can do*. Routledge.

Springgay, S. (2016). Towards a rhythmic account of working together and taking part. *Research in Education*, 96(1), 71-77. https://doi.org/10.1177/0034523716664603

Springgay, S. (2022). *Feltness: research-creation, socially engaged art, and affective pedagogies*. Duke University Press.

Sorensen, M. & Triggs, V. (2017). Practicing the Rock: Field experience and diffractive thinking. *Revista Vis: Revista do Programa de Pos-Graduacao em Arte* 16(2), 2017.

Stinson, S. (2004). My body/myself: Lessons from dance education. In L. Bresler (Ed.), *Knowing bodies, moving minds* (pp.153-168). Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Stinson, S. (2015). Dance/teaching/research: The practice of living. In Bresler, L,. *Beyond methods lessons: From the arts to qualitative research*, 141-152.

Stinson, S. (2016). Embodied curriculum theory and research in arts education. In S. Stinson, *Landscapes: The arts, aesthetics, and education*. Springer.

Swinkels, J. R. A. (2018). Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 19(4), 547–548. https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1080/14649365.2017.1421042

Thorpe, H., & Clark, M. (2020). Gut feminism, new materialisms and sportwomen's embodied health: The case of RED-S in endurance athletes. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 12(1), 1-1. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1631879

Truman, S. E., Loveless, N., Manning, E., Myers, N., & Springgay, S. (2019). The intimacies of doing research-creation. *Knowings and knots: Methodologies and ecologies in research-creation*, 221-249.

Tufnell, M., & Crickmay, C. (2004). *A widening field: journeys in body and imagination*. Alton Dance Books.

Tufnell, M. (2017). *When I open my eyes: dance health imagination*. Dance Books Ltd.

Van der Kolk, B. A. (2014). *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma.* Viking.

Walker, J., & Butterwick, S. (2023). Education to change the world: Learning within/through social movements. In *The handbook of adult and continuing education* (pp. 322-329). Routledge.

Wang, X., Geng, L., Zhou, K., Yang, L., Ma, Y., & Zhang, S. (2016). Mindful learning can promote connectedness to nature: Implicit and explicit evidence. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 44 (1), 1-7. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2016.06.006.

Weber, A., Bradley, R., & Elder, J. (2017). *Matter & desire: an erotic ecology*. Chelsea Green Publishing.

Weber, R. (2009). Integrating semi-structured somatic practices and contemporary dance technique training. *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices*, 1(2), 237-254.

Weber, R. (2019). Somatic movement dance education: A feminist, cognitive, phenomenological perspective on creativity in dance. In K. Bond, *Dance and the quality of life* (pp. 307-324). Springer.

Weber, R., & Reed, S. (2022). Pedagogical perspectives on developing creativity in dance students. *Journal of Dance Education*, *22*(2), 119-128.

Weems, M. E. (2003). *Public education and the imagination-intellect: I speak from the wound in my mouth*. Peter Lang Group AG.

Weibe, S., & Snowber, C. (2011). The visceral imagination: A fertile space for non-textual knowing. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 27(2).

Wells-Wilbon, R., & Estreet, A. (Eds.). (2021). *Trauma and mental health social work with urban populations: African-centered clinical interventions* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429276613

Whatley, S., Weber, R., Williamson, A., Batson, G. (Eds). (2014). *Dance, somatics and spiritualities : contemporary sacred narratives.* Intellect.

Williamson, A. (2016). Reflections on phenomenology, spirituality, dance and movement-based somatics. *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices*, 8(2), 275-301.

Wolfe, F. (2023). Women of colour and somatic movement: an emerging narrative. *Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy*, 19(3), 214–230. https://doi.org/10.1080/17432979.2023.2249516

Young, I. M. (1980). Throwing like a girl: A phenomenology of feminine body comportment motility and spatiality. *Human Studies*, 3(1), 137-156. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02331805