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Senior Project 2018

**Dancing Through Life: An Autoethnographic Collection of Experiences and Perspectives in
the Commercial, Experimental and Street Dance Spaces**

Celebration of Life

“Every art is expressed through a particular medium, and every artist’s *self* is a conduit for that medium.” (Fraleigh 7) I think the most important part of artistic expression is the humanity of it. Sometimes you get so lost in the sauce of WHAT you do that you forget WHO you are. Hopefully this project does the job of expressing WHO I AM as well as what I feel in the hopes that someone reading it will feel the same way.

“I am on the bus and I did my tarot cards the other day. Yesterday. It was cool and fun and the lovers are my resolution. My issue is the past lives. I was literally so close to telling someone I am falling in love with them yesterday but instead I hit up “he who shall not be named” like “hey I want to have sex with you.” I am really excited for my Burlesque performance. I want to be a tree I want to smile at the ocean that is calm like a lake. Like Milan’s dragon Moosho. I became a vegan today. I just want to stay away from meat and cheese please meat and cheese from the market. Cold cuts in my stocks. I don’t know but I’m feeling good I feel so wonderful in the world of performance no I get a little bit jealous of my talented friends. Ain’t that the truth you stayed aloof and now I’m up on the roof reminiscing bout the times when everything was chill and cool we smoked each other’s hair and had sex in school and you lived with your brother upstate. And we went to the lake and we rode a boat.” This is a diary entry from May 2016.

I'm four years old and standing naked in my bathroom about to take a shower. It is my childhood home in Far Rockaway, Queens. I have not seen much of the world at all, just the beach to the bay, and sometimes New Jersey. The showerhead comes from the ceiling and let's out a steaming powerful stream. I look up, close my eyes and take a step into the wet zone. As soon as the warm water hits my adolescent shoulders, I feel relief. I had not yet worn a backpack to school or done any kind of labor, I was four. There was nothing in my life at that point to have given me stress, but I felt a release of tension that is the first memory I have in my entire life. I took a step under the water, and the heat let me loose, as I breathed out a sigh of pleasure. The beauty of dance to me is that moment of my first memory. All of the tensions and releases that create a story and express a feeling. It's like popping. You tense a certain part of your body, the place you want to pop, as tight as you can for a split second, and the release. This action creates the illusion of that body part popping. You don't pop to silence though, you pop to music, on rhythm, usually on the 2 and the 4. That's your base. It's one-pop-three-pop-five-pop-seven-pop! That's so weird writing down in an academic way. What I'm trying to say is that life experiences, big and small, are very interconnected with dance, because it is the embodiment of the rhythm of life.



I sat on a rugged floor in Alumni Village at Purchase in May 2017. The room was empty and there was a feeling of readiness to leave behind what happened there. It was the end of my semester and I was saying goodbye to my friend Raechel. She was/ is a strong and caring, smart and sincere person to me. Weeks before we sat by a bonfire I made in the woods, where I got really drunk practically alone (there were people there, but I sat alone) and expressed to her in my state of obliteration how badly I wanted to stop drinking. I didn't remember telling her this but she reminded me. So here we were, a few weeks later, sitting on her floor saying our goodbyes. She did a reading of my tarot with her deck. I pulled a celebration card, again. I don't remember exactly what it said but the time before that I had done tarot I pulled a celebration card. The first time I got it, it was a beautiful image of the three graces, and said, "These three women dancing in the wind and rain remind us that celebration never need depend on outside circumstances. We need not wait for a holiday or a formal occasion, nor a sunny and cloudless day. True celebration arises from a joy that is first experienced deep within, and spills over into

an overflow of song and dance and laughter, and yes, even tears of gratitude. When you choose this card, it indicates that you are becoming more and more available to the many opportunities that are to celebrate in life, and to spread this by contagion to others. Don't bother about scheduling a party on your calendar, let your hair down, take your shoes off, and start splashing in puddles right now. The party is happening all around you at every moment." I left her room with a grounded feeling, with the feeling that I have control of the journey in front of me, and I was excited to celebrate it.

Sekou, a legendary house dancer from New York City, one of the first to do this style of dance, teaches class to people who want to learn. Most of it is taught silently, as the art of dancing is most effective non-verbally. But there is something missing from this generation, or perhaps it is not missing but it is buried under the sensory overload that we face that forces our souls to shut down a bit. He pauses the music, and says something along the lines of, everyone and everything tells you to turn to this little black box, tells you to turn to the things that are trying to control you. Instead, why not go to the club? Why not be free from the control you feel, I have to do this, or I have to do that. Celebration. It is an act of rebellion against everything, to just enjoy and celebrate your life.

Omari, of the house of Mizrahi, and a vogue/ afrobeats teacher in New York City. One Sunday afternoon, he discusses movements of the body as rebellion. Simply being at a ball, and

walking or dancing, you were celebrating your life, even though the rest of society told you it wasn't valid.



Ejoe Wilson, legendary New York House Dancer stated in an instructional house dance video, “Think of your body as a map folding and unfolding on beat, mixing centuries of cultural and unconventional movements to sound, while the spirits of the past speak stories through each emotional step every limb disconnected, ever reaching for more.” My project dissects the way

that my body and bodies around me unfold in different dance spaces I have stepped into in the past few years. Every aspect of dance that I have encountered, has had a context that is so specific to the situation, that I have enjoyed collecting stories, videos, and experiences to describe the context in relation to the media form that captures it, the social and political frameworks that influence them.

Object of Desire

It was a cold night in March, and I was wearing fishnets and tall red boots. I walked into the stood and saw my team, everyone dressed in scandalous black and red clothing to represent the colors of our team. There was a DJ and his groupie setting up a white tented turntable while the dancers stretched on the floor. It was Sextacy night, and everybody was ready. The set lasted for no more than five minutes, where some Christina, Rihanna, and Janet were mixed into a sexy, diva-channeling, sensual few minutes of performance. The crowd was going wild, the dancers were all panting and out of breath as they stared down members of the audience in a cat-like manner, and everyone was really sweaty. There was a lot of floor work grinding, there wear heels, and there was the snapping of the body at every bass and snare. The Stood is always very sweaty, but tonight it was particularly hot! I invite my friend who I think is really cute, and when he tells me what a good job I did, I am pleased. My ability to portray sensuality onstage is important to me, because I like to show off my body. I perform because I like people to watch me when I look polished and attractive. It gives people a small taste of who and what I am. It is

because I am allowing people to be a part of my world, but not completely. I am just giving a sneak peak.

Flash forward to June 2018. I walk into a classroom. Yanis Marshall and Brian Friedman are teaching a heels masterclass. I am wearing grey patent leather gogo boots, rainbow leggings, and a tight black sports bra. There are about 120 people in the class, mostly women and gay men. I stand to the left because all of the good dancers stand on the right. As I try to see the choreography being demonstrated, it is very difficult to see in front of me, but I try my best to not get frustrated. Yanis Marshall was on Britain's Got Talent, and his claim is he originated men dancing in heels. Brian Friedman was one of Britney Spears's original choreographers. These are some legendary teachers I am taking class with, even though I still consider myself to be a beginner. At Millennium Dance Complex, where this class is taking place, it is common for a videographer to come in the last 15 minutes of class and record the combo that was taught for the past 75 minutes. I did not realize this at the time, but there is a hierarchical method to the recording process. Jade Chynoweth, an 18 year old dancer, is in the class and is chosen for the video. I didn't even know who she was when I took this class, but for the rest of my time in LA, I will learn that not only do you have to be amazing and close to perfect to be recognized, but you have to have a following; have relationships with the choreographers, and have confidence, or else you will be lost in the sea of thousands of girls trying to make it. Even Madonna, one of my biggest inspirations, started out as a dancer.

Erotic dance is connected to expressions of sexuality and desire, how they can claim power and how they can succumb hierarchical power, intention, place, and audience. Recently,

there has been a rise in “rauch” culture or porno-chic, which is a woman’s voluntarily participation in the resexualization of women’s bodies. The conversations that surround this new culture involve individualism, consumerism, and empowerment. There is a big emphasis on individuality, but also on blending in to the mold of a specific body type, specific stereotype, or archetype. For example, if an agency or manager says they are type-casting, they are separating you first by race, and then potentially by physical attributes such as hair color, body type, age. You are almost always being clocked by what mold you fit into, and then afterwards your individualism can shine through. Although, individualism can be immediately clocked by style, energy, and talent.

There are plenty of classes in LA that are titled “Heels.” This is because in the commercial industry, women are expected to be feminine and know how to work it in heels. When I take class from these people, they are training me to dance for Beyonce, Pink, Miley, or really any of the big popstars. My favorite class is taught on Mondays and Thursdays by Aisha Francis. She is the woman who taught Beyonce how to walk in heels. She exudes and preaches confidence, feminine energy, and empowerment. She teaches At Evolution Studios in North Hollywood, and you are allowed to film yourself in the class, but there is not professional filming in the class. You truly get to work on technique, sex appeal, and performance in general. She brings It’s also a little easier in this class because there are not as many people, it does not seem like a very competitive atmosphere, and there are red lights that give a very “bedroom vibe” to the room. I personally feel myself the most in this class, because I have never had trouble with expressing myself through performance until I moved to LA.



There is a distinction I think between knowing your worth and trying to ask for someone to give you worth. Personally, Britney Spears taught me what it meant to be sexy. Hers was the first concert I ever went to. She presented a helpless desire, one that communicate she can't help but be so aroused and wanting to please when she is around the person she is trying to attract. Or she knows she has already attracted them and now she is just playing with them. I'm not dying to be sexy, but I am dying to love myself enough to the point where I know I am desirable and I get let that wanting look in my eyes fade away. I want the look in my eyes when I dance to express the power I feel dancing gave me. It gave me physical and emotional strength, it gave me

knowledge of my sexuality and it gave me a reason to live. It gave me so much that I don't want to have to care who is watching me, I want to do it for myself. I want to feel sexy because I work so hard for what I want and that's a powerful quality. Now that I have the ability to enjoy sex and not have to be drunk to kiss somebody feels so amazing, that the feeling of "I want you to want me," doesn't feel right to me anymore.

A lot of modern concepts of dance and sexuality that inspire the kinds of performances I mentioned on the previous page come from an era of commercial music videos that immensely appealed to the public and that involve erotic movement not necessarily dance that pairs with sexual lyrics. Some of these videos chronologically include, Tina Turner's "Private Dancer", Christina Aguilera's "Dirrty", and Beyonce's "Dance For You" music videos. These present the concept of dancing for an audience, but they were not original by any means. A lot of sexual or erotic movement came from different places, such as early Burlesque shows or stripper culture, to name a few. For Dirrty, for example, there is a lot of butt shaking, hip gyrating, and gestures towards the crotch in the dance. An interesting connection that I make to these particular movements involved the story of a dangdut (Indonesian folk) singer named Inul Daratista. She started a form of dance in Indonesia that she called "drilling" in 2003, which was characterized by hip-gyrations. The dance involved a lot of public reactions, positive and negative, resulting in a law enforcement against, "pornoaction" or anything involving porn-related acts, which was put into place after Inul and her dancer's exercised their erotic dancing. Madonna was involved in a similar erotic shutdown in Canada during her Blond Ambition World Tour. After hearing word that she was to simulate female masturbation onstage during Like A Virgin, the Canadian police almost arrested her for immoral live performance on May 29, 1990. She did not, however,

change the show because her sexual Middle-Eastern tinged version of Like a Virgin was simply an act of free speech and artistic expression.

The way that popular music videos are produced that represent these forms of sexuality involve the rhetoric that a woman who is up for it can be sexually active and participate in consumerism by whatever means of production she chooses to exploit herself within. This “sex-positive” approach has led some women out of a more inferior, hetero-normative position and towards a more active, confident and auto-erotic position. In “Technologies of Sexiness: Theorizing Women’s Engagement in the Sexualization of Culture,” the authors state, “it has been argued that these discourses often exclude those who are not young, white, heterosexual or otherwise conforming to a narrow, globalized homogenizing conceptualization of female beauty (Gill, 2009; McRobbie, 2009; Orbach, 2009), highlighting the intersectionality between gendered, classed, racialized and sexualized discourses. Research on this intersectionality has also identified that, although young, white, heterosexual, slim women are less likely to be excluded, and cultural texts addressing this consumer might be more ‘mainstream’, discourses within sexualized culture address different people in different ways. For example, research has documented how black girls and women negotiate black sexual subjectivities presented in hip-hop, raggae and R’n’B, within both lyrical content and the visual media forms of music videos (Weekes, 2004)” (Evans, Riley, Shankar 3). Gill refers to the way women place themselves in this re-sexualization of culture as the agency pendulum, where they are either referred to as perceived as having a false consciousness of their actions or they are agents of their own liberation. All of this however, falls under the concept that postfeminist women activate, “technologies of sexiness” in order to participate in culture.

In a Burlesque performance, you are only as successful as the audience that is cheering you on. However, it is a very exploring it historically and academically is a popular endeavor. Burlesque began in the early 19th century, where the quasi-pornographic theatre would propose an ironic humor that poked at “high” culture, such as Shakespeare and representation of the women of that time. In the papers reviewing some of these Burlesque shows, the dancers were described as “brazen-faced, stained, yellow-haired, padded limbed creatures.” (*Horrible Prettiness* Allen 16)

I attended a Burlesque performance at a place called the Beauty Bar in New York City, where three women performed, all of whom were beautiful and slim, but had curves to them. The room was small and dark, and the MC was singing when I arrived. He had a beautiful voice by regular standards, but to me it sounded like his voice was traveling through some kind of ugly horn pipe. An ugly horn-pipe is actually a good way to describe this place. The stage was short and small, and there were able 30 fold-up chairs set up behind it, with a bar to the right of the chairs. Behind the bar was a women dressed in a very Victorian dress, a powdered wig and rouged cheeks. She was the middle-aged bartender, but she wasn't serving any drinks, it was just part of the scene. The first dancer to come on was Lilan. All dressed in red, from her long ball-gown to her nipple-tassles, she seemed like she had training in musical theatre dance. She got some dollars shoved into her lace by men in the front row who came to enjoy the artists. It was like a busted, broken circus audience in the wild west, the customers had dirt under their eyes and a lot of cavities.

I saw a burlesque performance at Purchase that was extremely entertaining and artistic. The first performance was to a song called “Feed Me” from the musical *Little Shop of Horrors*.

The person dressed as the man-eating plant who needs to be fed, slowly took off their forest outfit throughout the song, while performing musical theatre dance moves. It was quite funny, because amidst the campy, jazz song, the plant character was gearing up to “eat all of the men.” The second performance was a horror, the dancer’s own possession. Her hand undressed her unwillingly, until the end where she stood naked onstage with the saw she used to cut off the hand that was undressing her. Finally, a black performer danced onstage to Kendrick Lamar’s “Alright” until a gunshot is fired and a slow song ensues. She took off her black hood to reveal a white T-shirt, soaked in blood. She finishes by taking off the white t-shirt to reveal her breasts and then the lights go off. The burlesque performances at Purchase were particularly interesting because they went deeper than the common dance strip-tease performance. The horror performance evoked this sense of not having agency initially, but having to enforce violence to claim your power. The last was so emotional, where no one hollered at the woman taking her clothes off because her body in that circumstance was her enemy. The audience sat in Whitson’s at the Stood stunned, and finished the show with a standing ovation and tears.

The reason why the performances at Purchase were so artistic and powerful was a direct relation to the students observing the pieces. In college we are encouraged to challenge social conduct and experiment in a place that is open and safe. The performances used here are often not exploitative, but used as tools for sharing art and connecting to people. This happens with many of performer/ spectator relationships. In Judith Hanna’s “Dance and Sexuality: Many Moves,” she states, “Spectators interpret aspects of dancing on-stage akin to their own embodied experience and gender ideology.” (Hanna 216) She also mentions Foucault, and how the body is a subject the conducts a socially, economically, and culturally constructed discourse.



I performed as Madonna in the Fall of 2016 at Purchase. The cover show was at the Stood in November, pretty close to my 20th birthday. It was really important to me to be able to facilitate that experience. I bought a headset microphone, choreographed to Like a Prayer, Vogue, and Like a Virgin, and staged the whole thing with some of my friends. I think the main reason why Madonna was and is so inspiring to me, is she was completely steadfast in her destiny, and let nothing and nobody get in her way. In Hugh Hetherington's essay titled, "What a Performance!", he states, "Of course the carapace of the social and the pretence of 'safety' and 'respectability' are being challenged; but Madonna's posture is assumed in the face of destiny. Her questions move beyond the social. One of her most successful songs – 'Like a Prayer' – was seen by some merely as a challenge to social and religious convention. It begins with cosmic silence...then comes an interrogative spoken as if by a young girl. The voice is provocative, plaintive, ghostly, honest, earnest, curious. It seems to be asking who or what is there; or if anyone can be there in a universe where time runs out for some agonisingly soon and attachment is tricky because hello IS goodbye. 'God.....?' Another silence. Then the music starts, the song

begins... ‘Life is a mystery. Everyone must stand alone...’” (Hetherington 7) I am so happy to find this perspective, because it aligns with a lot of why I love Madonna. I think her artistry was all about opening up about deeper meanings of the self, the soul, what it means and who we share it with. Intimacy and sexual identity play such large roles, so they are obviously something that needs to be talked about in a creative and expressive, or even very straight up way.



Expression of Pain

I am crying. I throw my red stilettos into a bush near my house promising myself I’d never put them on again. I am mad at my roommate, she is the epitome of everything bad about LA, everything bad about the industry I’m trying so desperately trying to realize. She’s a really

good dancer though, very cunt. I have blisters on my feet and a kink in my back, so can't tilt my neck to the right side or else a lot of pain sets in. I hate how I am told that I have to learn how to be a woman in the industry, because that means dancing in heels, which I don't like whatsoever. I feel awkward and like I am not in control of my own body weight. I want to get past my own limits, find a path for myself that allows me to be successful, yet firm in my morals, my beliefs. Mind over matter, I tell myself, as I walk towards my next class. Training can be difficult for a number of reasons. I always tell myself that it is my journey, and that I have to be conscious of the way my own particular body moves through space, but comparison is inevitable, and I undeniably want to be better. Sometimes I feel like healthy comparison will help to make me better, and sometimes I feel like I think too much. I should just let me body go. Dance is defined as the art that has "movement as its medium" and "the body is its instrument (Fraleigh 9)." This is an approach that incorporates dualism, entailing that dance requires the concentration of "a minded body." The training of the body is also the training of the mind, which I will approach again after this explanation. I walk into Movement Lifestyle, and check myself into class. I go back outside, stretch my neck a little bit, and settle into the sadness that I was feeling. "I'm about to take a freestyle class, this is perfect. I can be angry and upset."

Hanna (1987) acknowledges that "to dance is human and humanity universally expresses itself in dance [through its ability to] interweave with other aspects of human life, such as communication and learning, belief systems, social relations and political dynamics, loving and fighting, urbanization and change" (p.3). Hanna also continues to point out the significance of dance in the biological and evolutionary development of the human species. Dance, especially as used in rituals, has also played a role in the spiritual and social development of many

communities throughout the world. Through its many functions, dance is not only a form of healing, but also represents a symbol of the personal, communal and social narrative of these societies. For example, “Ndeup is a Senegalese therapeutic ritual used to heal a person who has been possessed by the spirits who established a contract with the community’s original ancestors. Practiced by the Lebou fishing community and the Wolof and Serer ethnic groups in Senegal, the Ndeup ritual of possession is a way of reconciling with the ancestors and their spirits (Monteiro 7)”. Movement in this case is created for the purpose of physical, spiritual, and psychological release. It is also used as a community activity, and although it is public in nature, the music and the dance break down all barriers of isolation that is felt by the community.

The room is long, with a grey floor, a mirror, and black walls. The teacher, Big Mijo, orchestrates an energy that is raw and emotional. We warm up with a freestyle. He turns on Krump music, and whoever feels powered by the spirit of the music enters the circle and does the familiar gestures they know of the Krump style. Mijo goes first, striking with power and emotion and creativity. He says something like, “It’s just art,” meaning to me that it could mean so much and also mean nothing at all. Krump, or Kingdom Radically Uplifted Mighty Praise, started in Los Angeles in the 90s. Tommy the Clown started the style of clowning, which developed as a means of making people feel happy and free from concern. Clowning evolved into Krump, which allowed for a “constructive outlet and alternative to engaging in drugs, violence or gang activity. In providing a backdrop for the evolution of this dance style, Rize (2005) begins by setting the stage of the aftermath of the Los Angeles riots of 1992 (Monterio 13)”. The most important part of this style, to me, is the spiritual release of body over mind. I am so caught up in my head all the time, it’s good to have my body take over me. Now, I am still a beginner, and in

the *Rize* documentary, the Krumpers made it clear that Krump isn't taught in schools. I don't know whether or not the dance studio is considered a "school," but to me it feels much more like a church. This class does, at least. There is a small structure to it, we learn some basics, but don't focus on them too much. We're put straight to the test, thrown straight into battle. I battle a girl with a long red braid, a black hat and all black clothes. She puts her head on my chest and pushes me backwards with the top of her head. We're playfully taking out internal rage on each other. There isn't actual hostility, but it's our own demons coming out and being demonstrated. After class, I talk to this guy Sebastian. He's really nasty at this style. Nasty meaning, good. He's from Chicago and says he's been training like this for a little over a year. I tell him that it is my wish to be that good, and he responds by saying something like, "Krump isn't human. If you are concerned with how you look or how dope you are being, you're not doing it right. It's like a spirit takes over." I felt this spirit, but I want to be closer to this feeling. "In its original form, this dance style incorporates aspects of spirituality and has Christian roots. Though the extent of the assimilation of Christian doctrine is indistinct, incorporating fundamental Christian teachings and beliefs offers dancers a viewpoint that emphasizes the importance of faith, community and a way of life. In the documentary, a dancer regarded Krumping, not as a trend but a belief in itself, which provides a space to feel confident, to meditate, to make a statement, as well as give their lives value and meaning (Monteiro 14)". Krump, as said in the documentary *Rize*, is the closed chapter of hurt, sorrow, and anguish in our lives that people don't know about.

Every class I have taken in LA has been a spiritual experience in some way. There are a lot of reasons for this. The people that I learn from, all of them are dancers, and all of them have been through the process. This meaning, the process of growing and changing in the school of

movement is very special. The first reason for this is the mind I think. You are training your mind to control your body, while also training your mind to release. This is another example of the dualism of mind and body. There is no benefit to negative thought. It is physically, emotionally, and practically debilitating. People I learn from the most are the people who have learned to believe in themselves, believe in their process and believe in their purpose. That is why it feels like a church, a religion, a spiritual practice. “In reality, the whole self is shaped in the experience of dance, since the body is besouled, bespirited, beminded (Fraleigh 11)”. The soul, the spirit, and the mind are intrinsically tied to the physical body, leading to a transcendent experience every time the body is in motion. In the classroom, we are training to be the best dancers we can possibly be, but also the best people we can be. I don’t think those things can be separate.

The Education of the Mind, Body, and Spirit

“I want to start by saying that I am not a trained dancer in any sense. I’m on the hip-hop team, Sabotage, and I take classes in the city. I also do solo performance and have performed in many musicals, but I can’t develope, or leap into thin air effortlessly like a swan taking flight. I simply just love it, and I am still working on getting better and getting in shape. It’s actually really hard! But it’s made me realize that my body is very fragile and also very capable. However, I have a deep respect for dancers, teachers, and choreographers, because I think dancing is one of the most beautiful and liberating things we have in this world.” This is something I wrote in March of 2017. Reading it again about one year later, it makes me very emotional. I am a trained dancer now, not classically, but I have put in so much work over the past year I won’t diminish the efforts I have put in. I still have so much to improve upon which is

part of the beauty of revisiting this passage. Last year I had so much to work on, and that notion is still true.

I take about 12 dance classes a week, where teachers preach different ideologies, teach different styles, and create different environments. The common thread to all of these classes, however, is movement. In every class, there are humans moving, sweating, creating, and feeling together. My question is what kinds of connections are created through our movement? What signifies understanding and community, what signifies danger, what signifies competition? I started reading Drid Williams *Anthropology and Human Movement: Searching for Origins*, and in the first chapter, Sylvia Glasser raises the question, “*Is dance a political movement?*” What I found interesting there is that dance is a European term, and many non-European people have structured body movement that is intrinsically social and rhythmic, yet not considered dance. Under colonial regimen in South Africa, missionaries saw dancing as pagan rituals which they believed they needed to suppress. Traditional South African dancing then became the sole preserve of non-Christian black people for a long time. She also discusses the trancelike states that dance allowed to communicate with ancestors, reaffirming values of cultural traditions.



While this Volume of Williams' research focuses particularly on origins of communication, in her *Anthropology and the Dance: Ten Lectures*, she rejects postmodernist

writings regarding dance, because these writers do not comprehend what objectivity, subjectivity, and self-reflexivity amount to. Her study helps us to understand culture, movement and the body, the expression and construction of identities, the politics of culture, reception and spectatorship, aesthetics, and ritual practice. In the preface, she quotes Charles Lamb in saying that, “Nothing troubled him more than time and space, yet nothing troubled him less.”

The act of dancing and the educational process connected to it constitutes a link between “tacit and explicit knowledge,” that forms a connection between two levels of reality. Research in dance studies can help us understand human action more broadly. I think that some of the most beautiful moments in dance is connection, whether that connection be soulful, sexual, spiritual. We bring to the table what we have experienced. None of us have had similar lives. We are all individuals, inexplicably unique, trying to fit capitalist molds that enables us to make money and profit off of our passions and desires. However, because of this, and because we are artists, we will happily perform these roles. “Dance is a transient mode of expression, performed in a given form and style by the human body moving in space. Dance occurs through purposefully controlled rhythmic movements; the resulting phenomenon is recognized as dance by both the performer and the observing members of a given group.” (Keali-inohomoku, 1965:6, revised, 1970.) We are inspired by natural, everyday movement, to create, because that is what people, the non-dancers, the observers will understand. The more understood the viewers felt, the more connection that occurs in a space. Also, dance is the visual representation of music, so the way that music makes us feel, dance will do something similar. Our brains are designed to be attuned to the emotions and actions of the people around us, and we learn from other people by being emotionally connected and imitating. Something that a teacher I take from says constantly

is, “Dance comes from the soul. If you are moving without it coming from your soul, the movement is lifeless and I can’t relate to it.”

In order to conclude this project, I want to bring back the quote from Caitlin of March 2017. “I simply just love it, and I am still working on getting better and getting in shape. It’s actually really hard! But it’s made me realize that my body is very fragile and also very capable.” I’ve always loved dancing and it started showing truly during my time at Purchase. I have had a year of incredible growth within myself and I’m really really proud. I just got off the phone with a friend who told me, “Last year I was really worried about you. You would meet up with me looking like a mess, smelling like cigarettes and alcohol in the morning, and having stories of hospitalizations that you made to sound funny.” Today, it’s been a month since I had a drink at all, and while I’m not completely sober, I don’t need substances to be happy or feel normal, which is all thanks to finding a purpose for myself, letting go of what doesn’t serve me, and attempting to be a part of something bigger. Embodiment has become me. I think we all are attempting to find these answers of life, in every way we can, and art is one of the most beautiful and powerful ways to do that. I will continue to explore expression through these media forms, movement and music. I am fragile and capable, and I will not let this life pass without searching and finding unique importance. “Creative work is not a selfish act or a bid for attention on the part of the actor. It’s a gift to the world and every being in it. Don’t cheat us of your contribution. Give us what you’ve got.” ~Steven Pressfield

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