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# The Constructive Healing Powers of Dance Rhetoric

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# **The Constructive Healing Powers of Dance Rhetoric**

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**PART I:**  
How does dance inspire emotion?

Grandma forgot me. But it wasn't her; it was Alzheimer's. My family and I visited her small, institutional dorm room where the relatives were re-introduced by first name and relation every, single, time. While Mom, Grandpa, four aunts, and a total of six cousins chatted and played—Grandma sat in her wheelchair, off to the side. She stared into space with her neck bent downwards, face towards the floor. *Hi grandma..* when I approached, her gaze slightly shifted. But no response. Nothingness. The vacancy separated us; deterioration ate not only her memory, but her words. I thanked god for the surrounding conversations—a saving grace from the needed yet impossible conversation. *And then Tom, you and Grandma came to watch Emmy skate..* Grandma looked up. *Do you remember that, Grandma?* She looked straight ahead; a single tear slid down her cheek as she whispered— *so beautiful.*

And at the Midwest Regional Figure Skating Championships, my hands settled in Coach Mary's open palms. We closed our eyes and stood at the boards—mentally preparing for my performance. Before stepping on the ice, she had one request: *paint me a beautiful picture.* I don't remember my performance; everything went black. I only remember heartstrings, tugged in tune with the music through movement; and that *something* happened. When I returned to the boards, to Mary's side, her face glistened with tears.

\* \* \*

I've witnessed the power of dance through figure skating—in which the impact of ice-dancing stayed with my grandma despite mental deterioration. Dance somehow survived and remained within her; and in the end, breached the silent gap of wordlessness. For the smallest moment, dance brought us back—together. But how? Something happens when we experience dance as a witness or mover; something meaningful enough to inspire tears. I experienced a similar reaction to the dance "Gravity"—a portrayal of addiction. Like Mary, tears streamed not only my face, but the judges' and audience's faces as well; and the dance remains one of the most powerful performances today. Through choreographed dance, I will analyze and critique the social construction of dance movements and how they communicate our cultural understandings of emotion. The exploration of dance rhetoric and analysis of "Gravity" present dance as a powerful constructor of reality and healing means of socialization.

## Body Movement and Affect

On a broader level, body movement and affect studies begin to explore the relationship between dance and emotion. Body movement is presented as the reflection of an inner-state through various approaches; these theories offer truths that aid in a rhetorical analysis of dance.

\* \* \*

Charles Darwin theorized that emotional expressions and gestures were instinctual; for example, in fear, one holds his/her breath, stays still, or listens for sound (Rossberg; 1992). In a rhetorical analysis of dance, we might explore the ways in which movements play on our 'instinctual' emotional expressions; however, social constructionism proves Darwin's theory unlikely. In a rhetorical analysis of dance, the critic must recognize movements as non-instinctual—the critic must work to deconstruct the *taken for granted* expressions and further build on the *taken for granted* expressions; the critic must unravel coherent, environmental threads in an attempt to understand how our shared realities exist, perpetuate, and further construct.

The analysis of "Gravity" works to unravel the environmental threads that sew the concept of addiction; it asks *what does addiction mean to us?* And *what is addiction?* My analysis revealed multiple meanings; but the 'immortality of addiction vs. the mortality of humanity' seemed to backbone my interpretation of the multiple meanings that sprung forth. Addiction exhibits immortality vs. mortality throughout the following themes— addiction and immortality work together to construct meaning.

### **Addiction through the lens of immortality:**

*Addiction's Invitation:* The concept of immortality, like addiction, might stand inviting and attractive to the mortal human.

*Humanity as Vulnerable:* Humanity as mortal implies a vulnerability in relation to immortality, to addiction.

*Coupling & Dominance:* One might couple with addiction like one might couple with immortality—as a religion, a saving grace, a god. However, within this relationship, immortality and addiction stand dominant and powerful.

*Addiction as Incapable of Empathy:* Immortality and addiction, as inhuman, are incapable of empathy—which construct and perpetuate destructive relationship patterns. Pairing becomes more like bondage.

*Effortless vs. Effortful:* Immortality and addiction do not face death, the weight of the world—like mortal humans. In this manner, addiction never tires and holds immortal abilities.

*The Hand of Addiction:* Like the hand of addiction understands human workings; immortality understands our lives through fate.

*Denying the Human Face:* This movement further separates immortality vs. mortality, addiction vs. humanity; which further disables empathy and perpetuates destructive relationship.

*Addiction as Monstrous:* Elkins' defines monstrous as an unrecognizable and incomprehensible body; immortality and addiction are understood in this manner. Furthermore, we might not understand immortality and addiction, and its relationship to us, so it becomes unfathomable—monstrous.

*Addiction as All-Encompassing:* Immortality encompasses the real, ideal, old, and new; addiction exists as a real struggle, an ideal high, and old ways that permeate new ways.

*Coming Down From Addiction:* When there's a high, there's a low; but through the lens of immortality, coming down might imply a death. The immortal's metamorphosis into mortal demands death—likely, a devastation. Coming down from addiction's high might imply death, devastation.

*Addiction as a Defeated Victory:* Immortality seems to offer a victory—but historically, striving for immortality, or the ideal, or perfection, has resulted in destructive journies. Addiction as a defeated victory offers a temporary high and ultimate defeat.

*Addiction ties and unties:* Immortality, through fate, might tie and untie our relationships, networks, and life-lines; addiction might seem to

*The beginning and end:* Immortality exists as the beginning and end; addiction exists unconditionally, as an option, even after 'recovery'.

\* \* \*

In 1932, William James experimented with posture and emotion; he researched the means by which posture could suggest a particular emotion (Rossberg-Gempton; 1992). Although posture should not be considered alone, separate from movement, James revealed probable truths that aided in the understanding of body language and emotion. He proposed four major categories of posture and suggested meaning— a) *approach* to signify attention, b) *withdrawal* as a negative, repulsed expression, c) *expansion* to communicate pride, conceit, arrogance, disdain, d) *contraction* to express depression, dejection. He revealed the importance of posture in interpreting body language, the rhetoric of the body, and emotion. Today, psychoanalysts use posture as a nonverbal aid in understanding patients' feelings/attitudes.

In the analysis of “Gravity”, James’ concept of posture aids in understanding addiction. Addiction’s posture seems to signify *approach*—in which addiction constantly moves towards, and approaches, Kayla. Addiction unconditionally offers itself as an option. Kayla’s posture dynamically switches between approach and withdrawal; in which she signifies attention from addiction, yet runs away from it. Her dynamic inconsistency might resonate with her internal struggle in relationship with addiction; in which her emotional expressions reflect an inner state (Rossberg; 1992). Addiction’s posture also stands expansive—suggesting arrogance. Addiction offensively displays its superiority at the mercy of the addicted; no matter the pain in relationship with addiction, it stands strong and inviting.

\* \* \*

Body movement and affect have been divided into two categories—gross and specific affect (Rossberg; 1992). Gross affect refers to the general positive/negative attitude of an expression or posture (facial, body); in “Gravity”, the gross affect feels generally negative. Specific affect refers to more particular ideas of emotion through facial and bodily movement; in Gravity, specific affects might be sadness, fear, desperation, elation. Theories also differentiate between the affect of body vs. facial movement; bodily movement was deemed more informative on the intensity of emotion, and facial movement as more informative on the type of emotion.

Assuming the view offered through the film, the dance highlights body movement; we have limited access to facial movement. The emphasis on body movement draws attention to the intensity of addiction; the intensity of the experience with addiction. Addiction as an immortal, incomprehensible, monstrous force might not reveal the exact, intimate relationship experience through emotion. The dance illustrates the consistent intensity of addiction; and maybe, recognizes that more specific, emotional experiences differ between individuals. Overall, “Gravity” amplifies intensity of an experience with addiction through its focus on bodily movement.

\* \* \*

As Body Movement and Affect studies became more complex and layered, “The Cause-Effect Debate” sprung forth; a unilateral cause-effect argument. Simply put, one side argues that emotions cause bodily movements; for example, our uncontrolled physiological responses to sensations such as fear in heightened heart-rate, pupil dilation, etc. The other side, particularly dance therapists, argues that emotions could be manipulated by bodily movements—reflecting another understanding of body language and communication. The idea that ‘movement creates emotion’ constructs communication as neither unilateral nor bilateral—but as transcendental, an agent and constructor of reality.

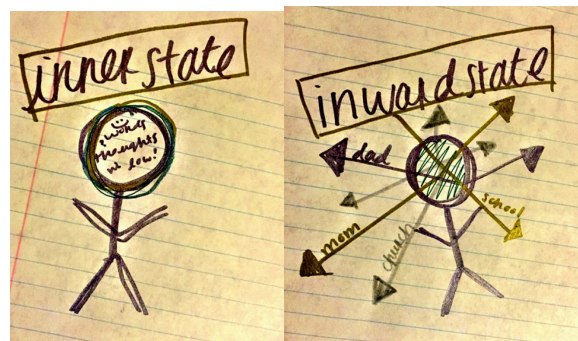
I’ve provided these historical findings because all seem to hold an element of truth; however, although these studies have provided valuable insight, the extent of reliability is questionable—in part, due to a missing piece. Modern studies don’t deny the correlation between inner-state and expressive behavior, but modernists

have recognized a pivotal element—the dimension of socialization (Rossberg; 1992). Through social constructionism, we might deepen our understanding of body movement and affect.

## Social Reconstruction

*“The most important thing about people is not what is contained within them, but what transpires between them” (Sampson; 1993)*

Social constructionist theory might criticize the concept of the inner-state, a cornerstone in body movement and affect studies; according to social theory, there is no individual self, no private, self-contained world. Rather, our being is a fluid boundary and concentration of *others*; it is composed of relationships, conversations, interactions, places, expectations, religions, values, etc. Darwin’s theory of emotional expression as the reflection of an inner-state makes logical sense— but a relational perspective would recognize what this expression does in relation to the other. The constructionist approach would explain the inner-state as a site of preparation for socialization and inner dialogue—the relational perspective would emphasize *what the inner state says in relation to the other*. A relational perspective would not approach body movement as the reflection of an inner state; rather, movement *out into socialization*. Emotional expressions become responses to and actions within the environment—which include the relationships, pressures, and expectations surrounding the body in the past and present.



Although the concept of inner-state permeates understandings of body movement and affect, a shift in focus might add another element of understanding. When looking at posture, muscle tension, and facial/body cues, we might ask—what do these expressions do in relation to *the other*? What does slouching do in relationship to *the other*? And what meaning transpires from this interaction? All movements could be considered interactions as a means to socialization; a means to connect with *the other*. By shifting focus to what these actions do in relationship with *the other*, we might more deeply explore the connection between body movement and affect.

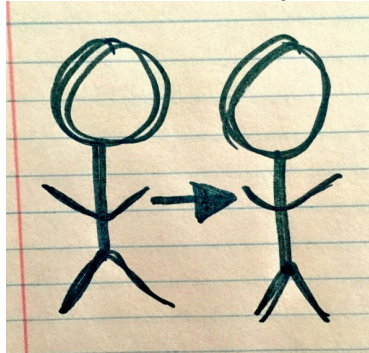
The cause-and-effect debate seems to move in a relational direction—through a bilateral (vs. unilateral) understanding. Through recognition that both

arguments hold elements of truth, we could view the 'cause and effect debate' as interchangeable or coexistent. Emotions effect/cause expression and expressions effect/cause emotion; but through a relational perspective, we go one step further. We explain and recognize external influences such as the relationship between the mover and witness, the environment in which they are embedded, ruling discourses, overarching expectations, politics, etc. By broadening our view and considering relational/relative aspects, we can deepen our understanding of the meanings involved with body movement. The development of the cause-and-effect debate might parallel the development of a more general understanding of communication through social constructionism.

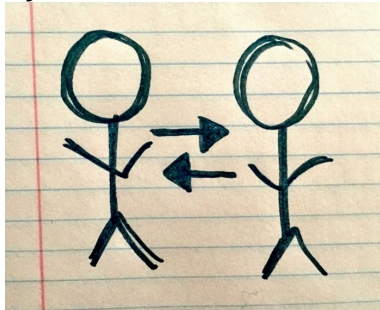
## Development of Understanding

### Previous:

*I communicate at you.*

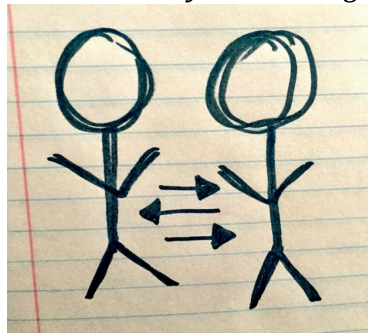


*And you communicate back at me.*

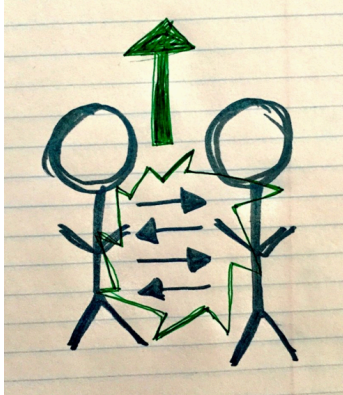


### Modern:

*And that interaction says something about me.*



Social constructionism constructs the arrows as fluid and consistent. We could add more arrows and examine the meaning of *that interaction* on the *other interaction* on the *other person* and involve arrows from *other discourses* and *other relationships* and *other things* that go on and on and on—so it becomes complicated. The concentrations of arrows are saturated in meaning; they speak to what transpires between us, what transcends the interaction. And what becomes meaningful, reality.



The transpirations are meanings and realities we construct through interaction. Are these guys friends? Enemies? Family? In love? Fighting? We can't know for sure—our culture and local specificities determine our interpretation of the arrows, the interactions, the meanings.

## The Rhetoric of Dance

*“..and the power of the experience is testimony to the power and subtlety of the rhetorics that construct it” (Clark; 1993)*

These particular, cultural variances could be better understood through rhetoric; where our culturally shared hopes, dreams, and values become more tangible. Through the socialization-dimension, body language becomes more complex than an instinctual reaction or reflection of inner state. Body language as socialized and socially constructed speaks rhetoric, speaks meaning— and requires a cross-disciplined analysis to more deeply understand constructed and perpetuated realities.

### The Rhetoric of Laban Movement Analysis

The rhetoric of dance seems tangible, alive, and at work through choreographed movement—in which movements are constructed to inspire a particular response within the audience. The Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) is a system developed for the interpretation of human movement; it attempts to classify and understand an ineffable range of human movements. The analysis could be used for generating movement—in choreographed dance; or interpreting movement—in

a dance therapy clinic (Connie; 2011). Although LMA does not seem to rely on dynamic social processes, it exercises as a site of shared meaning—helpful in guiding an understanding that we all might respond to.

Laban Movement Analysis features four areas: the body which acknowledges *what (part)* is moving, effort asks *how* is it moving (adjective), space considers the question of *where* is it moving (planes of movement), and shape explores *why* am I moving (meaning in social interaction) (Connie; 2011). LMA breaks dance into various basic components and breaches a variety of disciplines; although the analysis allows for description, interpretation, and meaning analysis—it states that movements and meanings vary between individuals (Daly; 1988).

LMA seems to acknowledge its limitations—it recognizes that an individual is not formulated and can't be decoded; therefore, the analysis does not deem the last word (such as a lie detector test). The analysis serves as a tool, an aid, towards the understanding of body movement communication in relationship with *the other*. The analysis seems to guide rather than demand.

LMA understands movement as the collaboration of change, relationship, and patterning body connections. It explores movement through shape (flow, qualities, changes), effort, and motion factors (flow, weight, time, space) (Connie; 2011). LMA also recognizes the importance of phrasing and sequencing. Extracting a single, motion-less scene from a dance could be dangerous; it's like ripping a photograph from its context—the image becomes dangerously ambiguous. The phrasing, the sequencing, the motion—all provide context. Which can completely transform the meaning of the photograph, the image, and the dance. By focusing on movement and patterns as context, we develop a more well rounded, considerate interpretation.

## So What?

Before thoughts on analysis:

Body language is an ancient, prevalent form of communication— and it's complicated. We can't say *this* movement means *that* emotion because we are not the same—emotional expressions and definitions vary individually, culturally, and temporally. Furthermore, body movement and affect studies cannot claim that a specific psychological state will produce an exact physiological response; the variance, vagueness, and ambiguity of emotions and expression complicate the rhetorical analysis of dance.

Throughout the analysis, I aim to refrain from body grammar— the assumption that we can be de-coded through our actions. De-coding suggests a coding—a formulated, consistent means of communication. Body grammar and decoding are labeling, confining, and limiting. Although rhetoric requires an element of consistency and redundancy, interpretations are rooted and dependent within *the other*—as shared knowledge vs. divisive, empirical practice. I want to reach beyond the individual as a self-container by focusing on the ultimate goal of social connection; away from *moving out* expression, and towards *moving into* socialization. I am asking the questions:

*What does the dance perform/do in the relationship?*  
*What meaning transpires from the dance as interactional?*  
*How does the dance move out into socialization?*

I utilize all previous concepts illustrated, as well as other rhetorical studies of the image and photograph, social constructionist theory, personal experience as choreographer, choreograph-ee, and audience, through an analysis of a particularly emotionally charged dance—"Gravity"—a story of addiction. In order to articulate my analysis, I've recreated the artifact in poetic prose; poetry adds an element of motion to words—which might be understood as deeper context. Poetry has become increasingly concerned with the visual rather than conceptual; like dance, in which we rely on the visual in order to create the conceptual. Sontag says, "Poetry's commitment to concreteness and to the autonomy of the poem's language parallels photography's commitment to pure seeing" (Sontag; 1977). Maybe poetry could transcribe reality through text like the camera transcribes reality through photograph. The creative narrative, in combination with images and actually witnessing the video, reveals hidden, unexpected movements and patterns. Throughout the analysis, I begin with a focus on the meaning that transpires between the two dancers and viewer (myself). Afterwards, I move the dance *out into* socialization.

\* \* \*

**PART II:**  
Supplemental Analysis of “Gravity”

*Rhetoric comes to life..*

### **Context:**

“Gravity” was performed in May-August of 2009 by Kayla Radomski and Kuponono Aweau in the So You Think You Can Dance (SYTYCD) TV competition. Throughout 12 seasons and 211 episodes of SYTYCD, it remains one of the top dances. “Gravity” tells the story of a modern day addiction—Kayla plays the addicted, Kuponono plays the addiction. Kayla says, “it’s a constant battle.. me trying to get rid of him, but he always comes back”; Kuponono hates his character, addiction nearly destroyed one of his best friends and his family (“; 2012). Choreographer Mia Michaels explains that we’ve all probably had an experience of wanting something that wasn’t good for us (Gravity; 2012).

With movement analysis comes the responsibility to know the mover and their unique patterns of communication (Connie; 2016). Although I do not know these dancers personally, I’ve observed their styles in other dances. Kayla’s patterned body movement seems rigid, quick, strong, forceful; similar to the following artifact. A lot of throwing, jerks, kicks, ground contact. But in the other dances, she seems stronger—less passive. In her Samba dance, Kayla performs latin-dancing and curvature style—one of the most difficult and intricate means of movement and control. In the following artifact, Kayla loses control. Kuponono’s other SYTYCD videos contain very similar styles to the following; his control and bounded-ness are similar. In “Eyes on Fire”, another performance with Kayla, he patterns similar, relentless grasping and manipulative movements of her body; in which he stretches her to the limits.

## The Dance of Addiction



Tall, strong, steady—  
determined.  
Arm open, extended—  
knowing.

Addiction invites.  
Frantic desperation,  
bolting.



Nestled and eased  
beneath his arm,  
she settles addiction  
over her shoulder,

over her under,  
his upper arm.

Injected with needled-fingers,  
movement serum winds her body when she  
sways, she rolls, she delusions, she  
falls and addiction braces,  
lets her lean,  
cradled back.



But above,  
the needled hand morphs—  
gently palms, masks her face.



The hand extracts her  
breath and life and jolts  
her up and down and  
sucks her breath but

shoves it back in  
graceful snaps of the  
mask for her body,  
like a puppet, on a string, stays attached.



Addiction releases  
his hand, his power, but he doesn't  
stop it won't stop because her arms  
extend V-  
I-C-T-O-R-Y she strains she stretches  
her arms on her toes on her  
knees.

She falls into addiction  
and he's there—  
swiftly swipes her  
mindlessly, gracefully,  
her body lifted  
high, body elated,  
body let go—



He lets her go.  
Her knees buckle and  
brace and arms bend in

space when she grasps  
for balance being  
carried, for so long,  
she can't walk.

\* \* \*

He's behind  
watch out  
he's back  
he's here  
he's hidden  
and swerving but  
swerving all sides you  
can't dodge him.



He's behind  
you extend  
you reach out  
but escape, there's no way  
cause you kick and  
he grabs you, your leg and he folds you  
in creases and bends where he  
knows you, you're  
weak, and he  
drags you.

Back.



He splits you—

your legs

to the ground

to the sky

gaping mouth

lower stomach

upper thigh

his cheek caresses

ecstasy.





But the arm slices  
the air to her mouth with his hand, she can't breathe  
pries it off pries his hand, her half drops  
from the force but his hand  
it is back—her hip off,  
it is back—throws it off,  
it is back— she fights off,  
but his hands..  
when they clasp,  
when they snap,  
when they grasp,  
they encase her and she  
pries, she is free..  
defeated V—  
it is back.  
From behind,  
grabs her hips, folds her bones,  
drags her back.

\* \* \*

Near knees, back arched  
arms up, face up, torn up and  
twisted, contorted—  
near knees.





Violence, distortion—  
the classical scorpion.  
Becomes a fight, a kick in motion  
behind—overhead—foot devotion  
in ballet she would hold it,  
but his hands tie  
her wrists—

it's not her move,  
she molds it.



Both stand on their  
own two feet,  
own two faces,  
own two hands to hand to  
forearm because he can because  
he will and do whatever he must to  
pull her down, to the  
ground, to the dirt.

Just get out,  
of the dirt.

But she's buried,  
so buried, still  
alive..  
with her hand,  
broken free  
towards the sky  
fingers stretched, fingers strained  
wiggled shakes, shake the dirt,  
shake the wary, shake the habit  
while he suppresses, he subdues so  
she moves but her  
face—she will loose, but  
not all, for she calls in back  
up, calls in arms, other arm,  
but the harm that's been done  
has her weak,  
has her sinking.

Dirt.



\* \* \*

Like before, like a cradle,  
brace her head, keep it stable.  
Through her body there's a flow, like  
new life, don't let go.

When the flow  
becomes trance,  
feel addiction—  
last dance  
like forever,  
make it stay,  
it will hold..  
dip her low  
lullaby,  
no surprise in  
confusion, this  
delusion, never meets,  
meet her eyes.



It's just hands on her  
neck, hands and suffocation.

But it's not only she and  
it's not only him.

When we're showcased and promised,  
the end, we begin.

\* \* \*

He's there, he permeates  
every breaking free.  
So she was and she is  
how he demands,  
she will be.



Addiction structures—  
she depends, on his  
hands which do more than  
she can, when he spans her  
waist, her mouth, her  
body is his,  
it's not hers, she  
needs cures, she  
needs yours—  
needs your hand and your body  
call them in,  
call the army 'cause  
her body will walk, turn away but  
to stay—she  
needs yours,  
needs your hand,  
needs your bond so  
she can, she can stand,  
she'll belong—  
but not here,  
on her own.



With his arm  
open—  
extended, knowing,  
strong—  
steady, determined.

Addiction stands,  
timeless.

## The Rhetoric of Dance: Constructing Addiction

### Addiction's Invitation:

In the opening position, addiction stands timeless and inviting; one arm extends, opens, welcomes. Addiction gazes into the distance and never looks at Kayla—maybe *merely* looks—from what the camera angle offers. The distant expression of addiction might suggest a lack of evaluation and judgment—but even more so, indifference. According to social constructionist theory, we all teeter on the edge of acceptable and unacceptable in society; and *the other* has the power to confirm/reject the self (Gergen; 2008). Kayla might mistake the indifference of addiction as easy acceptance. Through indifferent acceptance, addiction is illustrated as an available, accessible resource to almost anyone— Kayla, or anyone, could belong under addiction's arm. The question is not whom will addiction choose, but who will choose addiction.

Kayla chooses addiction. Her movements are sudden, hurried, quick, as she runs towards it and away from her environment; these sensations, as well as immediacy and impulse, are commonly associated with addiction. The directionality of her movement suggests a sense of security in addiction and fear of her environment, external factors. Once Kayla reaches addiction, she calms.

### Humanity as Vulnerable:

Patterned movement phrases emphasize Kayla's legs—repeatedly, addiction separates Kayla's legs. Sometimes dramatically, sometimes in the smallest transitions. Separating the legs reveals the most intimate, vulnerable space on a female body—and more generally, a human body. Addiction exposes our vulnerabilities; and in the end, makes us vulnerable. In the most dramatic separation of the legs, addiction stands mid-stage and unapologetically stretches her to the limits in a twisted version of the standing splits—addiction *merely looks* at her.

Throughout this phrase, we can't see Kayla's face; understood as the ultimate source of human relationship and connection. Her head is thrown backward and lifeless; with his lower cheek, he caresses her lower stomach, upper thigh, lower calf in a public display. She is in a vulnerable position, so it uses her, savors her, and objectifies her. As an audience, we witness this intimacy, vulnerability, and objectification—which invites a wariness, suspense, and maybe even shame from the crowd.

The close, consistent contact between bodies suggest an intimacy; and with this intimacy, comes a vulnerability. This intimacy could be explored through a lens of sexuality; in which addiction embodies the dominant male and addict as the submissive female. The vulnerabilities in sexual intimacies seem concentrated in the female body—through this dance, in the addict. The dancers as coupled play on our cultural understandings of gender roles; which further illustrate addiction as dominant and addict as submissive. Overall, the separation of legs casts a

vulnerable, sexual element onto addiction as the dance; the relationship is further constructed through movements of coupling and dominance.

### **Coupling & Dominance:**

As humans, we have a desire to bond, connect, couple—Kayla and addiction embody this concept. As two dancers on stage, Kayla and addiction couple. They perform a tie-sign; a private and public display of identification with each other which further assumes romantic connotations. Their mirroring and mimicking movements communicate a deep interrelation—coupling. Mirroring movement patterns are used in Dance Movement Therapy to affirm the self—which might play off of how in coupling, selves are affirmed by each other. The bondage to addiction seems to affirm the self; however, in a destructive manner..

Coupling and bonding with addiction becomes destructive in multiple ways throughout the dance; in one way, through power inequalities. In the tie- sign, addiction assumes the dominant position—its arm over her shoulder, she beneath its arm. Addiction so calmly, yet forcefully, forms a needle with two middle fingers and injects motion through her body; exercising its dominance over her. Before the motion-serum is injected, Kayla's movements are slower, sustained, lingering; the moment is drawn out, which might suggest her thinking, contemplating, debating. Regardless, before she has the chance to question, her body is consumed by the injection and the serum invades her blood stream as she sways with the needled hand—as if cast under a spell in complete submission to dominance. Addiction's gaze barely looks, and merely looks, at Kayla; further objectifying her.

Throughout the dance, Kayla kicks and fights to break free—but their bodies remain in contact and move together, in the way demanded by addiction. Even when Kayla momentarily breaks contact, her body still moves as if attached; and immediately, addiction's hands are back— grabbing her mouth, hips, stomach, body. Repeatedly, addiction exercises dominance over her body; almost as if beating her into submission. This movement phrase suggests the danger in bonding with addiction; in which it requires submission to its dominance, its will.

### **Effortless vs. Effortful:**

The effortlessness of addiction implies an immortal, god-like quality; especially in the face of the effortful addict. In order to more deeply understand and conceptualize this contrast, I've explored the concepts of flow, weight, time, and space guided by an LMA effort analysis. Addiction's flow seems bounded and its movements contained—elements of control. Addiction's light and active weight illustrate buoyancy and being "lifted-up" or "overcoming one's weight"— like an immortal being, a god. The timing of addiction is sudden, quick, "spark-like"— associable to the immediate "spark-like" high of addiction. Addiction's spacing (described as engagement with environment) is direct and demands *this is the way* and *this is it*—similar to demanding rules presented by the gods, or dominant discourses. Addiction, in complete control of weightlessness with confident, knowing timing holds qualities of immortality.

Kayla exerts an un-comparable amount of effort. Her flow is unbounded and open-hearted; out of control and vulnerable. Her timing shifts between lingering

and impulsive; in accordance with her unstable state in the presence of addiction. Kayla engages with her environment indirectly and expansively; she relies on addiction to guide her, lead her. Even her weight-sensing, pattern of weight management, hinges on addiction. When held in the arms of addiction, Kayla is light; but on her own two feet, she moves passive and heavy, completely exhausted. Despite Kayla's collapsed weight, the immortality of addiction remains graceful in scooping her up, sliding and catching her, etc. Addiction's weight is strong and active; which suggests power, standing ground, and immovability (Connie; 2011)—and no matter how many times Kayla pries addiction's hands away, addiction's resilience is unbelievable, inhuman.

His pattern of total body connectivity could be described as 'core-distal'—limb movement as clear as connected to core, and intricate whole-body engagement. Which suggests "support to the very edges"—constructing the steadfast strength of addiction and false promise of security. Addiction's ease and expansive posture exemplify patterns of grounded-ness, stability, and mobility— Kayla might be attracted to the unwavering confidence and steadfastness of addiction as something solid within an unsafe environment.

### **Addiction as Incapable of Empathy:**

Addiction causes Kayla turmoil—evident through desperate fighting and kicking; however, his steadfast grounded-ness speak to expressive images of "good enough as I am" and "at one" with oneself (Connie; 2006). Despite Kayla's effortful, exhaustive struggle, addiction exhibits an almost comfortable, self-satisfaction. Addiction as immortal doesn't seem capable of empathy with Kayla. Merriam Webster defines empathy as:

"the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner; *also* : the capacity for this"

Generally speaking, the beings of immortality and. mortality differ so greatly—even dimensionally; which complicates a 'vicarious' experience. Addiction has differing physical, mental, and emotional abilities than humanity; which in this case, seems to play out in abusive dominance.

However, the steadfast, grounded connection might communicate empathy through associative images of "one-ness" and "one with oneself"; for addiction, the empathetic aspect might present itself from Kayla's perspective. Addiction seems to empathize with Kayla by offering an escape; addiction lifts her up, brings her higher, away from her reality and environment. But very quickly, addiction's empathy act wears thin—addiction consumes Kayla into "one with oneself"—with itself. Despite Kayla's desperation, addiction forces her to move together with it, in *the one way*, determined by dominance. These phrases recognize the empathetic show of addiction—in which "one-ness" with addiction exists as an abusive, dominant relationship.

### **The Hand of Addiction:**

Although the hand seems unique to human beings, addiction embodies it; addiction takes the hand as its own. Addiction's embodiment implies a physical understanding of humanity, a knowing of how we work; but just because addiction knows us, doesn't mean it empathizes with us—we are not connected by the same feelings, emotions, experiences. The definition of empathy suggests that one may explicitly know a physical/mental/emotional state yet not vicariously experience—or empathize. So addiction knows how we work and can utilize this information—without empathy, moral obligation, or human responsibility. As informed and freed fleshly limitations, addiction is portrayed as powerful over the human being; addiction as a 'body with hands' uses one of our strongest elements against us.

The hands learn infinite physical skills and specializations; but they also learn socialization through gesture. Hands can breach physical and social dimensions; the hand learns empathy in the slightest touch and violence in the kill. Humanity seems to exercise the hand with a sense of empathy—an awareness of and responsibility to the other. But the immortality doesn't necessarily hold the same moral standards as mortality; addiction might have the same hands, but not the same morality.

### **Denying the Human Face:**

The contact between addiction's hand and Kayla's face serves as a punctum—it elicits an especially sensitive, almost disturbing, response. Addiction's hand smothers, suffocates, and manipulates the breath—one of the most intimate aspects of our being. Movement studies explain the breath as a human cornerstone (my term) in which it builds posture, shapes movements, and communicates emotion (Connie; 2011). Addiction effortlessly toys with the deepest of Kayla's being.

Faces are saturated in meaning and fundamental to human relationship. Denying the face rejects human relationship; although Kayla seems deeply connected with addiction, addiction is incapable of relationship. Addiction as inhuman and incapable of empathy not only smothers and suffocates, but dehumanizes. Elkins illustrates the hidden head as denial of relationship and symbol of psychological vacancy through the lens of pornography—in which the body becomes an object. And the viewer becomes a consumer; addiction “will devour any kind of pleasure” (Elkins; 1999). The movements suggest a danger in Kayla's anthropomorphism of addiction; in which addiction can't return the trust and vulnerability bestowed upon it. Not only are these values consumed and unreturned; but Kayla is denied, even dehumanized.

### **Addiction as monstrous:**

“Gravity” does not embody the typically beautiful, aesthetic image of ballet; rather, the movements seem monstrous. Elkins speaks to the human desire for clear, distinct bodies; monstrosity could be understood as an unrecognizable body or an un-comprehensive organization. Addiction distorts Kayla's body; it splits her legs, covers her features, twists her back, and folds body parts—Kayla's body becomes almost unrecognizable. Gaps, missing proportions, and blind-spots are also forms of

monstrosity; addiction uses its body to remove pieces of Kayla's body from sight. Because Kayla and addiction are so closely intertwined, we don't know exactly what transpires between them. The means by which addiction distorts Kayla's body into something inconceivable constructs a sense of monstrosity.

### **Addiction as all-encompassing:**

"Gravity" portrays addiction as all-encompassing and timeless; addiction permeates the real, ideal, old, and new. Addiction bounces Kayla up and down, between the real and ideal throughout the dance. Kress and van Leeuwen explore the bottom of the image as reality—where Kayla's weight is heavily centered. The upper portion of the image suggests the ideal—where addiction throws her, lifts her. Supposedly, to a better place. But always, addiction towers over Kayla's heavy, passive body.

The dance and poetic prose present an incessant pattern of going *back*—in which Kayla always goes *back* to addiction. Addiction as the center becomes the mediator—between the real, ideal, old, and new. As mediator, addiction is limitless between worlds and again, god-like. Addiction as the polarized center might serve to illustrate Kayla's self-polarization and internal struggle while fighting addiction.

Although the video, angles, and staging complicate left and right, the overall body pattern is an incessant mixing of the two. The left represents the given, the old—in which Kayla has been tied to addiction. The right offers powerful placement potential—it can naturalize and reaffirm values of culture and replicate paradigms, as well as present new information. Addiction's seamless reign between both sides suggests a manipulation of what Kayla has been and will be. Evident through the way in which the ballet 'scorpion'—something Kayla has likely known as a dancer—becomes a violent, fighting move. Addiction manipulates not only her body; it manipulates the things she's learned and known. Systems in the given and new could be understood as stable and lasting; this concept, in collaboration with patterns of dominance and defeat, eerily twist the presence of addiction into an everlasting superiority (Kress; 2006).

### **Coming Down From Addiction:**

Although addiction throws Kayla, and takes her higher—Kayla's patterned weight remains passive, heavy, and connected to the ground. Her weight portrays a complete collapse within her environment; in which she repeatedly relies on addiction to move her, pick her up, put her down. Kayla escapes her environment through addiction—being held and thrown high—but she must always come down, *back* to the ground, to reality. Because Kayla constantly escapes her environment, she never learns how to live in it; she becomes more dependent and less independent. When addiction lets her briefly stand alone, she can't balance; she's forgotten how to stand. Kayla's struggle for balance likely extends beyond the literal metaphor and speaks to a broader struggle for balance within her environment.

### **Addiction as Defeated Victory:**

Throughout the dance, Kayla performs a pattern of a wide V arms. The V is commonly understood as a sign of victory; Harvard Professor Amy Cuddy explains

the wide V as one of the most powerful signs of victory, commonly performed after crossing the finish line in a 1<sup>st</sup> place. Kayla likely feels a similar high with addiction; but her V stands half elated and half defeated. Her head positioning and body weight alter the associated victorious meaning; Kayla's head and facial expression, our ultimate source of meaning and relationship, has collapsed and fallen backwards. Although addiction offers a high and idealized version of life, it's not lasting and takes everything from her; ultimately—in a collapsed, defeated victory.

### **Addiction ties and unties:**

Kayla faces the opposite direction of addiction when it sways behind her; it seems like she moves on her own, but addiction mimics her. Or is she mimicking addiction? These movements illustrate an interrelation in which we don't know where Kayla and addiction end or begin; they are intertwined, tied together. The swerving body movement pattern in this particular phrase seems to be contralateral (body-diagonal); in which a rhythmic, extensive sway pattern connects opposite limbs through diagonal movement—further emphasizing intertwining through limb connection (Connie; 2011). Mimicked swerves might represent the “integration of dualistic issues in complex ways” (Connie; 2011); in which Kayla and addiction are integrated in a complex manner. These movements speak to the complex ways in which our environment is connected, networked, and involved—when one side swerves right, the other side follows. And as soon as one side follows, the other side moves back into place—a tying-untying motion. In applying the motion to Kayla and addiction, we might ask what the ‘tying-untying’ motion says about their relationship. The answer seems to be ‘nowhere’. Furthermore, Kayla's might feel pulled together—the paradox allows addiction to ‘tie her together’ momentarily. But ultimately, unravel and un-tie her. So in the end, she's not going anywhere.

### **The beginning and end:**

The dance begins and ends with addiction's powerful stance—strong, steady; arm open, inviting. This juxtaposition presents addiction as ever-present; something that Kayla can always come *back* to, something we could always come *back* to. Addiction does not have the human abilities to hold a grudge, forgive, reject, or die; rather, when anthropomorphized, addiction seems to offer an unconditional relationship—a tempting option in an uncomfortable environment.

For Kayla, addiction is portrayed as both the beginning and end; in order for things to change, Kayla needs another factor—another human. Although addiction seems like an immortal tyrant, two dancers vs. one have a better shot on the dance floor. And even if two dancers can't defeat addiction—another human could steer her clear, help her avoid it, or lead her on a more peaceful path. Rather than investing her heart in addiction, Kayla could invest herself in the supportive person/people. But where would helpful, healing relationship come from? It could be one of us—in the audience. Distanced and seated in our chairs, maybe even behind a screen—unable to cross the invisible force-field between subject and spectator.

**PART III:**  
The Rhetorical Powers of Dance

## What is Dance?

Pictures of dance differ between ballet, jazz, hip-hop, and contemporary dancers; and even more so between non-dancers, genders, classes, and cultures. Individuals seem to hold particular images of dance in their heads. But despite the variance involved in dance, I argue that a general understanding of dance involves the collaboration of image, motion, body and socialization.

This understanding, considering social constructionist theory, broadens the horizons of dance. Gergen refers to the “extended dances of relationship” in which interactions become a dance; and “the usual dance of question and answer” (Gergen; 2008). Dance could be dodging people in the hallway, or waving, or tripping. Dance seems to permeate social interaction in the construction of self and reality.

Rhetorical power comes to life through dance as an *image*, in *motion*, of the *body*, and as an ultimate means of *socialization*. The image of dance holds rhetorical implications and imaginative powers, while motion offers context and deeper understanding through narrative. Through the shared meaning and the medium of the body, we are called to shared meaning and empathy—but overall, socialization. The following sections explore the powers of dance rhetoric and implications; specifically, through the previous analysis of “Gravity”.

## An Image

My analysis assumes that a dance can be analyzed like an image—a series of photographs create a film, like a series of movements create a dance, like a series of symbols create an image. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (which seems to hold the societal account of reasoning), an image is “a picture that is produced by camera, artist, mirror, etc”. The dancer could qualify as an artist—but what is a picture that the dancer produces? According to the same account, a picture is “a design or representation made by various means”. In “Gravity”, the dance produces a multi-dimensional image of addiction through the medium of bodies. According to our basic understanding of image and dance, they exist of and within each other; and analytical disciplines could cross.

Groupe Mu explains the image as rhetorical through the article “Toward a General Rhetoric of Visual Statements: Interaction between Plastic and Iconic Signs”. Mew understands rhetoric as a conceived level superimposed upon the perceived—furthermore, rhetoric involves allotopia and the production of a gap; then, the identification and reevaluation of the gap. In viewing “Gravity”, we constantly fill in the gaps with culturally coded knowledge; beginning with individual understandings of addiction as the studium. The dance requires interpretation as a means of making sense—the movements as culturally coded express and construct specific meanings that inspire emotional responses.

Groupe Mu differentiates the plastic element from the iconic element—which coexist and work together to create meaning. The iconic element refers to the coded message a viewer receives by drawing on multiple knowledge resources; for example, we see a circle with two triangles on top—we might determine a cat head, the iconic sign. This iconic sign is developed through visual redundancy and a particular rationality developed within a culture. The plastic element refers to the shape itself—the triangle, the circle. These plastic symbols do not have deeper

meaning; but by phrasing, sequencing, and juxtaposing plastic symbols, meaning is constructed and expressed. Dance uses the plastic symbols of basic movement in order to develop an iconic message. An arm in the air might simply exist as an arm in the air; but let the fist clench, and the forearm swing down—the combination of these basic movements might suggest a punch (or something completely different) depending on culture. But in recognition the infinite images movement offers us, which do we see? Where do our eyes settle?

Our eyes might settle when the image settles; however, stillness depends on movement, like movement depends on stillness. Generally, contrast seems to invite emphasis; in the fast-paced, infinite offering of images through movement in *Gravity*, we might focus on the image that settles, slows down, or stands still. These images serve as a punctum and vividly remain in my imagination; throughout “Gravity”, the two (nearly) standstill images feel especially, emotionally packed. In the 1<sup>st</sup> standstill, addiction supports Kayla’s lifeless back in a face-up standing splits.

Plastic symbols, as the simplest of movements, require filling in the gap an amplified amount of times in order to make sense (Groupe; 1995); maybe, when the image stands still, we have time to do this—we have time to think about, to realize, what *splitting the legs* might mean. The still-er image allows the audience to process movements into meaning through interpretation; in which our ideas become more tangible, logical, real. However, the power of ‘stillness’ in “Gravity” seems concentrated in the contrast; maybe amidst the slow-paced dance, hurriedness becomes emotionally packed. Regardless, movement contrasts coexist and work together to shape meaning.

The image, itself, moves—through the juxtaposition of symbols, phrasing of codes, and sequences of looking. According to Elkins, phenomena/markings within images gain meaning from bodily motions, actions, ideas—like curves mimic the sweep of a forearm, and an arc could resemble the iris. Therefore, the meaning in movement derived from the image is amplified through dance—in which our lens of bodily metaphor comes to life; and it happens again, and again, and again.

More specifically, our lens of bodily metaphor might come to life through photograph—“Gravity” is a photographic dance. According to Sontag, the photograph claims to transcribe reality; the photograph seems to be especially in-touch with reality. Like the photo transcribes reality, the body might transcribe experience—in which the body touches reality. In a bodily representation, the body is *experiencing* and *feeling* the representation—the body lives the representation. And overall, the rhetorical power of dance is amplified as not only one image, but infinite images.

### **Imaginative:**

Maynard’s “The Engine of Visualization” speaks to the power of images as imaginative, in which they inspire imagination. The dancing image acts as an entirely new engine of visualization; amplifying the imaginative power of the image. “Almost every picture (photographic or not), every song, every story, novel, play or dance, is a technological means of inducing (and thereby shaping) imaginings” (97). Maynard says that we *imagine*, and then we imagine *ourselves*. In viewing Kayla’s desperate struggle with addiction, we might imagine ourselves with addiction. Upon

viewing an image, we are called to reflect back upon ourselves: am I this? Am I not this? Could I be this? His argument explains why dance could be so emotionally arousing: what if *we* were Kayla— thrown to the ground, suffocated, and paralyzed by addiction?

Maynard claims that gestures can be objects of imagination—and gestures are amplified, even emphasized, through dance. Again, bodily metaphors become tangible through dance. An object of imagination elicits our own imagination—like a child’s toy basket elicits the imaginative project of shopping in a grocery store, or a Easter basket inspires an egg hunt. Maynard claims there are two levels of imagination—the first, a representation of another’s imaginings. For example, in *Gravity*, when we imagine *about* Kayla’s feelings and experiences; when we imagine her hardship, exhaustion, constant battle. The first imagining might involve elements of empathy; whereas the second level reaches an overarching meaning of ourselves and humanity.

Once the *imagining* reflects back upon ourselves, and we cast ourselves as the subject, we reach the second level of imagining (Maynard; 2000). We might ask— how would *I* experience the hardship, exhaustion, and constant battle? What would *I* do? At the second level, our *own* imagining is elicited. Maynard claims that the second level of imagining is the most powerful; dance seems to encourage a personal, intimate imagining of the self through affirmation seeking. We constantly teeter on the edge of acceptable and unacceptable in society—viewing the self in comparison to the (dancing) image offers resonance with societal discourses embedded within and constructing the image—through comparison, a means of validating and/or rejecting identity.

## **In Motion**

As mentioned, motion permeates images and actively develops meaning; these meanings and movements are amplified through the phrasing of symbolic movements through dance. But what are the implications of amplification? We might explore the rhetorical power of movement as context.

Internal context could be understood as the subject matter, medium, and form—and furthermore, the relationship between the three (Barrett; 2005). Through dance, through movement, these aspects actively participate in relationship. So movement could be understood as the active context in which these relationships interact and work together. Overall, motion brings these relationships to life through tangible interaction; and these aspects, as observed in relation, offer information—a form of context.

“Gravity” as a photographic film could work to save the context-less image from destruction—explained by Sontag: “It is because the photographs carry no certain meaning in themselves, because they are like images in the memory of a total stranger, that they lend themselves to any use” (Sontag; 1977). Through movement, dance aids the image in speaking.

And in this manner, context might become narrative—a story of the relationships between subject matter, medium, and form. Furthermore, the juxtaposition, phrasing, and sequencing of infinite images hold significant potential in storytelling; stories provide before, afters, causes, effects, etc—also forms of

context. The photographic image in motion involves various sources of information that concrete the experience—into reality.

Narrative has been defined as “a spoken or written account of connected events”; yet stories know no bounds (Hammack; 2012). In Gravity, the body speaks its own language. Dance, as an image in motion, and therefore a narrative—not only concretes reality, but constructs it. According to Hammack and Pilecki, “human beings think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures”—so what kind of moral choices are compelled by Gravity? Dance as narrative holds ineffable powers that actively perpetuate and construct moralities and realities.

## Of the Body

*“The human body is the best picture of the human soul”  
~Ludwig Wittgenstein*

### Prevalence of Bodies:

Dance inspires emotion through the medium of the body. Bodies seem to make imaginings more tangible and invite empathy. Elkins claims that we always see bodies; we constantly search for clear and distinct bodies in order to make sense of the world around us. Elkins supposes that bodies are the lens in which we interpret the world; whether as the hand of the clock, or the legs of a chair. Furthermore, the search is not necessarily conscious—rather a subconscious philosophy that governs our interpretation of the world. Maybe, we search for dancing bodies—bodies in movement, as phrases, with context, and transpiring meaning.

Bodies as sense-making devices hold power and influence in society; the body has been illustrated as a powerful medium for discourse and a focal site for contemporary and political practices (Hepworth; 1999). Foucault also explores the ways in which discourse becomes inscribed on the body, and how discourses come to idealize the body (Foucault; 1991). The body serves as a powerful medium in communication and the creation of meaning and emotion.

### The Body, the Mind, the Other:

The body-mind relationship offers insight into how dance might inspire emotion. Harvard Professor Amy Cuddy offers a modern understanding of body movement and affect in the TedTalk “Your body language shapes who you are”. Cuddy reiterates that communication is not a direct message between sender and receiver; rather, body language is an interaction in which meaning transpires and constructs reality—the shared creation of meanings, identities, realities. She encourages the ‘powerless’ to take on dominant postures; and through faking it, they will not only make it—they will *become* it. Cuddy explains that minds can change bodies; but bodies can change minds, too. Are the dancing bodies at work not only influencing our minds, but the dancers’ minds as well?

### Mirror Neurons:

We are so deeply connected to *the other*, that in viewing their motions—we take the psychological experience upon ourselves. Cynthia Berrol articulates our connection to *the other* through neuroscience and the concept of mirror neurons. Mirroring is the process in which the same sets of neurons are activated within the active and witnessing person (Berrol; 2006). So when the dancer expresses, embodies, and experiences a particular emotion, the witness' neurons will fire similarly—causing a reciprocal neurological experience.

*“A fundamental concept is that the mirror matching mechanism is activated in relation to a stimulus or stimuli outside the self, that is, in relationship to another” (Berrol; 2006)*

Mirror neurons allow for emotional and intellectual identification with another—we might feel empathy for the dancer, embodying a painful experience on stage. The audience partakes in “embodying the experience of (that person’s) state” (Berrol; 2006). We might even develop knowledge and rationality through mirror neurons; in which mirror neurons allow us to connect and create a shared reality of intersubjectivity (Berrol; 2006). This mirror matching mechanism and dependence on *the other* brings us together and creates common ground. The neurological connections made through dance exercise empathy and invoke emotion.

### Hands:

Hands seem to breach the physical dimension and the social dimension—illustrated by the spoken word poem “Hands” by Sarah Kay. She speaks to the infinite ways in which our hands learn—across disciplines and in multiple dimensions. In the following excerpt, she suggests that hands have qualities beyond that of the mind—

*“Hands **learn more than minds do**. Hands learn how to **hold other hands**. How to **grip pencils** and **mould poetry**. How to **tickle pianos**, and **dribble a basketball** and **grip the handles** of a bicycle. How to **hold old people** and **touch babies**. **I love hands like I love people**. They are the **maps and compasses** with which we navigate our way through life. Some people **read palms to tell you your future**, but I read hands to **tell your past**. Each scar makes a story worth telling. Each callused palm, each cracked knuckle is a missed punch or years in a factory. Now I’ve seen middle eastern hands **clenched in middle eastern fists**, **pounding against each other like war drums**. Each country sees their fists as **warriors** and others as **enemies**.”*

Hands learn many skills, but they seem to specialize in connection. Holding someone’s hand is a tie-sign; it’s an attempt to publicly involve an *other* in self-identity. The slightest touch could heal the worst of pasts, or cause your heartbeat to flutter, or calm heaving sobs. Hands in motion, and their gestures, commonly serve as signs of empathy. Through gesture, and through dance, hands become multi-

dimensional; hands breach the physical and emotional, the physical and social. The relational medium of the hands reflects the relational medium of the body—actively reaching out to us, the audience, through dance.

## **Socialization.**

Dance as an *image in motion* of the *body* serves as a form of context and narrative—and ultimately, a means of *socialization*.

### **Imaginative Project Leader:**

Dance invites us to partake in socialization as an imaginative project. Imaginative projects are driven by cooperative imagination—commonly lead by imagination leaders (Maynard; 2000). Maynard refers to dance as an imaginative guide and leader, “Imaginative projects are driven by theater, film, and dance”. The analysis of “Gravity” encompasses all of these mediums—an element of theater, film, and dance—and guides the audience’s imaginings on multiple levels towards a shared imagining. But what becomes of all of this imagining? Maynard argues “What is imagined may not only be real or *true*; the act of joint imagining can be part of what makes it so”. Therefore, our imaginings prescribed through dance, in cooperation with *others*, have the power to construct shared realities; in “Gravity”, we are guided through a shared reality of addiction.

### **Generative Practice:**

We have been dancing since the beginning of time—in ancient rituals, ceremonies, celebration, mourning; we dance when we’re happy, angry, torn. But why? Dance seems to resonate with Gergen’s concept of a generative movement—and a means by which discourse thrives in society. Generative practices are inherent to civil movement; which speaks to the potential of dance in constructing society (Gergen; 2001). Gergen suggests that we examine the various ways in which people engage in order to more fully understand the potential of generative practice:

“Ultimately we should take into account the entire range of corporal activities in which people engage. Generative coordination may be achieved in athletics, music, dance, cuisine, erotics, and more”

We might look beyond dialogue as a means to transformation; he suggests that we explore other activities that require relational responsibility—such as dance. Gergen distinguishes between generative and degenerative practices—in which generative practices determine the discourses that permeate society. Gergen describes generative action as “positive coordinations among people”—or the synchronization of dance. In which “their discourse and action move into synchrony and a recognizable “form of life” comes into being” (Gergen; 2001). What “form of life” comes into being through the thematic meanings presented by “Gravity”?

Dance itself presents another form of life—a being dependent on *the other*. Dancing in a group requires that each person coordinate his/her actions to *the other*; furthermore, synchronicity demands a recognition and dependence on *the other*. Through synchronization, a new, recognizable “form of life” emerges—the

dancing whole vs. the dancing individual. Different bodies with various strengths/weaknesses partake in the same dance as a larger, coordinated body—a new form of life—a coordination of multiplicities, and a generative practice.

Furthermore, degenerative practices slouch towards the end of meaning through divisive coordination that separate *the other*. Through dependence on and collaboration with *the other* in dance, we could work away from degeneration. However, not all dance is generative—particular relationships within dance may suggest degenerative coordination; such as a forced assimilation into one, homogenous being. With generative practices, come degenerative practices; it would be beneficial to explore the degenerative layers of dance.

But the point is that, with positive relationship patterns, dance has the potential to coordinate multiplicities and different bodies into a new body—a new form of life that exists only through difference. Furthermore, Gergen explains generative coordination as inherent to civil movement—which gains momentum and moves. Chances are, we won't stop dancing anytime soon.

## **Healing**

### **Rhetorical Healing:**

Rhetoric moves us—from body language to inspired emotion. By exercising rhetoric, we exercise our dependence on the other. Meaning springs forth from a foundation of connection and redundancy—in which repeated movements develop momentum and meaning towards common understanding (Barthes; 1993). The consistent, elicited response to “Gravity” might suggest that we, and the dancers, are not alone in facing addiction. Repetition through rhetoric as dependent on *the other* implies and recognizes the importance of *the other*—promoting a forgotten connection and belonging.

### **Healing the Desire for Connection:**

Social constructionist theories recognize the human desire to connect and communicate—if not through spoken word, it's possible through body language. The dominant understanding of emotional expression as *getting it out* could be relationally understood as a desire to *move out into socialization*—for connection. Furthermore, if ‘what needs to get out’ can't get out through spoken word, the body serves as a powerful alternative of socialization. As a generative practice, dance creates generative relationships—relationships with expanded potentials for relating. Gergen speaks to relationship potential and difference as the key to vitality (Gergen; 2008). Furthermore, the mirror matching mechanism of mirror neurons also reminds us of our dependence on *the other*; bringing us together, creating common ground.

### **Self Healing:**

Valentino et. al describes an element of rhetoric that is “trying to persuade oneself that one exists” (Valentino, 2004); which further suggests dance's potential role in the construction of self. Through Authentic Movement (AM) therapy, clients develop a sense of self through proprioception; and furthermore, through the

validation of the witness-mover experience. The patient moves in whatever way he/she is called to move; the witness and observes and mirrors the patient's movements. Meaning transpires when the witness experiences this authentic interaction between the subconscious-conscious beings of the mover—the mover is validated deeply, and on multiple levels. Through AM, dance has been clinically used to validate and affirm the self.

### **Narrative Healing:**

Dance as a narrative could work towards healing. Hammack offers narrative as a root metaphor for political psychology; in which a narrative-approach would address the following principles:

- a) the social construction of language, politics, and thought*
- b) the need for personal coherence and identity*
- c) the need for collective solidarity through shared meaning*
- d) the meditational and motivational role of language in social practice*

Dance as narrative holds an exceptional power in shaping reality. "Gravity's" social construction of addiction involves our language, politics, and thoughts as socially constructed—and perpetuates these constructions. By starting with the coordinated actions of dance, we could be empowered in the reconstruction of conceptualizations.

Narrative through dance might address the need for personal coherence and identity; "Social and personality psychologists have emphasized the way in which narrative represents a tool for creating a sense of self and identity" (Hammack; 1992)—the photographic image of dance offers realities that become our own, and potentialities we might take on. Furthermore, in a state of identity confusion or turmoil, one might resonate with the societal discourses embedded within dance—as a means of acceptance and self-affirmation.

Dance as narrative addresses the need for collective solidarity—in which narrative involves "integrating (an) analysis of cultural and contextual factors in the construction of self"; constructing the self through dance narrative requires multiple knowledges and sources of information constructed in various communities; these collaborations seem to present a more well-rounded idea of the self. Shared meaning seems more accessible through dance than verbal communication. Dance can communicate with the deaf; maybe with the blind in aiding him/her to move, and to *experience* movement. The narrative of dance transcends language barriers; although, as stated, responses may vary due to cultural coding. Furthermore, the concern of intellectuality and language might prove difficult for some in attempt to communicate a shared experience; through dance, the 'intellectuality' of language might not be necessary. Rather, the shared meaning transpires from our own expressions—tears, laughter, fear. Expressions that might not be as difficult to formulate or communicate. And finally, dance narrative might serve as an 'easier' meditational and motivational role of language in social practice—in which dance, as an *image* of the *body in motion*, compels us to action. Gravity might calls us to reach out to someone struggling with addiction, or to address our own struggle with

addiction; addiction as presented by dance and normalized through shared experience in meaning, addiction might be normalized—encouraging the addicted to reach out, and talk, about the struggle.

The narrative of dance holds power in reconstruction; in which restructuring coordinated action and narrative create and perpetuate realities. Furthermore, narrative has been used as a means of therapeutic healing—by reshaping stories through dance, we reshape realities and the world.

### **Expansive Healing:**

Through the rhetoric of dance, “Gravity” constructs an empowering understanding of addiction—as externalized. Viewing mental illness as an integral part of the self complicates the recovery process; it assumes the person must fight his/herself—and in order to fight the self, one must be polarized. This separation invites a state of turmoil and chaos while the self strives for consistency, coherence. Throughout the dance, addiction is externalized as a body, Kupon’s body. The embodiment of addiction might reconstruct our ideas of addiction as mental illness and serve as a lens in which we understand and interpret the dance.

The stance of addiction stands proud and inviting—even attractive; in which, through coupling and dominance, the addicted might engage in an abusive, romantic relationship with addiction. Although the addicted invests heart, life, and soul, addiction is incapable of validating/returning these investments—resulting in a dehumanizing relationship. Addiction as dominant doesn’t hold the same human morality—the same moral obligations and responsibilities. Addiction—in a constant state of contentment—serves to tie and un-tie the addicted’s relationships, networks, environment. Addiction weaves into the present, the past, and the future—exercising its immortality. But despite the complicated, ever-presence of addiction—externalization offers a sense of hope and empowerment. Externalization takes the problem out, from inside the person—and it allows others to band together, to join in, to help in the fight.

Dance holds infinite potentials for shared-meaning and could be healing; it brings us together, as humanity. Furthermore, does Zumba—an everyday workout ritual—hold potential for healing/communication? How else could we utilize the potential of dance in treatment and healing?

My research may suggest the potential for dance as communicative healing in everyday life. Gergen repeatedly refers to coordinated action as dance; Gergen also explains that people coordinate activities → in which activities become ritualized → which form standards and expectations → that create values, beliefs, and realities. What are the parallels between dance and the routine of life? What kind of potential does dance, rooted in the redundancy of even our everyday lives, hold for healing on grander level? Through a relational lens, dance acts as a powerful perpetuator, agent, and constructor of reality. Dance, saturated in meaning, inspires emotion by launching our imaginations, yet calling us back— to reflect upon ourselves in relationship with the other. To ask *who we are*, and *what we are*, as people.

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