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Abstract

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Seran Endrigian Schug

Asif Agha and Rebecca Huss-Ashmore

This ethnography is about Authentic Movement, a ritual form of dance and self-narrative in which a participant performs free association through trancelike movement in the presence of a “compassionate” witness as a means toward the discovery of an authentic self. Rooted in anti-modernist social movements in late 19th century urban middle- and upper-class communities in the United States, Authentic Movement brings to light a central paradox of modern life—though it is through liberal social institutions of modernity that individuals are purportedly able to achieve the freedom to be who they aspire to be, it is to an imagined non-modern past that many look toward to know and define the authentic self. The dissertation shows how cultural icons of authenticity come to be interpreted as both universal symbols and personal experiences of an authentic self.

Performances of authenticity embodied in highly stylized modes of introspection and narration, enhanced by intense alterations in the bodily experiences of space and time, explicitly call participants’ attention to the sensorial experience of movement as the source of the authentic self. In fact, it is the high degree of poetic patterning of performances that is the key to Authentic Movement’s power to evoke emotionally powerful experiences of authenticity. However, this study shows that the search for the authentic self as an imagined private, internal, radically subjective self is not, in actuality, a journey into a private enclosed world. The experience of authenticity is, rather, a public performance. Subjectivity, even when centered in one’s own experience of the body, is intelligible as authentic only insofar as privately felt sensations point to socially circulating discourses of authenticity. The integration of cultural historical research and a multidimensional performance analysis within a reflexive ethnographic project represents a unique approach toward resolving contradictions between older romanticizing and newer constructivist anthropological perspectives on authenticity. Ultimately my analysis reveals how participants, through performance, come to authentically experience and, thus, bring into being the socially constructed ideologies of authenticity they envision.

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Speaking and Sensing the Self in Authentic Movement
The Search for Authenticity in a
21st Century White Urban Middle-Class Community

Seran Endrigian Schug

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in

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Seran Endrigian Schug

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Jonathan, and children, Jorin and Ani,

my precious loves whose bright smiles, brilliant minds,
and enthusiasm for knowledge are my deepest source of inspiration.

And to my parents, Peter and Sirvart, and brother George,
whose enduring love gives me hope to achieve my dreams.

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hours of lunchtime conversations, whether about the *aqllakuna* or Authentic Movement, have a subtle but deep presence in this dissertation.

ABSTRACT

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Chapter 1

An Introduction to an Anthropology of Authentic Movement

Introduction

It was a warm humid summer day in the Mount Airy neighborhood of Philadelphia. The sun was beginning to set as I was sitting in the far corner of the attic-turned-dance studio of my new friend and guide Mona, whom I met during my fieldwork. She lived on a tree-lined street with row homes built around the turn of the 20th century, not far from the beautiful rambling Wissahickon Park. I sat under the window located in the alcove formed by the eave on the roof of her house. I could hear the chirping of the bird that was perched in the tree by the window and felt like I was nestled in a tree house. Mount Airy is vibrant this time of year so that it is hard to tell where the Park and the residences begin and end. As in the description of the New Guinea and Malaysian jungles, city and park, nature and culture, “the raw and the cooked” interpenetrate one another. I watched quietly as Mona and the other two dancers, or “movers” as we called them, moved with nary a hint, yet the utmost of intense deliberation. Mona, moving meditatively with her eyes closed, pressed her body against the wall, slowly turning left and then right. I felt as if the wall, not she, molded and changed shape. Dara and Elyse also moved with their eyes shut but they moved in magnificent synchrony—as Dara rose,

then Elyse fell, as Dara turned right, Elyse turned left, as Dara leaned toward Elyse, Elyse opened her arms and accepted her into her space.

Human communication is often described as a dance, a metaphor I usually describe as an essentialization and naturalization of a discursively constructed phenomenon. But here at this moment I felt as if I was privileged to observe a true dance of life, an authentic expression of the connection between person to person and person to world. This was a place where what I perceived did not have to make sense nor be accurate. I merely had to accept what I was feeling.

I embodied the role of “witness” at this time—as it is explained in Authentic Movement, to “watch without judgment,” provide “a safe container” for the movers, look upon the movers as would a nurturing mother, “to notice what I notice,” and to feel kinesthetically what I would be witnessing visually. As an anthropologist, I have often reflected upon these directives, or invitations as the leader referred to them, and remember Boas’ insights on perception that the eye is not just an organ but a mode of perception conditioned by tradition.¹ From this perspective, I was becoming part of a cultural tradition, learning a new way to use my senses, and learning what sensorial qualities are valued not merely as aesthetically beautiful and pleasing, but as aesthetic ideals of authenticity and personhood. I was here to learn how moving with eyes closed in the presence of a witness comes to be an experience of authenticity.

¹ From “A Tapir’s Heart,” Greg Urban’s discussion of anthropology’s original nonempirical foundations (1994:1)

Authentic Movement

Authentic Movement is a form of dance improvisation and self-narrative in which a mover performs free association through trancelike movement in the presence of a “compassionate” witness, originated in the 1940s by dancer, teacher, and Jungian therapist, Mary Whitehouse. Based upon the therapeutic practice of free association or active imagination in psychoanalysis, participants in Authentic Movement are taught to freely associate with body movement rather than words or art. Though simple in form, Authentic Movement is interpreted in many ways, and is variously described as an aesthetic exercise, spiritual practice, a form of narrative, a therapeutic practice or simply, an alternative way of being in the world. Authentic Movement incorporates a variety of practices including meditation, prayer, and dance techniques and is offered in a variety of settings including dance studios, health and wellness centers, spiritual centers and even business conferences.

My dissertation historically situates Authentic Movement as an outgrowth of antimodernist movements popular in the late 19th century in which members of the white urban middle and upper class in the U.S., distressed and anxious about the “over-civilized” world of modern city life, became intensely concerned with notions of authentic selfhood and modes of self-discovery (Lears 1994). I argue that the rise of antimodernist practices at the fin de siècle established the social networks in which discourses calling for a return to an idealized premodern lifestyle circulated, and accordingly, was responsible for perpetuating a culture of authenticity (Taylor 1991). I show how these historical circumstances provided the conditions of intelligibility for

discursive practices such as Authentic Movement. In addition, my dissertation also looks at Authentic Movement as a cultural performance of self. Since at its core Authentic Movement constructs an experience of authenticity, my study shows how this practice brings into phenomenological reality the imagined ideals of selfhood upon which the practice is based. Building upon the work of aesthetic and semiotic anthropology, my project thus examines processes of self-constitution and self-transformation as an interweaving of phenomenological experiences of the body and discursive constructions of self both of which are rooted in the culture of authenticity that emerged in urban centers of the late 19th and early 20th century.

The following chapter provides a general background on Authentic Movement and presents the theoretical perspective and methodological focus of the dissertation. The first section describes the basic structure of the practice so that readers unfamiliar with Authentic Movement can identify the basic characteristics of the form and understand how it functions in comparison to other aesthetic forms of self-expression. (I will expand upon this brief ethnographic description of the form in chapters two and three; in chapter two, providing further background in greater detail and in chapter three providing an experiential perspective on the practice.) Then, in order to orient the reader to what I deem as the most relevant social and cultural context for Authentic Movement, I also include in this first chapter a brief discussion of how the practice is closely linked to particular aspects of American culture. This section serves as a precursor to the more in-

depth historical analysis of the social and cultural sources of Authentic Movement provided in chapter 4.

The next sections give an overview of my theoretical perspective and methodology. Situating my study in relation to other anthropological discourses of authenticity, I lay the groundwork for my underlying premise that a performance perspective can serve as a way to resolve the contradictions between romanticizing and constructivist perspectives on authenticity; that is, I hope to show how in performance participants authentically experience the socially constructed realities about authenticity they envision.

Authentic Movement: Form and Function

The basic structure of Authentic Movement sessions entails the following: Participants alternately inhabit the roles of mover and witness. The movers perform improvisations with eyes closed in the presence of one or more witnesses, and the witnesses observe the performance of the movers. Witnesses sit in the periphery of the movement space and watch silently as movers perform their improvisations. Similar to the process of psychoanalysis, movers do not direct or plan their performances but rather learn a receptive stance in which impulses and free flowing images provide the basis of the movement improvisations. Following turn-taking of these roles, movers and witnesses share their personal reflections about the performances, movers talk about what they experienced, and witnesses respond with what they noticed in the movers and how this relates to internal feelings in themselves. Witnesses are expected to respond

compassionately and, like movers, focus their responses on their own feelings and experiences, not judge or evaluate the movement performances.

Reinforcing common perceptions of the form as primordial, Authentic Movement at times looks like a folk stereotype of a ritual. For instance, as performers move in slow motion with their eyes closed, dances may seem trancelike. Sessions begin with the gong of a bell, people sit in a circle formation within which the movement performances take place. Unintelligible and improvisational vocalizing is commonplace, and the mood is generally solemn and serious. The ritual quality is largely a result of conscious intention. The leaders of Authentic Movement are adept at conjuring experiences that may feel transcendent to participants and as if they are based in an authentic past.

The form has not always be known as “Authentic Movement.” The name has changed depending on the philosophical tendencies of its leaders. Mary Whitehouse, the originator of the practice, called it “movement-in-depth,” associating the practice with depth psychology and Jungian psychoanalysis, and the “Tao of the Body,” associating the practice with the receptive stance developed in Taoist practices like Tai Chi. Two prominent teachers and practitioners, Alton Wasson and Daphne Lowell, have chosen to call the practice “Contemplative Dance,” noting that they wanted to acknowledge the feeling of spirituality, inwardness and quiet engendered by the practice, and to promote the idea that Authentic Movement for them is dance and not just movement. For Lowell, dance is more playful, ritualistic and part of a rite of passage.

While the name and descriptions of Authentic Movement do not predetermine the interpretations of the actual event, in the context of co-occurring signs they do motivate

certain interpretations. The use of the word “movement” is an invitation to allow any kind of movement to emerge. Anyone can do it (as long as they are mobile). The movement does not have to look pretty or be right (although certain qualities of movement do get signified as more authentic than others). Also the term “authentic” signifies to the participant that the movement does not have to conform to arbitrary external standards. Rather, the movement should be unique to the individual and evaluated on the basis of the value that people should decide for themselves what is good and right for them (Taylor 1991:18).

In terms of categorizing the practice in relation to other dance and self-enhancement practices, along a continuum Authentic Movement sits between “high art” dance performance and psychotherapy. As an introspective practice that teaches participants how to explore feelings and desires through body movement, it is closely aligned with the practice of dance/movement therapy.² However, in contrast to institutionalized and licensed forms of psychotherapy, leaders of Authentic Movement groups are not necessarily trained therapists and though they take care to ensure the physical and emotional safety of participants and obtain agreements of confidentiality between group members, group leaders are not necessarily responsible for the psychological well-being of attendants of Authentic Movement workshops. In contrast to therapy groups, participants do not necessarily come to Authentic Movement for therapy. Many, in fact, attend merely for the pleasure of movement.

² Dance/movement therapy is the psychotherapeutic use of movement to foster the integration of psychological, cognitive, emotional and physical well-being of the individual. Dance/movement therapists train as psychotherapists who learn to apply the art of dance to their psychotherapeutic practice. They are in many states licensed therapists.

At the same time, the philosophy of Authentic Movement also stands in stark contrast to more formal genres of dance. For instance, Authentic Movement takes an explicitly opposing stance to the aesthetics of ballet. Specifically, while there are indeed aesthetic ideals in Authentic Movement, which I will discuss throughout the dissertation, Authentic Movement does not maintain a set of aesthetic standards for dress, body type, movement repertoire, or dance technique; the standards that are present relate less to the quality of movement than to ideals of personhood.³ For example, in contrast to ballet, there is no set of standardized phrases and postures from which to develop a choreography. Movers are free to move in any way they choose. Similarly, Authentic Movement eschews the structure of the dance class. Participants in an Authentic Movement group do not stand in line formations in the presence of a teacher. Rather movers are scattered throughout an open space moving in various directions, each person using her own unique rhythm and movement style. In addition, the focus on the mirror that is so central to ballet technique is antithetical to the ideology of Authentic Movement. In contrast to ballet, movers in Authentic Movement learn to assess the value of performance in terms of how they feel internally, not by how they look externally. Also, while Authentic Movement is performed in the presence of an audience (the witnesses), it presupposes a different set of expectations and standards than that for a theatrical audience. Theatrical audiences are free to judge, criticize, enjoy or despise a

³ Aesthetic standards to a large extent relate to ideals of personhood. Aesthetic values are intimately tied in with sensorial elaboration and cultural values. As Feld (1991) explains, aesthetic values do not inhere in cultural objects but are always part of social learning (see also Agha 2003; Blacking 1995; Qureshi 2000). For example, Kaluli preference for dense overlapping alternating sounds presumably arises from the layering of sounds in the forest in which they reside.

performance. Witnesses of the movement performances in Authentic Movement are, on the other hand, asked to restrain from making judgments or evaluations of performances. Audience assessments (or witness narratives) in Authentic Movement are about the witnessing experience itself, not about the movers. Finally, though Authentic Movement, like theatre, is a “staged” event (Gilmore and Pine 2007) with prescribed forms of preparation, special spatial performance venues, audiences and dramatic performances, it is in the end a reflexive performance for the self, not a replication of planned choreography for others’ pleasure.

While Authentic Movement is different from dance theatre, Authentic Movement does have affinities to other genres in modern dance such as Contact Improvisation.⁴ Authentic Movement and Contact Improvisation, for instance, are similar with regard to the emphasis on free improvisation and the facilitative rather than directorial role of the leader. Contact Improvisation, part of the experimental dance and theatre movements in the 1960s, shares the belief in the body’s freedom and agency. The body, according to both discourses, has its own intelligence but as marginalized by culture and civilization, needs to be rediscovered by “listening internally to the body.”⁵

⁴ As documented in an ethnography by anthropologist Cynthia Novack (1990), Contact Improvisation is also a uniquely American expressive dance form in which choreography is created by groups of dancers experimenting with balance and changing points of contact as dancers move together.

⁵ Though the two practices have much in common, they diverge in one important respect. In stark contrast to Authentic Movement, the leaders of the contact improvisation community do not look for meaning in a dance improvisation or promote the development of insight into one’s psyche. As Novack (1990) explains, the contact improvisation community is more “post-modern” in the sense that movement for them is just a sign of the living quality of the body, not an instrument of the mind or expression of emotion. Any meanings ascribed to a dance are socially constructed and not immanent in the dance itself. Dance does not represent anything but itself as physical human action. A second difference relates to technique. In contact improvisation the dancer rediscovers the body’s intelligence not through development of an individual’s kinesthetic sensation but primarily through the combination of senses of weight and touch experienced in

Like yoga, tai chi, and other mind-body practices, the ideology of Authentic Movement supports mind-body wholism and the idea that subjective experience of the body is also a direct experience of the “self.” In fact, practitioners have described Authentic Movement as doing “your own” yoga or tai chi. But, the key words “your own” reveal the important cultural differences between the forms. Authentic Movement adheres to the American values of individualism and independence. Participants are not explicitly taught a set of exercises to follow, but rather are encouraged to find the movements that are true and unique to them.

Members of the larger dance/movement community of which Authentic Movement is allied also presume affinities with the aesthetics of many forms of African dance, in particular the use of the circle in dance and the integration of improvisation and the free expression of emotion in dance. This purported connection to an African aesthetic, however, is interesting considering the virtual absence of actual participation from the African or African American communities, differences in the movement qualities between the two genres, and the reality that many African dances are not free forms but highly technical aesthetic practices.

Finally, the main difference between Authentic Movement and other forms of dance or body-mind practices is the omnipresent and central role of narrative. In contrast to most dance forms or body-mind techniques, Authentic Movement sessions always set

contact with another body. Authentic Movement has assimilated the post modern ideology that not all movement is meaningful or can be interpreted and thus leaders often promote the idea to allow some aspects of the movement experience to just “be.” Authentic Movement has also opened the physical and psychological space for physical contact as another vehicle of self-expression.

aside time to talk about what transpired during the movement portions of the practice. Moreover, these talk sessions are not casual affairs. They are structured, highly ritualized phases of the practice that asks participants to reflect upon and narrate the movement and witnessing experiences.

Outside the realms of art and psychotherapy, Authentic Movement surprisingly shares some basic features of Quaker meeting for worship. Though there are no explicit references to Quaker practice as inspiration for Authentic Movement, the similarities are remarkable. For example, just as silence is a fundamental aspect of Quaker practice (Bauman 1983), stillness and silence also are essential aspects of Authentic Movement. In Quaker worship, God speaks through those who can silence their need to speak “vain words” (1983:22). It is in moments of silence that one is quiet enough to hear the true words of God inside themselves. Similarly, in Authentic Movement, authentic expression has the greatest potential in times of quiet and stillness and when movers can let go of preconceived ideas and planned movements. In both settings, the intense attention to silence as a space of potential is very similar. The Quaker aesthetic of simplicity and economy of self-expression (also a feature of Zen practice) is also mirrored in the sensibilities of Authentic Movement practitioners who attend to the small and subtle sensations in the body as evidence of authentic experience.

To be sure, there is a certain amount of diversity in the practice of Authentic Movement depending on the proclivities and ideologies of its practitioners who come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. However, the versatility of techniques and leadership styles change the basic form. The phenomenological experience of

feeling that one is moving freely and spontaneously with eyes closed in the presence of a compassionate witness is what makes an event recognizable as Authentic Movement, and more significantly, as I will show, “authentic.”

Authenticity and Authentic Movement: Positioning Authentic Movement in American Culture

As self-professed members of the American counterculture, the Authentic Movement community rarely aligns itself directly with mainstream middle-class American society which it sees as a source of materialism and emotional constriction. Yet, as many social theorists have explained (Frank 1997; Lears 1983, 1994; Bell 1972) the countercultural stance with which they associate themselves is in fact intimately tied with the mainstream against which they rebel. The following anecdote portrays the conflicted nature of the Authentic Movement community’s ties to American culture, but also reveals the sincerity of their struggle for identity.

In 1976, Andre Gregory, a well-respected director of avante-garde theatrical productions in New York’s off-broadway, mysteriously “dropped out” of the theatre world. As many western artists who suffer from the “emptiness” of modern life, Gregory began a quest of self-discovery. Leading theatrical improvisation workshops in a forest in Poland with a group of women who could not speak English, Gregory discovered a life he considered more authentic. He and his new troupe would dance and sing in the woods every morning and perform pieces in the afternoon. The group followed what they called the “law of improvisation,” doing whatever their impulses would tell them to do (Shawn and Gregory 1994 [1981]:25). Without costumes, sets, or scripts, “actors” would cobble

together “staged” performances every day. And even though they could not speak each other’s language, it didn’t matter. The troupe communicated at a deeper level. Andre said that for the first time he felt “truly alive (1994 [1981]:38).”

The story of Andre Gregory’s heroic journey is famously told by Andre himself in the film *My Dinner with Andre* in 1981. The film is literally just a dinner conversation between Andre Gregory and Wallace Shawn, who in this ordinary context simultaneously act out and critique the classic conflict between hero and antihero. The climax of the film occurs when Wallace challenges Andre, wondering why he has to go to the woods to find a more real life.

Is Mount Everest more real than New York? Isn’t New York real? I mean, if you could become fully aware of what existed in the cigar store next door to this restaurant, it would blow your brains out. I mean, isn’t there just as much reality to be perceived in a cigar store as there is on Mount Everest? What do you think? I mean, *I think that not only is there nothing more real about Mount Everest, I think there’s nothing that different, in a certain way....*(1994 [1981]:90)

Interestingly, audiences found this drama particularly compelling, most likely because Andre’s struggle represents the conflict of the urban elite in this country—the struggle between modernity and authenticity. Who is the hero here? Andre, the adventurer or Wallace, the fellow who realizes there’s no place like home? Can modernity offer people a life with meaning and purpose? Andre assumes not.

Well, I agree with you, Wally, but the problem is that people can’t *see* the cigar store now. I mean, things don’t affect people the way they used to. I mean, it may very well be that in another ten years people will pay ten thousand dollars in cash to be castrated, just in order to be affected by something....they’re lost (1994 [1981]:90–91).

This story begs the question, if people have achieved so much in life, why is there an obsession with finding something more real? Isn't their own life real? What are people looking for? Do they have to play in the woods to find meaning? Do they have to travel to foreign lands to find out who they are? Do they have to dance with eyes closed in the presence of a witness to discover their true authentic selves? Ultimately, what does it mean to be authentic in contemporary mainstream American society? A number of contemporary writers and sociologists agree that "authenticity" has indeed been on the minds of the American middle-class.⁶

Like Andre Gregory, for many middle-class urban Americans, modernization despite the concomitant material well-being and triumphs over the uncontrollable forces of nature, is strongly associated with anxiety, boredom, alienation, and lack of meaning (Lears 1994). According to Frank (1997), the middle-class, in general, are conflicted about their material wealth and question whether materialism and consumerism have given them a life of prosperity and happiness, or have made them insatiable soulless beings. Like Gregory, many members of the middle-class are disillusioned with modern society and, as I will describe more fully in chapter 3, seek to find a more authentic way of being in the world. They long for a life more simple and close to nature. They desire the exotic with all its imagined sensuality and freedom.

⁶ According to klminc.marketing, authenticity is "the holiness of consumer grails." "Liberation Marketing has been effectively adopted by true anticonsumerist enterprises...It is the avant-garde itself, using marketing and media to regain and promote authenticity in the culture with a message that encourages us to be authentic in our lives."

Gilmore and Pine (2007), two leading business theorists from Harvard Business school, assert that authenticity is indeed “what consumers really want” (xii). Although “authenticity itself is never an objective quality inherent in things, but simply a shared set of beliefs about the nature of things we value in the world” (Grazian 2003:12), it has become a potent metaphor for what is missing in white upper-middle-class culture (di Leonardo 1998). As the rationalization of everyday life has brought increasing control over inner and outer life (Lears 1994:xvii), civilization has brought not prosperity but rather a sense of weightless and lack of personal identity (1994:32). The middle-class, in turn, has become increasingly “preoccupied with authentic experience as a means of revitalizing a fragmented personal identity “now realized in never-ending therapeutic quests for self-realization (1994:xix).

Antimodernists have sought relief in arts and crafts revivalism, transcendentalism, tourism, therapeutic rusticity and mind-body therapies since the late 19th century. Additionally, the corporate community would capitalize on the growing emotional needs of the middle-class in the form of products, services and experiences. As the middle-class has facilitated the growth of corporate culture, their antimodernist fascination with counter culture also continues to invigorate the consumerist economy in the form of increased demand for alternative lifestyle products. The growing emotional needs of the middle-class also continue to give rise to the growth of the self-help industry, the human potential movement, the development of “havens” like Esalen, a forum for exploration of religion, philosophy, psychology, for new ideas about the meaning and possibilities of life

(Anderson 1983:9), and various kinds of consciousness raising activities such as improvisational theatre in the forests of Poland or Authentic Movement. According to sociologist David Grazian (2003), “the increased global commodification of popular culture [has created] an even stronger desire among many consumers for that which seems uncommercial and therefore less affected by the strong hand of the marketplace,” whether through the blues, independent cinema, punk rock (2003:7), or as found in my research, Authentic Movement.

Given the persistence of antimodern sentiments throughout the twentieth century, the present economy (which Gilmore and Pine [1999] call an “experience economy”⁷) centers around creating products that go beyond meeting the material needs of consumers. Exploiting the coexistent affinities for consumption and aspirations toward self-realization, even manufacturing companies try to create meaningful experiences for consumers, whether this comes in the form of coffee, home furnishings, clothes, travel, birth, or even death. Companies in fact “stage” experiences (Gilmore and Pine 2007:2) that consumers can associate with what they believe is natural, original, exotic, non-commercial, intense, and important. In other words, companies manufacture goods that consumers will associate with authenticity. “Honest Tea,” for example, makes varieties of special teas, each with a name that refers to a story of its origin (2007:54). The art forms

⁷ The Experience Economy, Gilmore and Pine (1999) explain, refers to the predominance of interest in products as forms of experience in contrast to products as commodities or services. They explain that the experience economy has replaced the Service Economy which in turn had overtaken the Industrial Economy and the former Agrarian Economy. Each economy has fostered a different set of consumer sensibilities (1999:2) and in the present economy what consumers buy “must reflect who they are and who they aspire to be in relation to how they perceive the world”(1999:5).

on the packaging evoke the feeling of its purity and originality. Coca-cola is the “real thing,” unlike other manufactured copies of this original (2007:57). Distressed furniture, though distressed in the factory rather than through use over time, creates the image of rusticity and the simple life. The ancient contemplative gardens of Jin Li Street around Chengdu China, for instance, appeal to natural authenticity. Every material used in the garden is natural. Native artisans and unique features speak to its originality and exceptional quality. Though the street is not really an ancient street it is remade to look like an ancient street for artisans and for tourists, giving them the sense of being close to authentic roots in the past (2007:51). And as evident in the many remarks of members of the Authentic Movement community, Authentic Movement evokes what Gilmore and Pine might term natural and original authenticity by virtue of its association with “natural” movement and “exotic and ancient ritual dance.”

The breadth and variety of consumer products and experiences that answer to the call for authenticity set into clear relief the prominence of antimodernist sensibilities in American culture. Indeed, according to sociologist Richard Florida (2002), experiences of authenticity, are endowed with high status value. With “life” becoming a scarce commodity, he explains, many increasingly define the quality of their lives not by the goods they consume but by “the quality of the experiences they consume” (2002:170). In particular, authenticity is a valuable commodity in a specific sector of the economy that Florida calls the “creative class,” a sociological framework explaining the link between the Authentic Movement community and the experience economy.

Though class systems usually categorize people according to their economic position in social space, Florida defines the creative class not so much by their economic status as much as their outlook and approach to life. The creative class includes scientists and engineers, architects and designers, writers, artists, musicians, anyone who mainly uses creativity in their work—demographic features characteristic of the Authentic Movement Community. Florida claims that the creative class is the dominant class in America driving the economy, occupying the power centers of industry, media and government, as well as the arts and popular culture (2002:xxix). The creative class, Florida continues, is made up of people who desire “more active, authentic, and participatory experiences” in “more authentic, indigenous or organic venues (2002:4)” and revolve their life around self-invention and creative lifestyles “full of intense, high-quality multidimensional experiences,” from skydiving, to yoga, to ecotourism and to practices like Authentic Movement. Members of the creative class gain status and a sense of identity not so much from the goods they have but from the experiences they have (2002:166)—experiences that will ultimately redeem them from the burdens of over-civilization.

An anecdotal complement to Florida’s academic quantitative analysis, David Brooks’s (2000) *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* also sheds light on the outlook of the demographic population that participates in Authentic Movement (but also reveals underlying cynical attitudes toward the “culture of

authenticity”).⁸ Brooks typifies authenticity-seekers as those who have “one foot in bohemian world of creativity and [the other in the] bourgeois world of ambition and worldly success” (2000:11). Brooks, following Frank’s (1997) *The Conquest of the Cool*, maintains that bobos are against “conformity, traditionalism, clearly defined gender roles, ancestor worship, privilege, elitism, self-satisfaction, coldness” (Brooks 2000:33), and at the same time are embedded in the corporate culture against which they are rebelling. Bobos have a “desire to shape institutions to meet their individual needs” doing things like writing their own wedding vows, or as in Authentic Movement, creating “their own personal yoga.” Antimodernist in their sensibilities, bobos want to “drop out of the rat race, retreat to small communities where real human relationships will flourish” (2000:35), gaining status by ostentatiously displaying their non-materialist attitude.

Along with Brook’s sarcastic, albeit humorous, description of the bohemian bourgeois world, many other social theorists cast a dark shadow over the antimodernist movement and authenticity seekers, questioning the authenticity of their appeals to authenticity. “There are not a lot of artists and intellectuals in Wayne, but suddenly there are a lot of people who want to drink coffee like one” (2000:55), remarks Brooks. Folklorist Regina Bendix (1997) similarly asserts that as so many things these days are declared authentic, authenticity’s specialness is “evaporating.” Even the word “authentic” is inauthentic (Gilmore and Pine 2007:43). The aesthetic of the “authentic, natural, warm, rustic, simple, honest, organic, comfortable, craftsmanlike, unique, sensible, sincere”

⁸ I refer here to Charles Taylor’s (1991) essay on the “malaise of modernity” which he renamed the “ethics of authenticity.”

Brooks (2000:83) claims is inextricably intertwined with an aesthetic of spending money. The middle-class did not revolt against the system, adds Frank, they just developed a new lifestyle in which they could seek “self-realization” (Frank 1997). Subversion took place through pleasure seeking activities, not real structural change. Bobos practice what Brooks (2000: 224) calls “flexidoxy” a mixture of individuality with traditionalism with the presupposition that it is possible to have it all. “When they die, God meets them at the gates of heaven, totes up how many fields of self-expression they have mastered, and then hands them a divine diploma and lets them in” (2000:18). Anthropologist Michaela di Leonardo’s (1998) critique is harsher and more far-reaching. “Antimodernists,” she asserts, “whether past or present, construct noble savages for their personal salvation” (1998:3), but fused with the notion of the noble savage is western domination and superiority.

This sarcastic and pessimistic tone truly captures the skepticism, mistrust, and shame that many people have for authenticity-seekers. To be sure, during my fieldwork, I encountered many people with skeptical attitudes toward Authentic Movement and recognize that readers of this dissertation may also have a skeptical attitude toward this practice. Paradoxically, however, the negative attitude merely serves to strengthen the Authentic Movement community’s conviction that the modern culture cannot attune to the true needs of society.

While participants of Authentic Movement would not deny they share an antimodernist desire for intense emotional, sensorial, and meaningful experience that is

met through consumption of experiences, few would like to identify themselves as consumers or bourgeoisie. This is not surprising since it is the consumer economy and materialist manufactured modern world against which they rebel. In their naturally occurring discourse, “we” does not denote their alliance with a consumerist counter culture. Rather “we” connotes and *performs, or brings into reality*, a romantic ideal of unity of man, an experience of authentic *communitas* sought for in the practice. Indeed, as Urban (1996) explains, the phenomenal community described by anthropologists and others does not necessarily “correspond to the intelligible sense of themselves that is encoded referentially in their discourse” (1996:51).

The antimodern vision of authenticity that motivates practices like Authentic Movement—a primitivist aesthetic, a desire for communion with nature, a fascination with the exotic, internality, spontaneity, a return to the body, valorization of emotion, and heightened sensory awareness—does not necessarily include a sociohistorical perspective on itself. Yet, there need not be a contradiction between the social scientist perspective and insider’s point of view to shed light on the cultural phenomenon itself. From Wallace Shawn’s point of view, Andre Gregory’s journey was a misguided attempt to escape the modern world in which ironically he became ever more entrenched. For Gregory, the clichéd nature of his quest was irrelevant. He found himself in a social world that was truly meaningful to him. We do not have to deny that the longing for authenticity Authentic Movement practitioners feel, even if it is socially constructed, is personally authentic for them. While Jin Li Street, the home furnishings *and* Authentic Movement

are all patently “staged” or “manufactured,” they are still convincingly authentic to many. Sociologist, David Grazian’s argument (2003), similarly, is that authenticity is contextual. The “symbolic economy of authenticity” is a system of “commodified signs, social relations, and meanings” in “a world of human subjectivity and experience” (2003:17). A new blues bar on a side street in the south side of Chicago can be authentic. That same blues bar in a mall is not. When products and experiences meet a set of expectations about how a thing should look, feel, and sound, they are authentic. Authenticity is, ultimately, in the eyes of the beholder. People judge experiences as authentic that are phenomenologically authentic to them. My interest, thus, is in how the Authentic Movement community—leaders and followers—define authenticity, seek authenticity, and experience authenticity.

Authenticity as Performance: My Theoretical Perspective

Anthropology, like all academic disciplines, is a social institution often absorbed in its own social and cultural milieu. The culture of authenticity, a focus of the urban elite, accordingly, has also been key to anthropological investigations. Images of authenticity—authentic origins, authentic peoples, authentic objects, authentic ethnography—are in the background of many anthropological projects. In anthropology in the early part of the twentieth century, for instance, it was often the goal of the anthropologist to rediscover, recapture, and represent the authentic lifestyles, languages, and visions of authentic peoples. American Anthropology was complicit in what Renato Rosaldo (1993:70) described as “imperialist nostalgia,” a longing for what we lost

through our own projects of colonization, or what Michaela di Leonardo (1998:3) described as ethnological antimodernism, an escape from modernity through engagement in the lives of the “other.” According to James Wilce (2005:61), these sentiments still continue in anthropology today, in the form of a post-modern ethnography of mourning. Nostalgic sorrow over the loss of tradition, he explains, is often implicit in ethnographic metacommentary. In essence, these theorists concede that anthropologists were and are responsible for creating romantic visions of the exotic other without seriously considering the political implications of putting forth such representations of other peoples.

Following the reflexive turn in anthropology, authenticity was studied as an illusively changing object and “invented tradition” (di Leonardo 1998; Herzfeld 1986; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992). Deconstructing the nostalgic view of authenticity, anthropologists became most interested in exposing subversive claims of authenticity, as James Clifford (1988:14) notes, as “matters of power and rhetoric rather than of essence.” Therefore, many anthropologists began to study processes of authentication and how claims of authenticity and cultural continuities are semiotically mediated. Anthropologists described how interested parties would engage in a “play of tropes” (Fernandez 1986) linking cultural domains in ways that make the world appear coherent and naturalizing a particular vision of society for the advantage of one social group over another. More recently, John and Jean Comaroff (2007) show how the putting forth of authentic identity is a way of making identity a product that can be delivered to the market for material and cultural benefit.

However, it is not sufficient to merely analyze the constructed nature of authenticity. Ironically, we have to acknowledge the authenticity of the lived experiences of *representations* of authenticity because in social life, people have emotional and moral investments in their identities as being authentically theirs. “Authenticity gathers people in collectives that are felt to be real, essential, and vital, providing participants with meaning, unity, and a surpassing sense of belonging” (Lindholm 2008:1). Rather than thinking only about how performances are deployed for rhetorical purposes, we can think about how performances simultaneously render experiences as phenomenologically authentic, owned as part of self.⁹ The ethnographic study of Authentic Movement as a cultural performance of authenticity thus requires the study of discourses of authenticity and attentiveness to the performative aspects of this practice, as these serve as the indexical ground upon which performances of the authentic self are made meaningful. The theoretical focus of this dissertation therefore is based on an integration of theories of performance from cultural anthropology, semiotics, performance studies, and aesthetic anthropology.

In alignment with current anthropologies of performance, I view ritual performances as an “enhancement of experience” and “active event[s] rather than an

⁹ To some extent, the contrast between the constructed nature of authenticity and what I call phenomenologically authentic aspect of experience is inspired by but does not achieve the theoretical complexity of what John Jackson (2005) conceptualizes as a dichotomy between authenticity and sincerity. “Authenticity” he explains, “presupposes a relation between subjects (who authenticate) and objects (dumb, mute, and inorganic) that are interpreted and analyzed from the outside, because they cannot simply speak for themselves” (2005:14-15). Sincerity, he says, sets up different relation; “sincerity assumes a liaison between subjects (2005:15) who presuppose each others subjectivity and interiority (2005:15). In calling for an anthropology that acknowledges the authenticity of socially constructed performances, I do however, align with Jackson’s interest in developing an ethnographic project based on the intersubjectivities of sincerity over the authoritative nature of authenticity, as he conceptualizes the two states of being.

arena[s] for reflective representation” (Laderman and Roseman 1996:2). Performances are not restatements of ideas, but aesthetic modes of action that bring into being the realities they describe. In *Authentic Movement*, images of authenticity become lived experiences, not abstract ideas.

The ritual efficacy of *Authentic Movement* draws on its power to create an affectively charged, sensorially evocative experience for participants of the ritual event. As Schieffelin (1996) and Kendall (1996) show, this power arises in great part from the theatrical skills of ritual leaders to create emotionally powerful performances and their ability to attune to the mood and needs of the audience. Ritual performers also gain social authority through demonstration of special knowledge and control over agents of transformation (Briggs 1994). *Authentic Movement*, similarly, obtains its power from the abilities of its leaders to evoke emotionally powerful and meaningful performances from its participants, which I elaborate upon in detail in chapter 5.

Toward this goal, group leaders and participants, as ritual performers, accentuate the sensorial aspects of their movement and narrative performances. As in most ritual events, meaningful experiences are conjured through the body as well as through the mind (Laderman and Roseman 1996; Laderman 1991, 1994, 1996; Briggs 1996; Csordas 1996; 2002a, b; Howes 1991; Stoller 1989, 1997; Schieffelin 1985; Desjarlais 1992; Guerts 2002; Kapferer 1991). Specifically, ritual actions, as I describe in chapter 5, induce feelings in the body so that they can be pointed to as indexes of transformation of the self. However, this does not happen automatically. Transformations of body image are only felt as transformations of self-image when phenomenological

experiences of body image are linked with discourses about what these experiences mean about the self (Eakin 1999). The same sensations that index selfhood in one ethnographic setting may index spirit possession in another, and thus performance studies must take into account the cultural discourses of body and self that are presupposed in the performances themselves (Feld 1982). The emphasis on the kinesthetic sense in *Authentic Movement*, for instance, is based on its cultural value as an index of inner self and as the more genuine mode of human communication¹⁰. Kinesthesia is seen as an alternative,¹¹ more natural way of being in the world by virtue of its association with a particular ideology of authenticity,¹² not necessarily because of anything inherent in kinesthesia itself. With this in mind, chapters two and four outline the discourses of authenticity that come into play in *Authentic Movement*, and chapter four also charts the historical circumstances of their emergence and the development of the social networks in which they circulate.

I also base my study on the assumption that the self is a highly contextualizable phenomenon and therefore rather than looking at the self as a definable object, I examine the process of self-constitution as it happens in realtime (Agha 1995). In other words, I

¹⁰ Aesthetic values can be iconic representations of how people should participate in social life. For example, according to Chernoff (1979), the aesthetics of African music are intimately connected with social values. For instance, musicians are taught not to just join in synchrony to the music but to stand back and find a rhythm to add on to what is already occurring.

¹¹ The emphasis on kinesthesia challenges the essentialization of five senses model (Howes 1991), the primacy of visualism and its association with discourses of objectivity (Howes 1991; Jutte 2005; Stoller 1989, 1997).

¹² Sensory patterning is not random but intimately related to the values and interests of particular social group. For instance, the Anlo of Ghana emphasize proprioceptivity, or the sensory modality which provides information about the state of deep muscle tissue and effects of movement in space (Guerts 2002). Based on Guerts's elaborate and insightful ethnographic information, we find that proprioception is valued and emphasized for its contribution to cultural ideals of balance and coordination which index positive character traits.

consider not only what it means to be human, but look at how we make ourselves human (Csordas 1994: vii), at particular times, in particular places and in particular ways. In this pursuit, I acknowledge Singer's (1984: 3) warning not to be fooled by preconceptions of how humans can know the world. "Man's glassy essence," he asserts, implies more than that he is a window that frames a vision of the world. By representing himself, man is part of creating a world, including himself. To understand the process of self-constitution, therefore, we need to attend to this sign-making power, evident in ritual practices from the sacred to the mundane.

The argument for the semiotic constitution of the self begins from the presupposition that social identities or experiences of selfhood do not exist independently of their expression in public accessible signs (Agha 1995, 2006; Wortham 2000, 2001, 2006). Rather, identity and a sense of self are realized through the use of signs in realtime encounters. Furthermore, this view of selfhood is, in turn, based on a particular view of signification, that is, that language and other modalities of expression cannot merely be a means for reflecting pre-existent realities but a means of constituting social reality as well. This function of communication is realized through indexicality, that aspect of sign functioning that is necessarily connected to the context in which the sign occurs (Silverstein 1976). Accordingly, as the index directs attention to relevant features of the environment, it establishes, not merely reflects, the conditions under which the subsequent interaction takes place (Hymes 1981[1975]; Silverstein 1998; Duranti 1997). The context is not pre-existent but a product of creativity in semiosis. With indexical resources at hand, people as semiotic agents are in the position of creating the social

conditions under which they construct their identity (Goffman 1959). In Authentic Movement, this process is intensified in each movement and narrative performance.

Based on my analysis of the literature, I identify three indexical modes of signification for a performance of the self—as an act of contextualization, as self-centering, and as an act of typification. Of course, these three aspects of indexicality are related. They center themselves within the social contexts that they construct themselves and in this way typify their actions in particular ways.

In particular, the performance of self as an act of contextualization entails the self-production of frames through which social actors can both present themselves and be interpreted by others (Goffman 1959; Bateson 1972)¹³. For instance, group leaders and participants recontextualize the “space” of Authentic Movement, constructing environments that presuppose a set of possible identities different than those in everyday life, and thus provide opportunity for self-transformation. Specifically, participants in Authentic Movement often recontextualize the space as a “natural” environment in which they act as beings in nature, expanding the sense of self beyond present realities. As I explain in detail in my performance analysis in chapter 5, leaders and participants often refer to the floor as the earth, and through the construction of changes in the experience of the body which deictically ground the performance in a different time and place, they

¹³ For example, people may deploy signs to position themselves in ways that allow them to be heard (Lindstrom 1992), gain authority, raise their status (Goffman 1959; Morford 1997), demonstrate morality (Caton 1986), or any number of social goals that are available to them. In addition, each performance may differ in terms of how explicitly it draws attention to itself as a performance (Briggs 1993:199; Bauman and Briggs 1990, Silverstein and Urban 1996). This issue is particularly relevant in analyzing rituals of self-transformation, where drawing attention to a performance as a “performance” may undermine the efficacy of the ritual, i.e. the self that is performed may be perceived as less authentic if it is perceived as merely “performed”.

experience themselves in new ways, for example, as animals or plants moving within this more natural setting. The performers thus index themselves as more natural living beings rather than people following socially constructed rules and ways of being in the world. Specifically, by calling attention to culturally salient discourses of authenticity that presuppose a connection between nature and authentic selfhood, participants typify themselves as authentic. In Authentic Movement, participants produce the frames and perspectives for how they want to be seen, create the kind of world they want to construct for themselves, and then by doing so, become the kind of persons they want to be. In essence, different ways of acting on the body create different experiences of the body and in turn, the self, wherein phenomenological changes serve as basis for reinterpretations of the self.

These performances of self are particularly effective as acts of typification when particular characteristics indexed by ways of speaking and acting are seen as naturally inhering in the individual, i.e. bearing an iconic relation to the character of the person. These icons of identity depend upon their articulation with other semiotic devices such as indexicality and symbolism. In particular, participants behave in a specific manner so as to be typified as a certain type of person—moving with a sense of spontaneity, speaking honestly, quietly, and introspectively, wearing clothes associated with a natural persona—therefore motivating an interpretation of authentic self-expression. Aesthetic features evident in styles of movement and speaking in turn gain iconic value by virtue of their linkages with other aesthetic features, whereby the connection between the aesthetic feature to a particular social identity comes to be seen as natural and nonarbitrary (Keane

2003; Agha 2003). Correspondingly, the mysterious and evocative nature of the body movement experience in Authentic Movement is intelligible as authentic when the iconicity or feeling of authenticity is both sign and metasign—it points to itself as authentic and is combined with other indexical and symbolic signs of authenticity.

Performances of the self are also made convincing through the use of the poetic function of language. For example, the language user can create iconic imagery by means of sounds of words, length of syllables, figures, tropes, and comparisons (Noth 2000; Nanny 1999; Johansen 2003). Authentic Movement deploys a variety of poetic and narrative styles to iconically portray the nature of their subjective experiences. The patterned use of the first person perspective and meandering nature of narratives are iconic of a free flowing but highly personal way of being in the world. Styles of dance and movement are also used creatively to evoke imagery, emotions, and internal states of the individual (Daly 2001; Buckland 2001; Savigliano 1995). In spite of this, the meaning of any of these features or devices is not predetermined but rather depends upon how these features are contextualized and metapragmatically framed (Wilce 1997). As I will show in detail in chapter 5, in Authentic Movement, performances are framed as simultaneously personal and universal, enabling participants to simultaneously feel they are the architects of their own lives, but also part of something larger than themselves, both key aspects of authenticity.

The poetic function brings together the discursive and sensorial, the phenomenological and cognitive poles of meaning (Turner 1967). Sign form is not a mere dressing for discourse. Rather, the experience of the palpable qualities of the semiotic

performance gives essence to the meaning of the text and integrates the domains of the body and the mind. The discursive is both understood and felt. My own research of Authentic Movement, therefore, will not separate the analysis of the mediation of the phenomenological experience of the body from the analysis of the discursive processes which give meaning to this experience. My research is an attempt to reveal the dynamic interconnections and mutually transforming relationships between these two domains. I will show how both language and sensory experience are mutually constructive and integral to the discovery of an authentic self as it is defined in this discourse.

I return to the original question posed at the beginning of this chapter. How does moving with eyes closed in the presence of a compassionate witness become an experience of authenticity? How can a phenomenological experience of the body become a meaningful experience of authenticity? If modern life impels us to go through the process of self-making over and over, we must understand how this takes place. Aesthetic and semiotic approaches to anthropology that I have discussed above give us analytic purchase for determining how the process of self-constitution takes place. Aesthetic anthropology provides a methodology for investigating the construction of aesthetic experiences and semiotic anthropology the means for linking the aesthetic to the construction of self.

Finally, my analysis attempts to reflect the unique and exceptional quality of each performance. This means that I must acknowledge the social and historical context in which the performances take place. In the case of Authentic Movement, we only know how the performance comes to be intelligible as a performance of authenticity if we

understand what discourses of authenticity are in play. But more simply, even the most structured and patterned performances are singular and contingent upon the historical circumstances in which they take place. Any analysis of a performance should take into account the conditions under which it is created, for example, the setting, the audience (Goodwin and Goodwin 1992), the agenda and goals of its members (Schieffelin 1996). Most important, an analysis should be respectful and true to the desires and voice of the participants themselves who have a vested interest in their performances.

Ethnographer as Witness–Observer: Methodological Considerations for a Ethnographic Performance Analysis

The first consideration of this ethnographic project was to choose the settings in which I would collect my data. The Authentic Movement community, though small, represents a diverse group of participants. The Authentic Movement Community Directory has listings of 170 members from 21 countries, and over 5000 people from 44 countries have viewed the Community website.¹⁴ Perusing the directory, you can find an actress and drama therapist from Argentina, dancers from Brazil or Canada, a woman from Italy interested in developing higher consciousness, practitioners from the U.K. Germany and the U.S. who are looking for peer groups or “kindred spirits.” You can find advertisements for intensive workshops and ongoing groups, or stories about “making dream figurines of personality parts,” “moving authentically inside and out,” methods of teaching Kabbalah through movement. Personal essays theorizing the witness–mover

¹⁴ This data represents only those that visit the community website; this not does represent how many people actually engage in the practice, which is substantially larger than the numbers listed here.

relationship, speculating on the intersection of Authentic Movement and Organizational Development, or how to integrate Authentic Movement into the practice of psychotherapy also abound. This electronic gathering place is the hub of the Authentic Movement community, welcoming the small but vocal and intensely involved group of predominantly women to reflect upon and share their diversity of interests and creative work. Authentic Movement is practiced in the United States, Western and Eastern Europe, South America, and the world wide web. Where modernization arises, nostalgia for the past and a culture of authenticity follows. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that Authentic Movement is fashionable among modern dance communities around the world. Authentic Movement is visible in creative arts, religious, psychotherapeutic, and alternative health settings.

My dissertation attempts to represent this diversity. My selection of sessions was based on purposive sampling and enabled me to document a wide range of Authentic Movement experiences. I chose to attend a greater number of what I call self-empowerment sessions (those sessions focused on the development of body awareness as a way to first learn more about one's feelings and desires, and second to support the expression of these needs and desires) as this type represented the greatest variation of Authentic Movement in terms of style of leadership and group composition. I also chose to participate in multiple sessions of the same type of Authentic Movement group to assess how Authentic Movement functions with different sets of participants and different leaders. I also note that there is a great deal of overlap in these categories. It is often difficult to discriminate between self-empowerment and spirituality groups. I

merely use such terms to refer to a difference in dominance of tone or mood of the group. The demographic characteristics of participants is also not a major consideration in this sampling due to the homogenous nature of Authentic Movement participants; they are predominantly white, middle-class, educated women.

I participated in ten day or weekend “self-empowerment” workshops, and two short-term seminars, two intensive retreats, one business leadership training seminar, two long term Authentic Movement groups over two years, and ten individual Authentic Movement sessions.¹⁵

Though most of the research on which my dissertation is based was carried out in the mid-Atlantic and New England areas of the United States, in scope my research embraces the diversity of styles and applications of the practice. I focused my work in this geographical area for a number of reasons. First, I reasoned that the costs I would have incurred to attend workshops or retreats in exotic places such as the Grand Canyon, Mexico, or Tuscany would have outweighed the benefits of information I could have gathered at local workshops and retreats. I would not have been able to make video or audio recordings of these sessions. The other participants would be investing substantial portions of precious money and time for the retreat themselves and I was told they would not want to be observed, let alone videotaped. I was able to balance this limitation with intense involvement in long-term groups in Philadelphia, and participation in a variety of workshops and groups in the area. New York and Massachusetts are two centers in which

¹⁵ I note that prior to this anthropological fieldwork, throughout my previous career as a dance therapist I did attend two or three Authentic Movement workshops and was part of an Authentic Movement group for 6 months.

Authentic Movement developed from the 1970s and 1980s and there were teachers in Philadelphia that were involved in this renaissance. I therefore forewent the opportunity to attend retreats and workshops in expensive locations and focused on those places where I would have greater access to the leaders and participants.

The anthropological study of Authentic Movement presents a number of opportunities and challenges for the ethnographer. Authentic Movement is a semiotically rich practice. It has a clear structure such that its ideologies and practices are easily accessible in publicly observable signs ranging from gestures to words, books, articles, journals, and brochures. On the other hand, the role of the participant-observer of Authentic Movement is somewhat circumscribed. Authentic Movement practitioners are understandably protective of the private space they create for their groups. Though people do not reveal personal material, in terms of private matters in their lives, they reveal a number of personal feelings. Accordingly, the leaders attempt to create an open atmosphere where this kind of self-disclosure can be freely and safely expressed. As a result, a number of the leaders that I spoke to at the outset of my preliminary research were resistant to my participation as a participant-observer. They only accepted my attendance with the agreement that I would be a full participant in the sessions, with a responsibility for what that role entailed. Along with the other movers, I also kept my eyes closed as I engaged in movement improvisations. When I inhabited the role of witness, I adhered to my obligation to focus on my own reactions and internal sensations and did not observe the movers merely as research subjects. I also kept the confidentiality of all participants and did not speak about the sessions outside the context of the

Authentic Movement session. As time passed and as I participated in more groups over longer periods of time, a few workshop leaders allowed me to step out of my role as participant and engage in different levels of observation. In a few sessions, I sat quietly in a corner of the room and merely observed the happenings and took field notes. I also videotaped a long-term group for over one year, and taped two one-day workshops.

Different levels of participant-observation of Authentic Movement provided me with different perspectives and types of knowledge of the form. Each type of knowledge was important to learning about Authentic Movement, providing insight at different levels of experience. The following chart presents a brief summary of the responsibilities entailed by each form of participant-observation and the potential type of knowledge achieved.

Type of participant-observation	Responsibilities	Type of Knowledge Gained
Full participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eyes closed during movement improvisations • Focus on own internal reactions as witness others • Participate “sincerely”¹⁶ • Do not speak to participants about Authentic Movement outside the session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience phenomenological changes in my own body • Self as referent for all observations • Learn the appropriate structure of speaking as a witness • Field notes following session
In Session Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit quietly in corner of the room • Do not interfere in narrative portion of the session • Do not speak to participants outside the session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can watch entire movement process • Experience of movement through kinesthetic empathy • Potential Observer Effect • Field notes during the session
Video Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place camera or videographer in unobtrusive position in movement space • Obtain informed consent • Maintain confidentiality of participants where necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kinesthetic Empathy reduced • Potential Observer Effect; in combination with participant experience reduce observer effect • Can view repeatedly • Can transcribe “actual” text • Can share with outside observers (with consent) for research and educational purposes

¹⁶ Here I again invoke John Jackson’s (2005) call for an ethnography in which the ethnographer reduces projection upon her subject and respects the agency and interiority of her interlocutors.

As full participant, for instance, I engaged in the practice with as little distance as possible to obtain a more full effect of what it is like to be in the Authentic Movement community, attending to my own feelings and changes in body and self image. My participant experience gave me first hand knowledge of the phenomenological changes one may experience when participating in Authentic Movement. I learned the appropriate structure of speaking as a witness and came to understand what it means to move authentically and to be with others from the perspective of the Authentic Movement community. Given the salience of “experience” of this form, this is crucial to an adequate performance analysis that is to capture the semiotic power in these performances. The next stage of my ethnographic experience was to be observer in sessions, taking notes as I watched performances and listened to the stories of witnesses and movers rather than embodying the witness stance. In this case, while my physical presence still gave me access to the mood and tone of the experience, I did not focus so much on my own feelings but watched the overall dynamics and patterns happening in the sessions. Finally, as videographer, through repeated viewings of individual sessions, and readings of transcriptions of sessions, I was able to document all the details of a particular session and gain access to patterns and styles of interaction not readily apparent in simple observations. Though when serving as observer and videographer my presence would increase the chances that there would be changes in how people would behave in this setting, my informants remarked that they would soon forget about the presence of the camera.

The documentation and data collection from my participation-observation in the various Authentic Movement groups are in the form of field notes and audio and video recordings. My field notes complement my theoretical perspective and take note of the aesthetics and performative features of Authentic Movement sessions. I therefore describe the physical setting of the sessions, the activities conducted, how instructions are delivered, the major events of the session, what people said, and *how* they performed their self and witnessing narratives. I also write about the movement process, that is, the flow of events as they occur in movement improvisations and my personal experience of the activities insofar as this was pertinent to understanding how Authentic Movement works. I obtained the permission and written consent from all participants for all videotaped sessions (see appendix).

For those sessions for which I was able to videotape, I selected segments of the recordings most representative of the discourse and practice of Authentic Movement for transcription, with a particular sensitivity to the multimodal nature of these events, for example, movement, sound, spatial architecture. With regard to the movement observation, I applied the principles and theories of movement from Laban Movement Analysis (Laban 1988[1948]; Bartenieff 1980) to focus upon the quality of expression in movement. Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) is a means of observation and recording of qualitative features (efforts and shapes) of movement in space. I found LMA to be a useful tool for documenting the quality and dynamics of the movement process and the nonverbal aspects of the narrative performances rather than documenting only structural aspects of the actions. I paid particular attention to qualitative features of body language,

as the qualitative features of communication are more closely linked with performances of authenticity. As with the movement analysis, I chose to transcribe the verbal narratives with particular sensitivity to qualitative features of speech production as well.

Both the LMA and verbal transcription devices make salient those features that are relevant to an analysis of the interactional dynamics. Though witnessing and self-narratives are very structured turn-taking events in Authentic Movement, I also took note of the following linguistic features in my transcription: latching, pauses, and interruption. My goal was to analyze these features in order to reveal relevant patterns in the data. I was also interested in observing how the performance of authenticity was evidenced by thematic content and qualitative aspects of the performance associated with ideals of authenticity. I used the same sets of factors to analyze leader instructions and witnessing narratives and some interviews.

My fieldwork includes interviews with 50 participants of Authentic Movement groups and 11 Authentic Movement group leaders. My ethnography also includes data from personal essays and autobiographical narratives from *A Moving Journal: The Biannual Journal of Authentic Movement* (Fall 1994–2006), *Dance Therapy Journal: The Journal of the American Dance Therapy Association*, *Contact Quarterly: A Biannual Dance and Improvisation Journal*). I also incorporate information from published autobiographies from Authentic Movement practitioners, and modern dancers interested in dance and self-expression, written descriptions of Authentic Movement from advertisements, brochures and Authentic Movement websites, and several videotaped recordings of Authentic Movement sessions made by Authentic Movement practitioners

both for professional use and public distribution. I organized data from these sources into a database in order to assess consistency in the application of particular themes, interpretations, and ways of speaking about Authentic Movement

The design of my research was structured in order to document two levels of the discourse of Authentic Movement, the object discourse level and the metadiscursive level. I obtained data on the object discourse or indexical level of sign functioning in realtime through observing and analyzing data from my participation in Authentic Movement sessions and data gathered from open-ended interviews and autobiographies. I learned about the ideological structures of Authentic Movement from observing patterns of behavior in the Authentic Movement sessions, analysis of the instructions and explanations delivered during the sessions, and data gathered from brochures, websites, historical documents, and journal articles by Authentic Movement practitioners.

In order to understand how Authentic Movement is a meaningful practice and makes sense to people I also needed to find the conditions of intelligibility of this discourse. A historical analysis of the culture of authenticity in 20th century United States lays the groundwork for understanding how the practice is intelligible as an experience of an authentic self, that is, how this complex of signs can be interpreted as authentic. The study is designed to be able to see parallels or contrasts between the metadiscursive and object levels of sign functioning with the goal of determining how Authentic Movement becomes a performance of authenticity.

Chapter Descriptions

Authentic Movement is a multidimensional ritual practice for which no single perspective would reveal its multifaceted and complex nature. My dissertation therefore presents the practice of Authentic Movement from different points of view. Chapter two gleans data from a variety of ethnographic sources—interviews, journal essays and articles, and instructions—to provide an overview of the practice of Authentic Movement, its origins, rules of conduct, applications, and ideologies. In chapter three, by contrast, I provide an insider’s point of view. Toward the goal of giving the reader a sense of what it is like to practice Authentic Movement, this chapter is a narrative of my encounter with Authentic Movement as ethnographer–witness in Authentic Movement. The reader will accordingly find my voice interwoven with the voices of the subjects of my research. I also wrote this chapter in a subjective style to highlight the self-focused nature of the practice and to provide an open forum that may lead readers to experience the uncertainty of the ground upon which the form rests, and thus logically look toward the ensuing historical and performance analyses to understand how the practice comes to be understood and felt as an experience of authenticity. Accordingly, chapter four moves away from the experience-near perspective and takes a look at the historical and cultural landscape from which Authentic Movement was born. Setting down the discourses that make Authentic Movement intelligible as a performance of authenticity, chapter four lays the foundation for the performance analysis which follows. In chapter five, I return from the macrosocial perspective to the microsocal perspective. Chapter five integrates semiotic analysis and performance theory to demonstrate how movement and narrative

performances come to be construed as performances of the authentic self. In particular, the chapter focuses on the performance of the leader as guide and ritual leader, the development of a mood of subjunctivity which orients participants to possibilities of self-transformation, the construction of a participant framework between witness and mover, and finally, the production of narrative and movement performances that elaborate upon salient discourses of authenticity. Chapter six touches briefly upon the issue of how Authentic Movement is meaningful in the everyday lives of members of its community and focuses more fully on the relevance and relationship of the community's own perception of itself to those outside the practice. I find in the end that authenticity is only in part in the eyes of the beholder. The performance of authenticity is also dependent on an authenticator, be she ethnographer or witness.

Chapter 2

Authentic Movement as a Cultural System: Community, Practice, and Ideology

The Community

Mary Whitehouse, the originator of Authentic Movement, was a seeker of knowledge and adventure. She was part of a generation of modern dancers who did not merely want to dance for others, but wanted to dance for themselves. Her quest was to find a different kind of dance which could go beyond “assumptions of what it means to be a dancer,” (1999 [1969-1970]: 58) to bring dance into homes and communities to improve the everyday lives of men and women. Though she would be most famous for inventing a form of dance that would facilitate the discovery of the inner self, her own life story is in fact more about the changes she accomplished in the outer world.

Mary Whitehouse was the first dancer to “bring together a thorough understanding of dance with the principles of depth psychology” (1999[1956]: 33). She had influence in the dance world and the psychoanalytic world. Though she was not an analyst, she presented a number of papers at the CG Jung Institute of Los Angeles (1999[1956]:33). Her influence on the theoretical foundations of dance therapy and in the Authentic Movement community, however, was more intangible than these more overt accomplishments. Moreover, as Mary’s narrative is told and retold in essays and at

Authentic Movement workshops, her life story lays out a path of redemption for others to follow.

Mary was born in 1911 and grew up in New England in a middle-class family. She graduated Wellesley College in 1933 with a dual major in dance and journalism. Following graduation from Wellesley in 1936, Mary studied with modern dancer, Mary Wigman at the Wigman Schule in Dresden, Germany (Sullwold and Ramsety 2007:45). Mary was interested in the Wigman approach as it allowed for improvisation, individuality, and creativity and took into account the mind and intelligence of the dancer. When she returned to the States, she studied with Martha Graham at Bennington College in Vermont.

Though an accomplished dancer, Mary, like the dancers who would follow in her footsteps, always had a preference for dance as a means of self-discovery. Her proclivity toward improvisational movement over theatrical performance would guide decisions she would make throughout her life. She gave up a career in the Martha Graham Dance Company to raise her daughter (2007:46), only by chance resuming her dance career while working in an aircraft factory in California. Noticing the psychological and physical stress experienced by women working on the assembly lines, Whitehouse formed a dance troupe with these women. She taught them on a regular basis, applying the improvisational techniques she learned in her years as a dancer. Like many of her followers in the Authentic Movement Community,¹⁷ Mary sought ways to apply dance to

¹⁷ Among the many who work in social service community, in addition to conducting Authentic Movement workshops, Alton Wasson is also a chaplain and conducts diversity training for corporations and

social problems. Ironically, it was at an industrial factory that Mary became even more committed to the idea that dance could be a solution to the negative effects of civilization and this motivated her to go further and deeper in her work.

Mary opened a studio and taught dance to groups and individuals. Over time, however, Mary's classes increasingly became less about dance and more about "the self."

Whitehouse describes the turning point in her teaching career in the following way,

It was an important day when I discovered that I did not teach Dance, I taught People...my primary interest might have to do with process not results...then it occurred to me to ask what it is that man does when he dances, not only as artist but as man ... He expresses that which cannot be put into words: he gives voice to the ineffable, intangible meaning and condition of being alive; he puts himself in touch with forces beyond the purely personal and mundane; he swims in a river of movement that refreshes the spirit (Whitehouse:1999[1969–1970]:59)

Her story reveals a connection often seen in the dance therapy community between teaching others and deepening interest in the development of one's own psyche. In Mary's life, the development of her practice went hand in hand with her increased involvement in Jungian psychoanalysis. In fact, for most practitioners, Authentic Movement is one aspect of the multifaceted quest for self.

Mary's increasing concern with the psychological process of expressive dance led her to her own Jungian analysis with Hilde Kirsch in LA¹⁸ (Chodorow 1999 [1991]:308).

She also later worked with Jungian Analyst Frances Wicks, whose theory that society

educational institutions; Martha Lask applies Authentic Movement in her work in organizational development.

¹⁸ It is also possible that Martha Graham's interest in mythology and psychology instigated her interest in Jungian analysis as well.

inhibited the individual's natural creative urges had a great impact on Whitehouse's thinking (Sullwold and Ramsey 2007 [1995]:46). She described her education in psychoanalysis as reinforcing what she learned kinesthetically with Martha Graham—the importance of following impulses that come from internal rather than external stimuli. This principle would become the cornerstone of Authentic Movement practice.

Integrating her experience in modern dance and Jungian analysis, Whitehouse emerged with a new focus in her work. Rather than teacher or therapist, Mary saw herself as a facilitator who was able to help people “rediscover” their creative impulse. Trusting “that the body would know how to heal itself” (Sullwold and Ramsey 2007:46), all Mary felt she needed to do was to set up the circumstance in which creative energy would “emerge spontaneously” (2007:46). In addition to the psychology of Carl Jung, Mary was also influenced by Charlotte Selver's work in sensory awareness. Selver, a prominent voice in the Human Potential Movement, stressed that the sensorium offered a more authentic way of being in the world (see also Howard 1970 on the Human Potential Movement). It was from Selver that Whitehouse found a rationalization for her emphasis on kinesthetic experience. It was also from Selver that Whitehouse developed her style as “facilitator”—to be nondirective, ask indirect questions, give up preconceptions of what would be good for the person, and to give permission for openness without judgment.

Mary Whitehouse continually shaped and reshaped the practice of Authentic Movement. She taught differently at different times, at major centers of the Human Potential Movement such as the Esalen Institute (Howard 1970). Her antimodernist penchant for experimentation in alternate traditions is confirmed in the many names she

used to describe her work, from Movement-in-Depth to the Tao of the Body to Authentic Movement. Her influence is confirmed by the many students who would carry on her legacy.

Janet Adler is the most well-known of Mary's students and is the most enigmatic, revered, and by virtue of the number of conversations about her life I have heard, the most controversial Authentic Movement practitioner today. Members of the Authentic Movement community refer to her as "Janet," indexing their friendship, closeness, and genealogical relationship to her. Janet Adler has documented her life story—a narrative of self-discovery from dancer to dance therapist to leader in the Authentic Movement Community to mystic—in documentary films, articles, essays, interviews, and autobiographies. As hero of these tales, she is an icon of authenticity. She is the seeker of deep knowledge, she is a mover, she is exotic, she represents an aesthetic of times past, she is spiritual, she is unfettered by mundane concerns, she is peaceful and she is sensual. Her autobiographies are iconic of her free flowing style of life, filled with imagistic poetry that embody the spontaneity and ineffability of Authentic Movement. It was mainly through the work of Janet Adler that the "form" of Authentic Movement became solidified, codified, and institutionalized.

I first came to know about Janet Adler back in the 1980s. I was in a masters degree program in dance therapy¹⁹ at Hahnemann University and like so many other

¹⁹ Dance therapy, as defined by the American Dance Therapy Association, is "the psychotherapeutic use of movement to foster the emotional, social, physical and cognitive integration of the individual" (www.adta.org). Dance therapists work in mental health settings that generally adhere to a biomedically oriented model of therapy and accordingly, dance therapists go through training like any other professional therapist and then learn how to apply dance within this model.

dance therapy students, I was enthralled by her work with autistic children, documented in her film, “Looking for Me,” produced in 1968.²⁰ Foreshadowing her future work as witness in Authentic Movement, Janet moved in such quiet and gentle harmony with two young autistic children, following their rhythms, entering their world by rocking with them, careful to only do what felt safe for them.

As so many narratives one hears in Authentic Movement workshops, a series of fortuitous events occurred that changed both the course of Janet’s life and the direction of Authentic Movement. These included her meetings with John Weir, the originator of percept language,²¹ her work with Mary Whitehouse, her time as the director the Mary Starks Whitehouse Institute in Northampton, Mass., and finally and most significantly, the mystical visions that would drive her across the country to California, leading to the emergence of a second center of activity in the United States. Inspiring others to devote their life to self-exploration in the service to the collective and in service of the higher self, Janet’s work extended the range and depth of the Authentic Movement Community.

The heritage of Mary and Janet’s work is prolific. Mary’s students, Joan Chodorow and Caroline Grant Fay, have continued to integrate Authentic Movement within the Jungian community. Janet’s students Daphne Lowell, Alton Wasson, and Mary Ramsey set up the Contemplative Dance program in Northampton. Neala Haze and Tina

²⁰ At the time she was working for her M.S. degree in Child Development at the University of Pittsburgh Medical School. As part of her program, she was working at the Psychiatric Institute and Clinic. Rather than accept easy patients, Janet asked to work with the most distant and disturbed children living there. She wanted to see if she could communicate with them through movement and decided to document her work in a film. Janet also conducted studies at the Linguistic-kinesic Institute at the University of Pittsburgh with William Condon (1974), a student of Ray Birdwhistell (1970), using frame by frame analysis to explore the problem of interactional synchrony with autistic children.

²¹ Percept language is a style of speaking that codifies an ideology of compassion and self-other relations (Adler1999 [1976]b)

Stromstead, her students in California, established the Authentic Movement Institute in California. Zoe Avstreih opened the Center for the Study of Authentic Movement at Naropa Institute in Colorado. Anne Geissenger, Joan Webb and Paula Sager initiated and edited “A Moving Journal,” in publication from 1994 to 2006 and solely devoted to Authentic Movement. More recently, Andrea Olsen (2002) is combining her work in Environmental Studies with Authentic Movement. Marcia Plevin teaches Authentic Movement in Italy and the United States, integrating meditative practices into Authentic Movement. Aileen Crow also integrates the use of various artistic media with Authentic Movement. Martha Lask uses Authentic Movement in her business consulting work with non-profit organizations. Patrizia Pallaro combines Authentic Movement with an object-relations approach in her psychotherapy practice and she has also compiled essays and articles about Authentic Movement into two edited volumes.

The names and personalities associated with growth of Authentic Movement as a social institution with its own practices, technologies, and ideologies form an intricate web of tropic genealogical relations and associations. Practitioners identify themselves both by their teachers and by the philosophy of self they apply to the practice. While almost all practitioners embrace Jungian psychology as the overall framework for their practice, most also integrate other perspectives as well, including eastern and western mysticism, object relations theory, feminist psychology, artistic inquiry, Quakerism, organizational psychology, and phenomenology.

The Practice

Though the majority of Authentic Movement groups would be best categorized as self-empowerment dance workshops, Authentic Movement has found its way into multiple realms of American society. In this section, I will describe the most common and generic types of Authentic Movement sessions that are offered. Sessions basically vary with regard to purpose and setting, time commitment, and the role of leader.

As stated, the most common Authentic Movement sessions are self-empowerment workshops that take place in private dance studios, large halls in churches, or community centers. These “workshops”²² often have particular themes and intentions closely associated with transpersonal and humanistic psychologies such as rebirth and rejuvenation, creativity and healing, dream interpretation, or spiritual awakening. The pool of potential participants for these workshops are usually people who are already involved in expressive dance or body oriented activities such as yoga, tai chi, or other meditative activities. They are 90% female, white, educated, middle to upper-middle-class. Participants describe a variety of motivations for attending workshops including “to improve my health”, “to deepen my self awareness”, “to get connected again,” “as part of my lifelong quest to be in my body,” “to love myself,” “to work on my performance art”, “to give myself a gift”, “to learn more about authentic movement”, “to deal with a

²² The term “workshop” is a commonly used term for an educational seminar about a particular topic offered outside officially authorized institutions of education. Many arts organizations also used the term workshop in the 1940s and 1950s, as in the companies “Theatre Workshop” and “Ballet Workshop.” “Workshop” denoted the more experimental and democratic attitude toward choreographic and theatrical projects in contrast to the more authoritarian approaches of the more traditional institutions. Similarly, in Authentic Movement, the “choreographies” are merely facilitated by the leader. The participants produce the work.

dysphoric relationship with body”, and “to do this as part of beginning to try new things in life.” In general, participants seek a means of self-expression and a way to feel more positive about themselves in their everyday life.

Workshops are usually offered on a Saturday or Sunday for 6 to 8 hours, typically from 10 AM to 5 PM. For introductory one-day sessions, the leader inhabits a more directive role. The leader usually begins the session by educating participants about Authentic Movement—its history, purpose, and what they can expect to do and accomplish during the day. Introductory workshops are generally less emotionally intense and more carefully structured than weeklong sessions and long term groups. The leader is part dance/movement instructor and part therapist. She guides them in body relaxation and body awareness exercises and takes the role of sole witness for the movers. Participants take turns sitting as silent witnesses during movement improvisations, but during the narrative segment, only the leader will provide a verbal witness response to the movers. Novices are not considered knowledgeable and practiced enough in the form to be able to speak without projecting judgment onto the mover. Sometimes witnesses have to practice a year before speaking as witness. This highlights the highly charged but dual nature of talk in Authentic Movement; talk is at once brushed off as too weak to represent the full depth of movement experience, and demonized as potentially strong and hurtful.

Many of these groups are organized by dance therapists²³ for other therapists, or even other dance therapists, as a way of developing self-awareness or as a tool to for self-

²³ Dance therapists are certified masters level psychotherapists who employ the art of dance in the service of psychotherapeutic goals. They work in professional clinical settings, including mental health clinics and hospitals, with individuals and groups.

rejuvenation to reduce “burn-out” syndrome. While the practice and theory of Authentic Movement is often part of the general education of these professionals, dance therapists place strict limits on the application of the form. Though a highly structured practice, as a method for unveiling and releasing the contents of the unconscious and so-called primitive elements of the psyche, therapists deem Authentic Movement a potentially dangerous activity for vulnerable patients. For example, patients with schizophrenia or psychotic depression do not have enough “ego strength,” that is, sense of reality and appropriate psychological defenses, to cope with the potential flood of emotions and images that may emerge in the movement process. For those patients, dance activities that enhance reality testing and social awareness are recommended. Again, this highlights how practitioners ascribe an underlying sense of danger, and thus, power to Authentic Movement.

Those developing a more serious interest in the practice may join weekly groups. Authentic Movement groups that meet weekly or monthly tend to embody different group dynamics and require a different role for the leader. In the two groups I attended, there were no clear leaders of the group. All members were experienced in Authentic Movement and took an active role in organizing and determining the structure and activities of the sessions. In long-term groups, in general, where membership is consistent over time, the relationships that emerge become much more intimate than those of a day long workshop. In the monthly meeting that I attended for two years, the movement and witness narratives became much more personal than any I had heard in workshops or other long term groups where group composition changed each session. The narratives

included details of their personal lives and the women also began to meet outside the Authentic Movement sessions. But even in the short-term weekly group I attended, the level of intimacy that developed was notable. By the end of six weeks, there was a surprising level of trust, evidenced by increasing numbers of dyadic improvisations during movement sessions and more intense expression of emotion in narrative responses. Based on narratives in the Authentic Movement Journal, the development of trust and intimacy is common in groups that meet consistently. I also discovered that over time, long-term groups tend to engage in a great deal more experimentation with the form with regard to witness role, narrative form, and role of facilitator. I will describe these elaborations on the form in more depth in chapter 3.

For people who are interested in intensive experiences, weeklong workshops or “retreats” are available and may even be presented in exotic locations such as the beaches of Greece, Tuscany, La Isla Mujeres in Mexico, and the Grand Canyon. Most often retreats are offered at retreat centers, wellness centers, dance or art studios, or even someone’s home. Retreats may be advertised as religious retreats for spiritual rejuvenation, spa retreats for a “rest cure” (see chapter 4), or to heal a physical ailment. These retreats are offered as time away from the stressful everyday world, a time to be able to meditate and nurture the inner self.

Authentic Movement groups, whether one day workshops, long-term groups, or intensive retreats, may be organized according to different agendas. The main agendas are self-empowerment, health and wellness, meditation and spirituality, psychotherapy, professional leadership development, Authentic Movement leader training, or a

combination thereof. At spiritual retreats, for instance, the meditative aspect of Authentic Movement is emphasized. Participants take more care in the listening and quiet aspect of the form and place less emphasis on the creative movement. The movement improvisation may be interpreted as prayer or connection to transcendent forces.

Health and wellness seminars comprise only a minor fraction of Authentic Movement venues. In these settings, the “wisdom of the body” discourse is front and center. The physical experience is the focus. Students learn to get “in tune” with their body and to listen to the body’s signals and messages as they are expressed in sensation. Of course, this too requires interpretation. The movement is not an expression of creative mind from this point of view. Rather it is the body representing its physical state and letting the individual know the body’s desires and what the body needs to be healthy.

Finally, in leadership development training and in the psychotherapy training workshops, Authentic Movement leaders teach business leaders and therapists how to apply the compassionate witness stance in their work relationships. In these cases, the movement experience is merely considered a vehicle for developing a new interactional style. Experiencing the movement is a means, not a goal. Just as compassionate witnesses take ownership of their own feelings and do not project onto the mover, Authentic Movement focuses on teaching leaders and therapists how to be in touch with their own feelings so that they do not attribute their own agenda to their employees or patients.

Costs for sessions also vary according to purpose, setting, and time structure. Long-term groups at a friend’s studio are generally without cost, but more organized long-term groups with clear leaders are generally about \$20 to \$30 per session. Day-long

sessions cost about \$100 to \$200, and weeklong retreats are at least \$1500 in local areas and increasingly more expensive in exotic locations. How people view the cost depends on a person's income. While the demographics of the Authentic Movement community are white educated women, the income level does vary. Dancers make up at least one quarter of the community, and given the low salaries of dance professions in the U.S., \$100 is quite a substantial cost. For those in need, leaders often provide a payment plan or work study compensation. For the most part, these workshops are affordable to the community served.

Most leaders have other jobs in related fields and only periodically conduct weekend workshops, though a few leaders have made a career running Authentic Movement centers and traveling the country conducting workshops and training sessions. People find out about Authentic Movement sessions through focused advertising to known networks of people interested in practices like Authentic Movement. Flyers may be mailed or emailed to people connected with prior authentic movement groups, dance groups, or dance therapy groups. Finding out about Authentic Movement workshops, in general, usually requires membership in a related practice such as yoga, Feldenkreis or Alexander technique, and more likely, modern dance, dance improvisation, or dance therapy. Basically, people who know about Authentic Movement need to first be in the know about other mind-body activities, and are often actively engaged in them.

Flyers and workshop descriptions usually have very catchy titles but there are innumerable devices to link this work with figures and experiences of transcendence. If you are a member of associated listservs, or if you read journals such as the Authentic

Movement Journal or Contact Quarterly, you would be invited to workshops entitled “Spiritual Awakening through Authentic Movement,” “Wellspring of Feminine Renewal: Beauty and the Beast,” “The Dreaming Body: Authentic Movement in Tuscany,” “Dreamdancing,” “Authentic Movement: A Contemplative Practice for Self-Realization,” “August Full Moon Circle,” or “Invitation to BodySoul Retreat.” There are usually less evocative, more straightforward titles like “Authentic Movement for Social Workers, Therapists, Leaders, and Consultants,” but these appeal to a target audiences for specific purposes. In general, the language of these invitations calls attention to the antimodernist quest for intense and meaningful experiences.

Though Authentic Movement is ostensibly about the freedom to move in any way you choose, there are many rules and structures that have to be followed. For instance, leaders instruct participants to not physically hurt themselves, others, nor the physical structure of the movement space. If they are to move more quickly across the space or if they are partnering with another, they are told to periodically open their eyes to make sure they are not bumping into anyone or anything and not touching another inappropriately. I have seen leaders move from their witness position in the periphery of the movement space to stand near a mover when they are in a potentially precarious position to insure their safety. Participants must also protect the psychological welfare of themselves and others, and not speak harshly or judgmentally. Finally, members must maintain the confidentiality of all members of the group and not talk about the session outside of the group, even with other group members. As leaders say, “Whatever happens here, stays here.”

Though there are no formal institutions that can set and impose standards of practice, in order to encourage some standardization for those who may independently start new groups, practitioners talk about ideal standards of practice in sessions, and in their communications in the Authentic Movement Journal. The general list of rules includes the following: participants should attend groups regularly in order to establish trust and continuity; all decisions should be made by group consensus; each person should assume responsibility for speaking her or his truth and an issue is not resolved until everyone feels it is adequately resolved; anyone taking the place of witness has responsibility for intervening when necessary to maintain safety of the group—if someone is moving with eyes closed and does not realize he is about to fall, run into something or someone else; movers can open their eyes if they are moving boldly around the space or if they feel in distress and want to open their eyes; but ultimately movers take responsibility for themselves; there should always be a timekeeper so that movers have clear beginning and ending times; and each individual should have equal time to speak. Overall, the rules conform to Authentic Movement's underlying principles. Practices are intimately connected with the ideologies they ratify—the topic of the following section.

The Philosophy

Artists do not merely create physical objects or produce spectacles. They create phenomenal worlds²⁴ based on notions of personhood, social rules and obligations,

²⁴ Phenomenal worlds, or behavioral environments as Hallowell (1995) explains, are at once psychological realities and actual environments to which humans respond. There is no difference between what is

morality, and visions of the good life. Likewise, ritual performances create (or from a discourse-internal perspective, reveal) worlds and unseen realities. These realities may only be temporarily available to the senses in the performance of the ritual itself, but in the case of ritual in contrast to art, people deem these ritually engendered phenomenal worlds to have eternal existence that affect the everyday world (Schechner 2002). In essence, whether a particular phenomenal world is socially constructed or not, the people that live and act in that lifeworld feel and act as if it is real, and therefore, by virtue of behaving according to the rules of that world, actually bring that reality into phenomenal existence.

With regard to Authentic Movement, leaders and members of the Authentic community also create social worlds and phenomenal realities that they deem to be more “real” than “real life.” In fact, it is within this “really real” environment that Authentic Movement performs that a more expansive sense of self can be experienced and more authentic human connections formed. While I will explain in chapter five how phenomenal realities are constituted in Authentic Movement, here I provide a general background on the belief system and ideologies that constitute the world according to Authentic Movement.

objective and subjective. Hallowell (1995; 85) explains that, as member of society, “an intelligible behavioral environment has been constituted for the individual that bears an intimate relation to the kind of being he knows himself to be and it is in the behavioral environment that he is motivated to act.”

Theory of Self in Authentic Movement

The theory of the self in Authentic Movement is greatly influenced by the psychology of Carl Jung. Indeed, Mary Whitehouse, the originator of Authentic Movement, called her practice “Movement in Depth,” indexing her alliance with the Depth Psychologies, specifically Jungian analytic theory. In contrast to other theories of the psyche such as cognitive or behavioral psychology, depth psychology presupposes a psyche that has a metaphysical dimension beyond what is readily perceivable in actions and expressed thoughts. The mind has inner “depth” and breadth, and is a complex and changing form often containing unknown drives and motivations, repressed feelings and memories, alternate perspectives, archetypal figures, or aspects of ourselves we have ignored. Most significantly, these aspects and figures of the unconscious affect how we feel and behave in our daily conscious lives. In fact, the emergence of unconscious impulses and drives may be especially strong the more repressed and hidden the contents of the unconscious are. Methods such as psychoanalysis and artistic expression, including creative movement (insofar as the artistic endeavor is a spontaneous act of the imagination), are considered therapeutic because they allow for more meaningful and satisfying expression of this lively and mysterious liminal world.

Like Jungian psychology, Authentic Movement also emphasizes what Jung deems the collective aspect of the unconscious.²⁵ More than dealing with personal thoughts and

²⁵ The collective unconscious must be differentiated from Durkheim’s (1995[1912]) notion of collective consciousness. For Durkheim, collective representations are transcendent of the individual, but arise out of the social body. For Jung, the collective is an archetypal source in the human psyche that is antecedent to the social body. Symbolic expressions from the social body are mere outward cultural manifestations of a preexisting/antecedent universal order of which all members of the human species are a part.

feelings, Authentic Movement claims to connect with the collective unconscious and to enhance awareness of transpersonal energies (Adler 1999[1987]:147). This aspect of the Authentic Movement experience is often described in spiritual terms. As Authentic Movement teacher Stu Breach (Authentic Movement Journal 2005) remarks about Authentic Movement, “ I know at the deepest level of my being that we are all One, that our love and our hearts and our souls are all connected.”

Jungian theory also provides a framework for understanding human distress. According to Jungian psychology, emotional dysfunction results from overvaluation of the conscious point of view (Chodorow 1999 [1977]: 236), a trait Whitehouse and others attribute to modern society. In alignment with antimodernist philosophies that I will discuss in chapter 4, Authentic Movement often portrays “society” as an insidiously destructive monolith hurtful to the health of the human psyche. Society is a problem because it does not value imagination, childish playfulness, nor know how to deal with the darker aspects of the personality. Therefore, in order to compensate for society’s bias toward the rational and conscious, a countervailing attitude is taken in the unconscious. In other words, since the contents of the unconscious are integral aspects of ourselves, they seek expression whether the person concedes to the whims and impulses of the unconscious or not. Repressing desires of the body, or ignoring feelings of anger, for instance, may actually increase an individual’s libidinous and aggressive impulses. Rejecting the voices of the unconscious may also result in intrapsychic conflict and engender feelings of fragmentation and tension. However, if the person embraces and

allows expression of the unconscious, through the expressive arts, the person is more likely to accept and be at peace with themselves.

Our direction in life, therefore, according to the discourse of Authentic Movement, should be toward an expansion of the self to embrace this collective unconscious, to allow for the reintegration of the parts of unconscious we have repressed or ignored, and to integrate multiple aspects of self. The goal is a wholeness of being, which they define as “Self.” Where lowercase “self” is the mere egoistic sense of personhood, uppercase “Self” refers to an expanded self that embodies a perspective beyond the individual ego. Accordingly, Mary Whitehouse saw her “movement in depth” as “physical movement as a revelation of the Self” (Whitehouse 1999 [1979]:94). The idea of collectivity and unity in all mankind was evident in many aspects of Whitehouse’s work, but most clearly evident in how she would close her sessions. Following the movement and witnessing, Whitehouse, for instance, would have her students stand in a circle where they would make eye contact with one another as they placed their hands palms closed in front of their chests. This appropriation of the Indian greeting “Namaste,” ‘the God in me greets the God in you’ signified for her “a statement for becoming aware that we are little personalities in relation to the ‘totality governing all of us’” (1999[1979]:94).

It must be stressed, however, that collectivity does not necessarily mean unitary. The Self, in the discourse of Authentic Movement, is multidimensional. In contrast to inauthentic self, which may be restrictively unidimensional, the true Self has many aspects and shapes. Although Authentic Movement speaks of wholeness and selfness as

if there were one true and all-encompassing authentic self, they also embrace multiplicity as a fact of authenticity. They actually cringe at the explicit mention that there would be one correct kind of authentic self. In fact, one teacher claimed that to judge a particular act as inherently authentic is “insidious” and destructive to the process of authentic movement. Doing so would lock the mover into a restricted sense of self. The goal of authentic movement is to discover and accept different aspects of yourself. The wholeness is not singular but an integration of many parts.

What happens if fragmentation of the self does occur? According to Jungian theory (Jung 1968; Chodorow 1999 [1991], 1999 [1977]), integration of the various aspects of the self may happen without effort. In fact, according to Jung, expression of the unconscious happens naturally all the time, even at times when we are unaware or try to prevent expression of unconscious feelings or thoughts. He claims the return of the repressed can also be a positive event, leading to great moments of creativity and growth. Freud, on the other hand, saw the emergence of the unconscious as potentially problematic. He called this the “return of the repressed” (Scheff 1977), which manifests symbolically in slips of the tongue, neurotic symptoms (e.g. excessive hand washing as way to clean the self of internal aggressive or sexual impulses), and most famously, in dream images. To facilitate a more healthy and therapeutic integration of the unconscious, psychoanalysts developed specific procedures to allow this to happen. Freud, for instance, developed free association (verbal) in the context of the therapeutic relationship. Jung “discovered” active imagination which encourages free expression in modalities beyond talk, such as drawing, dancing, and music. Active imagination, in

contrast to free association, was seen as independent of the analyst and was encouraged outside of the therapy session. Practices like Authentic Movement which mirror the process of active imagination are an attempt at recreating a situation where conscious intentional activity is reduced so that the contents of the unconscious can be expressed safely.

Jung's students and associates outline four stages in the process of active imagination: (1) opening to the unconscious, (2) giving it form, (3) reaction by ego, (4) living it (Chodorow 1999[1991]:308). The practice of Authentic Movement conforms to these steps. The opening to the unconscious takes place through relaxation of the body and mind through meditative exercises. The unconscious is given form as the mover listens and waits for the movement impulse to emerge and follows that impulse. The movement improvisations are often interpreted as manifestations of our collective conscious—symbols of the mother or child archetypes that are not given space for expression in everyday life. The reaction by the ego takes place in two ways. Sometimes, the mover has a dual consciousness, giving into the experience of the movement *and* watching herself go through the experience. In addition, the reaction of the ego takes place at the end of a movement improvisation when participants are asked to speak about their experiences.

Practitioners view the self narratives as ways of “integrating” the experience. In order to be able to speak about the movement, movers must remember what happened in their improvisation and they must bring some level of order to what may have been experienced as a random series of events. Many times, the movers tell a story about the

movement experience that reveals the connection between the experience and their issues in everyday life. At other times the narratives are a series of images of the movement event, a way of mirroring the variable nature of the unconscious. I have also heard more instructors asking movers to “contain” aspects of the experience, to not speak about all of the experience but to just let the process “be.” The practical purpose of this is that time is limited. But also, “containment” allows much of the experience to remain a mystery, again a way of mirroring the unconscious. The belief is that it is impossible to understand the entire meaning of movement. There will always be aspects of the self that are beyond our conscious and rational understanding. Embracing this awareness in life would bring one closer to wholeness.

In addition to Jungian analysis, Authentic Movement is also aligned with the humanistic growth model of the self that asserts the innate capacity of all individuals to change and grow to their “fullest.” Mary Whitehouse asserts the principles of humanism in noting that the “basic creativity of the human being consists in his working toward his own fullest development, the realizing of his own potentials, the allowing himself to grow. What we create first is ourselves and it is out of ourselves that the producing comes” (Whitehouse 1999 [1956]: 40). The Human Potential Movement was popular among the educated white population in the 1960s and with the natural alignment of Authentic Movement with this philosophy, many more women became a part of the Authentic Movement community.

Body and Mind

We do not know in what way the psyche is the body and the body is the

psyche but we do know that one does not exist without the other (Whitehouse 1999 [1958]:42).

The mind-body problem—the uncertainty of the mind’s relation to the body—is of primary concern in Authentic Movement, not merely as a philosophical problematic but as a crisis of being. What Max Weber refers to as the “disenchantment of the world”²⁶ is a persistent concern in the Authentic Movement community that lies beneath a nostalgic vision of an authentic past that pervades the discourse of Authentic Movement.

We no longer know it but there was a time when movement was our language. It was long ago... we can’t remember... learning was nothing we did on purpose.... we were busier moving... long before we had words we communicated how we felt through our bodies... We were undivided. Where did it all go?... We learn differently now. Learning is for the mind, a mind separate from the body... this body that we have created is less expressive, less alive than it could be, because it is not experienced by most of us [1999[1958]:33–35].

It is common for teachers to lament about “society’s” inattention to the needs and desires of the body. “We are taught to live in our heads,” I have heard teachers say to students. Emphatically, they utter these words as they metaphorically slice the head from the rest of the body with the edge of the hand, a dramatic and sharply executed gesture iconically portraying the disconnect that causes distress and alienation in our lives.²⁷

²⁶ Weber (1978 [1968], 2003 [1904]) describes the rationalization of life as a “disenchantment” of the world, a turning away from the search for a deeper meaning to life, where all aspects of the world should be under rational control.

²⁷ Gestures in combination with signs of emotions are complex sign vehicles that can be circulated through society and as such may help to constitute communities of sentiment (Urban 1991, Besnier 1990; Guerts, ; Feld 1982; Abu-Lughod 1986; Qureshi 2000). In this case, this gesture is one means for transmitting the negative attitude about the mind–body split.

Authentic Movement is explicit in its opposition to a Cartesian perspective on the body and mind. For instance, Mary Whitehouse states with unqualified and unambiguous certainty,

the body is not and never will be a machine, no matter how much we treat it as such, body movement is not and never will be mechanical—it is always and forever expressive, simply because it is human [Whitehouse 1999 [1987]:52]

Authentic Movement, however, espouses a unique vision of mind and body, one where the mind is connected to the body mainly through kinesthesia, that is, the awareness and feeling of movement in the body skeleton and musculature. Movement is the way to be in touch with the essence of life—more than other forms of perception—and is more meaningful than other sign modalities. They would not deny that other kinds of bodily perception are an important part of the mind-body experience. However, implicitly what is conveyed is that sounds and sights are only significant insofar as these create impulses to move in particular patterns. Mary Whitehouse’s oft cited dictum—“Movement is the great law of life. Everything moves,” naturalizes the reverence and worship of movement as an expression of truth.

It follows that the antidote for the alienating ills of society is to rediscover the “wisdom of the body” that, according to Authentic Movement, we all knew as children and all knew before modernity. Moreover, since modernization has resulted in the objectification of the body, the Authentic Movement community promotes the idea that we need to reconstitute the body as subject, not to use the body for instrumental purposes, to gain approval, nor to perform, but to be *in* the body in the service of the Self.

In line with the emphasis on kinesthesia, recapturing the wisdom of the body is possible through becoming aware of sensation in the musculature in our bodies. “The practice offers a means to experience movement as a direct expression of the many layers of mystery and intelligence that live within us—in our cells, atoms, genes, muscles, minds—drawing the unconscious to the surface, into movement, where it can be seen” (Smith 2002:2).

Once a person is aware and in tune with the sensations in the body, the mind and body maintain connection through mutual dialogue and through mutual constitution.

The body wants to tell its own story by moving. Movement is the body’s story... and the psyche wants to hear it and support it [Sullwold and Ramsey 2007[1995]:49].

As mutually constituted, they reinforce each other’s nature or personality.

distortion, tension, and deadness in our movement is distortion, tension and deadness in ourselves...change in new quality of movement is a change in self [Whitehouse 1999 [1969-1970]: 60].

In addition to personality, the body also houses its own memory. Memory is not merely a function of the brain/mind but part of the body as kinesthetic memory. The idea is that consciousness of movement in terms of persistent tensions or patterns that are associated with particular events in our life can also be brought to consciousness. The wisdom of the body is in its “capacity to store every memory at a seemingly ‘bone level’” (Adler 1999[1987]:146-147).

A woman I interviewed about her experience with Authentic Movement captures the sense that deep within the body lies a cores self that is the source of expression.

Aside from what I think of when I think of the word ‘moving,’ aside from physically moving my body, there’s that emotionally touching, our

emotional core that moves us.

The Authentic in Authentic Movement

Authentic Movement produces an undifferentiated flow of movement similar to what Saussure described as undifferentiated flow of sound in language. However, while sound becomes intelligible as language by virtue of a grammar that separates sounds into meaningful units, movement is meaningful only by virtue of its existence as part of a context. Movement does not have a grammar the way language does (Agha 1997), and therefore requires other principled ways of breaking up pieces of the movement into meaningful patterns and units, either explicitly or implicitly. In this regard, Authentic Movement does not explicitly specify a set of characteristics of movement that they say points to or indexes authenticity or other values. In fact, to explicitly do so would contradict the whole premise of Authentic Movement. From the discourse internal point of view, authenticity is determined relative to the needs and personality of each individual. Ultimately, the judgment of what is authentic can only truly be known by the mover herself. Simply put,

When the image is truly connected in certain people, then the movement is authentic. There is no padding of movement just for the sake of moving [Franz 1999[1972]:21].

Nevertheless, there is an implicit discourse that points to particular phenomenological signals that show an authentic experience is taking place. When the individuals have the sense that the movements they are performing are felt as being given to them, then this is more authentic than if they are actively engaged in planning out the

choreography. This being the case, Authentic Movement sets up the conditions under which the impulse to move can emerge spontaneously.

I move is the clear knowledge that I, personally, am moving. I choose to move, I exert some demand.....the opposite of this is the sudden and astonishing moment when 'I am moved'... when the ego gives up control, stops choosing, stops exerting demands, allowing the Self to take over moving the physical body as it will... unpremeditated surrender that cannot be explained, repeated exactly, sought for or tried out [Whitehouse 1999 [1979]:82].

Clearly, one spontaneous sensation may not always be powerful enough to convince a person of the authenticity of their actions. Other phenomenological signals, changes in the perception in one's bodily state, such as when the movement feels as they arise from an internal stimulus, may be necessary to interpret an event as an authentic revelation.

Those patterns which the mover can associate with particular memories or characteristics of their personality also are deemed more authentic. Usually certain segments stand out more than others. The process of interpretation is similar to the mapping of a genome. Some stretches of DNA can be distinguished as functional, while other parts are set aside as "junk" or reserved for later interpretation. In Authentic Movement some of the unknown pieces may be discarded as preparation or fill-in time. At the same time, the unknown also holds a particular kind of power. That which cannot be understood or expressed may actually be the ultimate sign of authenticity.

Along these lines, Authentic Movement subscribes to a semiotic ideology that is suspicious of words and verbal communication. As Martha Graham repeated to her students, you can lie with words but "movements don't lie." So when there is still a sense

of mystery after talking about the experience, then that experience is more likely authentic. Underlying the philosophy of Authentic Movement is the idea that free improvisational dance reflects a truth of the Self, whereas verbalizations are constructed, planned, and potentially artificial reflections of the self.

In concert with phenomenological signals, practitioners tend to perceive particular stylistic patterns as authentic and true to a person, though these patterns may in fact be cultural constructions as well. Practitioners tend to interpret slow and minimal movements as feeling more private and personal. Movements that are associated with patterns of movement in nature—the slinky and wavy movement of a reptile, a leaf falling to the ground, the sneaky walk of a cat, the undulating movement of a wave—are more authentic. Stereotypic patterns of movement that are associated with elements of dance from Asia and Africa, the exoticized continents, if performed in the right context and style might be perceived as authentic. The performances, however, cannot index the association with dances of the “other” explicitly, as this would be interpreted as “performance” rather than being authentic.

Finally, it is important to note the fact that a sign (or cluster of signs) to be a sign of something to someone depends on there being shared cultural knowledge. This is the case with signs of authenticity. In chapter 4, I look at the historical circumstances that formed the cultural and social space in which these phenomenological signals and stereotypes become intelligible as authentic.

Self and Other

Authentic Movement believes that the discovery of authenticity can only take place in a situation in which a person feels safe, physically and emotionally. With this in mind, the witness carries the responsibility of creating a “safe container” for the mover. Practically, the witness makes sure that the movers do not bump into anything or anyone while their eyes are closed. But symbolically, the witness, who watches without judgment or criticism, creates a nurturing and compassionate interpersonal space within which a mover can explore her inner world. This cannot be done alone because as Authentic Movement suggests, “going inside” and exploring the inner world is a potentially dangerous undertaking. To be more specific, practitioners are concerned that improvisations may be too “primal,” and for those individuals who do not have strong enough “ego functioning” (a psychoanalytic characterization that denotes an individual’s orientation to reality), improvisations may be emotionally overwhelming (Adler 1999 [1987]:147). The mover might experience emotions or have memories that may be overwhelming. The calm presence of the witness lets the mover know that someone is there to physically and emotionally contain her emotions. The witness also answers to the “universal desire within in all of us to be seen in a compassionate and loving way” (Adler 1989). (Implied in this dictum is that under “normal” circumstances, the opposite is the case. In the outside world there are judgments, expectations and pressure to “perform.”) The witness is likened to a nurturing mother who watches her child with unconditional love and makes it safe for the child to grow; or even compared to a compassionate and loving God.

But in addition to safety, containment, and compassion, the witness and mover relationship is also about the possible mystical union that can be achieved between two human beings, when unfettered and uncontaminated by the judgments of society. Similar to their philosophy of body and mind, in Authentic Movement, human connection, based on kinesthetic empathy, is realized through mutual sharing of a kinesthetic experience. Kinesthetic empathy happens when the mover conveys an internal emotion, body memory, or image through bodily movement that is felt in the body of the observer. In fact, the qualities of the movement are experienced in the body of the observer as if she were performing the movements herself.²⁸ The observer thus has the sense that she can feel what the mover is feeling. Though group leaders often suggest that witnesses should check with the movers and verify that they indeed are having the same associations to the movement, a fascination and longing for mystical connection through shared sensation is fairly common. There are many times that these connections are interpreted as understanding “beyond words, “ or a natural connection among equals, for example, women just connecting to other women. It may be interpreted as a metaphysical transpersonal force connecting all humanity. Janet Adler, who takes a more mystical approach to Authentic Movement, claims that it is the attitude of the witness that allows for a transpersonal experience to occur. If the witness is able to expand her own consciousness, then the container and interpersonal space includes the collective consciousness.

²⁸ Recent research in neuroscience has shown correlations of the experience of kinesthetic empathy to the functioning of mirror neurons. Research suggests that neurons that fire when people perform that action also fire when they observe others performing that action (Iriki 2001).

Finally, the value of the witness–mover connection ultimately lies in the capacity of an individual to internalize this relationship such that they develop their own inner witness that is as understanding and compassionate as the outer witness. According to Adler, “self witnessing is transformed after truly seeing another as she is” (Adler 1999[1987]: 154) to the point that it is possible to be “birthed by [her]self” (1999[1987]:154).

Though a powerful symbol in Authentic Movement, the dynamic relation between self and other, and the personal and collective, form a central paradox. On one hand, Authentic Movement creates a supremely and utterly subjective world. The practice continually invokes a reality where you feel that all you really know is what you perceive and that even the experience of collective consciousness is your own version of the collective. You move with your eyes closed and try to block out all external stimulation to be able to just “listen to your own impulses.” Even while the role of witness is supposed to be the embodiment of compassion toward another, it basically entails complete concentration on your own perceptions; your witnessing is about you, not the mover. On the other hand, participants often report having had powerful experiences of intersubjectivity with another member of the group or feeling part of a collective consciousness. When this occurs without talking, the connection seems even more profound. The resolution of this contradiction in performance remains a key factor in the effectiveness of the practice to create meaningful experiences of authenticity.

In conclusion, Authentic Movement presupposes a social world in which people have both conscious and unconscious and material and immaterial aspects to their

personalities. Reconciliation between and openness to all aspects of self lead to wholeness and well-being and creative expression is a prime means to bring about this reconciliation. Authentic Movement also envisions an ideal state of human connection where acceptance, compassion, and trust reign supreme.

Chapter 3

Ethnographer as Witness

Introduction

The following chapter is a narrative of my fieldwork experience of Authentic Movement. As a social science enterprise, my story attempts to reveal some general facts about Authentic Movement. As narrative, my story reveals an experiential truth about the practice, with its complexities and contradictions. Clearly Authentic Movement, as an aesthetic experience, derives from many voices and radiates many meanings. As such, my narrative is one among many potential narratives. Yet, culture is fundamentally about sharedness, and accordingly, this narrative also seeks to illuminate the processes through which multiple voices and meanings are made mutually intelligible.

With this in mind, I bring together different aspects of my fieldwork experience. My narrative tacks back and forth between the participant's insider perspective and the observer's more distanced point of view to illustrate both the idiosyncratic nature of fieldwork in Authentic Movement, which I describe in the past tense, and general aspects of the practice, written in the present. The narrative follows the common chronological trajectory of Authentic Movement meetings, but is also an open ended interweaving of anecdotes and stories from my fieldwork. Though I distance from this personal and subjective perspective in chapters four and five, by engaging the reader's curiosity and imagination, I hope this narrative will impart to the reader what it feels like to be a part of

an Authentic Movement group—the emotions, sensations, connections, the drama, and the absurdity.

At the same time that I confer authority to narrative to give the readers an insider's view of Authentic Movement, I do not presuppose a simple relationship between narrative and experience. In alignment with Byron Good (1994), I identify narratives as forms through which experience can be represented, but can never fully reveal the entire nature of an experience.

Narrative is a form in which experience is represented and recounted, in which events are presented as having a meaningful and coherent order, in which activities and events are described along with the experiences associated with them and the significance that lends them their sense for the persons involved...but experience always far exceeds its description or narrativization [1994:139].

The idea that a narrative can never fully account for the breadth and depth of experience is a well-known folk truth.²⁹ But even as we acknowledge the limits of narrative to represent, we must also recognize another fact about experience. Experience is not of a separate order from narrative. As much as narratives are about experience, experience is also about narrative (Mattingly 1998). That is, as much as narratives about a participant's experience of the improvisation are about the improvisation, the improvisations are also about narratives (which are about improvisations). As Mattingly (1998) so eloquently explains, “narrative imitates experience because experience already has in it the seeds of narrative” (1998:45).

²⁹ This is especially true in Authentic Movement where the fact that the people have trouble expressing their “experience” in words validates the experience as even more authentic. This “limitation of narrative” is actually institutionalized in Authentic Movement and is called containing. Group leaders suggest to practitioners to “contain” part of their experience, in other words, to not talk about their whole experience so that it can “just be.”

The ethnographic enterprise is not an exception to this reality. Ethnographic work too has the seeds of narrative; for instance, the common narrative of the call to the exotic or a call to authenticity. As I have conducted my fieldwork, my actions have necessarily been informed by my image of ethnography. My image of Schieffelin and Feld with the Kaluli in Papua New Guinea or Marina Roseman with the Temiar in Malaysia had a profound impact on my perception of fieldwork. And, my experience of Authentic Movement was, of course, influenced by narratives about Authentic Movement. All the same, since experience is always partly a reflection on the past and projection into the future, and since these reflections and projections are necessarily rooted in social and cultural space, my narrative will reveal how, in general, most participants view the practice of Authentic Movement.

The Call to Authenticity: Preparation

For an experience that on the surface appears so spontaneous and simple, a great deal of preparation goes into setting up classes or workshops. Besides the practical concern of attracting enough people to make the workshop economically feasible, organizers must also think about how to make the practice personally and aesthetically enriching as well. But beyond these matters, the physical and psychological safety of the group is the overriding concern of pre-workshop work. A group leader must create a setting in which participants feel comfortable and trust others enough to be themselves and feel free to move “authentically.” The leader must also be assured that participants will be respectful and not invade each other’s physical and psychological space. As one

leader remarked about the preparation of a one-day workshop, “it makes me appreciate how *delicate a thing* it is and how much *care* has gone into how we’re setting it up.”

I learned first hand what one leader meant by the words “delicate” and “care,” when we worked together to organize an Authentic Movement workshop that I could videotape for my study. I first approached her when I went to take a week-long training with her two years prior as part of my preliminary ethnographic research of Authentic Movement. She and her co-leader at the time were taken aback when I asked them about videotaping a session. They looked at me suspiciously. The message was clear. The sacred space of Authentic Movement is like a precious delicate egg—a well-fashioned container for growth and development of the self, but fragile and easily broken if not handled properly. They were not alone in this response. I encountered a variety of reactions from the Authentic Movement community over the years. Even though most group leaders were to some extent enthusiastic and saw my interest as an opportunity to educate the world about Authentic Movement, for the most part, leaders and participants were wary and feared that my ethnography could be a breach of the “safe container,” the envelope of trust the leaders try so hard to protect. I found it ironic that this was a group of people who in their workshops watched ethnographic films about “exotic” peoples as inspirations for their own self-exploration, but who felt reluctant to be filmed themselves, for fear of feeling vulnerable and being misunderstood.

It took me two years to finally organize a workshop that I could record for analysis. By that time I had participated in a variety of workshops and was working on a

regular basis with a group in Philadelphia. With the help of the Authentic Movement community of Philadelphia, I was able to expand my role as participant-observer. Mary, my guide in the Philadelphia Authentic Movement community, served as my liaison with Leslie,³⁰ a leader in the Authentic Movement Community. As organizer, I had to attend to a number of practical details and Mary helped me choose a time frame, make transportation and housing arrangements for out-of-towners and find an appropriate space for the workshop. We chose a beautiful church hall in the Mount Airy section of Philadelphia. The space was a large hall with high ceilings and wide-open central space in which at least twenty people could freely move without feeling confined. It had beautiful glass windows highly placed so that the light could stream into the room while still maintaining a sense of privacy.

We next had to work on a theme, recruit and interview prospective participants, and make and distribute advertisements for the workshop. Leslie often creates themes that are related to the time of year or location of the event and in this case he thought the theme “from darkness to light” would be fitting for a January workshop. Leslie identifies the cycle of seasons with different modes of psychological transformation, bridging the outer world to inner psychological world. As I will discuss further in chapter 5, these kinds of messages signal to participants that Authentic Movement is more than a simple improvisation class, but rather a practice about the growth of the self. The following

³⁰ I use pseudonyms throughout the dissertation. I use male or female names randomly and these pseudonyms may refer to both male or female leaders. I found the language, behaviors and overall leadership styles to be so similar that differentiation of leadership style according to gender was not necessary. This also maintains the confidentiality of my subjects.

description was distributed to various distribution lists and listservs in the dance and dance therapy communities:

WE WILL FOCUS ON THE ARCHETYPES OF DARKNESS AND LIGHT, HONORING THE WINTER DARKNESS AS A TIME OF GESTATION, HIBERNATION, MYSTERY, AND REST, AND CELEBRATING THE RETURN OF THE LIGHT, THE NEW YEAR, AND NEW BEGINNINGS. PARTICIPANTS WILL RECEIVE SHORT READINGS ON THIS THEME TO STIR THE IMAGINATION FOR OUR DAY OF MOVING TOGETHER.

By January 10, about two weeks prior to the workshop date, we had only eight people registered. We decided that eight people would not be enough to “fill up” the space (physically and emotionally) or make the workshop financially beneficial. Leslie was not feeling well, Mary felt rushed and so they decided that these were messages or signs that we should reschedule the workshop until the spring. The theme would be—rebirth and rejuvenation—the symbol of spring.

I fielded and triaged calls about the workshop for several weeks prior to April 8, as Leslie instructed, to make sure those signing up had some experience in Authentic Movement. Ultimately Leslie would make decisions about who was appropriate or not for attending the workshop. Leslie always makes sure there is some direct contact with prospective participants prior to accepting registrations for his workshops. In longer-term groups, he even asks for a written autobiographies. Leslie is a kind of gatekeeper, restricting membership in this community to those who he can be sure will not be rude to or harm others, will not harm themselves, and will be comfortable with themselves enough to be able to speak and move in the presence of the other participants. Leslie and others learned from the encounter group and human potential movements that practices

like Authentic Movement, though not officially “therapy,” can at times stimulate disinhibition. If a group member is vulnerable or unstable, the process can turn into a “dangerous” experience. I never was privy to the biographies, for the sake of respecting the confidential nature of the material, but generally speaking, Leslie asks applicants to talk about the themes in their personal and professional lives and to write about why they want to take the workshop. Leslie also uses these autobiographies to get a sense of the agenda of the group, insuring that people can work together.

At the Threshold

On one sunny Saturday in the Spring of 2006, I attended an Authentic Movement workshop at a countryside art gallery near Princeton, NJ. The gallery, housed in a turn of the century Victorian home with a wrap-around porch embraced by Monet gardens and large willowy trees, stood on several acres of flat land a few hundred feet from a country road. I parked my car and walked up the stairs through the side door to the house and entered the home hall of the gallery where several other participants were milling around. As usual, the atmosphere was friendly and polite—there was a check-in table with a sign-in sheet outside the movement space and another clothed table with coffee and danishes, a typical gesture of hospitality. The tables served as a place where participants could congregate and informally greet one another, prior to more formal ritual greeting ceremonies. It was at these times that the mundane details of participants’ lives might be revealed in one-on-one conversations, details that may be considered beside the point or unsightly from the perspective of the Authentic aesthetic—how long the drive was, the traffic, the location of the bathroom, who told them about the workshop, where they

lived. On the surface it seemed, I may have been at a tea, a conference meeting, or funeral. These familiar symbols of social propriety, however, were clearly not the focus of the event. They merely were the background that foregrounded the more authentic experience that was to come.

I found this time of transition somewhat uncomfortable because, though I knew I would not be forced to or asked to reveal personal details of my life, I would eventually be asked to reveal something authentic in myself. I was in a sense making a social contract to show my “true self,” to act in accord, with and express my true feelings in the presence of these virtual strangers. I realized that while the anonymity protected me, the lack of familiarity also heightened the sense of the unknown. And though I knew that the leader would take responsibility for the emotional and physical safety of the participants, there was still the risk that someone could invade my personal space, either emotionally or physically. At the time, I thought about how different these workshops were from community rituals in more “traditional” cultural contexts where everyone knows each other, where maybe the unknowns were not so plentiful. Looking back, however, I find my anxiety ironic. I laugh at myself because as typical of other workshops, the participants were generally not unlike myself, 90% educated, middle-aged, white females, with a man or two, or a few young college students serving as ornamentation to the homogeneous collection of authentic hopefuls. I was not really stepping into a world unfamiliar to me.

I walked down the hall, moving literally and metaphorically closer to the ritual space for Authentic Movement. Around the corner, in the room where our movement

improvisations would take place were a few people already in warm-up mode. One woman was lying on her back in meditation, another person stretching her limbs, with a sustained and slow motion. Appearing to be unaware of the rest of the world, she worked her body with an intense inner focus. Another older woman sat crossed legged, her eyes wandering and looking around the room in anticipation of the leader's instruction to begin the class. Though seemingly casual, these times of "milling" around are emotionally charged moments of being on a threshold—a boundary between one's comfortable everyday life and the subjunctive ritual space and time of Authentic Movement. It is a period of liminality, neither here nor there, a time of intense anticipation. Each experience is unpredictable, each moment new, participants unknown, outcome unknown. Schieffelin (1985, 1996) writes that it is this sense of anticipation that makes rituals more effective. Anxiety can index significance. A feeling of potential danger creates drama and suspense of what important information about the self may arise. This heightens the emotionality of the event, creates a sense of excitement, inducing people to care about what happens. In this sense, the event did not seem silly or mundane, but instead meaningful.

Reflecting upon the event, I wondered what it meant to cross the threshold into this space. Recalling Katherine Young's (1997) analysis of a medical examination, I thought if what is necessary for the body to be exposed to medical examination is to peel away the evidentiary boundaries of the self (e.g., one's everyday clothes which mark the person as an individual with a social identity), then what do participants of Authentic Movement need to peel away to allow for the spontaneous expression of authentic feelings and

memories in the presence of others? If particular features of medical space and behaviors of doctors signal to patients that medical touch is okay in that context, what are the signals that it is safe for me to be “authentic” in this context?

Greetings: “Come into yourself as Body”

Greetings are interaction rituals that mediate transitions from one set of social circumstances to another, or as Eliot Chapple (1970) explains, one set of interaction rhythms to another. In Authentic Movement, greeting rituals facilitate the transition to a social world with a different set of interaction rhythms and social rules. And, similar to how Alessandro Duranti (1992) described Samoan greeting rituals, greetings in Authentic Movement do not just begin with an opening word, but take place through multiple channels and modes of interaction.

In Authentic Movement, greetings begin with a movement warm-up where participants come together as bodies rather than social personae. The warm-up works on many levels. We warm-up our bones and muscles, we warm up to the space, we warm-up to each other, and most significantly we warm up to ourselves. But practically speaking, the warm-up helps us pass through the anxious moments of waiting for the real work to begin.

So, following milling around the old Victorian mansion, the group gathered into the movement space and waited for Arden, the leader, to tell us what to do next. She laid out the schedule for the day and then asked us to close our eyes and to begin to focus on the sensations we feel in our bodies, to “enter into ourselves as body.” Closing my eyes, I felt my weight shifting from one leg to the other as I was breathing in and out. I was

less aware of the others around me and felt relieved to concentrate just on myself. I felt a shift in my state of mind, away from ordinary concerns and responsibilities, and concentrated just on the presence of the moment.

Arden guided us to concentrate on any tension we may feel in different parts of our body. She “invited” us to breath into our legs and back. I remember imagining as I inhaled that the breath could reach beyond my lungs into deep spaces of my body I had never thought of before. She “invited” us to stretch in ways we “needed to” and I focused on areas of my body that felt tense. Concentrating on my own body, I still heard other people sighing and breathing loudly, interpreting that they too were releasing tension. Gradually, Arden guided us to open our eyes and notice the space. She “invited” us “to walk in meditation, pay attention to sensation and to the space, and finally to go to “a place we were drawn to,” directions very much in the subjunctive mode, the mood designating the hypothetical and possibility (Bruner 1986). Arden gave this litany of denotationally abstract instructions open to an almost infinite variety of interpretations (though paradoxically, it felt like most of us seemed to be following a cultural script that we learned unconsciously at some point in our lives).

The mood was serene as everybody attuned to Arden’s steady and tempered voice—a prosody so unmarked that it was markedly unmarked. We were invited to go to a place that we were moved to go, and so, the “movers” placed themselves around the gardens and yard that embraced the old Victorian home like figures in a Seurat painting—a man melded into large oak tree, a woman lay on the ground, some sat gazing as if looking both out into space and inward at themselves, others walked in meditation.

We embodied what ethnomusicologist John Blacking (1977) would have regarded as a generalized state of fellow-feeling, or as noble savages, an image that was mentioned a number of times during my fieldwork.³¹ At the same time that the group collectively attended to Arden's voice, each person also seemed attuned to an inner impulse, yielding idiosyncratic dances that at once seemed so personal yet stereotypic, sincerely engaged but also performing. All in all, though, I felt as if we were in sync with Arden's voice as if we were, at some basic physical level, becoming a group.

The guided warm-up (which was almost word for word replicated in other sessions that I attended) seemed to be setting the stage for the Authentic Movement session, the beginning of turning inward. The warm up was also a venue for Arden to model a receptive stance and present a set of alternatives and possibilities for what participants could do when they have no set of instructions or guidance during the Authentic Movement session.

“Just see what is happening in you right now as you're arriving,” she noted in her instructions. Arriving? What is it to be in the process of arriving? Arriving here in this place today, arriving to where I am in my life? I breathed and concentrated on the alignment of my body, concentrating on each sensation as a way to stop my mind from wandering and to focus on being present in the moment. I noticed the others out of the corner of my eye and saw we were all in our own little worlds.

³¹ di Leonardo (1998) notes that romanticism of the “other” by anthropologists had great influence in constructing images of the “other” in popular media. This explains why a number of participants would interpret improvisational performances using such images of the other.

We were no longer milling around. We were no longer in the place to chat about the mundane details in life; that would clearly have been a breach at this point. The quality of eye contact was different, we now looked within ourselves or beyond the others, no middle ground. We were *arriving*, on a different path or journey, both physically and psychologically³².

Arden then took us “deeper into ourselves.” Interspersing the words, “body precious, precious body,” throughout her instructions, I began to feel that each movement and each sensation I had was sacred and special. This feeling intensified as she continued to guide us in this improvisation because Arden did not just automatically deliver her instructions but performed her own “dropping into” her body, a phrase that describes the moment when one is focused on inner sensation and has let go of everyday awareness. I could hear the sound of her letting out long sighs in between the verbalizations. As she gave us options for how to “drop into” our bodies, I could hear and feel Arden’s own dropping into her body as she wandered around the room, moving as though she were following some impulse of her own. She periodically stopped and just closed her eyes and focused on herself. She repeated her mantra, “just notice what you notice, “ “just notice what you notice.” We continued to move in different directions around the space.

And then, again redirecting our attention, Arden’s voice gradually changed as she guided us back to the social circle, inviting us to notice each other and try to make some kind of connection with another person. Having come into our bodies, we could more

³² As Van Gennep (1960) and Levi-Strauss (1967[1950]) explain, ritual journeys bridge the mythic and physical planes, such that each action taken represents both physical and social movement toward the stated goal. Marina Roseman describes a similar process in her analysis of healing songs of the Temiar. The movement mapped in the melody corresponds to the shapes and figures of the sacred landscape.

authentically greet one another and acknowledge each other as one body to another. We began to walk and glide around in a circle, the swirl of movement becoming a vortex, looking *at* not beyond one another, maybe smiling, maybe a gesture. The circle became more well-defined and Arden “invited” us to come to a center point in the room every 15 seconds. The vortex increasingly became stronger and stronger as we circled faster and faster, 10 seconds to the center, 5 seconds, and one second, and then stillness—we became a melding of people. Sharing a rhythm of breathing, I could barely differentiate my own breathing from the person next to me. We looked at one another, almost inside each other’s eyes. We closed our eyes once again. I still could hear and feel the rhythm of everyone’s breath, but I was again contained within my own space. She invited us to find an image that described what we were feeling at this moment. We then sat in a circle to talk. We were invited to state our name, where we lived, and to express an image or feeling that had emerged during the improvisation. Our identities were now tied with this spontaneously generated image of ourselves on this journey. This greeting marked the completion of the separation from the everyday world to the realm of Authentic Movement.

The Circle: Honoring the Space

Following the warm up, Authentic Movement always begins with the ritual of standing together in a circle and “honoring the space.” This enclosed circle forms the area or ritual space in which the movers will perform their movement meditations and improvisations, while witnesses gaze upon the sacred space from the periphery. Though I performed the actual ritual of honoring the space in every group I have ever participated,

I first heard the phrase “honor the space” in the winter of 2005. The workshop took place in a large dance studio at a New England college. Following our “coming together as body,” as the leader described the warm-up, we were ready to begin the practice of Authentic Movement.

There were twenty participants, 18 women and two young men, some novices, but most were experienced in introspective practices. We stood together in a circle formation in the middle of the vast dance studio where the workshop was being held that week. The sun came through the skylight windows and the wide circle we created looked imposing. We were like statues in a wide open field. We stood quietly, inwardly pensive as our bodies lightly swayed from side to side. The workshop leader, stood at the periphery of the room where there was a small stage. The co-facilitator stood at the other end of the room gazing out at the space. She held a brass bowl in the palm of her hand and a thick round wooden stick in her right. She stood erect and seemed to be meditating, as she performed what seemed to be an image of peacefulness and serenity. She took a deep breath and sounded the Tibetan singing bowl she delicately grasped in her hands, a signal to the group to step backward to the periphery of the room. Retreating with a sustained and light step, we were to “witness” the large open circular space we created, which is called a “container.” In honoring the space, participants gaze upon the empty space for about 30 to 40 seconds, which is supposed to be a way to truly imagine and visualize the emptiness of the space, to remove preconceptions of what a dance space usually is. As I stood there meditating upon the space, I saw potential. I imagined patterns of movement, being in the space and I felt excited to move into that space. As part of the circle, I also

became very attentive to the intense quiet which felt like a robe of silence embracing the space before me. Simultaneously, the circle again conjured up stereotypic images of rituals. The experience was for me at once sacred and pretentious, and I'm not sure I was able to make the space truly empty of preconceptions.

As with all symbols (see Turner 1967), the visual and kinesthetic image of the circle in Authentic Movement has great semiotic potential. It is a multidetermined sign radiating a variety of effects, though the themes often center around collectivity.

According to practitioner, Paula Saeger, for instance, the circle is the collective body that forms the safe container for self-exploration.

The reality is that we are separate individual bodies, but we have the potential to know ourselves as members of a larger body and to directly experience the collective body in our individual selves. Every time we stand in a circle we approach this potential to know ourselves individually and as participants of something much more [Authentic Movement Journal Entry 2006].

Additionally, Janet Adler, who founded the Mary Starks Whitehouse Institute for Authentic Movement, believes the circle is "ancient archetypal form in rituals where the sacred is honored or expressed" (Adler 1999 [1992]: 185). The circle, she explains, is a carving out of a space for the mover's and witness's consciousness. The circle seems to invoke a referential and influential kind of authenticity where "people tend to perceive as authentic that which refers to some other context, drawing inspiration from human history, and tapping into our shared memories and longings...it is not derivative or trivial" (Gilmore and Pine 50), but draws them to a higher goal.

The leader rang the bell again and each person then moved slowly and intently, randomly, yet purposefully, to various parts of the space. We were to find a “home” for ourselves, where we felt safe to allow the movement process to occur. We closed our eyes and began our meditations and performances.

“Out of the stillness”

Authentic movement is “born out” of stillness and quiet, for as teacher Mary Ramsey explains, “it takes slowing down to see.” Learning how to “wait” is indeed one of the keys to discovering the authentic experience, and thus, waiting for the movement impulse to emerge is a rich and prescient period of time. The mood at the beginning of a movement session is one of quiet and solemnity.

Following the ringing of the second bell after honoring the space, movers walk, roll, glide, and find their way to a place in the room they are either “called to,” “drawn to,” “discover,” or if they are not yet in “authentic” mode, plan. Dispersal from the circle is random but looks organized and choreographed as people move toward various corners and spaces in the room.

Movers generally start lying on the floor. Practitioners suggest that the floor provides a physical connection with the ground, and psychological connection to earth. Practically speaking, for the novice who has to get used to moving with eyes closed, it is easier to be lying down or seated on the ground for balance. Psychologically, the ground also provides a connection to earth, which will safeguard the mover from becoming “unearthed” by impulses and images that may emerge in the movement improvisation. With greater experience, however, movers often experiment with beginning from other

places and postures. People begin the “waiting” standing against the walls or corners for support, and stand or wait as they move slowly around the room.

The immediate goal of the practice is to be able to “listen to the body” which means to be able to sense a kinesthetic impulse within a particular part of the body to move in a particular way. You may feel an impulse to roll around on the floor, to arch your spine, to stamp your feet, to reach into space, to press your hands to the floor, to twist, turn, or to just lie still. The possibilities are obviously endless and I found that the movement experience changed with each encounter. Nevertheless, there are some general commonalities.

With eyes closed, I begin the movement process by directing my attention to the act of breathing.³³ Lying still, or sitting against the wall, I become aware of the sensations and rhythms of my breathing. Focusing on breathing, I am very conscious of my self as a biological being, an organic structure living among other organic structures. The more I concentrate the more I am aware that I do not have to do anything. My body works on its own, expanding and contracting, in different directions with each rise and fall. This always feels very relaxing. The fact that the breathing happens on its own helps me to let go of my usual mode of thinking ahead and planning my actions, so that I can lie and wait for the impulse to move.

As I continued to focus on my breath, I focus on the different levels of tension in my body, for instance, a need to stretch or change position. Just as following the breath teaches me to “go with the flow,” I follow the impulse to stretch or change my posture.

³³ Breathing in Authentic Movement is a complex semiotic activity and I will show in chapter 5 how attention to breath is central to creating the mood and disposition for self-transformation.

For me, impulses would feel like an internally generated sensation to move a particular body part or place my body in a particular posture. Sometimes an idea in the form of a kinesthetic image spontaneously emerges and I just perform the idea. Others speak about following visual images that would come into their minds that would inspire particular performances. Either way, once giving in to an impulse, another impulse usually follows and I follow that impulse as well. My arm might move into space. I might be moved to curl my body into a fetal position. I might feel like jumping and flying through the space, but my awareness would always be on what my body is telling me it wants to do. The movement impulse may be fleeting or it may lead into an improvisation that continues for a period of time. In a movement session that may be around twenty minutes long, there are at least two or three different periods of quiet and movement.

In any movement session, what is most important, but also most tricky, is to know the difference between following an impulse and inadvertently planning the movement. So, for the most part, the practice is really just watching yourself and making sure that you are *being*, not performing (though as explained in performance theory by Bruner (1986), “being” is actually performing, a performance of being). The movement improvisation is as much a state of mind as it is an act of performance. To be able to find this state of mind, you have to learn to quiet your mind enough to truly wait for an impulse to happen. Mary Whitehouse, resourcing the teachings of Rudolph Laban,³⁴ explains that movement comes from “inner effort” where the inner impulse leads outward

³⁴ Rudolf Laban was a movement educator of the early twentieth century who developed an elaborate movement notation system.

into space. By following inner sensation you also initiate the process of active imagination.

The movement improvisation is the central focus of Authentic Movement and is presumed to be the time and space where authentic experience occurs. It is what the participants spend time preparing for and what they talk about. In terms of ritual structure, the movement performance, and the witnessing of the movement performance, are the most liminal aspects of the practice. It is when participants are least connected to their everyday roles, when the rules of custom and propriety are overturned, when the sense of time changes, where work is play and play is work, when people can transcend their limitations, and when possibilities for transformation are most potent. It is when people can directly confront or be confronted by, in the words of Bruce Kapferer, “the existential conditions of their existence” (Kapferer 1991:xi).

In this regard, movers experience periods of intense phenomenological changes in sense of body boundaries and body image.³⁵ I remember one event in particular during a weeklong workshop.

Ella, the leader, gave those of us in the mover role a piece of clay to “play with” during our movement improvisation. Ella and Dina were the witnesses. I was lying on the floor with a ball of dark brown clay in the palm of my hand, and as I held this piece of earth in my hand, I felt that I was becoming part of the earth like this piece of clay. This was not just metaphor. I didn’t feel *as if* I was a part of the earth. I literally felt like my

³⁵ V.S. Ramachandran (2007) explains that the body is a kind of phantom entity. Artistic experiences and other rituals can alter perceptions of reality. His experiments demonstrate that experiences of the body can be very illusory and can be based on “tricks” in the environment.

body was also the clay in the earth. I did not consciously imagine that I was in the earth. I felt the connection with earth in my body.³⁶ As Turner describes liminality, I lost a complete sense of my identity, my sense of space and time, and was immersed in another reality. My arms and legs began to move like an insect coming to life in the mud, and I just watched myself move in the earth. I felt the small movements of my extremities, and little movements of the joints. My muscles felt translucent and light. My body felt very relaxed and lifting up out of gravity was smooth, like the earth was lifting me up. I stayed close to the ground, just moving my head and arms periodically, just feeling like I was swimming in the mud. A shift occurred and I then placed my hands on the clay, I could feel its subtle elasticity, its softness next to the hard floor. I was still “being moved” but I was more aware of my self in the studio at this point. I was not really working on creating a form with the clay so much as just exploring it kinesthetically. Later, when we each placed our pieces of clay on a canvas, I noticed others made shapes with the clay, definitely using more of their visual senses. As I put the clay on the paper, it just represented my kinesthetic experience of being “in the earth” and I merely drew a shape of my hand around the clay. To “come back” (reorient myself to ordinary consciousness) I looked at my hands and touched my body.

In addition to transformations of body image, the movement performance is also a time for transformations of self-image. Movers can embody new ways of being in the world. In my improvisation with the clay, I felt like an earth figure, but in other

³⁶ As you will read in chapter 5, bodily connection to earth is very common. This passage, which I drew almost word for word from my field notes, even employs some of the phrases used by other participants in later sessions that I videotaped.

performances, I performed what felt to me like dances of power and strength. Movers discover new ways to move in the space, playing different gender roles. Women who are shy in everyday life, may perform more aggressive and strong motion. A person with stressful busy life practices quiet and stillness. People experiment with new positions and new vantage points on the world. They embody images from nature, have associations to their past, or express emotions that are unsafe to express in everyday life. At the same time, the movement experience may be purely kinesthetic with little imagery, creating a narrative that is not very readable. The experience may merely be a series of sensations, in flow, out of time, out of space but quintessentially present in body. Overall, though, the movement experience is a kind of sensorial ethnographic landscape that cannot always be drawn with perspective or order. The experience is one of utter sensation, non-sensical, and subjective, but as rooted in the body, it too may be a sign of authenticity.

Contact

In the course of a movement improvisation, movers may seek out physical contact with another mover or may by chance make contact with another mover. Movers always have the choice to engage and continue the improvisation in contact with the other mover or politely withdraw and carry on their improvisation on their own. Whatever choice a mover makes, consciousness of the potential for contact is always present.

I would place the moments of contact that I observed or were a part of on a continuum ranging from uncomfortably awkward to exquisitely beautiful. On the one hand, I felt a sense of awe and experienced a feeling of warmth when two people would come together and communicate with such harmony and sensitivity. On the other hand, I

cringed and felt uncomfortable when it just did not work, when there were miscues, imbalances, and asynchronies of rhythm.

Contact is such a delicate and sensual process. Two people with their eyes closed sensing each others' bodies, giving and taking weight, touching, embracing, pressing and pushing, and mirroring. Contact, even just hand to hand, is extremely intimate. In contact, movers are exposed and vulnerable. Reaching out to touch another, one may be accepted or rejected. As movers try to attune to each others' rhythms and intensities, they try to "read" the feelings and intentions of their partners. When partners do achieve interactional synchrony, they often describe an experience of merging where they do not even know who is leading or who is following. By contrast, when cues are misread people may feel misunderstood or embarrassed.

My own inclination when participating in sessions was to engage in contact improvisations only in long-term groups where I was more familiar with the group members. While this cautious strategy seemed to be a common approach to contact, I met a number of women and men who sought contact even with people they didn't know at all.

Contact can be as simple as two people standing face to face, eyes closed, with a peripheral part of the body in contact as they move together in synchronous spatial patterns and rhythms. Or contact can be complex feats of balance as movers take turns balancing precariously on the spine, arms, or legs of each others' bodies. Contact does not look like a pas de deux of ballet; there is no leader or follower. Contact looks more

like two people doing tai chi with their bodies entwined.³⁷ Partners might be upright or moving together on the floor. The quality of touch is usually light, and movements are usually slow and light as well. This is probably the case because it is easier to attune to another mover and find a mutual balance point if you are moving slowly and gently. Interestingly, contact mainly demands attunement at a physical level, “reading other peoples’ bodies without looking at them,” while, at the psychological level, movers remain internally-focused, concentrating on their own associations, images, and sensations through the improvisational process. With eyes closed, the other person is more a body than a person. Movers may not even know who their partner is, but even when they do, they try to maintain the sense of anonymity and disconnect the social person from the movement partner. I’ve been in groups where movers are forbidden from mentioning the partner’s name or addressing the partner during the narrative portion of the ritual. This removes a sense of social intimacy that may interfere with allowing the movement experience to flow freely.

Sounding and Silence

The silence of an Authentic Movement session can be very weighty. Like the empty space inside the movement circle, silence is a palpable sign of creative potential; it is another space waiting to be filled. Silence draws attention to the practice as distinctive from our everyday experience of the world. The quiet is contemplative, peaceful, and helps the participants to focus on what is going on in their minds and bodies. However,

³⁷ As noted in chapter one, Authentic Movement has been greatly influenced by the growth of interest in contact improvisation.

even with calming and evocative quality of the silence, many practitioners of Authentic Movement want to express themselves (or as they say, “let the body speak”) through sound as well as through movement. So, over the years, practitioners have integrated what is called “sounding” into the Authentic Movement practice.

Sounding is the term used for spontaneous vocalizations made during movement improvisations. Most times, soundings are unintelligible nonsense vocalizations consisting of grunts, groans, melodies, “speaking-in-tongues,” or sounds made from physical contact with the architectural features of the space. The sound forms are as much kinesthetic expressions—actions with physical intensity, focus, force, and rhythm—as they are auditory expressions. In other words, they are meant to be felt in the muscular body as much as heard as sound by the ear.

Because it is important that movers not be distracted by outside stimulation, special rules for sounding need to be established. Therefore, before the beginning of each session the leader asks the group to come to a consensus about whether to allow sounding to take place. If the group agrees to allow sound, the discussion then turns to how loud the sounds are to be. I found this part of the discussion interesting because sound was almost always discussed with regard to the body’s kinesphere, the area determined by the size and reach of the body’s movement, rather than in terms of sound. Specifically, they described low level sounding as happening within the near kinesphere, and loud sounding within the far kinesphere. In sounding within the near kinesphere, the assumption is that movers would not disturb others because they would keep the sounds within their reach, so to speak. This was preferable in groups with new participants, as allowing full out

sounding might be too frightening or undermine the participants' ability to focus on their bodily sensations, thus interfering with free and authentic self-expression. As movers become more adept at the practice, they are able to concentrate on their own feelings and sensations even in the midst of loud emotional outcries from other participants. Also, as the group coheres and begins to know one another, sounding may be a way for individuals to make contact with one another during a movement improvisation. I have heard people harmonize together, make chantlike music, or even form a chorus of animal sounds.

The permission to make sound in an Authentic Movement session is a heated topic in the Authentic Movement community. For some, sound is distracting and disturbs the flow of the movement process. Others feel that sound is an integral part of the movement process. While sounding can be a powerful way let the body speak, "full out sounding" can at times distract from concentrating on one's own process.

I remember a particularly dramatic event of sounding during my weeklong workshop. I was witnessing at the time, and as I pensively gazed out at the movers in space, out of the quiet, came a sound, unintelligible and disturbing to my sensibilities. "huoahhhohhhohhhhh," I couldn't figure it out- was this laughing or crying? The sound penetrated the room and my body. Soon, overlapping with this modulating moaning laughter came a voice emanating what seemed like speaking-in-tongues, phonemic combinations, but certainly form without sense. The sounding intensified and in addition to the speaking-in-tongues and extraordinary combination of laughing and crying, there emerged what I interpreted as grunts and groans, loud breathing, and improvisational

singing and chanting. I became increasingly curious yet unnerved by what felt to me like a strange guttural release of tones and cries (which according to the discourse of Authentic Movement means something about my own psyche). Another woman also talked about how disturbed she felt as she heard the sounds. She said she tried to crawl in a corner to get away from the sounds. I empathized with her but at the same time, I also felt strongly that my emotional response was a signal that something “authentic” and significant was taking place; this was not just weird nonsense.

There was no way that the sounding could not have affected all the movers at that time. The sounds permeated the space. There was no escape or respite. On the one hand, the whole event seemed stereotypic of a sixties encounter group. At the same time, I realized that these women were truly releasing something that felt authentic to them. Later in my reading, I encountered a passage from Mary Whitehouse in which she said that when sound bothers people, that is because “there’s no ground under it.” I’m not sure that it was my call to judge whether there was any “ground” underneath these sounds or whether these were just a bunch of affected women pretending to be in a trance. I chose to believe that the sounds emanated from authentic emotion and true need and that it was important to remain accepting of them. I also recalled reading a woman’s entry in the Authentic Movement Journal that the most authentic sound that she ever heard was from a dog who was present at a workshop. I am not sure that the sounds were as “authentic” as a dog barking, but maybe this is the best way to describe what I heard.

Creative Forming

After moving, participants sometimes take time to draw, sculpt, make a collage, or write a response to the movement experiences before the verbal processing of the movement meditations. Because participants sometimes feel it is difficult to use words to adequately capture the immediacy and quality of the movement experience, leaders encourage participants to first use other media to facilitate integration of the movement experience in a non-movement idiom. The community calls this creative formulation and it is based on Jung's active imagination.

Creative formulation follows the same structure and rules of Authentic Movement. The mover or witness, whoever is doing the creating, does not direct the emergent images, but follows the inner impulse to draw or sculpt particular patterns. If they are writing, the creator is to allow words to emerge, performing a stream of consciousness exercise. The images may change rapidly or the artist can stay with one image about the movement improvisation. The process in creative formulation is more important than the end product.

Creative forming is a focused, yet playful, time. Though participants are still supposed to be in a kind of receptive and contemplative mode, in creative formulation participants appear more active as their eyes are wide open and focused, sit upright, look around for art supplies, and energetically work on their art. My creative forming tended to reflect the kinesthetic qualities of the movement performance so that my art work would display textures and abstract shapes. The creative forming thus felt to me more

like an extension of the movement process. Other participants, however, who are more visually oriented tended to play with shape and color.

The productions in creative forming, like the movement and narratives in Authentic Movement, are treated delicately. The artwork is never interpreted, merely presented. The movers or witnesses who create the work may speak about their constructions, but these are not to be criticisms or evaluations. Just as the movement improvisation is witnessed without judgment or projection, the creative formulation should be gazed upon with acceptance and neutrality. Basically, creative forming is just an extension of the movement improvisation but through another modality which according to the practitioners is less “primitive” and less immediate than movement. Creative formulation is a way to bring the movement experience into conscious awareness. The goal is to seek a balance between over and under intellectualization.³⁸ Too much thinking omits the emotional immediacy aspect of the experience. Too much emotional immediacy leaves the performer without a means to organize the experience in her mind.

Witnessing

In my many ethnographic encounters with Authentic Movement, I found the omnipresent figure of the witness uniquely and emotionally compelling. At the same time, I found the idea of having a witness who was only focusing on her own feelings to

³⁸ Similarly, Thomas Scheff (1977) defines ritual as the distanced reenactment of situations of emotional distress that are universal within a culture and a device which allows individuals to be participants and observers of their own distress. In this way there is a balance between over and under distancing in the experience of distress.

be rather paradoxical. I was being watched, but at the same time I was not being watched. As witness, I watched others, but more truly, I was watching myself. Though illogical as it seems, the presence of the witness as I “moved” seemed to have a profound effect on my sense of self and after much study I have come to the conclusion that it is mainly the unique quality of performance of the witness in Authentic Movement that makes Authentic Movement different from an ordinary dance improvisation class or a walk in the woods. The witnessing experience, as I learned as participant and as observer, alters the phenomenological and emotional tone of the practice.³⁹ I emphasize my own experience in this section because I found that it was indicative of participants’ experience of witnessing in general and because it highlights the ways witnessing can affect the sense of self sensorially, socially, and morally.

The job of the witness in Authentic Movement is to be present for the mover, watch without judgment, and create a safe container for the authentic expression of movement. The witness must not read intentions onto the movers, must not project her own thoughts and emotions into the mover, must not interpret the performance of the mover, but just be there to accept and allow the mover to feel free and safe, both psychologically and physically. Because these seemingly simple rules are actually complex psychological states of mind, only experienced practitioners who have engaged in the practice over long periods of time take on the role of witnessing. Beginners are relegated to the role of silent witness until they learn how to “own their own feelings” and begin to internalize their own inner witness.

³⁹ I analyze witnessing in greater detail in the section in Chapter 5 on participant framework.

There are many parallels between the witnessing and moving experiences. As in the movement performance, witnessing entails dual consciousness. For example, while one part of you is watching what is happening before your eyes, the other part of your consciousness is focused on your own sensations, feelings, and thought processes as you are observing. As in the movement improvisations, the imagery, emotions, and thoughts that emerge in witnessing are also attributed to an unconscious source of information about the authentic self. As witness, therefore, my attention is directed inward to my own thoughts and projections, images, and emotions.

In tune with the spontaneous and flowing patterns of the movement performances, my attention is not linearly focused on one particular person's performance (unless I am instructed to witness one individual) or even the performance as a whole. Rather, my attention often wanders spontaneously and randomly to various happenings, focusing on one or more movers for different periods of time, depending on what "moves me" or grabs my attention. For instance, I may be drawn to particular performances that spark my curiosity or to a mover that I feel does something so eloquent that I feel aesthetically engaged in the performance. At times, as the movers enter what seems to be a trancelike or meditative state, my mind may be intensely focused on nothing but the performance. Witnessing, like the movement meditations, engenders altered states of mind and transformations of body image.

Along with the changes in body and self-awareness, witnessing also brings about a change in relation between self and other. In particular, as I become conscious of my own breathing and aware of the sensations in my own body, I am also able to feel in my

own bones and muscles what I am watching with my eyes. For instance, sometimes as a mover reaches slowly and extensively out into space, I feel the stretch in my own body. Correspondingly, I may imagine I share an emotion that the mover feels. Reaching, I may feel a sense of desire and longing in my own body. This kinesthetic empathy (when the mover conveys an internal emotion, body memory, or image through bodily movement that is simultaneously felt in the body of the observer) is highly provocative and is often a great stimulus to further meaning-making. Many participants, in fact, interpret kinesthetic empathy in transcendental terms. As one woman wrote in the Authentic Movement Journal.

I see my movement in you
 I feel your movement in me
 Once we lived in the sea together you and I
 creatures of the deep we were.

Given the Jungian frame on Authentic Movement, recurrent interpretation of kinesthetic empathy as primal union with another is not surprising, especially in long-term groups where members form more intimate relationships. On the other hand, this tendency goes against other tenets of Authentic Movement. Teachers caution witnesses to not too easily assume that kinesthetic empathy means that you know what the mover is feeling. For example, I once was witnessing a young woman who came to a short-term weekly Authentic Movement to work on feeling better about her body. As I witnessed her, I kept this intention of hers in the back of mind and it affected how I saw her. As I watched her move, I felt a deep struggle. As I saw her continually stop and start a series of movements, I also felt a strong sense of frustration. She searched, did not find, and searched again to only give up over and over. I felt frustrated that she was giving up.

However, this was merely my narrative of her performance. Her own narrative was indeed about a struggle, but rather than feeling frustrated, her own story was about trust and loss, and her fear of being rejected. So I learned from experience that it was very important to not project my own narrative on her. I was feeling my own sense of frustration when I do not finish a project, but she, in her own mind and body, was engaged in a different set of emotional issues. Whatever reaction I have, I try to be conscious of the fact that in Authentic Movement my reactions say more about me than the mover. (In fact, immersed in this state of mind, I began to feel that everything in the world was merely about me, an issue I will return to in the conclusion of the dissertation).

Witnessing is more than a way of looking, it is way of being in the world. As Robert Desjarlais explains in *Sensory Biographies* (2003:54), seeing is a way to perceive, think, or act “through the medium of the eyes.” Because as witness, I would feel kinesthetically what I witnessed visually, my body learned new ways of moving through space. Witnessing also made me much more conscious of vision. At the most basic bodily level, I could look at space differently. For instance, some times in witnessing, I would look at the space as if it had substance. I would see the bodies and the space around them as part of one entity. I could see the space between objects as if it were palpably expectant with possibility, always ready to be filled with the next movement that may occur. Likewise, when the mover extended a body part, an arm or a leg, into the space, it seemed that the space was being moved as well.

Witnessing also affected me in many ways that I did not expect. I found watching without judgment freeing and relaxing. I felt honored to be a witness, a great feeling of

privilege to be able to witness another person performing something so personally meaningful to them. That a person would put their trust in me was very humbling. I took the role of witness seriously. I did not want to betray anyone's trust or interfere with their personal process. As ethnographer, I felt a duty to be an honest and "authentic" member of the community. I practiced letting go of judgments and prejudices. When value judgments would come to mind, I practiced reading them as information about me and not the other. As witness, I practiced compassion and acceptance and I came to understand how this kind of training could be helpful in teaching people how to get along with one another.

Being witnessed as mover, I was not necessarily conscious of the compassionate stance of the witness as much as I was aware of the physical presence of the witness. For me the presence of the witness was a constant reminder to attend to the impulses and sensations in my body, and the images and thoughts in my mind. I did not want to appear inauthentic, so basically, the witness kept me honest. What I did really enjoy was listening to the witness's experience of my performance. I liked the attention and I felt safe knowing that I was not going to receive praise or criticism. I was just going to hear about the ways my performance inspired images, thoughts, and feelings in the witness, like "awakening" or "mythic earth figure." I also liked seeing the witness perform a part of my improvisation. I did in fact feel noticed and not judged.

Variations on the Form

Authentic Movement is essentially about a person moving with eyes closed in the presence of a witness but practitioners play with the form all the time in terms of number

of witnesses in relation to movers, how people move into and out of the witness and mover roles, and how witnessing is performed. As a group initially gets established, the leader takes on the witness role but as group members gain experience and get to know one another better, the group members share in the responsibility of witnessing.

Sometimes the group splits in half, where the participants form partners and take turns moving and witnessing one another for set periods of time. Other times there is flexibility and choice in taking on mover and witness roles, and participants move in or out of the space when they want to move or witness. This is called a “round robin.” There may be one or more witnesses, but the group agrees that if there is only one witness that person cannot enter the space to move until another mover comes out as witness. In small groups, participants may take turns being the sole witness, deciding on the order of witnessing prior to beginning the movement ritual. The first person then takes on the witness role for a set period of time, and at the end of the period, enters the circle, lightly taps the next witness who then leaves the space to become the witness. In the “long circle” the witnesses form a circle around the movement space and each person takes a turn moving in the space witnessed by the rest of the group. The following chart explains other variations of the practice.

Style	Mover	Witness	Notes
Group Therapy Style	Several movers	Group leader inhabits role of witness	
Partnering	One mover	One witness	
Triangle Partnering	One mover	One active witness One seated witness	
Long Circle	One or several movers	Circle of witnesses	
Round Robin	One or several movers	One or several witnesses	
Long Distance/Online Authentic Movement	One or more movers	One or several witnesses	Only advanced
Moving Alone	One mover	Inner witness	Only advanced

Sharing

Narrative performances in Authentic Movement are highly structured events. In chapter 5, I will provide a detailed analysis of the poetic structure of the narratives and show how the poetics of narration embody the ideals of authenticity as they are understood by the Authentic Movement community. In this section, though, I write about what it is like to be speak and listen in an Authentic Movement group.

The verbal sharing, or “processing” as it is sometimes called, is nothing like a casual conversation. Each person is given a set amount of time to speak so that everyone gets an equal turn to describe their experiences. Speakers form a “sitting circle” as equal partners in the exchange, but it is the “movers” and their movement performances that are the focus and “leaders” of the discussion. For instance, movers speak first about their performances, and then if witnesses are to speak at all, they speak after the mover.

Movers also may get to decide how much time they will leave to listen to the witnessing

narrative. For example, the leader may apportion each mover five minutes in total to speak, but the movers get to choose how much of that time they want for themselves and how much time they will give to the witness to give them “feedback.” Another participant will take the job of timer and will let the speaker know when 3 or 4 minutes have transpired. They can choose to listen to the witness or choose to continue speaking themselves. In more casual long term groups, after members become more familiar with one another, there may be more time and flexibility where witnessing narratives may be as extensive as the mover narratives.

The speaker, whether mover or witness, has full control of the floor and each speaker speaks one at a time. There is usually a break between taking turns, sometimes marked by an honorific gesture from the group such as a slight bow or a “group breath” before the next turn is taken. Non-speakers must quietly listen and pay attention to the speaker. It would be a severe breach to make any kind of interruption while movers or witnesses speak about their experience. If, and *only* if, it is obvious that the speaker is trying to be funny, I have heard people chuckle or I have often heard people sigh if the speaker is saying something emotional, but even those reactions are pushing the boundaries. The implicit ideology is that it is rude to cause any distraction while someone is speaking. It is a violation of the integrity of the safe container the group, or as they say, the “collective,” established for self-exploration. I have heard people whisper at weddings, funerals, and other religious ceremonies but I do not think I have ever witnessed that kind of side-talk in an Authentic Movement session. Again, in long term groups where people know each other and have been together for a longer time, there

may be some interruption and conversation-style exchange, but even in these groups, I never have seen someone talk to another participant while the mover or witness is speaking.

As I noted when writing about witnessing, it is also a breach of etiquette and trust to project any of your own thoughts or feelings onto someone else in the group. This is why people new to the practice are not even allowed to give witnessing narratives. To insure openness and acceptance, even movers are discouraged from talking about someone else they moved with during an improvisation. The group leader, accordingly, gives explicit instructions on how to speak. Participants are to make “I” statements, not “you” statements, and always try to note in narratives that the images and feelings expressed are their own projections and stories. This will be very apparent in the analysis of witness narratives in chapter 5.

In some groups, the canon of non-projection is even more formalized. For example, Janet Adler, and many of those who trained with her, incorporated what is termed “percept language” into the practice. In percept language, almost every sentence uttered is in the first person, so even if you are talking about how you saw a person lunge across the floor, you would say, “I lunged across the floor.” Or you could say “Here is what is happening in me as I watch you...As I listen to you, I am reminded of *that* part of me.” Some teachers do not suggest that witnesses speak this way all the time, but just ask participants to use this style of speaking until they are more familiar with the practice. I was in one such group and I found that percept language increased the already growing sense in Authentic Movement that the whole world is just my projection.

The social pressure to speak sincerely is as strong as the social demand to actively and attentively listen. This is as much for the benefit of each individual as for the benefit of the group. If the group is to be a safe container, then participants must speak with honesty. With this in mind, listeners do not only attend to *what* each person is saying but they attend to *how* each person is speaking. So, while there is no pressure to reveal your darkest secrets or to necessarily reveal *everything* you are feeling, if and when you do decide to speak (you always have the choice to not speak), you are, in a sense, under the microscope. The group does expect you to be sincere, and with no distraction, they listen to you attentively. As I will discuss in the following chapter, the social milieu is very much in tune with the Protestant turn toward sincerity and authenticity that Trilling (1972) and Keane (2002) talk about in their respective works. In social situations lacking predictable social rules and proprieties, sincerity and authenticity in social action provide the foundation for security and predictability.

Along these lines, I find the atmosphere in Authentic Movement to be much like a Quaker meeting, where the truth value of speech is closely monitored and regulated. The qualitative atmosphere is also similar in that in both settings speech is heard through a dense and sometimes pervasive silence. As in the discourse of Authentic Movement, Quakers practice a style of speaking where you wait to receive the “right” thing to say (that is the word of God) or, as in Authentic Movement, the speech that authentically represents your movement experience. As Bauman (1983) quotes the early Quaker teachers, “let your words be few” and “cease from those discourses that draw the mind from an inward, deep sense of the invisible, immutable power of the Lord God Almighty”

(1983:21) because empty speech will distract from the spirit. Speakers in Authentic Movement must in more contemporary idiom, “keep it real,” which in a number of cases, may mean not speaking much at all. To avoid giving a planned or banal narrative, which would be nonauthentic, it is best to contain and remain quiet.

Though silence and containment are explicitly important aesthetic ideals of speaking in Authentic Movement, in practice, (as in recent Quaker meetings I have attended), participants and leaders do speak a great deal. Listening to movers’ or witnesses’ narratives, I often felt like I was listening to a Shakespearean soliloquy. First, speakers are not actually speaking to you in conversation. They are almost thinking while they are speaking. Their eyes may gaze down or across the room, almost looking beyond the group as they speak. They seem to be in a state of reverie, talking to themselves, while the audience gets to witness a narrative of their innermost thoughts, feelings, fears, concerns, and imaginings. The narratives meander and you often get the sense that the speaker does not know where their story is going; they are just following their thoughts. The narrative is an inner dialogue, where you give yourself time to think and reflect. The effect of this interactional style is that sharing does not seem to be the most important part of the speech event (though the narrative time is actually called “sharing”), but the time is for you to hear yourself.

Even with the great sense of gravitas that pervades the sharing session, the “sharing” experience is at times also filled with irony. There is so much talk that goes on in an Authentic Movement session, from elaborate instructions to sharing, yet, speaking in this discourse is considered a dilemma. Over and over again, people repeatedly express

how difficult it is for them to verbalize what feels so immediate and so sensual. Words, they express, cannot capture what they want to say. This is an ideology with a long history in the dance community.

Some dancers are satisfied to leave the two worlds (verbal and nonverbal) apart. But given the philosophy in Authentic Movement that in order to expand the sense of self, to truly individuate, the movement experience must be integrated into awareness and higher consciousness, and thus, words are needed if this is to be realized. The Authentic Community over time has accordingly, developed ways to deal with this so-called problem with words. First, they acknowledge the problem and note explicitly that one narrative cannot say everything. In a session, there is only a certain amount of time and so we are just getting starting in what should be an ongoing process. Since the “process” is always there, people can continue to return to the experience, think and talk about it further and integrate it into consciousness. In addition to recognizing the purpose of talk, they also express the need to enliven the authenticity of speech through various poetic devices. For example, narratives can be condensed into one word images, can be performed in movement haikus, or narratives can be performed while showing the movements the words are describing.

The kinds of stories participants tell vary. The stories may be metaphors for the struggles and issues that are taking place in their own lives at the time. For instance, in one sharing session, a woman said she felt like she had an image that the floor was calm water and that she was at first rising above it, but gradually she began to sink into the water and as she was sinking, the water became rough. She felt this was what was

happening to her at work. The stories may also be detailed elaborate descriptions of body sensations, just talking about the sense of touch or the movement qualities and patterns of the improvisation. The stories could be imaginary tales of adventure or exploration of the unknown. Stories may provide new perspectives on the world. One woman, who witnessed another woman improvising with her sweater over her head, said the mover seemed both like an animal and veiled woman. She said that she had never before put these two images together before but felt like the veil was a way to dehumanize the individual. The narratives also may just be a series of random images.

Reintegration: The Long Goodbye

From movement to drawing to speaking, Authentic Movement offers an intense yet simple, active yet restful, novel yet straightforward experience outside ordinary time and space. Leaders initiate and guide participants through experimentation and play and they generally take seriously the need to guide participants back to their everyday consciousness. In many groups, this reintegration takes place by just changing attention back to the mundane concerns of everyday life, coordinating a time for the next meeting, talking about the chores that have to be completed the next day, or figuring out where someone left their keys. Other leaders formalize the process of closure and reintegration. Ella and Dina, who run many Authentic Movement workshops, complete this task in dramatic fashion. Readers of Victor Turner, they take seriously the structures and potential dangers of ritual transformation.

During the weeklong winter Authentic Movement workshop I attended, they began the first in a series of closing rituals on the fifth day of a six-day workshop. The

first ritual marked the change in social status of the workshop participants from novices to initiates in the Authentic Movement Community. They marked this beginning of the end of the session by joining the group as movers, handing over to the rest of us the responsibility of witnessing. This action indicated that Ella and Dina were of equal status and that we could, at least at the basic levels, be responsible members of the Authentic Movement Community. We had a two-hour Authentic Movement marathon that morning, as we all took turns being witness.

In the second closing ritual, Ella and Dina emphasized the more reflective components of the process of reintegration. They gave each participant five minutes to reflect on their work over the week and share in some way what was most valuable to them. Some members showed their artwork, others read poems they had written about a particular experience, and others just spoke. One woman drew a picture of faces with their mouths open, symbolic, she explained, of now being able to sing and speak in front of people. Another woman talked about coming to terms with some physical problems she had developed recently. Dancing with linear and direct motion of her arms and legs, another woman portrayed the sense of purpose she desires in her life. The last person just laid her body on the floor in respite. The rest of the group joined her, merged together as one body, just as we had started at the beginning of the week.

On Friday, the last day, we began with our usual warm up and Authentic Movement session, but Ella and Dina instituted changes in the practice that would facilitate regaining one's normal sense of self and separating from the group. Accordingly, during the sharing session, rather than speaking, Ella and Dina asked us to

“contain” most of our experience. We would be leaving and it was important for us to learn to be able to hold our thoughts and emotions ourselves. We needed to differentiate what it would be useful to share and all the rest we could contain. We were now distancing and finding our way back to our everyday life.

Dina called the next stage (stage 4) of closure “nush nush.” Nush Nush is when we collect all our belongings, props, and art supplies in the room and clean up. Clearing the space is a way to mark another moment in distancing from the world of Authentic Movement and moving back into everyday life.

Before the final ritual of reintegration, Dina took time to talk about what she has learned over the years is a very delicate process of returning home from these kinds of retreats. First she mentioned that we should acknowledge and remember that we gave ourselves special permission to come to Authentic Movement and that we created a special container here. But she emphasized that we must realize this is not same agreement we make with the “outside world.” “For your own psychological and emotional health, remember that the container is here and not out there.” “Consciously invoke,” she implored, “what do I need to do to go out in the world?” Giving us a focus on the future away from the present, she then forewarned us of what could go wrong if we did not fully return to our normal state of awareness. She told stories of two people who were still in “old space” when they were going home; one got lost, another had small accident with her car. But physical safety was not her only concern. She reminded us to remember to respect the confidentiality of the group. We were not to tell anyone about what others did or said in the group, but we were to also be careful in talking about

ourselves. “Pause before sharing,” she advised, “because people who weren’t there don’t always get it.” She worried that we would be hurt and misunderstood.

The next set of warnings related to the danger of doing Authentic Movement on our own. “Use caution. This work is wide open, and in being wide open and swimming in unconscious, it can be powerful, can be dangerous if you go too far.” She continued, “Don’t teach other people, it takes practice and experience,” but if we chose to practice the form, she suggested we only move by ourselves for short periods of time, use objects as stand-in witnesses or invoke an inner witness, and to not necessarily close our eyes. Finally, she suggested that if we did find a way to do Authentic Movement with someone else, we should only use silent witnessing. “Sharing and dialoguing is tricky, people can project onto others in nonsafe ways.” The message clearly was—do not do this on your own. You could get hurt. I would hear these warnings over and over again in other workshops.

The final sendoff came as each person, one by one, entered the center of the circle, and performed a gesture or act of completion. The rest of the group would then repeat the gesture with the person in the center, and then finally we would all say the person’s name, and “we send you forth.” The ritual on the surface seemed corny but in practice, the individual dances were very poignant and after so much time together the group sentiments seemed genuine and supportive.

Conclusion

Throughout my fieldwork, I enjoyed moving, witnessing and listening to mover and witness narratives and given that people come to Authentic Movement to find meaning in

their lives, there were always plenty of stories to be told. In fact, throughout all the sessions I attended, there was rarely a time when a participant was not able to tell some kind of story about her performance. The proclivity to find meaning in the movement performances was not necessarily because the movement performances have the seeds of stories in them, though they may. It seemed that the performances offered material and a structure to people who may already want to tell stories about themselves.

Chapter 4

The Aesthetics of Antimodernism, The Rise of Expressivist Modern Dance and the Modern Longing for the Authentic Self

Introduction

The notion that dancing freely and spontaneously with eyes closed in the presence of an “empathic” witness can provide an answer to the central question of modern life—”who am I?”—reveals a central paradox of modernity. It is purportedly through liberal social institutions of modernity that we achieve the freedom to be who we aspire to be, to be the authors of our identities, and to be our own source of authority by which we evaluate the moral rightness of our actions. However, it is outside institutions of modernity that we tend to look toward to know and define that precious authentic identity. Modernity is associated with the perfection of the self and pursuit of knowledge through the growth of science, the devaluation of magical thinking and ascension of a secular rational epistemology (Gaonkar 2001:2). At the same time, modernity is also associated with a profound loss of connection to community and to land, and the passing of comfortable reliance on religious values. For many middle-class urban Americans, modernization, with its attendant material well-being and triumphs over the forces of

nature, ironically, came to be strongly associated with anxiety, boredom and alienation, lack of meaning, and lightness of being (Lears 1994). Modernity was a vastly new and vibrant imposing cultural landscape, but this modern vista also included patches of dryness and gaping holes filled with “antimodern” anxieties and desires—a longing for a return to past innocence, for a “re”connection to one’s body, for “oases” of calm, quiet, and simplicity, for profound experiences of insight, memorable adventure, and intense physical work, for an experience of one’s own uniqueness and special place in the world, for nature, transcendence, intimacy, spontaneity, emotion, and beauty. So, with modern convenience, came the loss of sense of independence. With comfort, came a loss of intense emotion or absence of challenges people heroically overcome when they face pain and discomfort. With growing rationalism, came the loss of enchantment and wonder. With the urban environment, came loss of connection to nature. With the proliferation and production of new and varied social roles, came loss of trust and mutuality. With the sense of external unreality and lack of solidity and predictability, came a turn to internal worlds for truth and authority.

It was not that the urban middle-and upper-class rejected the modern project or did not enjoy the material well-being it afforded them. In fact, the particular antimodernism that characterized the urban elite was not a rejection of the social and economic systems upon which modern life was founded. Antimodernism was rather the quest to experience a different way of being in the world or different aesthetics of existence that would ameliorate the sense of emptiness and unreality that characterized urban life.

I do not want to characterize antimodern longings for an authentic existence as universal discontents or instinctual desires of individuals that preexist civilization. Rather these longings are meaningful for a particular class of people at a particular time and place in history. A return to nature and hard work as a form of respite from modern life has a very different meaning for the urban elite at the turn of the 20th century than for a 15th century peasant, or 19th century factory worker. This is not to say that the feelings and desires of the urban elite are not “authentic,” so to speak. They were and are real and have real consequences. My point is that the desire for a more authentic existence that is an integral part of practices like Authentic Movement is rooted in particular historical circumstances and practices that create and perpetuate such communities of shared sentiment. *Antimodernism within the urban middle-class engendered communities of sentiment; specifically, it established particular social networks cohering around shared notions of authenticity and shared ways of being in the world that would open the space for practices like Authentic Movement to emerge.*

The following chapter, accordingly, is a reflection on the aesthetics of authenticity and construction of “communities of sentiment” (Feld 1982) as they emerged in the late 19th century and 20th century urban settings in the United States. I first provide an overview of historical setting within which ideals and practices emerged. This picture will lay the groundwork for our understanding of how the practice of Authentic Movement can be intelligible as an experience of an “authentic self.”

The Search for Authenticity in a Disenchanted and Material World

Historians, philosophers and anthropologists (Bauman and Briggs 2003; Bendix 1997; Bigenho 2002; Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; di Leonardo 1998; Jackson 2005; Keane 2002; Lears 1994; Lindholm 2008; Taylor 1991) who write about “authenticity” consider the antimodernist passion for authenticity to be a creation and even intrinsic aspect of modernity itself. They convincingly portray modernity and authenticity as social imaginaries, where modernity is based on invented discontinuities with an imaginary past (Bauman and Briggs 2003) or where notions of authenticity are an invention about a primitive and exotic “other.” Yet, these scholars also acknowledge that the fact that modernity and its antimodern counterpart, authenticity, are social constructions does not preclude the experiential and psychological reality of both of these imaginaries. Modernity and antimodernity with all their tensions and contradictions are what Hallowell (1955:x) might deem “behavioral environments,” both part of an “order of psychological reality” or the virtual environments to which individuals react and respond. A cultural history of antimodernist longings for an authentic self thus reflect and are grounded in the lived experience and culturally constituted worlds created by the people that inhabit them.

Writings on antimodernism more often than not ground their analyses on Lionel Trilling’s (1972) historical account of the rise of interest in and importance of authenticity in contemporary society. Trilling’s work, as cited by scholars (Braman 2008; Jackson 2005; Lindholm 2008; Taylor 1991), adeptly reveals the inherent tensions and paradoxical relations between modernity and antimodernity upon which ideas of

authenticity rest. Explicitly, Trilling marks the history of the antimodernist longing for authentic experience to the events instigating the emergence of modern social, cultural, and economic movements, namely, the breakdown of feudalism following the Black Plague of the 14th century (Lindholm 2008:3). Trilling's account provides the backdrop for understanding the lived experience of changes in social, cultural, and economic structures.

As Trilling (1972:3) describes, in feudal times, before the rise of modern urban society, life may have been a struggle, but it was predictable and stable. With a sedentary lifestyle, and little to no social mobility, social roles were clearly defined and people knew their place in the world. The sense of self was rooted in the social world and what was significant to people was that they be able to live up to their social obligations to community and family. Individual wants and desires were meaningful only insofar as they could be part of a larger order. The moral commitments or "horizons" that endow life with meaning (Taylor 1991, 1992; Braman 2008) were external to the self. What was real, mattered, and had authority came from sources outside the self, both divine and earthly.

The Black Plague of the 14th century would bring this way of life to an end, leading to social changes that would affect all aspects of the everyday lives of citizens from all classes and backgrounds throughout Europe. In the end, the turmoil and upheaval from the massive death toll of the plague impacted how people thought about themselves and made meaning in their lives (Tuchman 1978).

With the loss of over a third of the population, the ensuing labor shortage created new social and economic opportunities for peasants and serfs that were never before afforded them. In this shifting and volatile economic environment, peasants and serfs could break out of old roles to seek wealth and power, significantly altering the previously accepted relations of power between classes. Economic survival now would come to depend upon a whole new set of opportunities and demands. The economy would be based upon flexible rather than stable social structures and require new ideals of personhood more appropriate for the new dynamic economy.

Yet, according to Charles Lindholm (2008), intermingled with the possibility for freedom and progress was existential anxiety over the unknown and fears of loneliness. As peasants were forced to flee the countryside in search of work in urban environments, social networks and family structures were weakened. Without the pressure to adhere to pre-established social commitments and with opportunities for social advancement, the foundation for mutual trust and social connections became fragile. Community relations were also uncertain and unpredictable. People could pretend to be part of groups they were formerly not a part of, origins could be falsely claimed, and people could lie and cheat in ways that were previously unfeasible (Lindholm 2008; Keane 2003).

Understandably, in these unstable conditions, people needed a way of judging the truth and reliability of others' actions and promises, and accordingly, authenticity, identified as a publicly verifiable correspondence between inner intentions and outward behavior, became a highly valued ideal of social interaction.

At the same time that these economic changes were taking place, the development of Protestant ideologies reinforced this new emphasis on authenticity. Whereas the Roman Catholic Church had emphasized the mere observance of liturgical ceremony and strict adherence to canon law, Protestants were concerned that actions truly and directly reflect inner intentions. According to Protestant ideology, people were expected to reveal themselves “as they really were” (Lindholm 2008:4) without unnecessary flair and affectation in speech, clothing, or behavior. Authenticity meant laying aside displays of social status and baring one’s inner feelings and thoughts.

In concert with economic forces, processes of democratization in Europe were also important factors supporting new ideals with authenticity. Proponents of democracy challenged the underlying assumptions about the natural order of class relations, instead seeking to reveal “transcendental spiritual essence” uniting all of humanity.

There are no longer any mountains, rivers or barriers between men. Their language is still dissimilar but their words agree so well that they all seem to spring from the same place, from the same bosom [Jules Michelet in Lindholm 2008:7]

Michelet and others created an “argument of images,” (Fernandez 1986) employing the “commanding image” (1986:177) of a universal mother and trope of kinship to naturalize a new social order.

As the Black Plague ushered in political, social, and economic changes, it also brought about revolutions in worldview that would indirectly generate a trend toward antimodernism. Just as peasants and serfs experienced their new found freedom and opportunity with both hope and fear, many people also dealt with the opening of the Enlightenment and the shift from a religious to a scientific frame of reference, with

optimism and regret. While modern science could provide some relief from the pains and suffering of everyday life, modernity also brought forth a loss in the “enchantment” of everyday life (Weber 2003 [1904]).

Among the many factors leading to the Enlightenment was the utter failure and incapacity of existent institutions to explain or ameliorate the overwhelming sense of helplessness and despair brought on by the Black Plague. Explanations of bad air or the wrath of God could not account for nor help people deal with the massive devastation they endured (Tuchman 1978). The utter lack of fortitude and powerlessness of clergy also greatly diminished the legitimacy of the Roman Catholic Church. People began to look for answers outside the traditional cultural and religious institutions. At least for those members of privileged educated class who had access to scientific discourse (Bauman and Briggs 2003), truth would be revealed by science and technology rather than by communion with God. By virtue of a series of scientific discoveries, citizens became hopeful that legitimate answers could be found to relieve the sufferings of everyday life. However, along with potential for knowledge of and control over nature, came a loss of meaningfulness and sacredness of life. The rationalization of the world (Weber 2003[1904]) characterized by “the systematic organization of economic life for maximum productivity and of individual life for maximum personal achievement” also made the world “a disenchanted object” (Lears 1994:9). Ironically, making the world a more predictable place created a mood of emptiness and loss. Objectivity and rationality might have provided sense of control over nature and reduce physical suffering, but it also

engendered a psychological “malaise” (Bendix 1997:34). And so, from the early beginnings of modernity, people possessed a simultaneous belief in scientific progress and a nostalgia for an idealized past.

The conflicts and ambivalent feelings toward modernity were apparent most prominently in Romanticism, the opposing voice or counter-discourse to the Enlightenment and rationalization of life. Romantics feared that economic growth would lead to “excessive materialism and luxury, aggressive self-interest, alienation and ultimately even to social breakdown” (Bauman and Briggs 2003:131) and, accordingly, sought truth not in science or objectification but in artistic, subjective, more “emotional” endeavors. Expressive culture, they asserted, would be the remedy for the ills of society. Poetry and the arts alone had the power to release hidden passions and imagination of the human soul (2003:132). Romantics directed citizens to look to primitive man as the ideal of authentic existence as well. Primitive man essentially became a projection of the antimodern desire for freedom, yearning for a re-connection to nature and longing to return to a state of “wonder of surprise” (2003:134).

Antimodernism attained an emotional peak in the work of Jean Jacques Rousseau, whom Lindolm calls the “inventor of authenticity” (2008:8). “Rousseau’s confessions were the harbinger of a new ideal in which exploring and revealing one’s essential nature was taken as an absolute good, even if this meant flying in the face of the moral standards of society” (2008:8). Real existence meant getting in touch with one’s inner authentic

self, a goal that Charles Taylor (1992) explains became the central concern in modern life.

Ways of Knowing the Authentic Self: A Brief History of Discourses of Interiority

If, as Charles Taylor (1992) asserts, the question, “who am I?,” is the central issue of modern life, then the epistemological question, “how do I come to know my self?” is a fundamental concern as well. I can only answer the question of my identity by making a choice about the epistemological stances I take in relation to who I am. To delve into the ontologies and meanings of the self is to venture into epistemologies of the self.

According to Charles Taylor (2002:111), the modern way of coming to know the true self is intimately involved with “inwardness.” Discovering the authentic self is a matter of plumbing the “inner depths” of the self, wherein individual feelings are the source of moral truths. Yet, interiority, the idea that the true self is located in some inner private realm, is not a fact of nature. Even though we may take interiority for granted and experience the inner self as a natural pre-cultural entity, the “inner depths” of the self are not a literal reality of the human body. From an objective point of view, there is no “real” locatable inner self. Rather, the phenomenological certainty of the inner self is a socially constructed reality based on a complex process of semiosis. Interiority, for instance, may be an effect of the first-person stance in language we use to understand who we are (2002:177). Interiority may also be the result of a tendency to associate “inner speech” with a pre-existent internal self. It may be the case that we have been socialized to

associate speech with an inner self merely through grammatical parallelism or the repetitive use of the first person pronoun over a period of discourse (Urban 2001).

Of course these possibilities do not alone prove anything about the nature of the self. It is not clear from these examples whether language reflects or performs a reality of personhood. And to be sure, the ethnographic reality of the middle-class fascination with finding and nurturing our inner authentic self (Rosaldo 1982; Appadurai 1990) also does not prove anything about the nature of the self. However, what these facts *do* show us is that social conditions are related to how people understand and experience themselves. The introspective stance presupposed in so many discourses of the self is connected to social developments in history; and, for example, discourses of the authentic self in Authentic Movement are intimately tied to these social developments. This section, therefore, surveys the broad ideological context in which the idea of the inner authentic self became intelligible as it is known today. Following this discussion, I lay out the specific circumstances from which Authentic Movement emerged as a discourse of the authentic self.

I base a great deal of my historical analysis on the work of philosopher Charles Taylor (1992). Taylor provides a comprehensive intellectual history of “sources” of the inner modern self and his book, aptly named, *Sources of the Self*, directs readers to the major ideas and epistemologies of the modern self through the works of the most influential philosophers of modern western thought. However, because his work does not provide ethnographic grounding of these ideas (for instance, he does not discuss what segment of the populations in Europe and the U.S. were aware of or influenced by these

ideas), I refer to other historical and ethnographic sources to locate the social and cultural settings which made ideas of the inner self and processes of introspection meaningful in middle-class lives in late 19th century and early 20th America, the social arena in which practices such as Authentic Movement arose. I do not trace the sequences and modes of transmission of discourses of the inner self, but determine some of the most salient and relevant discourses and practices that maintained a presence in culture over time. I do not suggest that all of these discourses are necessarily in play at any given time, but assume that these are ideologies of selfhood that people can deploy as active agents of their identity.

As discussed in the previous section, the rise of Protestantism was an important force in expanding the discourses of sincerity and authenticity (Keane 2002). But immanent in this cultural movement was also the expansion of discourses of interiority. In instituting an ideology that claims followers achieve grace through pure intention rather than through rote action (for example, where speech must reflect inner beliefs, feelings and thoughts), Protestantism necessarily entails a mindful inner self that is separate and prior to action. Where proper ritual actions themselves have the power to transform, the intentions of the speaker or actor are irrelevant. There is no need for an “inner self” in this case. Personhood is mapped directly onto behavior. But where intentions are important, managing the private self is crucial, engaging the public in assessing the sincerity of actions and intentions. Insuring that outward behavior reflects interior states requires not only continual self-scrutiny but also the vigilance of the community over behaviors that may stray from publicly stated intentions. Given these

conditions, this ideology had an impact on the lives of practicing Protestants as self-scrutiny became routine part of everyday life.

Another source of the aesthetics of interiority and introspection comes out of early Christian practices (Pagels 1979). In contrast to the superficial diversity projected by later Christianity, early Christianity supported a variety of beliefs and practices, many of which continued to influence religious attitudes and customs even as they were “shunned” by the Church. One particular group, the Gnostics,⁴⁰ followed “ascetic forms of self-discipline, seeking religious insight through solitude, visions, and ecstatic experience” (1979:144). The Gnostics paid close attention to personal visions, hallucinations, and fantasies as ways of experiencing God, respecting these experiences as insight into another more important reality. Souls and selves could be liberated not just through actions in the world, but through inner transformation. The Gnostic Sources, accordingly, pointed Christians toward looking inward for salvation. According to Pagels, the Gnostics “shared certain affinities with contemporary methods of exploring the self through psychotherapeutic techniques.” Both Gnosticism and psychotherapy value, above all, self-knowledge based on insight. Though she does not presume a causal relationship between the two, the fact that these esoteric practices (even if they remained on the margin) maintained a presence in the churches leaves open the possibility that aspects of the Gnostic traditions were integrated into self-enhancement practices of the Europeans.

⁴⁰ Pagels (1979) explains that most gnostic research treats the Gnostic movement as unrelated to Christianity with roots in Greece, but Pagels grounds the movement in the diverse teachings and practices of early Christian sects.

In addition to reverence for the inner life, Gnostics, like modern artists, valorized creativity as a transcendental experience. “Like circles of artists today, gnostics considered original creative invention to be the mark of anyone who becomes spiritually alive” (1979:22). They express their own knowledge of God, by creating new myths, poems, rituals, and dialogues with Jesus. Following the logic I laid out earlier, the correlation between modern notions of interiority and Gnostic practices does not prove any historical connection between the two. However, what is significant is that Gnostic mystical practices and ideologies, themselves a syncretistic movement, were a source of dissemination of mystical and introspective practices in the Christian church, and thus also opened the cultural space for the development of introspective practices in other social arenas as well.

Augustine’s book of self-revelation, his *Confessions*, was another source of dissemination of the discourses of introspection and was particularly important because it not only revealed his personal struggle to find God but because it was written as a reflective account in the first person. Augustine uses what Charles Taylor describes as a “language of inwardness” going “as far as generating the view that there is a special domain of ‘inner’ objects available only from this standpoint” (Taylor 1992: 131), a style of introspection relevant today. According to Augustine, you find God by going inward because as you become conscious that you are a thinking and sensing being, you also become aware that you are dependent on something outside yourself and in turn become closer to experiencing God’s creation. In other words, we find God in the act of searching

for own self-knowledge. The *Confessions* served as a model for *how* to look inward and gave introspection a moral purpose beyond self-aggrandizement. His work bridges the introspective propensities of classical philosophy and romantic expressivism.

The reflective mode that was fundamental in the *Confessions* was likewise the epistemological foundation of knowledge for classical philosophers that came before him, such as Plato. The aesthetic of interiority in the *Confessions* was succinctly expressed in Socrates's dictum (as quoted by Plato) that the unexamined life is not worth living. For Plato, it is only by examining and scrutinizing our thought processes that we can find what is outside ourselves, that is, the natural order of things. Somewhat in contradiction, though the Platonic world of Ideas is transcendent of the subjective phenomenal world of appearances, Ideas can only be known through intensely reflective and rational thinking and therefore what Plato contributes is not merely a philosophy of the world but a way of being in the world. Through dissemination of the discourse in academies of learning, men practiced forms of self-examination and how to think about how they think, in the end absorbing a value that a contemplative attitude is the most desirable state of mind.

Like the inward-looking stance of Plato, the interiority of Rene Descartes is also concerned with thought processes, though in Cartesian philosophy, there are no "self-manifesting" (1992:161) ideas pre-existing the thinking mind. For Descartes, the "order of ideas is not something we find but something we build" (1992:144). Rationality, in contrast to Platonic thinking, is the capacity to construct order, not discover order, and is an *internal* property of subjective thinking, rather than a vision of reality (1992:156).

Furthermore, interiorization takes place not by attuning to the external world but by distancing from it. In other words, by objectifying the world, you separate yourself from it, and then you perceive the distance between your own subjective internal world and that of the external world. “Radical objectivity is only intelligible through radical subjectivity” (1992:176). Most significantly, in creating this separation, you develop the first person singular stance that Taylor claims is the foundation of modern individualism.

Now, it is certain that Cartesian philosophy, responsible for the separation of body and mind that the founders of Authentic Movement claim severed the connection between man and nature, is antithetical to the kind of interiority engendered by practices that are supposed to integrate man with nature. To the extent that objectification distances a person from his emotional reactions to objects in the world, this is true. However, to the extent that the separation between subject and object constructs the first person stance, objectification may, in fact, be in alignment with practices like Authentic Movement. Insofar as this stance intensifies the sense of being an individual person with unique consciousness, Cartesianism does not obstruct moves toward introspection as a way of knowing in the world but is a significant development toward a humanistic concern with originality.

The most salient discourses of interiority in Authentic Movement are the Romantic expressivism of Rousseau and Montaigne’s “principle of originality,” which assert that each of us has our own inner voice and that this voice has something significant to say about who we truly are. From their point of view, the turn inward to discover

one's true inner voice is not a way to reach an external all knowing God, but a way to reach a psychological truth of the self. Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*, in contrast to Augustine's (Taylor 1992), hence, was not a first person narrative of a search for God but was rather a self-narrative about a return to nature and a return to feeling. But most relevant to contextualizing practices like Authentic Movement, Rousseau, emphasizing the ever-growing anxiety over modernization and industrialization, presented his community of readers with an opportunity for liberation from civilization, not merely through a stance but with an image of authenticity, that of the "noble savage." The inner voice would naturally take people back to their truer and simpler essence. Modernity, Rousseau theorized, separated man from his true self, and in his *Confessions*, gave civilized man a path back to the true self through a special kind of interiority—one entailing an objectification of the primitive "other." Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, among others, would extend and elaborate upon this path.

Freudian psychoanalysis and Jungian analytic psychology bring together, along with a number of other ideas, the Romantic notion of a hidden authentic self and the Cartesian drive to objectify the biological aspects of the self. These "depth" psychologies postulate interior structures within each person that embody unconscious socially-forbidden thoughts, memories, and desires. For example, Freud (1953, 1961) postulates a self with interiorized primitive drives—sex and aggression—that need to be restricted in order for normative bourgeois society to function (Cushman 1990: 602). Jung's conception of the interior self, by contrast, is less dark and dangerous in that his

unconscious embodies a more diverse and abstract array of drives and emotions beyond sex and aggression including childlike play and or spiritual enlightenment. But more significant in understanding Freud and Jung's place in expanding discourses of interiority and developing the social and cultural space for the emergence of Authentic Movement is that both Freud and Jung offered a means for freeing and expanding the sense of self. Looking inward and opening up to hidden impulses and desires promised salvation from the restrictions and delusions of modern civilization. Psychoanalysis, in this way, offered hope for a more fulfilling life, and middle-class women seeking liberation from unfair, overly restrictive and suffocating rules of Victorian society were thus drawn to this practice. In fact, at the beginning of the 20th century, many middle-and upper-class women looked to psychoanalysis to develop, according to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "beyond the incidental relations of life, such as mother, wife, sister, daughter" and enter "upon the free unfolding of her personality as an end in itself" (Buhle 1998: 3)

Clearly, discourses of interiority did not circulate in absence of or in isolation from other discourses of the self. They became meaningful in relation to social, economic, and political conditions of the time and this is clearly the case with Freudian and Jungian psychologies. Psychoanalysis, as a particular form of interiority, arose and grew at this particular time and place in history because it answered particular anxieties and concerns of the time. I, therefore, turn my discussion to late 19th century America and the concerns of urban middle-class women, as a way to show how communities of sentiment centered around discourses of authenticity arose at this particular time and place.

Antimodernism, The Body and the Aesthetics of Authenticity

I have drawn a brief sketch of the cultural landscape upon which an aesthetics of interiority emerged in Europe and the U.S. I now want to return to the central questions of modern life—”who am I?” and “how do I come to know myself?”— and look at these questions from the point of view of the urban elite in the United States at the turn of the 20th century, the period in which antimodernists laid the groundwork for practices like Authentic Movement.

According to historian T.J. Jackson Lears (1994), the fin de siecle was a time of uncertainty for middle- and upper-class Americans. Modernization and the disenchantment of the world left the urban elite feeling like they could no longer answer the question “who am I?” by turning to God or to their community (Lindholm 2008), but neither was a turn toward the self an easy answer to the dilemmas they faced. Looking inward, they did not find meaning. Rather, they discovered only empty space and confusion. According to Cushman (1990:600),

The American terrain has shaped a self that experiences a significant absence of community, tradition, and shared meaning. It experiences these social absences and their consequences ‘interiorly’ as a lack of personal conviction and worth, and it embodies the absences as a chronic, undifferentiated emotional hunger.

Neitzsche similarly wrote that America entered a “weightless” period at the end of the 19th century that was characterized by nebulous moral and spiritual beliefs, and lack of personal identity. “The individual will and action is hemmed in by an iron cage of a bureaucratic market economy” (Lears 1994: 32). Interiority, in a sense, created a double

bind. Going inward at this time at once embodied the hope of fulfillment and the certainty of despair.

As a reaction to this profound sense of loss and alienation, the turn of the 20th century witnessed the rise of antimodernist groups such as simple-lifers, militarists, mind curists, health reformers, mystics, and avante-garde artists, as “authentic” alternatives to the modern empty self (Lears 1994:4–5; Cushman 1990). As feelings intensified that the urban environment was overcivilized and artificial, antimodernist movements of the late 19th century and early 20th century looked toward therapies that promised instinctual and bodily freedom, a return to nature and the wild frontier, and utopian visions of a new kind of society as ways to relieve the overpowering sense of alienation and emptiness.

According to T.J. Jackson Lears (1983, 1994), the late 19th and early 20th century was the culmination of the shift in American culture from the Protestant ethos of salvation to a therapeutic ethos of self-fulfillment. The body for many of the urban elite was a principal site of the struggle for authentic selfhood and it was during this period that the urban elite opened up a social space in which ideologies of authenticity calling for “a return to the body” could circulate. The development of a shared aesthetics of authenticity strengthened social networks among the urban elite, in turn naturalizing the ideologies of authenticity the urban elite espoused.

Aesthetics of Labor

During the 19th century, the American capitalist economy underwent a dramatic shift from being a complex set of disorganized and independent entrepreneurial ventures to a more organized corporate, and centralized enterprise (Lears 1994:11–12). Among the

long lasting impacts of this economic transformation was a fundamental and profound change in the phenomenology of everyday life. Specifically, the bodily ways of being in the world (1994:60) for middle-class Americans were dramatically altered. For the white-collar worker, labor no longer consisted of intense bodily engagement with the earth where he could see the results of his own labor. Instead, work demanded a lot of thinking with little physical activity. White collar workers, though living a life of comfort and ease, complained of a sense of diffuse fatigue and a general feeling of disconnection and alienation. People had to be at work “on time,” the pace and rhythms of modern life and work felt artificial, and with less use of the body they felt unchallenged and less tolerant of pain and discomfort. The world felt over-intellectual, “buttoned up and humorless” (1994:48). T.J. Jackson Lears characterized their predicament as a “psychic crisis” (1994:47). As noted in the following quote from William James [2000[1899]:264], fear over these lifestyle changes was extreme.

Civilization will require more mentally from us, but less and less physically, machines will do everything, so that in the future homo sapiens will only be able to eat and digest food and think ...we will suck up our food from glass tube.

Gustav Stickley (who later started the United Crafts furniture workshops in 1898), similarly, bemoaned “we are losing the charm of youth and ... we have forgotten how to play” (Lears 1994:69). Bureaucratic work seemed insubstantial in contrast to the authentic experience of manual labor (1994:60). Modernity, he believed, repressed people’s sense of spontaneity leading to an increase in diseases of civilization (1994:69) in those whose work was too intellectual. The machine was a threat to “enjoyment” and “growth” (1994:69). It was, therefore, not surprising to find that the middle-class white-

collar workers would look to other lifestyles for relief and diversion. The arts and crafts movement was one such diversion and the artisan revival flourished in the latter part of the 19th century.

The arts and crafts movement was very popular with the educated bourgeoisie. For actual artisans where handicraft work was what they knew and already did, an artisan revival was neither meaningful nor necessary. Ironically, however, businessmen cut off from the fantasied “real life” needed a “revival,” or what they saw as a return to a more authentic way of being. The arts and crafts revival of the late 19th century answered this call.

Two British antimodernists, John Ruskin and William Morris, influenced the ideology of the arts and crafts revival in America. Ruskin, for instance, promoted the restoration of traditions that came before the Renaissance aesthetic of order for which he blamed the expansion of mechanization in the modern factory system. The aesthetic of Medieval architecture in contrast to later schools, he claimed, appreciated the idiosyncrasies and unique contributions of individual laborers. Morris, likewise, promoted the idea of revival of medieval guilds in England as a way to deal with excessive division of labor, asserting that “the leading passion of my life has been and is the hatred of modern civilization”(Lears 1994:62). Ruskin and Morris’s philosophies and programs in England inspired simple lifers, dress reformers (whom I will talk about later in this chapter), and vegetarians in America to also form social networks to create social change. One such group, the Rose Valley Community, located outside Philadelphia, became a subsistence agricultural community designed to attract skilled craftsman and

unhappy city dwellers to a more “rural and vigorous life” (1994:69). Jane Addams established the Hull House Labor Museum, where factory workers could be educated on the importance of their jobs. Her work led to the increased circulation of the antimodern aesthetic among middle-class families as she taught them how to develop a “fuller” life through engagement in manual labor and craftsmanship (1994:80). Similarly, programs such as Stickley’s Craftsman Farm School for Citizenship, at a tuition cost of \$1000, flourished throughout the east coast, instilling in children, the school claimed, with the old “entrepreneurial spirit,” that was missing in urban society. Providing them with temporary respite from intellectual work, they could return to school with a new “zest for life” (1994:82).

Yet, as Lears explains, the arts and crafts “revival” did not make any dents in the social structure of labor, but was merely a form of therapy to ameliorate the personal sense of alienation among the middle-classes (1994:83). Craft education and manual training did not protest modern organization of labor, but eased the transition to 20th century separation between work and “life.” In point of fact, the artisan movement simply intensified the bourgeois preoccupation with individual fulfillment (1994:83). The artisan movement, like other antimodern movements, would merely provide a respite from modern urban life, that would reduce any motivation for *real* changes in the economic system. Such movements would merely spur production of more “oasis regimes” (Strauss 2005:58–59). Simple life was a state of mind (Lears 1994: 93) and had nothing to do with living on a farm. Whereas the saying used to be “Our cry is Back to the land!,” it became “Back to yourself” (1994:93).

Aesthetics of Health

The wide prevalence of nervous disorders among the urban middle-class in Europe and the United States at the end of the 19th century is prime evidence of the phenomenological effects of “over-civilization.” Characterized by a “paralysis of will,” repression of emotion, and physical debilitation, “neurasthenia” was a concrete manifestation of antimodernist sentiments about urban living. Accordingly, the middle-class sought and created special therapies to attend to these somatic concerns, developing cultural models and social networks that would continue to be resources for middle-class anxieties in the future.

The rest cure was one popular antidote for the stressful pace and style of urban life. Developed by Dr. Weir Mitchell (Lears 1994:51), the rest cure was based on the economic metaphor⁴¹ of a bank account that continually needs to be replenished, and thus promoted the idea that isolating patients from the conditions that had brought about stress would restore energy that was drained from them. Patients, he claimed, needed to go to open air and more “natural” settings for replenishment. The rest cure promoted an antimodern aesthetic of slowing down and taking time for oneself, returning patients to a more authentic time and place. Ideologically, the rest cure harkened back to Rousseau’s vision of authenticity, invoking images of the noble savage who does not have the responsibilities and stresses of the urban businessman.

⁴¹ Emily Martin (1988), following Douglas (1996), explains that the body is often seen in metaphors related to the people’s conception of society. The 20th century saw a widespread shift in medicine from depicting the body as a “intake-outgo system” to the body as a small business trying to spend, save or balance its account. Over time, as the economy became more complex, so did the economic metaphors of the body.

Rest cures were very popular and “getting away from it all,” beyond being a medical “cure,” became an integral part of the lifestyle for those citizens who had the time and resources to avail themselves of this luxury. The proliferation of hotels, spas, and centers that catered to these needs is evidence of this fact. Hotel brochures, designed to appeal to potential patrons, reveal implicit antimodernist assumptions about the emotional needs of vacationers and about how pastoral resorts would satisfy these desires (McCombs 1985:411).

And from thy worries dwell apart;
 Here golden afternoons are long,
 And voices ripple into song,
 And vexing cares are swift forgot,
 And fret and hurry harass not;
 Here peace and solace thou may'st win,
 Where idleness is not a sin;
 Here tensioned nerves relax their strain,
 And bodies find surcease of pain,
 And hearts outgrow their petty strife,
 And beat with stronger, surer life;
 Here the long days are calm and sweet
 And earth and heaven nearest meet--- Come to the mountains, weary soul,
 And let their healing make thee whole!
 [McCombs 1985:410]

A vacation at a resort or secluded hotel in the woods, thus, promised a respite from the banality and noise of city life. In the words of historian W. Douglas McCombs (1985:417), these hotels offered “regeneration through simple living” or a “therapeutic rusticity.” But even more than psychological and physical rejuvenation, they asserted that a hike through the mountains would also bring you closer to God and heal your soul.

Nature, as the transcendentalists and antimodernists espoused, was a spiritual haven and a “complete antithesis to the demands of modern life” (1985:419).⁴²

In addition to its antimodernist aesthetic, the rest cure also embodied the transcendentalist version of rugged individualism, that is, the idea that man should boldly eschew civilization and make his own heroic journey in discovery of the inner life. This followed the form of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s transcendentalism where “man cannot just be satisfied with reading novels, going to lectures...man [should look] for adventure in going to Pike’s Peak” (Emerson 1860:69). I’d rather “die by the hatchet of a Pawnee man than sit all day and every day at a counting-room desk,” Emerson declared (1860:69). Transcendentalism was not a passive meditation on the inner light. It demanded bold action. Finding “the divine presence in ourselves” (Dillaway 1936:307) involved intense physical experience in nature to ward off the negative effects from the absence of corporeality in modern life.

Thus, the rest cure, combining “getting away from it all” and adventure, gave the middle-class a moral foundation for their leisure activity. More realistically, though, this health tourism merely provided the middle-class with what Strauss (2005), citing Giddens, calls an oasis regime, “time out” from everyday responsibilities, for oneself.

The health tourist’s quest is not for authentic others, but for an authentic

⁴² Rambling societies that arose in suburban England in the 1920s and 1930s, in contrast to the solitary activities of the rugged individualist, promised “exercise and companionship” (Trentmann 1994:589). Rambling parties comprised an average of four to twelve members, taking respite in the rural countryside to walk and sing popular folk songs such as “I’m Happy When I’m Hiking” (1994:587). “Rambling became an antidote to the quickening speed of the modern machine age, providing the psyche with silence and peace from the urban chaos (1994:588).”

Self--a self which is at ease, relaxed, able to express itself without being buffeted about by external pressures. That Self is one thing that cannot be bought, cannot be mechanically reproduced, cannot be commodified. However, the time and place to locate that Self can indeed be bought, and through the development of an oasis regime, a set of self-building practices cobbled together in another zone (whether temporal or geographic) an individual can learn to take that “time out of time” back home. The authentic Self is healthy, in every sense of the word. It is another manifestation of high modernity’s “reflexive project of the self” [2005:58–59].

Rest cures as oasis regimes are still a fixture in middle-class society and serve as the model for Authentic Movement workshops and retreats, among other types of self-enhancement therapies, today.

In contrast to the rest cure, therapies based on the idea of psychic abundance also proliferated (Lears 1994:52–53). These therapies were based on the idea that the unconscious is a deep source of power, a power inaccessible in “civilized” society. Mesmerism, a therapy imported from France, was, for instance, based on an extreme belief in interiority (Cushman 1995) and powers of the mind over circumstance. Like the rest cure, it was a popular therapy among the “rich, alienated, and troubled” (1995:118), who may have also been intrigued and engaged by its exoticism and physical intensity. Mesmer, to be sure, created quite a dramatic performance.

He assembled his afflicted patients around a tub of water in which electrical wires and magnets had been inserted. As the patients held the wires, Mesmer danced around the tub, dressed in a lilac robe and armed with a special wand. He would sing, chant, and talk to his patients, and at a propitious moment touch them with the wand. Immediately they would fall into a deep, curative trance, during which they might attain ecstatic spiritual heights, gain the gift of clairvoyance, or experience a deep sense of well-being, and it was said, be relieved of their troublesome, usually psychosomatic, symptoms (1995:118).

Mesmer claimed he healed by harnessing and releasing the “animal magnetism” within each individual (1995:118). The hypnotic trance, he asserted, would bring the mind in touch with the spiritual world, a world of truer reality (1995:119). The therapy, thus, spoke to the antimodern quest to rediscover the more primitive parts of self, those parts antimodernists claimed as more authentic but absent in the everyday world of urban America. Patients said they experienced improved interpersonal skills and felt invigorated by the therapy.

In his history of psychotherapy in the U.S., Philip Cushman (1995:119), asserts that mesmerism was the first ideology of personal inner liberation. The superficial similarities between mesmerism and practices such as Authentic Movement—the use of trance and the invocation of a world of truer reality—are notable. However, even more pertinent to opening the culture space for Authentic Movement is the fact that mesmerism helped to set up the social networks in which the urban elite, the majority of whom were women, would continue to explore alternatives to what they felt to be their mundane, sensorially restricted, lives.

In addition to rest cures and mystical therapies, upper-middle-class women also became very involved in what was known as the mind cure (1995:125). Many women even became mind curists themselves (claiming their legitimacy as therapists through an aesthetic of authenticity, relating their practices to ancient spiritual rites). The mind-cure, following the principles of Christian Science, was based on the idea that the cause of illness was incorrect belief. Like Mesmer’s contention that a truth lay outside our everyday reality, mind curists also claimed that a true spiritual universe (1995:126)

existed outside of the material world. Curing happened if the mind connected with this alternate authentic reality. But more than the work of the mind, the actual practice of the mind cure depended on developing empathy with patients. Quimby, who developed the mind cure, describes his work in the following way.

I sit down by a sick person, you also sit down. I feel her trouble and the state of her mind and her faint and weary for the want of wisdom.... my words are words of wisdom and they strengthen her [Caplan 1998: 68].

Note the level of attunement Quimby describes that he has with his patient. He “feels” her trouble, her mind, her state of weariness, as he sits next to her. This is a “being with” kind of therapy based primarily on the development of an emotional connection with the patient. Quimby developed a following among urban middle-class women who longed for emotional experiences in their constricted lives. It was not coincidental that women, who were the main caregivers of the middle-class household, would be practitioners of the mind cure given the primacy of empathy in the work. It is also not insignificant that it opened up a space for women to use these social skills outside the home. The mind cure’s emphasis on empathy is an aesthetic of healing that is still very much part of the psychotherapy community, and certainly an aesthetic in Authentic Movement.

Before concluding this section, I want to make one peripheral but important point about the development of health cures among the urban elite in the 19th century. Like current antimodernist practices, the aesthetics of health are couched in nonpolitical terms and ignore the social embeddedness of their beliefs. For instance, the impetus to improve the physical health of urban elite was not merely a response to the dissatisfaction and distress they experienced in their everyday lives. The physical health movements were

also spurred on by the urban elite's anxieties over the influx of immigrants into the cities. According to Smith (2000b), upper-middle-class whites worried about health and stamina of immigrants in relation to tired "brain workers" of white collar workers. They were also anxious about high birth rates of immigrants. Fitness became part of the health agenda in order to look strong and compete with immigrants (2000b:259). The physical culture movement (Burns 1996; Foster 2000 [1900], Ruyter 1979; Smith 2000b), stressed an aesthetic of "stature, muscularity and dynamism" in contrast to the Victorian aesthetic of gentility (Smith 2000: 259). Thus, the physical culture movement not only provided alternative solutions to the maladies of civilization but exposed the body as the site of political struggle over identity and self-determination.

Women's Health as Freedom

The body was a site of struggle for freedom and change for women throughout the 19th century. The popular health movement of the 1830s and 1840s was at the forefront of social change in women's lives (Ehrenreich 1973a, 1973b). "Ladies Physiological Societies," resembling the present day "know-your-body" courses, became very popular in the mid-19th century with a focus on the concerns on the everyday lives of middle-class women. Accordingly, they promoted lifestyle changes including frequent bathing, loose fitting clothing, whole grain cereals, regular immunization, and safer reproductive practices (English and Ehrenreich 1973b: 25). Ehrenreich describes the societies as a movement against the paternalistic attitudes toward women and supportive of women's liberation (1973b:7).

Characteristic of early feminist movements, the movement comprised mainly of white upper-class women, or those aspiring to be upper-class. These were “ladies of leisure,” who because of their sedentary lifestyle, were “inherently” sick, weak, and delicate (a view of women that allowed men to continue to bar them from important public activities such as medical school, voting, and higher education). Given the image of the frail and delicate body, doctors recommended a regimen of leisurely physical activity such as golf, boating and swimming to regain their strength and health.⁴³ Travel to health spas and health specialists became a central aspect of the social life of “fashionable women.” Similar to health tourism for middle-class families, the physical health movement offered a way for these women to achieve a sense of freedom and vitality without having to give up on or sacrifice one’s wealth and comfortable lifestyle (Lears 1994).

In the early part of the twentieth century, psychoanalysis was another means through which upper-middle-class women could define and achieve expressive freedom. For instance, Freud’s lecture at Clark University (Buhle 1998: 5) in 1909 would popularize psychoanalysis and change the lives of many women (in a way that it could not in Europe at that time.) Certainly, Freud tapped into the antimodernist sentiments of his American audience,

We ought not to exalt ourselves so high as completely to neglect what was originally animal in our nature. Nor should we forget that the satisfaction of the individual’s happiness cannot be erased from among the aims of our civilization [1985:177].

⁴³ By contrast, for the “African negress...who washes and scrubs...toils in our homes, enjoys for the most part good health,” (Ehrenreich and English 1973b: 13) doctors did not prescribe leisure activity.

To those “neo-Romantic” (1998:8) Americans who looked toward an optimistic future of freedom and self-fulfillment, Freud’s words were reassuring. Freud gained a following among journalists, novelists, playwrights, poets, critics, college professors, and physicians, most of who lived in New York City and hung out at coffee houses in Greenwich Village. Psychoanalysis, as Freud feared,⁴⁴ became the “property of freewheeling intellectuals and popularists as well as of physicians”(1998:6). Hollywood even asked Freud to work on screenplays for movies. He did not accede to this demand, but he did present simplified views of his work in popular magazines, and so his work became widely disseminated among middle-class women. Jung’s work, similarly, became popular, especially on the west coast.

The sense of hope and possibility that intellectuals infused into psychoanalysis is especially evident in Max Eastman’s article, “Exploring the Soul and Healing the Body,” in *Everybody’s Magazine*⁴⁵ in 1915. Eastman claimed that psychoanalysis would be a therapy not for a select few, but for “thousands of people” and heals wounds created by society (Eastman 1915:741). Analysis, he asserted, would get to the true source of

⁴⁴ Freud feared that the popularization of psychoanalysis would lead to a watering down of the medical and scientific aspects of his work.

⁴⁵ *Everybody’s Magazine* (www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAeverybodys.htm) was a magazine founded in 1899. This magazine gives a sense of the audience to whom Eastman and others were speaking. The magazine was generally concerned with issues of social justice and published investigative pieces challenging corruption in business and government. In 1903 *Everybody’s Magazine* had achieved a circulation of 150,000 and by 1908 sales reached 750,000. Journalists who wrote for *Everybody’s Magazine* included Upton Sinclair and Ambrose Bearce. Though sales fell after First World War, as the magazine became embroiled in disputes over American involvement in the war, during the time of Eastman’s publication, the magazine was still circulating to an audience of 500,000 of the urban educated elite.

people's troubles. But his piece goes beyond description or even argumentation to make a case for psychoanalysis. Eastman uses a personal rhetoric and, as if he were writing an advertisement, speaks to his audience in the second person, "Are you worried?...Have you lost confidence in yourself?"... "Do you suffer from headaches, nausea, neuralgia..?" (741). He relays stories of miraculous successes, a woman whose pain finally subsides after realizing her secret feelings toward her brother-in-law, or the relief of a man's fainting spells once he acknowledged recurrent feelings of a lost love. Eastman speaks directly to the suffering souls of the lost and alienated elite.

Given the popularity of psychoanalysis among the urban elite, its aesthetic of spontaneity also took hold. Spontaneity was a sign of freedom of expression. For women who had felt constricted by Victorian rules of propriety, psychoanalysis provided a way to safely allow repressed memories and unconscious feelings and desires to come into consciousness.

According to historian Mary Buhle (1998), psychoanalysis flourished by virtue of its articulation with antimodern sentiments and also its alignment with the growing feminist movement at that time. Psychoanalysis was a "natural ally" (1998:12) with feminism, which at the beginning was "an inner revolution before it [was] an outer revolt, subjective before objective" (1998:12). Emma Goldman, the famous anarchist and "free lover" had heard Freud speak in Vienna in the 1890s, and encouraged Freud to speak about the need for the sexual freedom of women. Goldman and Freud declared the potential for psychoanalysis to liberate repressed libidinal impulses. Though Freudian

theory would eventually be despised by feminists for its misrepresentation of female desire, at the turn of the century, it was a discourse of freedom for educated women in city settings and universities away from the domination of their Victorian families, and one eventually incorporated into aesthetic practices like Authentic Movement.

Aesthetics of Dress

Just as the popular health movement and psychoanalysis promoted the emancipation of middle-class women, the dress reform movement was also a very vocal and prominent discourse of freedom for upper-middle-class women and influenced the aesthetics of living through the 20th century. Early modern dancers, for instance, were either dress reformers themselves or greatly influenced by the dress reformers. According to B.A. Flower (2000[1891]:274), the International Council of Women took up the subject of dress reform “with a firm determination to accomplish a revolution which shall mean health and happiness to the oncoming generation.” Dress reform, these women wholeheartedly believed, was necessary to “save the race” (2000[1891]:281). According to Mrs. Abba Woolson, one of the attendees of the International Council, the “disease producing skirts” (2000[1891]:275) as she called them, were a burden to women and caused a wide variety of physical ailments. The binding at the waist caused women’s organs to be compressed into one another wherein “every vital organ is either functionally obstructed or mechanically disordered” (2000[1891]:280). Doctors discovered that women’s livers were dented from pressure of the corset on the ribs. The

tightness also interrupted circulation, constricted breathing, and shortened women's lifespan (2000[1891]:280).

Do what we will with them, they still add enormously to the weight of clothing, prevent cleanliness of attire about the ankles, overheat by their tops the lower portion of the body, impede locomotion, and invite accidents...uncomfortable, unhealthy, unsafe, and unmanageable...women can't compete with men, not because they can't compete but because they are in corsets and long skirts [2000[1891]:275].

Women had to wear up to 16 layers of clothing including binding around the waist, drawers, underskirts, balmoral, dress-skirt, over-skirt, dress-waist, and belt (Ross 2000:36). An eighteen inch waist, unattainable except through physical constriction, was the ideal size from the 1820s to end of 19th century, causing a number of internal disorders. Adherence to fashion was a clear cause of ill health.

Yet, in addition to improving women's physical health, dress reform was also about freeing women's desires. Miss Francis Willard called for dress reform, claiming that long and tight dresses prevented women from being able to "run wild" in the fields and pastures (Flower 2000 [1891]: 276), (though, of course, "running wild" was exactly what the long dresses were made to prevent). Dress reformers responded that freeing women would allow them to achieve spiritual heights not moral decadence.

Anything is ethically destructive which chains the mind to the realm of animality, when, unfettered, it should be unfolding in spiritual strength and glory [2000(1891):284].

The dress reformers espoused the view that wherever "an article of clothing causes physical distress or throws the body out of equilibrium like high heels do," or "makes the mind ever conscious of the body by virtue of its comfortableness," it is harmful to women physically and ethically (2000[1891]:284). They took a strong stance that it was for

women alone to decide what they would wear (2000[1891]:286), and that girls should be educated to think of health before fashion (2000[1891]:287). This aesthetic ideal continues in modern dance and in Authentic Movement where the ability to move freely without constriction is an essential way of finding the authentic self.

Self-Expression and Health Culture Movements and Feminism

The dress reform movement was closely aligned with and greatly influenced other feminist movements in the late 19th century, including physical education for women. Both dress reformers and dance educators shared the goals of health and freedom of women. Both also asserted that the most effective way to free the self was by freeing women's bodies from illogical and harmful restrictions. However, given this controversial agenda, "the dancing female body became a battleground for cultural anxieties about public morality" (Ross 2000: x). Concerns over bodily comportment were more than issues about the natural order or the way women are supposed to behave; they represented struggles over power and control (Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1987: 237). The dancing female body was a disruption to the body politic.

In this regard, educators argued over what type of dance would be taught and how much freedom of movement should be allowed for women. Concerned about the public display of female bodies, these educators published a series of dance manuals discussing what it means to be a lady and how to represent themselves as proper moral women in dance. Interestingly, it was former dancers who were mostly concerned about the dangers of social dance. Dance, they wrote, could be too revealing of emotion and also too arousing. T.A. Faulkner (in Ross 2000: 45), who wrote a pamphlet entitled "From

Ballroom to Hell,” claimed that if women were allowed to dance, “the next thing they will do is sin.” G. Stanley Hall, educational psychologist and evolutionary theorist, was similarly concerned about women’s uncontrollable instincts, but believed that physical education could be manipulated to help women to gain power over these forces. He wrote in 1911 that “although it may be a highly technical art, dancing is best conceived as an originally spontaneous muscular expression of internal states, primarily not with the purpose of imparting, but for the pleasure of expressing them” (Ruyter 1979:97). Fears that dancing will unleash unacceptable instinctual desires persist. Well-known are the strong sentiments espoused about “Elvis the Pelvis” in the 1960s, but even in Authentic Movement which promotes free expression, fears that free improvisation might let loose overwhelming thoughts or feelings reveal the persist concerns about psychological safety of dance.

Along with the fear-inducing discourses of Hall and others, many educators promoted the idea that graceful physical activity was an efficient means to the development of healthy body and moral character. For example, Thomas Wentworth Higginson published an article in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1861, espousing the theory that physical activity would be a useful means of sublimating primitive and instinctual desires (Ross 2000:58). Therefore, rather than fear the release of the passions, dance was a way to properly channel passion and desire. The instincts did not have to be suppressed, merely directed toward something positive. Along these lines, James Whorton developed system of gymnastics for “delicate” teenage girls for the purpose of advancing healthy motherhood (2000:58). This practice was known as “muscular morality.” The

introduction of physical education for women in its early stages, therefore, melded easily with maintaining women's roles in the domestic sphere. Like the artisan and health movements, physical education did not change the structure of society, but gave people an oasis or temporary means of improving the struggles of daily life. In particular, two movements in dance education, Delsarte Training and the growth of dance in higher education, the former developed in studios and living rooms of the urban elite, the other in universities, had far-reaching influence in bringing the discourse of dance as a means of self-expression and freedom to white middle- and upper-class women throughout the U.S.

American Delsartism refers to the lessons in elocution and self-presentation that were very popular among upper-class women and children in urban centers in the United States around the late 19th century. American Delsartism, like other antimodernist practices, explicitly advocates a romantic return to “natural expression” over the “artificial repression” (Bishop 1901:29) of modern life. According to Emily Montague Bishop (1901:23), “self-expression and health culture seeks first to emancipate people from the bondage of wrong habits, from influence of heredity, and from the effects of one-sided education.” She assailed the harmful effects of over-civilization on the body, claiming that “all our sufferings and sins are due to lack of poise-physical, mental or spiritual” (1901:53). “Overrought, nervous Americans have a special need to learn the ‘gospel of relaxation’” (1901:60).

Francois Delsarte, for whom the practice is named, was a music and drama teacher in France during the mid-1880s. He invented an “elaborate and mystical science

of aesthetics” (Ruyter 1999:17) and developed exercises for voice and body as a reaction against what he saw as “artificial and stilted” styles of acting and singing. According to the Delsarte doctrine, man has three natures—vital, mental, and moral—that are represented by different movements in space. Whereas gymnastics deals only with straightline movements related only to the physical aspect of the self, Delsarte trained women to move with curving lines of strong maternal goddess figures or objects from nature such as flowing vines (Burns 1996). The ideal style of movement, suitably, embodied an implicit antimodern aesthetic and morality. Delsarte thought that his training would not only enhance the performances of actors and musicians but, more significantly, would be good for society as a whole. In 1839, he gave a series of lectures on applied aesthetics for performers and became an acclaimed teacher throughout Europe. He died in Paris in 1871 but students carried on his work, including Steele Mackaye, who brought the Delsarte system to America (Ruyter 1999).

Delsarte artists performed in lecture halls, church basements and school auditoriums (Burns 1996:203)—the neighborhood venues where self-enhancement practices including Authentic Movement workshops take place. Though most scholarship on Delsarte looks to its influence on high art modern dance, mostly of its early influence was in upper class and popular middle-class culture (1996:204). Delsarte training went along with the health cures at the turn of the century which were “the rage,” and was also aligned with other self-improvement practices for upper-middle-class women.

Henrietta Hovey, a student of Mackaye, was the first American Delsartean to introduce the system and practice into “society” (Ruyter 1999: xix). She popularized the

form in America, first teaching Delsarte in wealthy society circles, from the Vanderbilts in Newport, Rhode Island to the Los Angeles “set”, teaching “ladies with the leisure and money to enjoy the finer things in life (1999:43), specifically, how to walk, how to sit...how to rest—in short, “the training of personality to its best” (1999:40). As noted in *New York World*, a popular newspaper at the turn of the century, the recognition of Delsarte among the rich was notable.

Newport has gone daft over Delsarte...Henrietta...came, saw, conquered...The choicest cullings from the smart set meet twice a week to writhe, bend and sway; to relax and decompose...to form spiral curves and make corkscrews of themselves...not only learn how to bow and smile...but how to fall gracefully” [Ruyter 1999:39].

The audience for American Delsartism, as lessons in self-presentation, was mostly women and female children. Women were predominant consumers of health and rest cures, and due to their concerns about the negative effects of overcivilization, saw health as their legitimate domain. Quoting Julie and Ann Thomas, two students of Delsarte, Burns notes that “women are the natural disciples of the “Gospel of Health” (1996: 213). Delsarte training was also associated with artists and mystics (in combination with the upper-middle-class women, this mirrors the demography of Authentic Movement groups). For example, Edmund Russell, the poet known as the “high priest of the social set” (Ruyter 1999:34), used Delsarte in his teachings and performances. Genevieve Stebbins writes “my best results have been attained when I, a passive subject, obeyed an inner inspiration coming from whence I know not and urging me on to results I had not aimed at....[much like] experience of great artists” (1999:37). She was closely associated with the Brotherhood of Light, an order of practical occultism. The Delsarte aesthetic

also had a strong influence on Ted Shawn and Isadora Duncan, two important figures in early modern dance, with their blend of art and spirituality.

Though Delsarte provided a concrete means for women to literally and metaphorically have more freedom of movement in their lives, Delsarte performance, like other antimodernist practices, did not make substantive social change in women's lives. Delsarte was merely a method for middle-class women to learn deportment (Burns 1996: 216) and accordingly, constrained such women within roles that fit in with, but did not challenge, genteel values. Burns notes that Delsarte was one way of replacing one rigid system with another. Like middle-class antimodernism, in general, the system had more in common with that which it chose to fight against. Recalling Brooks's typification of the hypocritical bohemian bourgeois, teacher and author Elizabeth Bishop's contention that Delsarte would release women from the negative effects of civilization betrayed its implicit complicity with middle-class bourgeois capitalist enterprise: "All time and money spent in training the voice and the body is an investment that pays a larger interest than any other" (Bishop 1901: 11). Delsarte was infused with Calvinist values, expressed in the teaching that "languid and lackadaisical airs do not constitute grace (1901:32)" but "getting the most and the best for the amount expended" (Burns 1996:213) is grace. Henrietta and Edmund Russell, two prominent members of the arts and crafts movement, correspondingly embedded the practice in consumerist sensibilities. They made women into "theatrical settings," (Ruyter 1996:218) writing about "Expression in Jewelry" and "Expression through Bronze" in popular magazines. They preached self-as-art object through dress, personal ornament, household decoration, Eastern philosophy, and good

literature (1996:218), so that the three natures of man translated into knowing which clothing colors should match hair color and in general, which particular styles fit with particular body types. According to Burns (1996:213), artistic life could be cultivated but also purchased. Delsarte in many ways was also another oasis regime that was not really revolutionary but a way to appease the unsatisfied middle-class. Delsarte provided freedom within the system—it did not provide freedom for all women, but freedom and social mobility for middle-class women, and was thus clearly a bourgeois movement.

By associating “grace” with health and moral fortitude, a particular habitus of the upper-class became a legitimized ideal of middle-class behavior. Delsartism, as it looked to the past, comprised a set of principles where the middle-class could be taught how to achieve upward mobility and also personal salvation. Delsarte was also a discourse, transmitted through word and body, that solidified the middle-class social networks in which it circulated, thus, providing a set of connections through which other self-enhancement practices could also flow.

Typical of the American spirit of individual enterprise, the acceleration of physical education and dance education for women came about as a result of the individual efforts of a number of women. Clara Ballard, Blanche Trilling, and Margaret H'Doubler, among others, established dance programs at the University of Wisconsin that like Delsarte would stimulate the proliferation of dance practices for self-improvement throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries.

In 1876, Clara Ballard taught the first class “physical culture for ladies” at the University of Wisconsin by persuading the Board of Regents to allow her space in

Ladies' Hall to conduct voluntary classes in "physical culture" (Ross 2000: 84). Her story is indicative of how women in American dance used creativity and resourcefulness to break new ground in dance education. For instance, because Ballard was not officially affiliated with the university, she was required to provide all of her own equipment. She received no salary, but she did charge students a fee to participate. Her classes consisted mainly of gymnastics and calisthenic exercises, usually performed to live piano accompaniment. Ballard shared her room with other music classes, so she had to move equipment and furniture at the beginning and end of each session. She was the quintessential entrepreneur, exploring and conquering new territory and new social environments.⁴⁶

Her efforts paid off, and by 1894 physical education became a required class for graduation at Wisconsin. In 1914, the Department for the Physical Education of Women was established. Blanche Trilling directed the department and hired teachers including Abby Shaw Mayhew from Wellesley. Mayhew expanded the repertoire of studies in physical education to include other genres of movement education, including Delsarte training and dance in the Greek aesthetic form. She organized festivals and fetes where women danced around the grass fields in light long flowing dresses. Dance historian Janice Ross notes that the popularity of fetes and festivals at that time evidenced the trend

⁴⁶ The challenges she faced working at the University remind me of the challenges that many artists and dancers face in therapeutic settings, having to locate or even clear spaces in hospital or clinical settings appropriate for a dance class, find patients, and educate other clinicians on the practice and benefits of their work.

away from modernity and a look toward the past.⁴⁷ The dances revealed “a pervasive primitivist yearning of the time, a yearning whose fulfillment would also help significantly to shape dance in academia” (2000:86). Quoting Joan Acocella and David Freedburg from their book *Dancers*, Ross notes the “primitivist” impulse inherent in early modern dance:

When modern dance was born at the end of the nineteenth century, it arose from the primitivist impulse so widespread at that time: the urge to heal the split that the modern world was thought to have created between nature and the human soul. Consequently, a primary article of faith for the creators of modern dance--and a principle reinforced by the example by the ancient societies that, as primitivists, these dancers took as their models--was contact with nature. They imagined themselves outdoors [2000:86].

Photographs capture scenes of women in loose clothing outside moving around a maypole, with ribbons, posing as Greek statues. The pictures look idyllic, though as Ross notes, close-up photographs betray a multiplicity of sentiments about these antimodernist fetes. Many of the women in the photographs look embarrassed, she mentions, revealing women’s persistent ambivalence about dance (2000:87). Nevertheless, Trilling’s department of physical education was so popular in the early 1900s that Wisconsin alumni constructed a women’s hall, the architecture of which is very revealing of the philosophy and aesthetic of self-expression underlying physical education at the University of Wisconsin.

⁴⁷ According to Trentmann (1994), European antimodernism in the arts also flourished, intensified through contact with foreign folklore groups. They were embarrassed by the “mechanized stiffness of their attempts to recreate agricultural ceremonies and the unconscious spontaneity which they perceived among ‘real’ peasants performing ‘real’ folk- dances” (1994:600). They therefore developed a new aesthetic standard where they would bring back the “vigour, vitality and unconsciousness into the English folk-dance” (1994:600). Though many people critiqued and feared the return of spontaneity, the “Zivilisationskritik” movement promoted the idea that spontaneity and unconsciousness needed to be freed and developed, not curbed and controlled.

Architecturally, Lathrop Hall is not an environment that invites looking out; rather, its whole ambience focuses on interiors on many levels: personally, here is where women are asked to explore their emotional resources through dance; physically, here is where women increase their aerobic and cardiovascular endurance; and psychologically, this is a place where the linkage of the mind, the body, and the emotions is explored. Its windows are small and placed high and deep within the cement facade. Inside, in nearly windowless settings, one finds customarily outdoor facilities...pool, track. It feels like a safe, private, and indeed almost invisible site from which women could challenge conventions and discover physical pleasures of activity [2000:93–95].

Physical education, from this perspective, was a time and place for private and personal exploration, where women could safely take pleasure in bodily activity, a sensibility embodied in Authentic Movement as well.

Trilling decided to incorporate more dance into the program and thus, hired Margaret H'Doubler, a woman whose work would more fully incorporate the antimodernist aesthetic of free self-expression. Margaret H'Doubler established the first university courses and the first degree program in dance in the United States, but it was her philosophy of dance, to use dance to “explore, cherish, and mold the self through the body” (2000:xi), that would have the most impact on the future use of dance practices for self-improvement.

Margaret H'Doubler, as so many of the women who would teach dance as a means of self-empowerment or self-improvement, bridged the worlds of dance and philosophy and psychology. H'Doubler went to Columbia Teachers College to study philosophy and aesthetics, and then became involved in physical education. There she met philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey, who professed that learning happened through sensorial experience and play rather than cognitive reflection. Dewey

believed that it was important to utilize each child's natural impulse for expression (120). Deeply inspired by his work, H'Doubler sought a dance "unencumbered as possible by personal style and fixed vocabularies" (2000:115). She disliked ballet, considering it merely miming, and thought other teachers in New York were teaching dance in the same "doctinaire" manner (2000:115). She therefore sought out dance that would be the antithesis of pantomime and performance-oriented dance.

H'Doubler came upon a music teacher for children named Alys Bentley. Bentley's teaching style involved having each child sing their own made up song rather than learning set melodies and lyrics. Classes would begin with all the children lying down on the floor, to get them to relax. Then she would allow them to explore and play. H'Doubler found what she was looking for and created a structure for improvisation that would be replicated for many years.

I said of course! Get on the floor where we are relieved from the pull of gravity, no balance—I had anatomy and all these things before I went to her. Where you could work out and see what the structure response to a change of position in movement. Why it was like a quick flash. I got so excited [2000:119]

Following Dewey and Bentley, H'Doubler made it her goal to give students means for own sensorial exploration through movement. She believed it was only following experience that her students could find meaning in the dance. She also believed that how you feel is more important than how you look, and that you should always talk about your experiences. Dance should be sensorially immediate and then later you could reflect upon it. As apparent in the integration of narrative and dance in Authentic Movement, her work had ramifications for future work in creative dance.

Like her predecessors at Wisconsin, H'Doubler's dance classes took place in conjunction with physical education and women's health courses, and gave dance performance a kinesthetic rather than visual focus. She took students outdoors to be in "harmony with nature" (2000:147), like the earlier teachers. In fact, all the pictures of the dances are taken of women in fields of grass, or dancing around trees, or by a lake. However, she also added an academic dimension to her curriculum. She taught a lot of anatomy, looking at skeletons to see the possibilities of movement. Foreshadowing the expressionist and modernist aesthetics, she taught students to lie on their backs and explore different movements at joints to see how different movements affect different parts of the body. She saw dance not as a visual art but as a way to enhance kinesthetic awareness. She never asked students to mimic her, but rather used her body as a cue from which they could form their own responses (2000:150). A student of H' Doubler describes her classes in the following way:

I was at first shocked and annoyed to have to stop, think, explore and dance without a model to watch...But the pleasure and relief of being able to put my concentration into my own rendering of a dance movement rather than an exact copy of someone else's movement gradually pulled me into the intricacies of Margaret H'Doubler's environment for learning [2000:151].

Her classes were oriented toward development of kinesthetic awareness. The student continues:

The kinesthetic sense soon made it as important to me as my eyesight...the kinesthetic data from the proprioceptors in our muscles, tendons and joints told us the intensity, duration, location, direction and amplitude of our energy release...we learned to analyze and describe motor response [2000:158].

Like the authentic movement classes that Mary Whitehouse would develop decades later, classes always ended with a verbal discussion of what had transpired. Similarly, the verbal sharing was more reflection on the events rather than aesthetic judgments on the dances. The goal of her class was to use dance as a means to grow as individuals not as theatrical performers. H'Doubler's career in many ways validated the discourse that practice of dance could be about the "real person" and her emotions, not about performing roles.

Sources of Authentic Movement in the Antimodern–modern Aesthetic in Modern Dance

Dance studios, living rooms, and analytic couches were prime cultural centers of the urban elite at the turn of the 20th century where young women like Mary Whitehouse refined their antimodern sensibilities of introspection, sensuality, curiosity, and spontaneity. These venues were the social and cultural spaces where young women developed a habitus (Bourdieu 1977), learning how to breath, how to walk, how to stand, how to dance, and how to reflect upon their bodily experiences as narratives of self-realization. As Janice Ross (2007:xiv), quoting Susan Foster, explains, the early modern dancers "constructed of the stage a space where the self might unfold rather than a place where the self was depicted...they argued for an alignment of all dance practice with the natural." Drawing upon discourses of interiority to link body and mind, heart and soul, sense and sensibility, these women "exalted" the search for authenticity as an end in itself

(Lears 1994). The early *modern* dancers were, rightly deemed, descendents of their antimodernist predecessors in work reform, physical culture, health reform, psychoanalysis, dress reform, and dance education—opening a space for the performance of the authentic self.

Mary Whitehouse, the originator of Authentic Movement, was what some historians might call the quintessential antimodernist, the seeker of self-knowledge and “intense” experience. As described in chapter two, Mary was born in 1911 and grew up in New England in a middle-class family. She graduated Wellesley College in 1933 with a dual major in dance and journalism. Though her education would give her more freedom and economic security than most, like so many urban educated women dealing with rapid social, economic, and political changes at the turn of the 20th century, Mary Whitehouse actively searched for meaning in her life. Modern dance would answer her calling. She studied first with Mary Wigman in Germany and danced later with Martha Graham before setting up her own studio. Whitehouse, in the tradition of her mentors Wigman and Graham, and their predecessors Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis, Delsarte and D’Houbler, spread what Benedict Anderson calls a modern–antimodern aesthetic (Jessup 2001) in the arts.⁴⁸

Isadora Duncan, the most famous “mother” of early modern dance, was a major catalyst for the dissemination of antimodern discourses to the white urban elite. Duncan was popular at a time in American history when the urban elite, especially women, were

⁴⁸ Modern Dance embodied what Benedict Anderson calls a Modern-antimodernism in the arts, dealing with modernity not by rejecting it, but by moderating it through inclusion of pre-modern "physical and psychological zones of retreat" (Jessup: 2001:6).

looking for outlets and creative venues to heal themselves from the ennui and alienation of modern life. Following Delsarte's grand entrance into the social world of the urban elite, Duncan became a symbol and icon of feminist desires of upper-class women to free their bodies and their minds of societal restriction (Reed 1988; Ruyter 1979, 1999).

Isadora promoted what she called "pure art" as a way to heal society and save women from what she and her fellow antimodernists saw as civilization's suffocating rules and prescriptions and distance from nature (Manning 1993: 16).

...listen to the music within your soul... now while listening, do you not feel an inner self awakening deep within you...this awakening is the first step in the dance [Adler 2007[2003]: 27].

Duncan's art and life were singlemindedly directed toward the antimodernist quest for self-realization and her dances embodied the new modern-antimodern aesthetic of moving toward the future by embracing the past (combining new and old). Rejecting the aesthetic of ballet, her dances drew attention to physical and sensual qualities of body movement rather than to a story or abstract idea. Duncan danced in loose-fitting ethereal gowns with bare feet, freely moving her body with sensual flowing motion. Stage dance, she claimed, was too unnatural and silly. She fought against the authority of ballet which she saw as the epitome of this disharmony. Ballet to Duncan was sterile and unnatural in its striving against the natural laws of gravity. The real source of dance, Duncan said, was in nature, in the waves, the wind and of the earth. Constriction, on the other hand, was a loss of power and diminishing of one's own personal agency. Isadora claimed the new expressive dance to be closer to nature and primitive man. "Movements of the savage...were unrestricted, natural and beautiful (Duncan 1983[1902]). As Duncan

dramatically maintains, “It is only when you put free animals under false restrictions that they lose the power of moving in harmony with nature and adopt a movement expressive of the restrictions placed about them. So it has been with civilized man” (Ruyter 1979: 50).

Duncan traveled around the world and mingled with artists and intellectuals. She talked a great deal of her alignment with Nietzsche, and was inspired by his assertion that “there is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom” (1979:49). She also liked the sensual spirituality of Walt Whitman and his glorification of the “body electric” (1979:44). Duncan spread what would become the new age glorification of the body with lofty rhetoric, a discourse of authenticity that would remain in dance performance and education.

She shall dance the freedom of women... Do you not feel that she is near, that she is coming, this dancer of the future!...She will help womankind to a new knowledge of the possible strength and beauty of their bodies...She will dance the body emerging again from centuries of civilized forgetfulness...she is coming the dancer of the future: the free spirit, who will inhabit the body of the new woman; more glorious than any woman that has yet been; more beautiful than the Egyptian, Greek, the early Italian, than all the women of the past centuries—the highest intelligence in the freest body! [1979:45]

Many elements of Duncan’s style of dance had a great influence on the aesthetics of modern and post-modern dance. For example, Isadora taught her dancers the value and aesthetic of spontaneity, and to look “within” for the source of inspiration to move. Breaking with traditional ballet and stage dance, Duncan also had a vision of dance as independent of music, costume and story; she advanced an aesthetic of the “pure art of

bodily movement”⁴⁹ (Manning 1993:16). Dance for Duncan was an independent of other forms of expression, and did not require music or art to give it form or meaning. She maintained that dance speaks for itself, “If I can tell you what I meant, then there would be no point in dancing it, ” (Farnell 2001:149). This was an ideology of dance that had great influence in the formation of practices like Authentic Movement whose goal it would be to find the most pure form of communication in dance.

Ruth St. Denis was another icon of the dance world and important source of dissemination of the discourse of dance as an expression of self. St. Denis became the “mother of American Art Dance” (Kendall 1979), because she refused to be a typical art dancer. Her own heroes were not ballerinas, but women reformers, aesthetic lecturers, and pioneer women doctors of the nineteenth century, all dedicated to improving the conditions of womens’ lives.

Whereas Isadora Duncan’s dances embodied antimodernist ideals of freedom, St. Denis embodied antimodernist longings to embrace spirituality, as she believed was found in foreign cultures. The Denishawn company, formed with her husband Ted Shawn, was the first truly popular touring company of the “pseudo-Oriental, American Indian, Far Eastern” dance style (Horosko 2002: 2). Produced at a time when “colored” people were put in costume on displays in World Expositions (di Leonardo 1998:8) and when “oriental” women were displayed as images of exotic beauty in popular journals (1998:8), the company projected images of the “other” as representations of authentic sensuality

⁴⁹ Hence, the “movement” in Authentic Movement.

and spirituality. Of Japanese dance art she said, “For the first time, I beheld and understood the beautiful austerities of Japanese art...filled my soul with such a longing for the subtle and elusive in art that it became my chief ambition as an artist” (Ruyter 1979:60). Her dance expressed a longing that energized middle-class audiences (1979:63–64).

The next generation of modern dancers in the United States, many of whom were students or audiences of St. Denis, were influenced by the wave of new philosophies and practices coming from Europe, namely, psychoanalysis, existentialism, and expressionism, where dance was perceived to be a means of externalizing internal feelings and passions. Dance was not only an expression of nature or the divine, but an expression of the internal psyche. Taking this discourse of interiority very seriously, Martha Graham, a Denishawn dancer, rekindled Duncan’s focus on the inner self. Her technique focused on the breath as the source and center of movement, giving greater emphasis to the kinesthetic feel of one’s body “from the inside” rather than only imagining the projection of movement in space “from the outside.” Her dance technique embodied the idea that the authentic self was something to be felt internally as well. According to Helen McGhee, a student of Graham, Graham taught that dancing “should be a source of commanding a deep, inner energy” (Horosko 2002:59). Meaningless movement is one that lacks concentration (2002:59).

Yet, going inward and breaking with tradition did not exclude the continued attraction to “the other.” Graham, for instance, simultaneously sustained a constant passion for experimentation with the new and a fascination with the past, as she believed

was expressed in authentic primitive art. Her dance “Primitive Mysteries”, for example, though breaking new ground in modern dance, was inspired by her observance of Spanish-Indian ceremonies of the Southwest. According to Susan Hiller (Burt 1998:166), the use of ethnographic material was immanent within modernism, paradoxically using the “primitive” as a way to break from the past. “Martha would often say ‘Don’t say I invented a school of movement. I only rediscovered what the human body can do’” (Horosko 2002:21). Similar to the logic of other antimodern discourses, Graham legitimizes her work by asserting that the dances one is making are not created but discovered.

Mary Wigman is the other key modern dancer whose voice continues to resonate throughout the Authentic Community. Similar to her American counterparts, modern dance for Wigman was a “dance of expression” (Manning 1993:1), but current insights into the political and social context of the Wigman school of dance may reveal some contradictions between the myth and reality of the meaning of freedom in expressive dance not only in Germany, but in modern dance in general.

What I find most telling about the assimilation of Wigman’s work into American modern dance is the utter lack of acknowledgement of the historical setting of Wigman’s company, at least in the Authentic Movement community. According to dance historian Sarah Fraleigh (1987), early modern dance was about creating self and promoting individuality. Modern Dance emphasized creativity and opposed pre-established, normative or idealized movement forms (1987: xxxiv). Paraphrasing Wigman, Fraleigh notes that modern dance of the German tradition “was a means toward self-

knowledge...not a disclosure of personality but a construction of it, not self-expression as self-indulgence but a creation of self in expressive action that moves one beyond the confines of the self” (1987: xxii). Many dancers working in the German tradition of Modern Dance looked toward existential philosophy and depth psychology for insight into the self-creating processes in dance, or possibly to find a language with which to speak of the body experience. However, in all this writing, there is no mention of the historical context of Wigman’s concept of expressive dance. Similarly, while Whitehouse tells of the important influence of Wigman on Whitehouse’s work, she gives few details of her time in Germany. Her work at the Wigman Central Institute in Dresden in 1936 where she obtained a professional diploma is mentioned repeatedly in Whitehouse’s own writings and in essays and stories about Whitehouse. However, no one mentions anything about what was taking place in Germany in 1936⁵⁰ nor how the surrounding context was dealt with at the Wigman school.

In Germany, Whitehouse was part of what was called Ausdruckstanz “Absolute Dance”—an aesthetic movement in Germany led by Rudof Laban and Mary Wigman under the authority of the Ministry of Culture led by Joseph Goebbels (Manning 1993:3). Ausdruckstanz comprised Wigman’s own private network of dancers but also became a movement that was very popular with the masses in Germany. Like Duncan, Wigman conceptualized dance as an autonomous language and self-reflexive art. Dance, they

⁵⁰ This is very typical of what I found in my research. Whitehouse and her protégés tend to essentialize and universalize the “power” of dance without taking into account the social and political circumstances in which they were working. The history of modern dance is usually written as the individual woman choreographing her own dance but modern dancers also universalized and essentialized female dance, assuming that all women shared similar attitudes and experiences as women (Manning 1993).

asserted, should not be dependent on music, costume, or words but, as the avant-garde espoused, try to breakdown boundary between art and life (1993:20). Wigman promoted improvisational methods, breaking down the distance between professional and amateur dancers, something that Whitehouse would eventually do in her own work in the United States as well. Also similar to Delsarte trainings in self-presentation for the urban upper-class, Wigman's dancers worked in non-dance settings. In Germany, this included church groups, unions, political parties, and sometimes included gymnastics classes. But unlike her American counterparts, Wigman had to teach in a context where the government was directly involved in her daily routine. The Nationalist Socialists oversaw the work of dance teachers and though the Nazis supported these efforts they required that students follow certain rules. Students had to prove their Aryan origin, they had to demonstrate familiarity with National Socialist Ideology, and finally, the school had to teach German dance forms, classical dance forms, and folk dance forms as part of a program to "nationalize" a German social body (1993:192). Wigman, who promoted a discourse of expressive dance, had to organize her curriculum in accord with this policy. This allowed the school to receive patronage for teaching but required them to produce performances for the Reich. This directive narrowed the scope of improvisation and "pointed toward a codified vocabulary for Ausdruckstanz" (1993:203), ex. walking patterns, running patterns, triplet patterns, spinning, jumping, swinging.

It is not clear how much Wigman truly adapted her practice to meet the requirements of the Ministry, but again it is telling that we cannot answer this question

because her students did not really speak about this. Mary Whitehouse, for instance, never mentions the Ministry. According to Manning (1993), oral histories question whether Wigman actually followed these rules in her classes.⁵¹ Wigman had permission to enroll some Jewish students in her school, though some have stated she did this because she needed the extra tuition. Also mentioned is that German teachers of the ministry's ideology did teach at the school, but how much students listened or believed them is not clear. No folk dance was taught. According to Gundel Eplinius, a student at the school, Wigman only superficially conformed to the directive, the ideology classes did not enter the dance class, and the school was international. Manning (1993:205) confirmed this with other documents and oral histories. The Culture Ministry did make Wigman rename Ausdruckstanz "German Dance," though this also does not prove that she modified her teaching philosophy. Nevertheless, that this shadowy past is missing from the written and oral history of Authentic Movement, even as a "would you believe?" or "isn't it interesting that Whitehouse was in Germany at the time...?" is noteworthy. And what the story of Ausdruckstanz, as well as antimodernist-modernist movements shows, in general, is that they opened spaces for personal expression for only a select group of people. This is not to say that the exclusiveness of the form was purposeful. In fact, this was explicitly *not* the case. What I do argue is that by virtue of the social networks through which the discourse flows, and by virtue of the discourse itself, which resonates

⁵¹Note that dance therapists in a similar way are secretly known for speaking a biomedical language when talking or writing about their work, and "doing dance" in the privacy of a dance therapy session.

with a self-selecting group of people, its application is narrowed to a limited group of people. It is not universally meaningful as it purports to be.

Expressive and modern dance grew in importance in the arts communities throughout the 1950s and 1960s, embracing the new aesthetic that Daniel Belgrad (1998) calls a culture of spontaneity. Spontaneity, so valued in Authentic Movement, was an aesthetic ideal and considered to be a revelation of authentic expression in all arts modalities. For example, Charles Olson, like Mary Whitehouse a follower of Carl Jung, developed a technique of writing poetry that promoted spontaneity as the essential element of authentic poetry. “Don’t stop to think of a word,” he commanded, instructing students to “trust the unconscious leanings of the mind and ear in collaboration, letting the syllables flow automatically and accepting an unconscious sense of their fitness” (Belgrad 1998: 29). Like artists in dance improvisation, Beat poets focused more on process than content, in particular, the prosodic rather than referential aspects of speech. Prosody is where the where meaning is which is associated with presence and “authentic” immediate face to face contact (1998:153). Dancers such as Anna Halperin found inspiration in immediacy, spontaneous and “nonvirtuosic” (Ross 2007: 124) art. Her dance technique of following her impulses corresponded to Kerouac’s spontaneous writing and John Cage’s experiments with chance procedure. Jacob Moreno created theatre that promoted the aesthetic of spontaneity. Written plays, he said, “were artifacts of a past culture that inhibited genuine self-expression” (Anderson 2004: 80). Avante-garde artists placed more value on action or experience for their own sake (Belgrad 1998: 67) in opposition to high art.

Avante-garde artists and modern dancers are no longer the authoritative voices in the arts world. While spontaneity and immediacy are still tools for artists, choreographers, and directors, interiority and self-expression do not have the gravitas or semiotic force they once did. Artists accept such creative encounters as random events where meaning is arbitrarily placed on such random events. Yet, the aesthetic of spontaneity as meaningful expression still finds inroads in new age, arts therapies community, and in the consumer economy.

Conclusion

Authentic Movement, thus, has definitive historic roots in antimodernist movements of the 19th and 20th centuries and in the world of modern dance. Authentic Movement calls on various ideologies of interiority in its quest to explore the inner self. The community also has direct links to traditions in rest and mind cures, arts and crafts movements, and discourses of freedom of the use of the body. This foundation is never more evident, ironically, in how the Authentic Movement community itself narrates its own history. As antimodern-modernists, this community of dancers sees their dance as a return to the true core of the dance experience, rediscovered from a time immemorial.

Dance is an ancient symbol of physical, spiritual, and social expression. It has always given shape to the personal and collective events of a lifetime and of a culture. (Adler 1999[1976]: 132)

Adler envisions Authentic Movement as a restoration of a more natural “primitive” aesthetic they believe corresponds to a more authentic way of life. Mary Whitehouse similarly reveals one of student’s images of Authentic Movement as “dancing the music

of the primitive peoples” (1998[1958]:45). The mythic fantasy that dance “always was and will be” explicitly performs an orientalism that Michaela di Leonardo (1998) also describes as ethnological antimodernism, an escape from the over-civilizing effects of modernity through engagement in the lives of the other (1998:2–3). Yet, unmasking the underlying orientalist ideology as misguided “othering” does not fully deal with the implications of the strong emotional commitment to these invented projections. The nostalgia and romanticism for an imaginary past have real consequences in the Authentic Movement community. “Illusion or not, separate is how we feel...thus we long to belong again to the “earthbody” (Adler 1999[1996]:190-191). Adler’s words resonate with her audience—and it is by virtue of linking this mythic vision with ideologies of authenticity that authenticates Authentic Movement as a performance of authenticity. And therefore, it is the artfulness and emotional immediacy with which these dancers and guides who communicate and perpetuate the antimodernist aesthetic that are the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Speaking and Sensing the Self in Authentic Movement: Performances of Authenticity

The following performance analysis will show how Authentic Movement deploys a variety of creative resources to construct an experience of authenticity. I will show how the leader projects authority yet reinforces the ideals of self-determination and independence necessary for experiencing the authentic self. I will also show how the establishment of mood of mystery, uncertainty, and possibility through transformations in the perceptions of space, movement, time, sound, and language opens possibilities for self-transformation. I use the term subjunctivizing to describe semiotic techniques that create the liminal space where performers are changed by the act of performing. I then show how the construction of a participant framework between witness and mover gives participants a sense of support and acceptance necessary for the free expression of inner feelings and impulses. Finally, I analyze movement and narrative performances that enact the ideals of authenticity presupposed in the discourse—being the body, being in nature, and expressing emotion. Though these phenomena are ongoing through the session and take place at the same time, I separate my analyses for heuristic purposes.

Introduction

April 8, 2006 was a rainy day in Philadelphia. We were at a church hall in a section of Philadelphia well-known as a center for progressive white educated members

of the middle-class. Setting up my camera in the corner of the hall, I watched as the participants, one by one, arrived and prepared themselves for the day ahead. My microphone sat in the middle of the large church hall with high ceilings, hard wood floors, and columns separating the main area of the room from the periphery. The microphone was what Mary Douglas might have called matter out of place, technic amidst the organic, modern amidst antimodern. As some mingled in the corner, around the tables with brochures and coffee and snacks, others were spread out across the floor. One woman attracted my attention as she was pushing her arms with direct intense pressure against the wall, elbows above her head, and feet firmly planted on the floor. She was performing, or “showing doing” (Schechner 2002:15); in this particular case, seeming to say “I am moving. I am internally focused on my body sensations and I am being authentic.” Her movements and inward focus drew attention to the act of moving as an emotional and mindful experience. My camera momentarily veered away, but when I returned, I saw that her body softened, as she molded to the wall, appearing as if in prayer, rising and sinking, swaying side to side. She was intensely involved in what she was doing, and with every inch of her body involved in motion, she seemed to say that she finds this important, not mundane.

Dance indeed can be a powerful phenomenological experience and one so heartily felt in the body that the folk notion that dance is a primal symbolic form with intrinsic meaning is rarely questioned. Yet as we see in *Authentic Movement*, dance is never really isolated from other forms of communication. Movement performances always gain meaning in the context of a multisensorial event and as integrally connected with other

bodily and discursive modes of expression (and its historical context). Similarly, Authentic Movement, a seemingly simple form of moving freely and spontaneously with eyes closed in the presence of a witness, is actually a complex ritual practice with a rich poetic structure. A multimodal form of self-expression, Authentic Movement incorporates a wide range of symbolic and creative forms of expression including movement, sound, drama, touch, dress, narrative and story-telling, art, food and feasting, and at times, even comedy. Authentic Movement is polysemous and polyvocal; it radiates a multitude of potential meanings and elicits expressions from a diversity of voices.

However, even as Authentic Movement embodies this complexity, it surprisingly calls forth a singular vision of authenticity. Melding together multiple images and ideas of authenticity, Authentic Movement points back to antimodernist sentiments and discourses that have circulated among the educated middle-class throughout the last century. And it is the ability of Authentic Movement to evoke images of authenticity that gives the form much of its power to affect change.

To be sure, Authentic Movement is prototypically a product of feminist urban elite antimodernism. Yet, situating the practice in its historical and social context does not fully explain its endurance and its power to create meaningful experiences for its practitioners. Rather, in addition to contextualizing the practice, we must also direct our attention to the compelling aesthetic quality of Authentic Movement because it is the high degree of poetic patterning of its performances that is also the key to its power to call forth a collective vision of authenticity and to allow participants to experience their own personal sense of the authentic in emotionally evocative and convincing ways. It is

this “hyperstructure” (Parmentier 1994:129), emergent in the context of each event, that creates a perception that Authentic Movement is a genuine rendering of the authentic time and place that antimodernists long for; and, most significantly, it is because these formal features play down or obscure the indexical grounding of the event that participants perceive that images, memories, and impulses come from a transcendent source beyond the present context, validating the performances of authenticity as truly authentic.

It is important to reiterate that my perspective of Authentic Movement as a historically-situated performative practice diverges from the position of the Authentic Movement community itself. From the perspective of the practitioners of Authentic Movement, the power of the practice to reveal the true nature of the self comes from allowing free expression of personal and collective unconscious forces that exist within each person. I do not care to dispute this assertion and my analysis does not question the ontological status of the unconscious. Whether fact or fantasy, a connection between the authentic self and unconscious feelings, desires, and thoughts becomes a phenomenal reality for many in Authentic Movement. Therefore, the question that needs to be addressed is not whether this is true, but how ideas and cultural conceptions of authenticity and the self are turned into meaningful experience in Authentic Movement. The question I want to answer is, how does the performance of Authentic Movement bring this community’s vision of the world into phenomenal reality?

The following analysis of a day-long Authentic Movement workshop reveals how the poetics of the performance of Authentic Movement engenders a meaningful experience of authenticity for participants of the practice.

I introduce my analysis by providing a general picture of the organization and schedule of activities of this particular Authentic Movement workshop. I note the length of time of each event following the description of the activity. I start the chronology following the transition time before the session.

Group Composition

There were fewer novices from outside the dance community than in other one-day workshops, but overall the group was a representative sample of the Authentic Movement Community. In a group of fourteen women and one man, there were two dance therapists, five dancer/dance instructors, two university professors, one therapist, one organizational consultation for non-profit organizations, one artist/poet, one chaplain, and two independent consultants. The age range was from 22 to 70, with most being around 50 years old.

Introductions

The session begins with a welcoming and greeting from the co-organizer of the workshop. Mary is a practitioner of Authentic Movement who integrates this practice in her work in organizational development with not-for-profit organizations throughout the

country. Mary completed her training in Authentic Movement with the leader of the workshop, Leslie, and helped to organize his visit to Philadelphia.

(4 min. 30 sec.)

Mary then introduces me as the ethnographer/witness-observer, for the day. All participants were informed before the workshop that the session would be videotaped for research purposes and that their names and identities would remain confidential. I read aloud and distributed informed consent forms at this time.

(6 min. 50 sec.)

Mary then introduces Leslie, the leader of the session and describes her relationship to him and his background and experience.

(1 min. 50 sec.)

Greetings and Warm-Up

Leslie reiterates the themes of the workshop, rebirth and rejuvenation, as these two images were described in the advertisement for the workshop. He then engages the participants in interactive free association to these themes.

(10 min. 45 sec.)

Leslie gathers the group into a standing circle before he is about to lead a warm up and reads an excerpt of the Song of Solomon from the book of earth prayers. Before beginning the warm-up he also explains what he will do in the warm-up.

(5 min.)

Leslie leads the group in a guided warm-up exercise and improvisation. First, he provides verbal instructions on different ways that the participants can learn to focus on kinesthetic sensations in their bodies. He then leads the group in an improvisational activity in which each person, as they move around the room, travel toward and away from a central point in the room in increasingly short amounts of time, so that at the end of the exercise the entire group is bound together at that central point in the room. Leslie directs them to complete the improvisation by closing their eyes and finding an image—in any sensory modality—that represents their “feeling of journey” to arrive at this workshop.

(14 min. 35 sec.)

The group forms a sitting circle in the center of the room. Leslie leads the group in a greeting ritual, where the participants introduce themselves by stating their names, where they live, and sharing their “image of arriving.”

(26 min. 30 sec.)

Learning about Authentic Movement

Leslie talks about Authentic Movement, including its history, how he became involved in the practice, and how it is performed by different practitioners.

(6 min. 50 sec.)

Leslie initiates interactive verbal free association to the inner witness and inner critic, two important psychological archetypal figures in Authentic Movement and gives further explanations on the practice.

(5 min.)

Leslie talks about safety rules regarding how to preserve the psychological, physical, and spiritual safety of the group during the practice.

(6 min. 10 sec.)

Before the upcoming break, Leslie answers a few practical questions about the form.

(1 min. 50 sec.)

Break (10 min.)

Authentic Movement Session 1

The group forms a standing circle in the center of the space. Leslie provides further instructions for the practice and then reads a poem by Jungian scholar and poet Marion Woodman.

(4 min. 20 sec.)

The group performs the ritual of honoring the space. Leslie rings the Tibetan bell and the group engages in their movement meditations.

(22 min.)

Leslie rings the Tibetan bell and the group quietly transitions from their meditations to forming a sitting circle at the center of the room.

(2 min. 50 sec.)

Leslie leads the group as each mover, one by one, talks about their experience of their movement meditation. Leslie periodically responds but does not provide a witness narrative for this first session.

(29 min.)

Lunch Break (35 min.)

Authentic Movement Session 2

The group forms a sitting circle and Leslie provides instructions for the next movement session. For this session, half of the group will be moving while the other half will be witnessing. The groups will then switch roles and the first group of movers will witness while the others will be moving.

(7 min. 10 sec.)

The group forms a standing circle toward the center of the room. Leslie reads a story about the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung and one of his patients.

(1 min. 50 sec.)

The group performs the ritual of honoring the space. Leslie rings the Tibetan bell. Witnesses move to the periphery of the room to witness. Movers perform their movement meditations. Witnesses are silent witnesses, that is, they are present as witnesses but do not have the responsibility of having to give feedback during the sharing session. That responsibility will fall to Leslie.

(20 min. 50 sec.)

Leslie rings the bell. Movers and witnesses transition back to a sitting circle.

(1 min. 40 sec.)

Leslie leads a sharing session in which the movers have four minutes to talk about their movement experience. The speaker has the choice of using all of her time or completing her narrative before the conclusion of the four minute allotment and allowing time for Leslie to give her a narrative of his witnessing experience of her movement meditation. Another member of the group is assigned as timer and lets the speakers know when three minutes have transpired. If the speaker has not completed her narrative, she has the choice of continuing her narrative or asking Leslie for witness feedback.

(34 min. 10 sec.)

Break (5 min.)

Leslie reiterates the instructions for this movement session.

(1 min. 20 sec.)

The group forms a standing circle and Leslie reads a poem by Mary Oliver about nature.

(1 min. 24 sec.)

The group performs the ritual of honoring the space. Leslie rings the Tibetan bell. Witnesses move to the periphery of the room to witness. Movers perform their movement meditations.

(20 min. 50 sec)

Leslie rings the bell. Movers and witnesses transition back to a sitting circle.

(2 min. 10 sec.)

Leslie leads a sharing session following the same structure as before. Each has four minutes to talk about their movement experience and/or to receive a witnessing narrative from Leslie.

(38 min. 40 sec.)

Break (5 min.)

Authentic Movement Session 3

The group forms a standing circle and Leslie provides instructions for the next movement session. For this session, participants break up into dyads, where one person is mover and the other witness. This time, the witness only watches her partner. The witnesses are given sketch pads and colored pencils, pastels, or markers. While witnessing they may engage in creative forming (active imagination through art) if they choose. Witnesses are still silent witnesses but may silently show their creative forming to the movers. They are not to verbalize anything to the movers.

(3 min. 30 sec.)

The group performs the ritual of honoring the space. Leslie rings the Tibetan bell. Witnesses move to the periphery of the room to witness. Movers perform their movement meditations.

(12 min.)

Leslie rings the bell. Movers and witnesses form dyads and find a place in the room for the sharing.

(1 min.)

Leslie gives the movers five minutes for sharing with their partners. Witnesses are silent witnesses. The movers talk about their experience.

(5 min.)

The group comes together again and performs the ritual of honoring the space. Leslie rings the Tibetan bell. Witnesses move to the periphery of the room to witness. Movers perform their movement meditations.

(12 min. 30 sec.)

Leslie rings the bell. Movers and witnesses form dyads and find a place in the room for the sharing.

(1 min. 35 sec.)

Leslie gives the movers five minutes for sharing with their partners. Witnesses are silent witnesses. The movers talk about their experience.

(5 min. 20 sec.)

Closing Ceremonies

The group forms a standing circle. Leslie reads a poem by Tomas Tranströmer, Swedish poet popular in the 1960s.

(1 min 20 sec.)

Leslie provides instructions for a closing ceremony. He asks participants to find and share an image that will help them remember their experience today, especially some aspect of the experience they want to integrate into their lives.

(1 min.)

Each person takes a turn sharing their image through word and gesture.

(8 min.)

Leslie reads a poem by Ann McNeil, a friend of Leslie and a member of the Authentic Community, who writes about this work. *(1 min. 20)*

Acknowledgements and Good byes

Holding hands in the standing circle, Leslie talks about upcoming groups that he will be organizing and allows other participants to announce any upcoming activities they will be organizing.

(3 min.)

This list of events draws attention to a few outstanding features of Authentic Movement. First, Authentic Movement has a salient poetic structure that follows the form of a rite of passage outlined by Arnold Van Gennep (1960) and elaborated upon by Victor Turner (1969, 1982). Rites of passage, according to Van Gennep and Turner, organize the social trajectory that people follow as members of society, from birth, adulthood and marriage, to death. According to the structure of rites of passage, societies mark transformational moments of social life with rituals that detach individuals from their roles, identities, and responsibilities (separation), reorient them with a new perspective on life (liminality) and bring them back into society with new identities and responsibilities (reintegration). Leslie, and other leaders of Authentic Movement, similarly organize the practice according to this ritual structure. Though adherence to ritual structure is not as important as the accomplishment of the functions of separation, transformation, and integration, Leslie's attention to these ritual tasks is notable. I will not write about ritual structure explicitly as rites of separation, transition, and integration, but focus on the ways in which these tasks are mastered.

Second, it is apparent even in this surface description of the form that the themes and issues that recur throughout the practice point to macrosocial issues relevant beyond the present context of the event (Agha 2005, 2006; Bauman 2005; Wortham 2005). Leslie's orientation to the themes of rebirth and rejuvenation and reading of poetry, for instance, points to antimodernist sentiments regarding the loss of connection to nature, longing to find a true self, and the desire to embrace a child's wonder of the world. The

ringing of the Tibetan bell speaks to the practice's bow to the "other" as potential icons of authenticity. The orientation to nostalgia and to "othering" also "keeps us aware that all utterances [and expressive performances] are ideologically informed" (Bauman and Briggs 2003: 145-146). Authentic Movement clearly represents the interests of a specific group of people at a moment of time and place. However, for the purposes of understanding the effectiveness of the form, I focus on the issue of how the realization of this ideology makes the practice intelligible as an expression of authenticity.

Finally, as stated previously, Authentic Movement is a multimodal multisensorial practice bringing together movement, sound, art, poetry, space design, storytelling and narrative. But, what stands out even more is the paradox that for a practice that heeds the slogan, "movement does not lie" (Horosko 2002: 2), where only words can lie, a great deal of time is spent talking. Underlying the philosophy of Authentic Movement is the idea that free improvisational dance reflects a truth of the self, whereas verbalizations are constructed, planned, and potentially artificial reflections of the self. Yet, out of the 350 minutes (which does not include the break times) throughout which this session transpired, only 111 minutes were spent moving without talking. The rest of the time people were talking. That is two thirds of the session. Thus, while Authentic Movement emphasizes kinesthetic experience as the means to finding the authentic self, the role of narrative is crucial in the discovery process. My analysis will show that both language and sensory experience are mutually constructive and integral to the discovery of an authentic self, as it is defined in this discourse, and specifically, the performance of authenticity is accomplished through the semiotic mediation of phenomenological

experiences of space, time, sound, touch, movement, and witnessing in conjunction with the structuring of instruction, self, and witnessing narratives.

Authority and Authenticity

Leslie walks casually into the church hall, but makes obvious the fact that he is open, curious, and sensitive to his surroundings, the characteristics of a mystic adventurer. His clothes are not explicitly distinctive of a dancer but the casual black sweater and loose fitting pants index his readiness for movement. He portrays the “free and natural” persona, a trope of an authentic self.

Standing erect and gazing far and wide, he breathes deeply, seeming to inhale the space. Leslie speaks softly and calmly, but is also gently playful as he saunters around the space to explore the dimensions of the room and the boundaries he will set for the practice. He presses his back against the wall, brushes his feet along the floor, and walks around the space in various patterns. His movements are not dancerly but he performs “being comfortable in his body” very well. He attracts attention as master and guide at the same time that he seemingly deflects this attention.

But Leslie does not obtain this immediate interest by his demeanor alone. Leslie is well-known among the Authentic Movement and dance communities. He has been a group facilitator for many years and has taught hundreds of students. His life story of self-discovery through spiritual journeys and his alliance with well-known leaders in the human potential movement in the 1960s enhance his reputation as a celebrated and esteemed leader in the Authentic Movement community. So when Leslie enters a room,

this past gets linked to his present performance, a necessary connection if he is to guide his audience effectively.

But even more, ritual performers gain authority, not merely by virtue of association with a dominant discourse or performing a persona, but through actual demonstration of knowledge and adeptness. Ritual efficacy depends on the capacity of performers to bring imaginary worlds into phenomenological reality. Rituals do not work merely because people believe they will. This is not to say that belief is not relevant to ritual efficacy. To the extent that belief engenders a disposition toward action, the establishment of belief is a crucial. But belief does not arise by happenstance. People come to believe in the efficacy of a practice because practices are able to create observable meaningful changes in the world (Desjarlais 1992). Belief is engendered as past participation in performances convinces people of their effectiveness which in turn depends in great part on the skills of ritual performers.

Levi-Strauss's (1998[1963]) famous story of Quesalid is enlightening on this point. Quesalid, a skeptic of shamanism, pretended he wanted to be an apprentice to local shamans so that he could expose what he saw as the trickery and deceit behind the local practices. Accordingly, he learned all the tricks of the trade—pantomime, prestidigitation (sleight of hand), art of drama, sacred songs, birthing, and the use of spies (to listen to private conversations). As it happened, Quesalid became quite an adept shaman, especially in regard to one particularly effective trick. He would hide a tuft of down in his mouth, and at an opportune moment expel the down with self-produced blood from his mouth, dramatizing the extraction of sickness from the body of the sick patient. Quesalid

gained a reputation as one of the best shamans among the neighboring villages. This begged the question, how could Quesalid, who now truly realized the trickery of his work, account for his own success or come to believe in this practice? How can you reconcile trickery with efficacy? Levi-Strauss explains, Quesalid did not become a great shaman because he could cure, he could cure because he was a great shaman. As performance theorist Richard Schechner tell us, acting is not make believe (1985, 1986). It is the invention and creation of presence, and good performers create new presences in very effective ways. Correspondingly, ritual leaders create convincing realities in which participants can perform new identities. But this ritual authority is not automatic; it is emergent. Ritual guides are able to transport audiences from one phenomenal reality to another by virtue of their actual performance. With this in mind, how do we understand how Leslie claims and uses his own authority in his leadership of Authentic Movement? And more specifically, how does he guide the semiotic movement from ordinary reality to the world of Authentic Movement on this particular day?

Leslie walks a fine line when asserting his authority in Authentic Movement. According to the ideology of the practice, and according to the principle of originality to which the community subscribes, there should be no dominant authority over the individual. People should be free to pursue their desires and to determine for themselves what is right for them. At the same time, participants need guidance and a safe and secure space for self-exploration. Therefore, Leslie must simultaneously get participants to take him seriously, believe that he has special powers to guide them through a process of self-transformation, to take them from the ordinary sense of reality to the unknown realm of

authentic self-discovery, *and* he must establish a mood of freedom and openness that Authentic Movement claims is crucial to process of active imagination and free association. He must give his audience a sense that they are guided by forces inside themselves and outside the realm of social authority. Paradoxically, as guide, he must direct them toward a path that is free of direction.

Leslie accomplishes this task very effectively. Note how he navigates the path between these two fields as he guides participants in a warm up exercise.⁵²

1. *So /start with just being here in the circle..*
2. *closing your eyes.. (1)*
3. *and if you'd like/.. (3)*
4. *go inward\ (2)*
5. *and bring yourself to what it is for you um you've already been here for a little while*
6. *but the whole sense of the journey to get here and maybe going back to when you first heard about it or decided that it was..*
7. *something that you wanted to follow up on..*
8. *that brought you here..*
9. *today..*
10. *anything about that that just comes up at this moment...(3)*
11. *and allow that to be part of how you are.*

Interestingly, Leslie guides his audience toward becoming agents of their own self-discovery in the imperative mood. His footing is clearly established as the deictic center of the command where the listeners are the receivers. He claims authority to direct this group.

[you] start

[you] bring

⁵² Refer to transcription conventions in the appendix.

[you] close(ing)

[you] see

Yet, Leslie adeptly masks his social authority, which would be contrary to the philosophy of Authentic Movement, and softens his requests by incorporating a range of moods and modalities into his litany of requests. (This is not to say that Leslie purposefully or sinisterly masks his authority. His interactional style comes from his own beliefs about what he needs to accomplish).

For instance, he masks the imperative mood, retreating as authoritative leader and foregrounding his footing as supportive guide, through inclusion of the optative form of the subjunctive mood in his instructions. For instance, in line 3, he modifies his two previous requests “start with just being” and “closing your eyes” by providing a choice in the next request. So participants can “go inward” if they’d “like,” spoken in the subjunctive form. It’s their choice and it’s a mere possibility, not a certainty, for them. Leslie also directs the group by using the command form but with verbs of the permissive mood. So he commands them, as in line 11, “to allow that to be a part of how you are,” or in line 47, “let sounds come if you like.” The action he is requesting is for the listener to be permissive of herself, simultaneously commanding and giving agency. He is giving them permission to give themselves permission. He uses the permissive mood often throughout the warm up: “let yourself stay here” “let yourself step back” “let come into your awareness” and “let it go.” The repetition of the permissive mood has the effect of lessening the explicit contextualization of Leslie’s authority.

Leslie also modifies the imperative mood by also handing over some responsibility to the hearers of the instructions, acknowledging them as active agents in the warm-up process. In line 5, for example, although he issues the command, “bring yourself,” the receivers of the command get to choose the object of their action, that is, “what it is for” them, something that only they can know.

Leslie softens the imperative by modulating the tonal qualities of instructions, avoiding what is most typical of command tones of voice, though as I will explain, even this tonal quality has dual effects. First and most simply, Leslie negates the imperative mood by periodically inserting an interrogative intonation throughout the instructions, framing the commands as suggestions of possibility. But more significantly, it is the pervasive quiet and evenly pitched tonal quality of his vocal productions that allows him to perform himself as both authoritative leader and supportive guide. There is no emotion and there is no customary sense of authority in his voice. But, while his voice seems neutral, the evenness and quiet of his voice actually tempts the hearer to actively attend and listen more fully. It pulls the hearer in, so to speak. The quality of Leslie’s almost hypnotic tone of voice places the hearer in a passive role, as one who is receiving comfort or being lulled to sleep. Leslie takes control of the rhythm and mood of the moment, taking his time, bringing his audience into the present so that participants can be so fully in the present that they are in a trancelike receptive state. Overall, Leslie’s use of his voice allows him to gain simultaneous dual footing as authority and guide.

But, even before beginning the guided warm-up, Leslie obscures his authority. For instance, in an introduction to the warm up, he provides a caveat to his pending

assertion of authority, explicitly framing the more directive warm-up as an exploration and invitation.

1. *So what I'd like to is just have us do is a kind of a warm up an exploration and any of these any of things that I do is guided you know the active imagination movement, the authentic movement uh*
2. *is nonguided it's you it is time for you to just find for me that's the definition we'll talk a little about this the def uh*
3. *of active imagination*
4. *or any kind*
5. *of um practice where you just get to see what comes out of your unconscious*
6. *but some of these things will be guided movement meditations*
7. *and they're guided just by*
8. *what comes to the top of my head or my heart something that goes with uh*
9. *an invitation for the day to enter into ourselves as body*
10. *enter into the space*
11. *enter into the group*
12. *and so any of the things that I invite you to do you can make up something you'd rather go to*
13. *that would be just for you (1)*
14. *because*
15. *because even in that*
16. *there it is totally idiosyncratic about what you need*
17. *so I couldn't possibility predict what you*
18. *or we need/ so I'm just going*
19. *to put out some stuff and take it if you like*

He first acknowledges that the warm-up is more “guided” and more directive than the actual practice of Authentic Movement (lines 1–5). However, he softens the expectations in lines 6 through 19, explaining that this guided meditation is just based on his own exploration and warm-up. It is merely an “invitation” for them to enter the space, their body, the group, where he only provides possibilities. They can “enter” in what way works for them.

Yet, the term “invitation” has many connotations in this context. Although, as Leslie will explain later, the same rules that might exist at a cocktail party are not

applicable here (for instance, in Authentic Movement, it is not rude to be alone if you want, and it is not rude to reject an invitation from another participant to move together), the notion of rejecting an invitation is difficult for most people. Invitations, at least to some degree, produce some social pressure. The word “invitation” also has spiritual connotations in particular social networks. Quakers, for instance, often talk about prayers as invitations from God. Many evangelicals also do the same. These invitations too are also hard to reject. Again, I do not suggest that Leslie does this consciously, but the repetitious use of the word “invitation” throughout the day has effect of drawing in the participant. While the performative invitation frame expands Leslie’s footing as guide, it simultaneously, as deliverer of the invitation, gives him footing as transcendent authority.

The dual footing is evident in later instructions as well. For example, he frames the setting of the physical boundaries for movement as suggestions or again as invitations,

“I’m suggesting that we don’t move on the three pillars but not over in that area”

“I invite you to take care of yourself”

The melding of moods is also apparent in Leslie’s explanation of safety rules for Authentic Movement.

1. *I just*
2. *wanted to say that you know that that um*
3. *a lot of people have practiced this work*
4. *spontaneously*
5. *and yet within this way way we offer it we try to create a lot of safety as much safety as we possibly can*
6. *and we do that by safety agreements*
7. *and so the invitation that I gave you at the beginning of doing whatever you want*
8. *and finding yourself in it*
9. *um when it comes to the safety agreements*

10. we would like to have everybody agree to that because that's the way we can that's where we can both be physically and psychologically spiritually safe

First, he calls rules “safety agreements.” Indeed, the rules are, in a sense, social agreements; rules are legitimate only insofar as the group agrees to follow them. Nevertheless, it is, in the end, by virtue of his responsibility and authority that safety rules are enforced. Again, he couches the rules as invitations and incorporates the subjunctive mood, as in “we would like to have everybody,” into his discussion of rules. Also note that he uses “we” rather than “I,” incorporating the group as the deictic center of the wish to obtain agreement and compliance of the rules, minimizing his role as enforcer.

In addition, in stating his idea about the best way to start the practice of Authentic Movement, Leslie again vacillates between pushing participants in a particular direction and giving them agency to do what they want; for instance, “*I would suggest today to start with some stillness but you can start any way you want.*”

The overall effect of the melding of modalities is to establish his own dual footing as leader and guide but also to establish in participants dual footing as receivers and active agents. As his authority comes from a transcendent source, participants are also receivers and guided by forces external to them. Insofar as Leslie is mere guide, participants can act as responsible active agents as well as receivers of wisdom toward the construction of their authentic experience.

Authenticity in the Subjunctive Mood

Introduction

Anthropologists understand the importance of mood in ritual performance. Csordas (2002b) citing Geertz, for example, describes mood as the essential quality of an event. In other words, mood lends a character or personality to the flow of activity and disposes people to act in accordance with the quality of the experience. Setting the tone and mood gives participants a sense of how they are to engage in the transformative process (Csordas 2002b). Feld (1982) and Schieffelin (1976, 1996) additionally show that the creation of mood is a vital resource for eliciting emotion in ritual practices. Feld, in particular, asserts that it is the reflective mood engendered through music, costume, and setting in Kaluli ceremonies that opens the possibility for particular aspects of the ritual performance, for instance, the recitation of place names, to evoke powerful emotions in Kaluli audiences. Music frames the event as a time for reflection. Their argument is further supported by the fact that the mention of place names in everyday settings does not evoke an emotional response as it does during ceremonies. Similarly, the establishment of the appropriate mood and ambience is essential to Authentic Movement's ability to effect personal change.

This fact is not lost on the leaders of Authentic Movement groups, most of whom are performance artists and therapists. As well-trained artists and performers, leaders of Authentic Movement groups pay close attention to the details of staging an event that evokes a sense of authentic time and place, as this is defined by Authentic Movement community. Whether this means creating an altar of aesthetic objects in the corner of the

room, or performing ritualistic sweeping of the floor to metaphorically clear the space as one would clear the mind of distraction (see Janet Adler in her film *Still Looking*), group facilitators find unique ways to create the appropriate ambience and mood that will motivate evocative performances that can be interpreted as expressions of unconscious feelings, desires, memories, and thoughts. Leslie is no exception. Chaplain, Jungian scholar, and bricoleur well-versed in Van Gennep's and Victor Turner's ritual theory, Leslie takes advantage of a wide variety of creative resources—voice, language, impulse, sensation, visual imagery, sounds, movement, space—to create the appropriate mood for self-exploration in Authentic Movement. In tune with Turner, Leslie works in the subjunctive mood.

Emptiness, stillness and silence form the sacred ritual space of Authentic Movement. The absence of form, movement and sound is a concrete manifestation of what Authentic Movement longs for—unqualified subjunctivity, hope, and possibility. Like the bird sounds in Kaluli music that call forth the most cherished cultural objects of Kaluli society—their memories of beloved ancestors—the sacred space of Authentic Movement summons a precious object in American society, an ever-expanding individuated Self.

According to Victor Turner (1984), rituals make social change and self-transformation possible by working in the subjunctive mood, the mood used to express supposition, desire, hypothesis, and possibility rather than state actual fact. It is the mood of “what if?,” “if I were you?” (1984) or “why not?” The subjunctive renders the world

less fixed (Bruner 1986). Cultural objects formed in the subjunctive mood do not attempt to correspond to the real world, but to reflect human aspiration and possibility.

According to Turner (1982), subjunctivity is an inherent quality of liminal spaces, those periods in rites of passage where life is ambiguous, uncertain, and strange. It is when people are most detached from their everyday roles and responsibilities and the normal structures of social life dissolve. It is a time when people can play with identities, engage in ludic, creative, absurd, or paradoxical behaviors. In liminal space, there is no need to make sense. People are free to play and to transcend the limitations of everyday life. As Turner explains, in liminal spaces participants can draw upon sources of subjunctivity normally inhibited in the “life of society’s indicative mood” (Turner 1984: 43). Sources include the body, the “unconscious,” or even the energy of the social group. Liminality creates an antistructure (Turner 1982:28) or a “latent system of potential alternatives from which novelty will arise when contingencies in the normative system require it.” Liminality, and by definition subjunctivity, become the sources of new culture and new ways of being in the world. In tune with Turner, Jaime Stover Schmidt writes in an advertisement for an Authentic Movement workshop, “shifting our way of perceiving from a pedestrian orientation to a non-linear, non-logical, non-causal context frees us temporarily from the strategies we have in place for getting along in our lives.”

With this in mind, the following analysis of mood in Authentic Movement centers around the construction of subjunctivity. However, before beginning my analysis of mood and setting in Authentic Movement I note a few important principles and qualifications. First, the effects and interpretations of signs with regard to mood (or any

other phenomena) are not predetermined. Interpretation depends on a number of factors. For instance, interpretation may depend on the relative strength of the vector of determination such that there is little leeway or mediation in how the object functions as a sign. Interpretation of a mood sign may also depend on cultural knowledge and individual proclivities. Finally, and most significantly, interpretation may depend on a sign's relationship to its surround. I try to take all these factors into consideration in my analysis of mood. Second, I recognize that some of the signs or forms of representation that will be the object of my analysis may not *only* be relevant to an analysis of mood, and may be applicable to the study of other types of semiotic effects. Signs have multiple effects and may simultaneously create mood, index character, or display a stance. However, for heuristic purposes, I limit my analysis in this section to those aspects of a sign that may have an effect on the mood of the performance, not to all features and functions of the sign. Third, though I recognize that moods are complexly mediated phenomena, I will at times treat particular actions as if they bring about immediate, albeit indeterminate, sensorial semiotic effects (that is, changes in phenomenological experience). I will also at times focus on qualities of an experience that people describe with general descriptive terms such as "reflective," or "mysterious" but acknowledge that individuals may have more particular imagistic associations and interpretations that if not verbalized we will not know. Finally, even though I understand that the evocation of mood in Authentic Movement is not separate from the overall aesthetic organization of the performance, I will, again for heuristic purposes, analyze mood as a separate aspect of the poetics of Authentic Movement.

Subjunctivizing Space

Authentic Movement takes place in large open spaces with minimal furniture, placed in the periphery of the room. The space is “empty,” affecting a sense of an absence of external stimulation, so that attention can be centered on inner stimulation. Unlike a dance studio, there is no mirror from which to have an external image of oneself. This reinforces the idea that the movers are to look “within” for the source of inspiration to move.

Leslie draws attention to the emptiness of the space in the ritual he calls honoring the space. In honoring the space, the group stands in circular formation in the center of the room. Then, as the group meditates in silence, Leslie directs everyone to “breathe together.” Through focused consciousness and recognition of this basic biological function, Leslie transforms the typically unconscious act of breathing to a formal social act of solidarity. Breathing together becomes a way to transform the group into a collective entity, sharing life as one. Following the group breath, as a collective each person steps backward to the wall, forming a circle around the periphery of the space. The group in a sense forms the space. In other words, by marking the territory, the group recontextualizes the space from whatever it once was to the space that it is to be for them. Leslie then directs them to “witness the empty space.” Witnessing the space also recontextualizes and socializes the space. Viewing the space with a new purpose and in a different frame of mind makes the space part of the collective experience, something they will share. Staring in silence and stillness across the empty space also draws further attention to, as Leslie explicitly explains, “the space full of potential,” that is, potential

creative movement, quiet, or self-discovery. The space is open to free idiosyncratic movement and the movers are free to move in any spatial pattern around the room to which they may be “called,” as the leaders repeatedly mention. The open space also functions as an icon of the invisibility of unconscious forces and observing movement within this open space has the semiotic effect of seeing the visible emerge from the invisible, a metaphor of the emergence of the authentic self. The act of “honoring” the space marks the space as sacred, to be entered with care and seriousness.

Evidence that these ritual actions have perlocutionary effects is the fact that participants actually treat the space as sacred. For instance, even before and after movement sessions, participants never engage in mundane activities in the movement space. While they will congregate in hallways or areas outside the movement space to talk or drink water or gather their belongings (all the mundane details of everyday living), this kind of activity never takes place in the collective movement space. The movement space is always left free for warm-ups, meditation, rest, or improvisation. The space is special and to talk or “fool around” meaninglessly in that area of the room would be spoil or corrupt the “preciousness” of ritual space.

In addition to establishing the “specialness” of the movement space, the emptiness may also have more simple immediate phenomenological effects on participants which are also key to subjunctivizing the space. Moving with eyes closed in a vast empty space can be very disorienting, almost like playing pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey. In this traditional childhood activity, the child is blindfolded and turned around several times so that the child loses his orientation in space, making pinning the tail a magical feat.

Disorientation, in fact, is a key aspect of many rituals of transformation. For example, séances, rituals of healing and rites of passage more often than not take place at night, (Kapferer 1991; Schieffelin 1996), a time of greater vulnerability, when people cannot see clearly, when spirits may emerge, or when people are tired. Nighttime is also a time of liminality, when people are detached from their daily roles and responsibilities. This absence of “structure” leaves them open to step into new roles and perform themselves in new ways. But more concretely, the disorientation of darkness, or in the case of Authentic Movement, emptiness, impels participants to find a new way to center themselves, to orient to space and to find a new way of being in the world, physically and psychologically.⁵³ The disorientation forces the individual to attend to and respond to a different set of indexical signals from the body’s “internalized system of signposts” (Lee and Urban 1989), and in this case, the sense of proprioception. Rather than use visual cues to orient in space, they turn to the sense of proprioception to ground themselves. It is true that Leslie suggests that if they become confused or if they feel the impulse to move quickly through the space, they should open their eyes, but this is more the exception than the rule. For the most part, people are moving with their eyes closed in an “empty” space.

Emptying the space has other semiotic effects as well. As the group literally and figuratively empties the space, they become more open to reconceptualizing the space as an imaginative open field. The “normal” way of perceiving space is thus upended. For

⁵³ Neurologist V.S. Ramachandran (1998) has performed a number of experiments on patients with phantom limbs that demonstrate the malleability of body image and is a “transitory internal construct” that can be modified by experience.

instance, the space can transform from being a mere floor with ceilings and walls, to becoming the earth. Note the way Leslie revises the space in the following set of instructions.

1. *if you'd like you might follow an invitation of going from feet on the floor (2)*
2. *touching with the floor(2)*
3. *being connected to gravity down in earth*
4. *sensation of even below*
5. *bottoms of your feet*
6. *interacting with the floor*

Leslie turns the floor into a medium with which to connect to earth and the natural forces of gravity. Subjunctivizing the space, he encourages participants to build a world that is more authentic and natural.

In the next set of instructions, Leslie builds on this reconceptualization of the space.

1. *when you're ready just begin to let your eyes open softly*
2. *as you move thru space (2)*
3. *so you can safely move through the space. without hitting anybody (10)*
4. *begin to explore the texture of the floor*
5. *your self moving a little bit (3)*
6. *and when you're ready at your own speed /pace*
7. *begin to let come into your awareness*
8. *the space itself (3)*
9. *I know you've been here for a while, there may be things you haven't noticed yet about the space as you move through the awareness of sensations*
10. *in your body breath*
11. *notice the space the size of the space,*
12. *my invitation is if you're thinking in terms of size*
13. *not so much my invitation do it in relation to yourself as body not so much*
14. *in standard measurements,*
15. *how many steps or how many bodies*
16. *would it take to get to the (2)*
17. *and anything you notice about this architecture structure (5)*
18. *the lights (16)*
19. *the passageways*

20. *stage (4)*
21. *the walls (3)*
22. *whatever you notice*
23. *and I invite you to move through the space uh (2)*
24. *checking out those kind of measurements of how long how far what is it to go from one corner to the other*
25. *what is it to go from one arch to the other*
26. *how is it (2)*
27. *to check out the size of this room and in relation to yourself (2)*

Leslie directs participants to perceive the space in terms of their own subjective view of the world rather than in standards of measurement codified in science. By contrast to a more mechanistic inauthentic conceptualization of the space, each person's own body image becomes the point of reference for measurement, validating the space as a psychological reality, the truer reality. Overall, the space is transformed from a given set of parameters to a flexible imaginative arena defined by an active agent in the construction of their own world.

Subjunctivizing Stillness and Movement

The movement experience, the central focus of the ritual, is specifically designed to facilitate the experience of being moved by internal forces, linking kinesthesia to the expression of unconscious feelings and thoughts. Mary Whitehouse, the founder of the form, contrasts the experience of moving and being moved in the following way.

Each is an act in itself, but a different act. "I move" is the clear knowledge that I, personally, am moving. I choose to move; I exert some demand on my physical organism to produce movement. The opposite is the sudden and astonishing moment when "I am moved". ...It is a moment when the ego gives up control, stops choosing, stops exerting demands, allowing the Self to take over moving the physical body as it will. It is a moment of unpremediated surrender that cannot be explained, repeated exactly, sought for or tried [Whitehouse 1999[1979]:82].

For Mary Whitehouse, there is a transcendent force, a self with a capital “S,” that is the source of authentic expression. But this Self is not something we can define, control, or harness for our own purposes. (In other words, *Self*-enlightenment is outside the path of The Enlightenment.) The process is uncertain, the outcome unknown. According to the ideology of Authentic Movement, in order to meet the Romantic goal of realizing our true selves, we must submit to this uncertainty. Only by letting go of preconceived ideas, and entering a subjunctive realm of new possibilities of self-expression, can people find a more authentic way of being in the world. In Authentic Movement, this capitulation to the transcendent takes place through sensation in the body.

The process begins with stillness. Movers can begin in a position they choose, but usually they lie down on the floor or sit in stillness until they feel an impulse to move. Leslie calls this period open awareness. In repose, movers learn patience. In stillness, they can also more easily pay attention to random sensation, engage the imagination, wait for an impulse to do something. As Whitehouse explains, it is in the waiting and the moment of “unpremeditated surrender” (1999[1979]:82) that movers can let go of the social rules that impede self expression and wait for the impulse to move in a way that may be more true to the self.

While movers begin in any body position they choose, their eyes, however, must be closed. This serves to shut down the visual channel of communication, closing off external visual stimulation. No music is used in this movement experience. Eliminating these sensory channels, the kinesthetic sense, and at times the sense of touch, may become more salient for the mover and experienced as a primary way of knowing the

self. Charlotte Selver, a prominent voice in the Authentic Movement community, links such states of open awareness to authenticity.

If we really would sense, really would be present in what happens, we would feel how lifeless, how depleted of energy, we have become. When one has ‘looked’ in order to see, has ‘listened’ in order to hear, has ‘sniffed’ in order to smell, has made an effort in order to think, one does not know at all that one is constantly hindering the innate capacities of the organism from coming into play.... So when I come to you with an invitation to allow more ease here or there, I do not mean that you simply let go, but that you enter a way, a path which you can only take step by step. In this work of transformation, when you follow anything at all, you follow only your sensations, the natural tendencies of the organism. And to be able to follow these inner needs we have to be awake.
[<http://www.sensoryawareness.org/see-without-eyes.html>]

Along these lines, facilitators direct movers to attend to breathing, the beat of the heart, and spontaneous sensations in the body as potential stimuli for movement. Sensing one’s own bodily functioning is an index that the source of self-knowledge comes from one’s own body, validating the experience as “authentic.” Natural spontaneity of random impulses to move can be indexed as an emergence from the unconscious.

The disinhibition and surrender to spontaneity that takes place with movement (and also sounding) can also be an emotionally and physically charged experience and, thus, also may motivate an interpretation of the impulse as an emergent expression from the unconscious. According to Mary Whitehouse, the emotionally charged experience is exactly what people should be looking for.

Could it be that the body is the unconscious and that in repressing and, more important, disregarding spontaneous life of the sympathetic nervous system we are enthroning the rational, the orderly, the manageable, and cutting ourselves off from all experience of the unconscious and therefore, of the instincts...? [Whitehouse 1999[1958]:45]

As with other sign vehicles, the movement impulse is full of semiotic possibilities. In states of relaxation and rest, the mind is passively attentive while the mechanisms of perception are still active. As the mover attends to these phenomena, they become fodder for semiosis. For instance, breathing may be an iconic sign of the movement of energy as in yoga, tai chi or chi kung. Or, breathing may be a shared symbolic sign of life itself, and literally and metaphorically a source of inspiration. Movement impulses may index a Freudian return of the repressed, a sign of revelation from God, an act of subversion against rationality, or a sign of possession by a spirit, among many other possibilities. The spontaneous impulse to move may even just be a random event. Indeed, many bodily sensations have an indeterminacy that creates a long chain of semiotic activity. It is the experience of going through a process from emotionally-charged indeterminacy (subjunctivity) to finding an interpretation that resonates with your life history and your cultural belief system that makes Authentic Movement potentially powerful. The searching, in essence, is more important than the finding or, to be more exact, the search makes the finding meaningful. Without the sense of openness and indeterminacy, of being in a place of open awareness and vulnerability, the process of meaning making would not have emotional resonance. In point of fact, the spontaneous sensation is a very productive semiotic tool.

Scholars in anthropology and other fields have similarly grappled with the phenomenology of the body in ritual contexts (Newburg 2001). Thomas Csordas (1996), for instance, looks to the writings of existentialist and phenomenologist philosophers to

make sense of revelatory images that “spontaneously”⁵⁴ emerge in Catholic Charismatic Healing sessions. Citing Sartre, Csordas explains that spontaneity’s essential nature is that in most cases it is felt as an image that springs up independent of the will (1996:94). Along the same lines, he cites Casey’s phenomenological description of imaginative spontaneity explaining that not only when an image emerges unbidden, but also when produced intentionally, it appears suddenly in a manner that can surprise us. It appears instantaneously with no time lapse between intention and its appearance. It also appears effortlessly and it seems to come of its own volition, what he calls “self-generativity” (1996:94). The image “appears” to come from nowhere and there “appears” to be no logical cause for its appearance (1996:94). However, Csordas also notices that to understand the full effect of the spontaneous image, we also need to take into account the presuppositions of the perceiver of the event. In the case of the Catholic Charismatic, the perceiver already believes in a transcendental world, and is thus predisposed to interpret the event as an image from this sacred transcendental world. Another person might interpret the event as a random occurrence of the mind. Taking his cues from Merleau Ponty, he states, “if the incarnate experience of the sacred is culturally defined as spontaneous, then the inherent spontaneity of imagination is readily embraced as a manifestation and criterion of the sacred” (1996:94). And moreover, if the belief is that the “incarnate experience of the sacred” will be revealed in an image that emerges spontaneously, it is not surprising that rituals are structured to achieve just that effect.

⁵⁴ I place this in quotes, because in prescribed rituals like Charismatic Healing the possibilities of spontaneous expression are in actuality not limitless but constrained by available and presupposable discourses available to the individuals.

Yet, what is most relevant to a discussion of mood is that the phenomenology of spontaneity is as important as the cognitive interpretation of spontaneity. They are both a part of the semiosis of spontaneity. Establishing a subjunctive mood in which unbidden and unforeseen movements arise in an emotionally powerful way is crucial to the transformative powers of Authentic Movement.

Elaine Pagels (1979), writing on the Gnostics, provides another illustration of this point. Looking at the social context surrounding the writing of the Secret Book of John, another of the Gnostic gospels, Pagels notes the importance of spontaneity among the Gnostic philosophers. The Gnostics were socialized to pay close attention to unbidden visions and voices. Events when “answers may come spontaneously to the mind” (1979:21) were productive moments for reflection and interpretation. But, spontaneity was just a signal for further semiotic activity. The fact that the Gnostics interpreted these events in religious terms rather than psychological terms is not as significant here as understanding that the meaning of phenomenological event is regulated by semiotic ideologies. The semiotic ideology that says that spontaneity is something to pay attention to results in the construction of activities which breed spontaneity (meditation, contemplation), which in turn gave the Gnostics something to talk about. In Authentic Movement, the semiotic ideology that denotes that spontaneous sensations are meaningful, actually, encourages the creation of activities (namely, lying in stillness) with one’s eyes closed in silence in which spontaneous sensations will more likely take place or be noticed, so that upon reflection these events can be pointed to as evidence of the emergence of the unconscious. In the end, spontaneity is meaningful insofar as the

individual physically experiences the spontaneity and presupposes it as meaningful, in particular, as a sign of authentic self-expression.

In addition to opening up to fields of interpretation, the movement experience may have immediate phenomenological effects. According to neurologist Oliver Sacks, the heightening of the kinesthetic sensations has the effect of intensifying the experience of self as embodied. Sacks (1984), citing Sherrington, describes proprioception, or the sixth sense as “that continuous but unconscious sensory flow from the movable parts of our body such as the muscles, tendons, and joints, by which their position and tone and motion are continuously monitored and adjusted, but in a way which is hidden from us because it is automatic and unconscious” (1984:43). The sense of proprioception, according to Sacks, is indispensable to our sense of selves. It is how we feel our body as proper to us, and as our own. Proprioception is like the eyes of the body (1984:47) or the way the body sees itself. Consequently, in Authentic Movement, becoming aware of our proprioceptive capacities enhances the sense of an embodied self. For the individual whose sense of body integrity has been shattered through personal crisis, illness, or through over-civilization, this reconnection to body can be healing.

Subjunctivizing Time

Separation from the ordinary to the ceremonial is also marked through the transformation of the sense of time. At the most basic level, Authentic Movement is an oasis regime or “rest cure” that takes people away from their daily routines and stresses. Sessions ideally last through an entire day and many workshops require a week to two week daily commitment. Finding the authentic self requires that one commit oneself to

continuous work and be away from one's daily responsibilities and activities. In transforming the phenomenological sense of time, Authentic Movement strikes directly at the core of one of the most oft mentioned complaints of modern civilization—the mechanization of time. In contrast to following clock time, in Authentic Movement, movers move at their own pace, indulging in time, not being rushed, free to take the time that the “authentic self” needs. Movement meditations correspondingly show a predominance of qualities of slowness and sustainment.⁵⁵ The slow pace may evoke images of rest and relaxation. It may just be a relief to lie down and not have to do anything. Practically speaking, slowness may be necessary if you are moving with your eyes closed and make it easier to “listen” for inner impulses to move. Practitioners do claim that subtle sensations in the body may be missed when one is rushing around. As Authentic Movement leader Mary Ramsey (2006) emphasizes, “It took slowing down to see.” And as slow and indulgent the practice is, some participants still feel that they do not have time or quiet. “I always want more time. I want to get really really quiet and then listen for something that’s really really deep inside,” one participant remarked. Many participants also mention that they are unaware of time or even feel like they are “out of time,” as if in a trance, what Leslie describes as a “time warp.”

(P-participant, G-group, L-Leslie)

1. *P: I'm surprised about how short the time was (0)*
2. *G: ~yeh*
3. *P: you know I could've (2)*
4. *L: time warp*

⁵⁵ I am not sure if the slowness in Authentic Movement is an aesthetic quality mirroring the movement qualities of yoga or tai chi, exercises which many associate with rest and relaxation, or this is a movement quality that predominates because it represents an appreciation for slowing down.

The conversational structure, with the group joining in, demonstrates the commonality of this experience of time.

Attention to the sense of time is evident in another narrative.

1. *P: /well I tried to get off the floor a few different times*
2. *and finally I*
3. *gave into*
4. *the luxury of (2)*
5. *resting*
6. *and I'd say the theme of um*
7. *checking in*
8. *the you know /how are you*
9. *I had a couple of very sore spots right in here*
10. *and I (1)*
11. *was doing a little time calibration*
12. *as it was going I was thinking there was a lot more t::ime*
13. *[G: ~@*
14. *I really hope this twenty minutes rea:::lly stretches out*
15. *[G: ~@*
16. *it se:::med like a lot at the \beginning*
17. *[G: ~@*
18. *there was a lot there were many spots I could have (1)*
19. *touched along the way*
20. *it was just very delicious (1)*
21. *to have that (4)*
22. *time to just check in*

Again, the group aligns with this participant as she talks about the luxury of rest. The narrative emphasizes the sensorial quality of time. Even in her speech, she indulges in time. Uttering the word “time” in line 12, she pauses for seconds, taking in the moment, remembering the moments of resting or having time. In expressing her longing for even more time, she elongates her words (lines 14 and 16) and in doing this gets her audience to chuckle in attunement with her performance (lines 13, 15, and 17).

Just as empty space and stillness are preconditions for authentic expression, being out of linear time opens up a possibility for change. In linear time or “realtime,” actions have clear beginnings and endings, and a set place in a story. When you are “out of time” you are in process, where activities cannot clearly be differentiated or defined in the way that you may have in other contexts. Experience can defy causality and allow for simultaneity and paradox. Again, being out of time, like being out of space and thus, *in* the body, invites the construction of a new perspective. By having to reorient oneself, one constructs a new way of being in the world.

The sense of time changes in great part due to the mere phenomenology of concentrating on sensation. Leslie helps spur this on as he guides participants, in verbal instruction and his own self-presentation, to be more conscious of being in the moment. Interspersing the continuous present tense in the guided warm-up, he directs attention to action that is happening in the moment, not to states of being or to routines of action. The continuous present tense both reflects and creates feeling of being in the moment, but also what is most robust is his demeanor and style of speaking.

1. *So /start with just being here in the circle..*
2. *closing your eyes.. (1)*
3. *and if you'd like/.. (3?)*
4. *go inward\ (2)*
5. *and bring yourself to what it is for you um you've already been here for a little while*
6. *but the whole sense of the journey to get here and maybe going back to when you first heard about it or decided that it was..*
7. *something that you wanted to follow up on..*
8. *that brought you here..*
9. *today..*
10. *anything about that that just comes up at this moment...(3)*
11. *and allow that to be part of how you are*
12. *standing here in the circle (1)*

13. *in yourself as body... (3)*
14. **precious...(4)*
15. ***self that is embodied...(voice fading)*
16. ***precious body..*
17. *just see what is happening in you right at in this minute*
18. *as you're arriving*
19. *beginning...*
20. *and it can be /simple..*
21. *stillness...(4)(rising inflection)*
22. *“(exhale)hhhhhh hxxhxx”...(4)*
23. *track what's going on*
24. *this arriving time and see um .*
25. *if you'd like you might follow an invitation of going from feet on floor (2)*
26. *touching with the floor (2)*
27. *being connected to gravity down in earth*
28. *? sensation of even below*
29. *bottoms of your feet*
30. *interacting with the floor*
31. *anything that you notice about feet themselves sensation (2)*
32. *wrinkles (4)*
33. *moving at own pace*
34. *calves knees*
35. *just any movement that might come*
36. *your thighs (2)*
37. *? legs (4)*
38. *you can go at slower pace if like (3)*
39. *see what's happening in yourself (2)*
40. *your pelvis keep tracking and noticing*
41. *breath as you pay attention as you witness (audible deep breath) (10)*
42. *within what is within..sacrum...(3)*
43. *up your spine a bit, (4)*
44. *belly...aahh (4)*
45. *let sounds come if you like*
46. *...(breath sound)...(4)*
47. *breath into middle chest middle back*
48. *huuuuuuu hmmm ahhh*
49. *movement come,(3)*
50. *stretching (2)*
51. *awakening (2)*
52. *rejuvenating*
53. *ahhh let the movement come itself by the attention*
54. *letting the movement then lead you out of the circle a little bit,*
55. *move your arms closed ? just so you can explore with this kind of attention..arriving, (6) any kind of movement or stillness that comes up for you*

- and (3)*
56. *when you're ready just begin to let your eyes open softly*
57. *as you move through space (2)*
58. *so you can safely move through the space. without hitting anybody. (10)*
59. *begin to explore the texture of the floor*
60. *your self moving a little bit ??(3)*
61. *and when you're ready at your own speed /pace*
62. *begin to let come into your awareness*
63. *the space itself (3)*

The starting place is “just being,” what performance theorist Richard Schechner (2002) explains is the existential background of performance. Yet, here in Authentic Movement, as we have seen in our discussion of movement and space, it seems that more than being the existential background, “just being” is part of the performance. Participants learn how to “be” and to show “just being.” At the same time that he increases the use of the continuous present, Leslie also more overtly performs “being in his body.” Participants can hear him breathing, and the strong exhale mimics the release of tension. He utters each word as if without forethought, “just what comes up.” The words come out with sighs and audible breathing as if they are mere kinesthetic emanations from the body rather than abstract arbitrary devices.

As Leslie begins to take more time between his verbalizations, as you see in lines 12 to 23, he also speaks more in the continuous present tense. The instructions explain that the participants may be here physically but they have not yet arrived. “Arriving” is a process, not an action that can be readily completed. Leslie sustains the sense of “presence” throughout the warm-up, intensifying the use of the continuous present in lines 50–52. The continuous present is mingled with drawing attention to parts of the body. Leslie here combines a phenomenology of sensation with a phenomenology of

grammar, getting participants to attend to the moment, distanced from the linear sense of time. Finally, at the end of this set of instructions, Leslie repeats the use of the verb “begin” as a command modified by adverbial infinitives. The action is to begin, as in “to begin to let come in...” and “begin to explore.” He attempts to draw participants into a constant state of beginning, again prioritizing process over discrete action.

By deconstructing the everyday perception of time, Leslie allows for possibility of recontextualization. The kinesthetic sensation event can be perceived in terms of an expanded sense of time and space, for example, in the context of how he started the day’s activity, in tune with the seasons. As the semiotic events are indexically anchored in the immediate here and now and dissociated from linear time, they simultaneously point to a sense of time and place that extends far and wide. In other words, the relevant context has become larger and thus, what relates to the self has grown as well. This opens the future possibility that the source of feelings and memories that will emerge in movement improvisations do not only derive from the individual, but from a collective consciousness of feelings and emotions that have taken place across vast areas of time and space.

Subjunctivizing Sound

As the empty space may symbolize the “space full of potential,” silence also creates a space full of potential. Silence in Authentic Movement is like the quieting of the mind. Silence allows participants to “hear,” as participants say, what is inside and distance themselves from the outside. Silence also creates a presence of the sacred, like a moment of silence before a meeting. Silence like the empty space also dramatizes and

foregrounds any sound that enters into the space, and this is most evident in the ritualistic ringing of the Tibetan bell before beginning the movement.

In addition to its obvious associations with various ritualistic practices, the Tibetan chimes that I have observed used in every Authentic Movement session I have participated from the most casual to the most formal, have particular phenomenological qualities that should be noted. Tibetan bells have an expansive sound, rather than localized resonance, that reverberate throughout a space and dissipate over a long period of time. As participants stand quietly and observe the empty space, the sound of the ringing bells envelopes the space, and can even resonate kinesthetically within the body. Along with possible cognitive associations to the sacred and exotic, the physical sensation may provide an added phenomenological presence that reinforces the indexicality of the sound.

The most striking use of sound in Authentic Movement is the practice of sounding. As I explained in chapter 3, sounding is the term used for spontaneous vocalizations made during movement improvisations. Most times, soundings are unintelligible nonsense vocalizations where there is no grammatical or musical structure. They may be grunts, groans, single notes or a series of notes, sometimes melodies, but rarely are they recognizable tunes and extremely rarely are they verbalizations. The sound forms are like the kinesthetic expressions—expressions with physical intensity, focus, force, and rhythm—as in the movement improvisations. Sounding, like the movements, seem to derive of a different time and place. I have heard participants describe them as reminiscent of ancient ritual, emotional releases, and primitive animal

noises. These vocal performances are talked about as expressions of unconscious feelings, impulses, and memories, and like the spontaneous kinesthetic sensations, phenomenologically experienced as mysteriously and spontaneously emerging from a source outside conscious awareness or “deep inside” the self. Most significantly, it is the fact of the unintelligibility of “moving” and “sounding” performances itself which makes them intelligible as authentic; that is, as the performance and witnessing of these types of movement and sounding performances engenders a sense of mystery and awe and a sense that words cannot adequately represent such an experience, one is able to have the desired encounter with the unconscious and interpret this as authentic.

Finally, the sounds of voices in narrative also create a sense of subjunctivity. As noted in my discussion of the construction of authority, the steady rhythm and prosodic quality of Leslie’s vocalizations have an impact on how participants interpret his guidance and instruction. The tone and quality of his vocalizations also have an impact on the mood of the session. The steady rhythm and even tone, especially in his guided warm-up, create a sense of dreaminess or a trancelike mood. Along with the sense of being out of time and out of space, participants can more effectively distance themselves from their everyday consciousness. The dreamy mood may also be associated with states of relaxation and practices which incorporate trance states into rituals. But beyond these indexical associations, the steady rhythm and even tone have a similar semiotic effect as other aspects of the performance, for instance, the spontaneous sensation. With few rises in intonation, with few changes in emphasis, Leslie leaves his instructions and his own

mood open to interpretation. His tone is in many ways a call to semiosis, and as such, this reinforces the sense of mystery and awe that indexes an experience of authenticity.

Subjunctivizing Language

The sense of subjunctivity and possibility that is constructed through reframing space, time, movement, and sound is also reinforced in the style in which participants learn how to narrate their experiences. Most prominently, leaders and experienced participants highlight the ideology that words cannot capture the experience, and that the experience can be felt with immediacy but its meaning cannot be contained. As Leslie mentioned, “Some of these [experiences] you have move right it’s hard to get the words.” One participant described verbalization as being in an “intellectual space,” where as the movement experience is an “inward space.” Distancing the world of words and the worlds of movement creates an atmosphere where meaning is more flexible and uncertain.

Accordingly, narratives may take the form of “witnessing haikus” or brief expressions of images in movement or words. Paralleling the movement performances, narratives are often a flow of images or series of images without the sense of a coherence or organization. Participants might find it necessary to reenact the movement sequence, evidencing the purity of the experience and lack of fixity of meaning. Note the following narrative.

*I found myself um I think I’m going to show it if that’s alright (mmhmm)
I’ll do it over here. I had gotten here. and I had I **just** had this image of
like I was a lily and I was thinking of that passage lilies of the field and I
was this growing tall lily and then the most remarkable thing happened
because I was very straight and that’s how I wanted to be then it slowly (5)*

*the lily just slowly if I was thinking about trust the process it was without any conscious volition the lily just slowly did what it needed to do which was relax and dissolve and I came to that ledge and I got there and I put my I sort of stopped I didn't do it on purpose and it was such a sad moment for me that it was alright to just stop it was alright to just be and I was aware that I was witnessing but I wasn't calling it into action and it was certainly related to me in my life and the transitions that I feel I'm in now and I ended up lying on my back and being very aware of the steam noises and having this image of my grandmother's stove which I don't believe I ever saw and she was baking an apple pie and the steam was going up and I was part of the steam and it was **just** all up there in the woods (?) a lovely place to have gone from this sort of very purposeful lily to in a way as I reflect on it down into being part of the steam of my grandmother's coffin*

This narrative does not have a beginning, middle, or end. Like an improvisation, it meanders and goes in many directions. The narrative also does not have an obvious point to it, other than giving the audience a sense of the feelings she was experiencing. The course of events are flow randomly, yet organically, as in a dream.

Narratives might also consist of just one word, as when we were asked to state one word to represent our present state of mind. Narratives might be just a series of sounds.

*(cough)lblalblalllllallllll hmmmmmmmmmmmmmm
aaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhh sigh that's all I want to say*

The openness and the foregrounding of poetics in narrative forms may allow for a productive kind of subjunctivity, an indeterminacy that inspires semiosis, where the hearers or tellers can thus “rewrite” their own versions, or project personal stories and meanings onto the narrative, thus, making the elusive experience of movement amenable to many different interpretations.

However, it is not any one stylistic element that creates the overall sense of subjunctivity. It is the accumulation over time of all of these various characteristics that

creates a mood of uncertainty and subjunctivity. This is the case with word choice as well. Take the adverbial use of the word “just. “

The general frequency of use of the adverb “just” is 4621 times per million words in speech, totaling a frequency of 0.00461 (Leech, Rayson and Wilson 2001). In the Authentic Movement session that I transcribed for this particular analysis, the word was used 322 times per 26, 800 words in the transcript, a freq of 0.012, 2.6 times more frequent.⁵⁶ I acknowledge that word frequency does not have a direct semiotic effect on its own,⁵⁷ but as co-text with other narrative elements (in this case, the modifiers “kind of” and “sort of”⁵⁸) the high frequency of usage draws attention to itself and has the semiotic effect of subjunctivizing the meaning of the action described. The following examples extracted from the transcript reveal this effect.

“just being”

just to kind of set the stage

sort of just turning it

just to sort of mark the season

just get to see

just notice

just invite inner witness that we explored before

⁵⁶ I have not determined whether the high frequency of “just” is evident in all Authentic Movement sessions (as I have with all the other semiotic devices I have described in this chapter). However, I do know that its usage is more frequent in Leslie’s narratives as well as in the more experienced participants and this may point to some kind of trend. This would require further investigation. The limitations on allowing videotapes and audiotapes makes finding general trends difficult.

⁵⁷ I do not know whether this frequency is a particular form of slang usage found in a particular social group.

⁵⁸ I did not find a general usage for “kind of” and “sort of” but in this transcript, “kind of” was used 102 times and “sort of” was used 58 times.

***just** notice what's going on*

***just sort of** recognize*

***just** questing*

***just sort of** focusing on a few things*

*it **just sort of** goes in different directions*

*and I want you to **just** witness*

*“the invitation in this work is not to try to surgically remove the inner critic can't do it anyway or get rid of it **just** to witness it notice what it does do **just** like you were doing and **just** let it have a space”*

*“yah, I feel like it was **just** a real uh cellular need to **just** hoo you know we **just sort of** explored the space”*

*“not resignation so much as **just** acceptance some **kind of** acceptance whatever that other was **just sort** being there”*

*“**kind of** rebirth and resurrection”*

*“**kind of** warm up”*

*“I'm also **kind of** thinking”*

*“we were **kind of** bonded”*

*“**kind of** loosening pelvis, **sort of** shaking things up”*

*“he's **kind of** a scorio dragon type of person and I'm **kind of** a hare cancer moonchild laugh”*

*“my image was one of uh **sort of** hearth and home”*

*“I had this very strong **kind of** wing thing”*

*“and it felt great to **kind of** depend on my whole body”*

*“one of things about the anxiety luxury **kind of** almost like a paradox in everyday life
and in this **kind of** possibility you can embody the paradox of both and”*

*“**just** I sensed a **kind of** another paradox **kind of** thing that whole being with what is and
the action that **sort of** dichotomy paradox”*

In concert with the even prosodic quality and meandering nature of the narratives, the repetition of these modifiers in narratives reframes the actions described. To “just notice” is different than “to notice.” To “just notice” is special, pure, and has a sense of immediacy. While the adverb “just” may be defined as “simply” which might seem to narrow the meaning of the word, “just” actually expands the meaning. “Just notice” is no longer in the mundane world, but meaningful in an environment where you are to have intense experience. Add to this repetitive usage of “just” the terms “kind of” and “sort of” and this intensifies the sense of expansion and “fuzziness” of meaning. The semiotic effect is that the actions or things described (loosening up, set the stage, shaking it up, etc.) are reframed as being somewhat out of the ordinary. The speaker appears to not have an exact word for what she is trying to say because there are no real words for the actions to be performed. At the same time, the use of the modifiers may also give hearers permission to interpret the action or thing described with more flexibility. Overall, the characteristics of the narratives intensify the sense of distance from ordinary reality, where the sense of openness and possibility promotes a change in perspective and

transformation of reality, involving an experiential but inexpressible authentic realm of the self.

Conclusion

The phenomenological role of subjunctivity is the construction of uncertainty, ambiguity, and possibility that impels the ritual participant to search for meaning in the events. In this searching process, the participant is empowered to be an agent in the construction of her world. The empty space excites the imagination, silence deepens the process of inner listening, and the vague language and bodily disorientation excites the mind to make sense of the experience. Surrender to the spontaneous impulse is not being out of control but in tune with transcendental forces from the inner self. The inability to clearly articulate the experience reveals its ineffability and thus its significance as authentic. Finally, the formality and ritual structure of the practice, evoke the longing for exotic qualities missing in everyday life and allow participants to feel like they are part of something larger than personal life. It is in the context of this mood that individual movement and narrative performances can become performances of the Self.

The Performance of Witness: The Construction of Authentic

Participant-Frameworks

Introduction

As Goodwin explains, participant frameworks are the forms through which “activities align participants toward each other” in particular ways (Duranti 1997:307). This may be

conditioned by the arrangement of physical space. The circle, for instance, is one simple participant structure that mediates face-to-face interaction. By having all members of a social group sit physically in equal relation to one another with equal visual access to the center of the physical space, the circle promotes (though does not determine) recognition that participants have equal rights to speak and to be heard. By contrast, the ordinary classroom participant framework in which the teacher stands at the head of the room faced by students sitting in a series of neat rows creates a different set of possible alignments among the students themselves and between the students and the teachers. Of course, the physical structuring of space is by no means determinative of social or power relations in an interactional setting. It is one factor among many that brings about particular alignments and relations. Power relations and social identities are multi-determined phenomena, and are mediated through physical arrangement of space, styles of speech, and turn-taking configurations among other representational structures (1997:313).

In *Authentic Movement*, one important participant framework is the witness–mover relation. As the model for both interpersonal and intrapersonal relations, the witness–mover relation is the focal point of the practice.

The performance of witnessing centers around the responsibility of the witness to ensure the physical and psychological safety of movers. Witnesses sit at the periphery of the movement space and watch the movement performances. Given that movers perform their improvisations with eyes closed, witnesses have the pragmatic function of making sure that the movers do not hurt themselves, hurt others, or hurt the space. But in

addition, witnesses have a psychological function. The witnesses form the psychological “container” in which authentic feelings, thoughts, and memories can emerge. Though the witness is simply present for the mover and does not guide the movement or interpret the performances, the nonjudgmental and compassionate stance of the witness, both presupposed and experienced through publicly observable signs, gives comfort to movers that their performances will not be evaluated or critiqued. The witness does not read intentions onto the movers, nor project her own thoughts and emotions onto the mover. Knowing that their audience will be compassionate and nonjudgmental, the movers are thus free to perform without worrying about looking pretty, being interesting, or meeting any outside expectations. More importantly, knowing that their audience is nonjudgmental, movers can learn to be accepting of themselves as well. Leslie’s performance as witness, as described below, reveals the multimodal nature of witnessing.

The witness–mover framework is manifest in a series of several possible dyadic relations. (1) the actual witnesses and movers, (2) singular pairs with one mover and one witness, (3) single/group dyad, one witness for a group of movers or group of witnesses for a singular mover, or (4) a group of witnesses for a group of movers. At the same time that this external witnessing takes place, Authentic Movement presumes the witness–mover relation takes place intrapsychically as well. The mover and the witness both claim dual consciousness. As the mover performs her improvisations, she is at once witnessing herself in the act of moving. Similarly, as the witness observes the improvisations, she is simultaneously observing her own reactions to the performances.

The basic witness–mover participant framework is replicated across all instances of the practice, though there are variations in the numeric ratios of witnesses to movers and in levels of responsibility of witnesses for a single event. In beginner groups, the leader of the group is usually the sole witness for the participants, who are the movers. Because beginners need to learn the complex psychological task of being conscious of their own feelings while observing another, beginners are only allowed to be “silent witnesses.” This means that as witnesses, they witness or observe the movement meditations, but they are not allowed to speak as witness during the sharing sections of the session. When leaders feel the movers have sufficiently understood the witness role and have internalized the witness stance, that is, display signs of compassion and ownership of feelings, they are allowed to act as verbal witnesses as well.

Ideology of the Witness–Mover Relationship

The witness–mover structure sets up a situation that maximizes freedom of expression. But in addition to this important role, the witness–mover framework functions as a symbol in and of itself. As a manifestation of a face-to-face encounter with another human being, it is a sign of authenticity itself. For members of the Authentic Movement community, the witness–mover relation is the opposite of impersonal mass communication in an over-civilized society, and, as such, is reminiscent of a more authentic communal past. Extending this antimodern fantasy of human connectedness, the witness–mover relation in Authentic Movement is modeled on two tropes of authentic interpersonal harmony—mother and child, and compassionate God and supplicant.

According to Janet Adler, who has been instrumental in explicitly defining the witness–mover relationship in Authentic Movement:

Being seen by another helps us to see ourselves differently. One of the first experiences in life is being seen by the parent. In Authentic Movement the mover’s need to be seen invites the complex task of trusting one’s witness and trusting oneself [Adler 1989].

Adler implies that Authentic Movement is a recapitulation of the birth experience, in which a “good” mother looks upon a child with acceptance and love. As a child needs the care of a compassionate mother, the birth of the authentic self requires a compassionate and loving witness.

Aileen Crow (2005), another prominent member of the Authentic Movement community, follows this line of thought and describes the witness as conveying to the mover, “I love you, love you, love you, as you are.” But even more than this, the good witness, like the good mother, not only loves her child unconditionally but is completely attuned to the mover. “As a witness, I am a mover...what the mover is experiencing will be in me. I am experiencing it and therefore, it’s there in me. So when the mover mentions it, my experience is there as well” (2005:6). The witness merges with the mover, implying a primal connection through a kinesthetic empathy, or *metakinesis*.⁵⁹ The development of this bodily attunement is a sign of authentic connection and according to this ideology “invites surrender,” thus facilitating free association, either

⁵⁹ Tanya Luhrman (2004) defines *metakinesis* as the way mind–body states are carried in the body so that they can be conveyed to interactants in a way that the states are uniquely and personally felt by each person. In her ethnography of evangelical Christian religious practice, Luhrmann shows how the process of *metakinesis* concretizes the feeling of the presence of God. In the case of Authentic Movement, *metakinesis* is an indexical sign of the primal union between witness and mover.

verbally or non-verbally. This authentic connection is the antithesis of projection and judgment. It is rather a simple and fundamental experience of “being with” another.

In addition to attunement, the good mother also protects her child. As a mother protects her child from harm, the witness protects the mover.

When the unknown is being explored through the arrival of and encounter with unconscious activity, there is often the element of fear and/or awe.” The presence of another in either case can be a response to the human need for safety, containment or balance [Adler 1999 [1987]:153].

Superimposed upon the image of mother and child, Adler envisions witnessing as a mystical experience of union. She conceives of witnessing as creating a “trans-egoic” union between witness and mover where “the seer and the seen are reduced to an inexpressible sizeless void which no mind can conceive...or any language describe... [where] subject and object become one” (Adler 1999[1992]:178–179). Adler claims that it is the attitude of witness which allows for transpersonal experience to occur because the witness experiences herself “beyond the boundaries of her personality as she shares the same energy field with the mover” (1999[1987]:148). In other words, Adler suggests that as the witness experiences kinesthetically in her own body what she is witnessing visually, she interprets this “metakinesis” or mirroring phenomenon as a transpersonal spiritual event. Ultimately, the sense of union with a compassionate other is “internalized” as an accepting and loving stance by witness or mover toward themselves. “Self witnessing is transformed after truly seeing another as she is” (1999[1987]:154). Adler describes this as like being “birthed by myself,” and what in Romantic philosophy and in the antimodernist utopian vision, is a return to a state of nature.

Voicing the Inner Critic and Inner Witness

Given the centrality of the need for acceptance, trust, and safety, Authentic Movement strictly structures how witnesses interact with movers, verbally and nonverbally. Leaders also try to mediate how the movers and witnesses look at themselves as well. But as I showed in my discussion on authority, Leslie cannot impose this interactional order on the group. To do so would disobey the community's adherence to the principle of originality (Taylor 1992), that each person knows what is best for herself. Participants must feel that they come to an accepting stance on their own. Toward this goal, Leslie engages the group in improvisational verbal play in which he gets the group to set the figure of the compassionate inner witness, a figure they are to emulate, against the figure of the menacing inner critic, that which they are to set aside. First, Leslie differentiates the two figures and the two different social realms in which each figure belongs, the inner witness in sites for contemplation and the inner critic in modern civilization.

(L-Leslie, G-Group)

1. *L: (ahmm)*
2. *one of the things that are interesting to me about,*
3. *about any kind of contemplative work meditative work is the inner witness people have talked about that,*
4. *this compassionate inner witness,*
5. *and um*
6. *and one of the things i noticed strongly in our culture*
7. *is an inner critic.*
8. *I don't know*
9. *do you any of you*
10. *[@*
11. *G:\NOOOO!! @@@@*
12. *L: not \you so so so,*
13. *the question is how to to to um,*

14. *for me is how to ease up on my inner critic,*
15. *uh,*
16. *you know there are lots of other characters,*
17. *over here,*
18. *and yet this the inner witness is one that I've **sort** tried to nourish and develop,*
19. *and Thict Not Hahn you know talks about,*
20. *you know we spent so much time nourishing the things that that that*
21. *in the garden you know that aren't going to produce anything*
22. *in our culture,*
23. *you know all the ads are going toward how to enhance the inner critic,*
24. *[G: hmm)*
25. *L: you know*
26. *[G: (mmmm)*
27. *L: how to say you're not enough,*
28. *and so to have something someway to not just counter that but at a deeper at a
deepest spiritual level,*
29. *to say I'm open to more of myself and and*
30. *have compassion for*
31. *all these different aspects,*
32. *the culture may not um support.*

Leslie definitely touches a note of familiarity, as he asks, knowingly, “Do any of you know the inner critic?” Leslie need not question the ontological status of their inner critics. Their existence is taken for granted and the group demonstrates their shared knowledge of the inner critic as they interrupt Leslie with a rousing round of laughter and back-channel “mmhmms,” breaking the usual turn-taking structure where participants only speaking in clearly differentiated turns. Leslie, with agreement from the group, frames the inner critic as a pervasive destructive force in the cultural “garden” where we are trying grow ourselves and then invokes antimodernist doctrine that we need to spend time developing and nurturing the counter to inner critic—the inner witness. But before he invokes the inner witness, he returns to the inner critic and asks them to reflect upon the nature of this character.

(P-Participant, L-Leslie, G-Group)

33. **L:** *so what does your inner critic say*
34. *what kinds of things does it say (2)*
35. *what's its voice?*
36. **P1:** *well mine was hhuuu i was about to sneeze but(0)*
37. **L:** *oh okay*
38. **P1:** *uh I do have lots of words at the tip of my tongue,*
39. *well things like (1)*
40. *umm (1)*
41. *like "that was dumb"*
42. **L:** *@ know that one.*
43. *that's one thing (laughter)*
44. **P2:** *"you could never do I could never do that" (0)*
45. **L:** *I could never do that yes selling yourself /short*
46. *yes others?*
47. **P3:** *"that's stu:pid."*
48. *that's si:lly.*
49. **L:** */silly*
50. **P3:** *silly stupid.*
51. **P4:** *"you shouldn't have said that" (@)*
52. **L:** *catches you a little bit /later*
53. **P4:** *\yeh*
54. **P5:** *"don't dare make a mistake,*
55. *so don't do it"*
56. **P6:** *"you must have been out of your mind" (1)*
57. **G:** *[~@*
58. **P6:** *"\and who really cares"*
59. **G:** *ah!*
60. **L:** *~and who really cares*
61. **P7:** *"you need to get all of this done"*
62. *»hurry up*
63. **P8:** *I'm sure it's been done befo:re*
64. **L:** *mm*
65. **P9:** *I'm such a ba;d wife*
66. *I'm such a ba:d wife*
67. *Teacher*
68. *wife*
69. *friend*
70. **L:** *[wow*
71. **P9:** *person (0)*
72. **P10:** *oooouuu*
73. **G:** *@*
74. **P4:** *shut up,*

75. */mother*

76. *G:/@*

Readily, the group gives voice to their inner demons who ridicule, rebuke, chastise, restrict, and impose guilt. The participants easily know how to voice the inner critic, validating Leslie's earlier mention that our culture has promoted the inner critic and that participants were here, to a great extent, to deal with this threatening voice. With a comedic tone to the verbal play, participants feel a release of tension as the true nature of these demons is revealed. In comedy, the community can all laugh together and through the theatrics, the group can deal with the realities of the everyday world (see also Kapferer 1986, 1991). Leslie responds empathically to the responses, repeating their remarks with an understanding tone. The dynamic exchange evidences a feeling of social sharedness that is not present during other verbal exchanges in the session.⁶⁰ The continuous latching and quick flow of the dialogue create a flood of information where the whole group builds a consensus about the inner critic. This conversation is not about individual idiosyncratic knowledge but about cultural knowledge.

Establishing a social consensus on the negativity of the inner critic, Leslie then strategically initiates the possibility of creative change, asking them to voice the figure of the inner witness, earlier typified as "compassionate," "accepting," and "forgiving."

77. *L:so what would an inner witness*

78. what **kind of** voice would that say to something we're doing (0)

79. *P'I:that's interesting*

⁶⁰ As I have mentioned in chapter 3, and will discuss later in this section, when participants give their narratives about their movement improvisations, there is no conversational-style exchange. Each person has a discrete turn to speak. Listeners show their respect of the unique personal experience of the movers and witnesses by not interrupting and by "owning" their own feelings.

80. *L*: say it
81. *P1*: \that's interesting
82. *L*: that's /interesting
83. so the curiosity
84. *P2*: keep going (0)
85. *L*: keep /going
86. /support
87. *P'3*: so how're you doing
88. *L*: let's see where that goes
89. *P'4*: how are you doing?
90. *L*: oh
91. sort a interest question
92. *P'5*: mmmm
93. Mmmm (1)
94. *L*: oh! @
95. [*P'5*: mmmm(0)
96. *P'6*: love wings
97. *L*: say that one again
98. *P'6*: love wings (4)
99. *L*: anything /else
100. *P'7*: \it's okay
101. *L*: it's /okay
102. *P'7*: it's okay
103. *L*: it's okay to /be \here
104. *P'8*: that's one way to do it
105. *L*: @ that's one way to do it
106. *G*:[@@
107. that's a critic (?) for ya no no
108. *G*:@@@
109. I'll give you the benefit of the doubt
110. [*G*@
111. *L*: so anyway you can play with this um
112. and and the invitation in this work is not to surgically remove the inner critic
113. can't do it anyway
114. or get rid of it just to witness it
115. notice what it does do
116. »just like you were doing
117. and just let it have a space
118. because it has a value
119. it does it it you know it probably's part of our survival has a lot of things that it's done for us over the years so
120. you can look at that witness that and you will discover important things about it and yet

- 121. not have it been the full
- 122. sway
- 123. the only
- 124. the only voice
- 125. in there
- 126. because there are lots more
- 127. but what the inner witness for me is like a like a
- 128. it's catches some of this uh possibility

In giving voice to the inner witness, the movers bring the transformative figure of inner witness to life in a way that it could be felt with the sense of immediacy Leslie was trying to establish. Leslie, at the same time, performs the compassionate witness, in words and in his manner, accepting all that they had to say. He employs the same technique of repeating the responses of the participants, but here also responds with metapragmatic descriptors of their dialogue. For example, “interesting,” “how are ya doing?” are ways of showing curiosity, interest, and support, ideals of the witness–mover stance.

The implicit message of this improvisational play is that to be able to be true to ourselves, participants have to quiet the voice of the inner critic, and bring in the voice of the inner witness. In turn, Leslie, as witness, is there to model an attitude, a compassionate stance that participants are to internalize, or to make their own. Leslie performs the role of witness and he builds an image of the witness throughout the day through propositional framing, instructing participants to “watch without judgment,” provide “a safe container” for the movers, “just experience,” “be present,” “just see what you are drawn to” “to notice what you notice ,” “look upon the movers as would a nurturing mother,” “let unconscious material come up.”

These propositional statements about the witness, juxtaposed with the experience of being watched, motivate an interpretation of being witnessed as the object of nurturance and acceptance. But as I stated at the beginning of this analysis, participant structures are mediated through a variety of semiotic phenomena and in Authentic Movement, in addition to repetitive propositional framing of the witness as anticritic/mother/compassionate being, time management and structured turn-taking, acts of deference, ways of seeing, and styles of speaking also mediate the witness–mover relationship.

The Performance of Witness

First, time and space are managed in a way that gives each participant equal yet special status in the group. Depending on the nature and time frame of a session, speakers are given set amounts of time to share their moving experiences. In general, the movers get to apportion their time between relaying their movement narratives and receiving a witness narrative. So, if they have five minutes to speak, they can choose how much of their five minutes they want to talk, and how much they will leave for the witness to speak. Where witnesses are not assigned to observe specific movers, both movers and witnesses will get equal time. This regimentation of turn-taking ensures that each speaker has an equal amount of time to share their experience. Though it would seem that this kind of time management is incongruent with the antimodernist sensibilities of Authentic Movement, the modern mechanization of time is reframed in terms of ensuring equal respect for each participant. The need for regimentation of the interactional text

supercedes the need to maintain the antimodernist regime. As Leslie explained, “it’s not rude, it’s like we appreciate it because it helps us all share.”

Other aspects of the interactional setting are also directed toward empowering the speaker. The group sits in a circle for all talking portions of the session, where each person sits in potential equal relation to a symbolic central space, representing the group container. Though Leslie ultimately supervises the interchange and at times interjects comments or questions between narratives, he also sits in the circle as an equal member of the group. At the same time that each person shares equal time and equal space when speaking, each speaker is center stage as performer. As stated, there is no interruption or conversational exchange as movers or witnesses perform their narratives. In addition, there is little nonverbal display from listeners during the narrative performances. While speakers, movers, and witnesses can often be very animated as they share their stories, the listeners, like witnesses, contain their own feelings and allow the speaker to be the focal point of the discourse. Other than a few head nods, and “uh huh’s” from Leslie, and these are few, the speaker is giving a solo performance.

The mover-witness participant framework is also mediated through regimentation of witnessing narratives. Many practitioners, for example, have adopted the use of percept language (or modified versions of percept language.) Percept language, developed by John Weir, leader in the Human Potential Movement, is based on the following ideology.

The purpose of the Percept orientation is to self-differentiate, to become more fully the unique person you are as you grow and develop with age. Percept suggests that people are not really interacting with a world “out there,” but rather, with our inner world of perceptions, which we project

and call “reality.”

Within Percept one person does not tell another person about that other person, because we believe that one person cannot truly know another person; we can only know ourselves. Since we believe that our percepts are truly unique to us, then I can never really know your percepts and you can never really know mine. I can never be you and you can never be me. You can only speak from your percepts and about the world as you create it. So when you speak about me, you are really speaking about the “me-in-you,” the me that you have created in your head. And when I speak about you, I am really speaking about the “you-in-me,” the you that I have created in my head. So I can’t tell you about you, only the way I have you be inside of me. And you can’t tell me about me, only the me that you have me be inside of you.

We don’t want to give the impression that the Percept language is the Percept orientation. Percept language is a vehicle that allows people to enter this different orientation. Eventually, one can actually live in the Percept orientation while speaking “regular” language.

We find it difficult to convey the profundity of Percept through the written word. We believe Percept is most easily understood through experiential learning and immersion into an environment where people speak nothing but Percept. This is how we learned Percept, and this is how we teach it. During a Percept training we create experiences that are designed to stimulate core issues for the participants. Many of the experiences are non-verbal and there is a good deal of emphasis on movement. The processing of these experiences is then done verbally-using the percept language.

[Percept Newsletter 2002]

To an extreme, Percept honors the individuality and subjectivity of each individual. It presupposes that the internal world of the individual is a private realm which ultimately is impenetrable to those outside, and in turn colors the lens through which the individual sees the world. In terms of the role of the witness in Authentic Movement and the trope of the empathic mother, Percept language is a way for the witness (mother) to show she can be connected without overwhelming, swallowing up, or projecting onto the mover (child). Like the good mother, the witness should attune to the mover, not overpower the mover. The good mother supports the child as a separate individual with its own feelings

and desires. Percept Language correspondingly reinforces radical subjectivity of the mover and witness through an extreme first person point of view. In witnessing narratives, for example, “I” is often used in place of second and third person pronouns. For instance, even if the witness is describing the movements and performances of the movers, she still uses “I” as a way of asserting the subjectivity of her observations. And in the event that the witness deploys the projective second person pronoun, there is very often a repair.

(L-Leslie, P-Participant)

1. **L:** *I was I was drawn to the (2)*
2. *several of the times when you were on the floor and did some*
3. *stretches that*
4. *that seemed delicious **to me my projection** was that they're (1)*
5. *kinesthetically delicious so that a few times*
6. *so that with the contact it was*
7. *um yeh*
8. *it was very simple*
9. ***in my story** it was nothing that had to be done*
10. *it was lovely **to me** that you don't know and that you don't need to know you know just to uh another human being there present that kind of presence through contact*
11. *and then somehow at the end there were*
12. *there were*
13. ***I don't know** if this was the*
14. *good for your soul*
15. **P:** [@
16. **L:** *but just there was just something that **felt good to me** as I watched you that was just like **my projection** was kind of an opening (0)*
17. *that's four minutes loud*
18. *breath*
19. *thank you*

Leslie continuously monitors his responses to the mover, making sure that he does not project his own feelings and associations onto the mover. Accordingly, he introduces his

response with the phrase “I was drawn to,” anchoring his words in his own subjectivity as separate from that of the mover. “I was drawn to” acts as a metapragmatic descriptor that asserts that the witness response is only the subjective experience of the witness, not necessarily a reflection of the mover’s experience. “I was drawn to” also demonstrates alignment between the witness and the mover. When the witness utters “I was drawn to” the witness mirrors the receptive stance taken during movement improvisation, “being moved.” As in the movement and witnessing experiences, movement and witnessing narratives are structured to create the sense that the significance of events are being given to rather than constructed by the participants. The desired receptive stance, as receivers of unconscious wisdom, is mirrored in the sentence structure of Leslie’s verbalizations. Specifically, Leslie places himself as receiver, stating repeatedly, “I was drawn to.”

Yet, the first person pronoun “I” is not the only way to perform the first person stance. Leslie uses several linguistic devices, first person possessives, first person direct object, and explicit remarks that he doesn’t know what the mover is feeling. For example, following “I was drawn to,” Leslie steps away from strict percept language, and deploys the second person pronoun, saying “when you were on the floor and did some stretches.” In strict Percept, the witness would ideally say “when I was on the floor and did some stretches,” owning that this was the witness’s perception, not necessarily what the mover was doing. Leslie, however, does not need to use Percept strictly to own his projections. He adeptly recovers from the second person mode with repairs deploying first person indirect and direct objects. Describing the mover’s performance as “lovely,” Leslie qualifies his evaluation as his own, mentioning this is what the movement was “to me. “

As he describes what he remembers or was “drawn to” in the mover’s performance, Leslie intersperses this pattern of following use of second and third person propositions with various kinds of repairs throughout the narrative. The pattern is evident in other witness responses as well.

1. **L:** *would you like a/ response*
2. **P:** *you can*
3. **L:** *only if you want*
4. **P:** *go ahead*
5. **L:** *okay*
6. *my response to the wall part*
7. *going over (14) (Leslie walks over to the area of the wall where the participant was meditating)*
8. *it had some sense of prostration and and when it turned this way (he demonstrates)*
9. *I **in my fantasy** the there were tears **the words came to my mind zen tears***
10. *did I did think of that facing away(4)*
11. *and this **I imagined this to be** uh relaxed and*
12. *not resignation so much as just acceptance,*
13. *some kind of acceptance whatever that other*
14. *was just sort of being there*

Leslie’s response is about what “moved” him. Even though he discovers a synchronicity between himself and this participant (like Leslie, the participant had just also associated her improvisation with zen meditation) he recognizes that his responses are about him, not about the participant. *He* had the sense of prostration. It was *his* fantasy that there were zen tears. *He* imagined this to be about relaxation, not resignation. The world from this point of view is, in essence, completely subjective. Percept language makes the first person point of view the core organizing principle of the narrative and this reinforces the phenomenological sense that each person is separate and unique and that the private imagined world is the more important context for the authentic self.

Yet, as narrative performances tend toward radical subjectivity, Leslie wards off the danger that this subjectivity would create distance and alienation between mover and witness. While narratives foreground the sacred uniqueness of each person, they simultaneously demonstrate respect and understanding that is crucial in maintaining an atmosphere of acceptance and support.

In the first round of narrative performances in lieu of the witness response, Leslie suggests that following each narrative, the rest of the group honor the speaker by performing a ritual gesture—placing the palms of their hands together, as in prayer, and lightly bows their heads in the direction of the speaker. This motion, reminiscent of a Japanese greeting or the movement pattern associated with saying “amen” at the end of a prayer, is a way to honor the speaker. In other words, listeners express “faith” in the speaker’s assertions and publicly acknowledge the authenticity and truth of the speaker’s sentiments. In turn, speakers can feel acceptance and respect.

Acceptance and support are also part of the interactional text in witness narratives. Even as Leslie speaks from a first person point of view, he demonstrates mutuality and attunement through other forms of communication, mainly through body movement. In fact, as much as witness responses project respect for the privacy and uniqueness of the mover’s subjective experience, performances to the same extent emphasize the primal empathic connection between mover and witness. And it is no accident that attunement is mediated through nonverbal modes of communication. As mother and child first relate to each other through smell, vision, touch, sound, gesture,

and movement, mover and witness, in part, return to this pre-verbal state to form a connection with one another, a relationship iconic of authentic union.

Thus, as Leslie narrates his witness response, he also performs pieces of the movement performance that he “was drawn to,” as shown in Speech/Movement Transcript 1 on the following page. Leslie’s narrative is not merely a retelling of a past memory, it is an embodied enactment of *his* experience of the mover. The narrative evolves in the moment where pieces of her improvisation are woven into a story they can co-construct. Like mother and child, they can attune to each other’s rhythms and sensibilities (Stern 1985). As he performs her movements, mirroring the kinesthetic quality of her previous performance, Leslie establishes an alignment with the mover by mirroring the qualitative character of her performance.

He reflects the phrasing of her twists and turns, the force of which come intensely at the bottom of the movement phrase. He mirrors the moments of lightness and sustainment as he describes the sensuous and sinuous quality of her motion. He does not need to show he knows what she was feeling or thinking, but that he can experience a kinesthetic resonance with her.

Speech/Movement Transcript 1

Speech

1. *do you want a response?*
2. *sure*
3. *can I show a /movement ?*
4. *that /alright?*
5. *is there a /minute left?*
6. *one minute left*
- 7.
8. *I was **I was drawn to** some of those spiraling (1)*
9. *oh yeh those slapping kind of thing*
10. ***I was thinking** of the tai chi door to life or something like that*
11. *and this was like opening it*
12. *or something*
13. *(ahhhh) (3)*
14. *and then **I was drawn to** the*
15. *to the connection with the other mover*
16. *and uh feet to feet was*
17. *playfulness sense of playfulness which was which was **in my story** it just a*
18. *the fun of it*
19. *and the*
20. *and the tactility of just feet*
21. *playing with feet*
22. *and then some of that sense of curling up that you were talking about was ended up **as I recall** just as a kind of a (1)*
23. *something*
24. *~that **for me** was (3)*
25. *~just some kind of a sinuous sensuous*
26. ***I thought of my association** was kind of integration*
27. *(loud breath) (2)*
28. *~something like that did you is that*

Movement

Stands up

Pointing toes. moves his watch with foot
Leslie performing movements derived by the mover's improvisation but only partial imitation

Leslie stands with feet hip width apart; he twists his torso side to side and allows his arms to follow the flow of the movement of the torso so that as he twists his torso to the left, his right arm crosses the front of his body and vice versa. He begins with an even tempo, characterized by free flowing quality; however after a few turns the phrasing changes to a more impactful phrasing with more strength, quickness, and bound flow—as this begins, the mover, with a tone of surprise, says, “oh yeh I remember that”

He continues the twisting of the torso but after mentioning the “tai chi,” the quality changes again—he slows down and adds softness to movement, like tai chi.

He stops moving after taking a deep breath
With arms at his side, head bowed down and eyes closed, he steps forward

There is a change from predominance of postural movement to gestural movement.

As he speaks of connection, he positions his palms toward one another

Then with fingers pursed pointing at one another, the predominant quality changes to one of quickness; suddenly he stops and as he stops, the rest of his body twinges, like a quick spasm, as he begins to talk about playfulness.

Repeat hand-pointing

He bends at knees, crouches torso over upper legs, squats low and then again twists side to side in figure eight motion, with very smooth phrasing

He completes this phrase with a deep breath, stands erect and then squats down, to a seated position.

He gestures toward mover with his hands.

The mover responds as if Leslie connected to something in her. He reminds her of an aspect of her performance that she did not readily recollect, and she is animated by this.

(P-participant, L- Leslie)

1. *P: yeh is was somehow um pressing into space(0)*
2. *L: oh I can hmm hmm yes*
3. *P: I mean my body had had the feeling of kind of a a cat like*
4. *the space right there*
5. *I was leaning into space each time (0)*
6. *L: yeh hmmm hmm*
7. *so it wasn't just like it was my own thing it was like relating to other in that*
8. *interesting*
9. *in that way kind of **thank you for that** cause this kind of ended up being kind of feeling of wanting to hu I mean it's really like kind of like hurting myself even it got to that place like just want ta you know you know which is part of the deal laugh part of the trip you know it's like how could I have anyway so it I mean it it was a way that it just bounced off so that it didn't it just got that little edge to it and then it kind of changed so that was that was interesting **thank you for reminding me***
10. *L: yeh thank you thank you so let's honor the stories thank you*

The mover here meanders through a series of sensations and images. She is mirroring the quality of Leslie's narrative, providing a series of kinesthetic images and affective states. Leslie is with her as she takes over the narrative, providing backchannel responses as she starts to speak. Mover and witness are in alignment, both being moved by impulses and events. Leslie has similar encounters with other participants.

1. *L: yeh I had fun **just** seeing that*
2. *just a lot of it seemed like a lot of*
3. *activity in the shoulder girdle as well as the extension so I was I was just um I was **kind** of activated by just imagining doing that movement*
4. *and then the other part that came to me was*
5. *was the*
6. *the head to head contact*
7. *it seemed both very intimate*
8. *yet playful*

9. *and uh*
10. *something about the skull to skull that was*
11. [**P**]: *yeh that was great*
12. *moving me*
13. [**P**]: *I forgot about that*
14. *and then at some point the other mover just went fffthh*
15. *I could see his legs and felt his I mean **this is me playing with birth rebirth** and all that and just sort of suddenly there was this shooting creature coming between your*
16. *between your legs*
17. **P**: *thanks*

Leslie speaks as if he were moving. “By just imagining” he was activated. Like the mover, “things come to [him]” and at one point, as he sees the other mover’s legs he says he “felt” them. He does not complete this thought as he stops himself to qualify his experience as “me playing with birth rebirth,” but it is clear that what he was perceiving visually he was also feeling kinesthetically. He speaks as if he were not only an observer but a mover also. In doing so, he creates an alignment between the part of himself that is “being moved” and the part of the mover’s self that was “being moved” —two people experiencing the movement together. Though each person is having their own subjective experience, together they are both “drawn to” movements, together they are surrendering to the flow of the performance, and this shared focus keeps them in alignment with one another. Affective attunement and kinesthetic resonance then further heighten the connection. This has the effect of making the experience appear to be intersubjective at the phenomenological level and the two subjective worlds become indexically linked. As such, the mover feels heard, validated, supported and accepted.

Conclusion

The experience of the authentic self, even that private, internal, radically subjective self of modernity, is not really an escape into a subjective and private world. It is utterly and completely a social process. Self-narratives are always performed in the presence of a witness—real or imagined—and it is in transforming or shaping our audience of witnesses—real or imagined—that we can find what we consider authentic. With this in mind, I argue that the cumulative construction of the interactional text, that is, the development of a participant structure characterized by perspectival alignments felt as a phenomenological connection at the level of the body is a determinant factor in validating Authentic Movement as a performance of authenticity. However, it is crucial to understand that there is no necessary natural link between kinesthetic resonance and authenticity. The connection between the two is mediated. The kinesthetic resonance that is foregrounded in the witness narratives directly points to antimodernist discourses that describe a pre-verbal state as the true state of nature of man. Thus, though it would seem that a radically subjective experience of the body is the ultimate validation of the principle of originality, (to a some extent this may be true, as we each have idiosyncratic ways of being in the world), subjectivity insofar as it is experienced in body movement is intelligible as authentic insofar as it is an instance of larger social discourses in play.

Similar to Agha's (2007) analysis of mass-mediated modes of semiosis,⁶¹ the authentic

⁶¹ Agha (2007:325) explains, "The deeper irony is that the sense of self that gets incorporated through these forms of participation may well be a sense of the self as autonomous of such acts of communication, so that everyone exposed to common representations can end up with the same view of his or her radical uniqueness, and this ideological stance can obscure the ways in which one's sense of self is aligned to those of others."

sense of self that participants experience in Authentic Movement is one that is presumed to be free of mediation, even though the discovery of this experience of self requires participation in semiotically mediated encounters with others. Authenticity requires an authenticator.

Performances of Authenticity

Poetics of Self and Othering

After a season of dormancy, gestating nature rises into new life. We will celebrate this time of rejuvenation and rebirth by reflection on and expression of our transitions. Through guided warm-ups, authentic movement/ contemplative dance, being in nature and working with art media we will explore the archetypes of this cycle [Workshop Advertisement].

Rebirth and Rejuvenation—the title of this workshop—calls to mind to the yearnings of bohemian counterculture seeking reprieve from “modern unreality.” Authentic Movement is rooted in the urban elite antimodern quest for the authentic self, typified by the person who is at one with nature, who can openly express feelings, knows her body, seeks self-knowledge, and can find wisdom and wholeness in the most simple sensation. Like most antimodern practices, Authentic Movement also finds its source of redemption in a more “natural” and exotic other. Authentic Movement’s sources of inspiration—Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, Martha Graham—found their muses in Greek, Indian and Native American cultures. Mary Whitehouse, the founder of Authentic

Movement, and her mentor Carl Jung, also discovered a source of universal truth in the exotic and “primitive.” Authentic Movement’s social imaginary is represented by the following quotation:

In the beginning there was not the word, rather there was the symbolic action—a union of body and psyche. In the beginning dance was the sacred language through which we communed and communicated with the vast unknown. In the earliest times the dancer was both healer and priest...As clarity, objective and differentiation were developed and given highest value, the Moon Goddess, who seeks union, wholeness, completion, was sacrificed [Chodorow 1999[1984]:267]

Authentic Movement imagines a mythic time before language, when the capacity of dance to transform was honored and respected—a time and place the Authentic Movement community envisions as “primitive” societies with moon goddesses and shamanic dances. This mythic space stands in stark contrast to modern society where bodily knowledge is marginalized and where the voices of practitioners of Authentic Movement are little heard. “Where did it all go?,” Mary Whitehouse grieves over the modern condition (Whitehouse 1999 [1956]: 33). In this way, Authentic Movement is a rejection of the present and a desire for the other where by incorporating the imagined other in performance practitioners gain a sense of empowerment and embark on their antimodern quest.

But this quest for authenticity, though seemingly noble, can sometimes miss the social and political positioning of this pursuit. Authentic Movement often misrepresents authenticity as a transcendent object and a province of all humanity, disregarding its cultural, social, and historical formation. Note the following advertisement:

Portals to the Self: Myth and Movement by the Sea, at Isla Mujeres,

Mexico. Experienced therapists and inspiring guides, are offering a retreat for women on Isla Mujeres, “Island of Women”, historically a place for healing rituals among the Mayan peoples. Authentic Movement, story telling, writing, dream work, singing and dancing will serve as our sources and provide the structures to help us remember past body stories and find the stories moving in us now. . . . together we create a circle of compassion and support by the sea [Advertisement]

Women are invited to partake of the glories of the ancient Maya. Like the Mayan women, these travelers can reenact archetypal rites of womanhood on this island. What this invitation, however, neglects to tell us is that after the Spanish conquest, this island was a place where pirates kept their women and served as the home of slave traders (<http://www.isla-mujeres.net/history.htm>). Even at present, the native peoples that clean, cook, and tend to the visitors of Isla Mujeres do not obtain the same social status as the visitors. The island is a place of free expression but for some.

I do not question the Authentic Movement community’s belief in the power of dance to transform. Quite the contrary, embodiment through dance is a powerful way that the intelligible is made sensible in ritual (Cowan 1990, Feld 1982, Friedson 1996, Reed 1998; Royce 1977; Schieffelin 1976). But, as I have shown in chapter 3, dance as therapy in the U.S. is a historically situated phenomenon and the alignment of modern therapeutic dance practices with ancient societies is a half-truth. The alliance between the two is a result of incorporation and appropriation rather than common ancestry. Authentic Movement has borrowed and adapted philosophies, psychologies, ceremonial practices, exercises, ritual artifacts, and sacred spaces from western and nonwestern traditions in constructing the “authentic.” The Authentic Movement Journal is decorated with Japanese calligraphy, movement sessions are opened and closed with the chiming of

Tibetan bells, the witness stands as both distant analyst and a compassionate spiritual guide, improvisations are flavored with an Asian aesthetic, narratives are performed as confessions, soliloquys, and witnessing haikus. This begs the questions, then, how do these cultural icons of authenticity come to be understood as universal symbols, and how do they come to be convincingly experienced as part of the authentic self?

My argument is that the authentic “other” is able to be naturalized and owned as Self because while images of the “other” form the *background* of the movement experience, the personal experience of the body itself, a salient discourse of authenticity, is placed in the foreground. The implicit message in Authentic Movement is that discovering oneself through kinesthesia is more natural, primitive, animal-like, fundamental, and thus, more authentic. As noted earlier, Leslie, as guide, “indirectly” directs participants to attend to sensations of the body as a more authentic way of knowing the world. The participant framework of witness and mover also directs attention to bodily attunement between self and other as a sign of primal human connection. Leslie grounds ideas and images of authenticity in the personal experiences of participants, and thus, diverts attention away from their social construction.

For example, at the beginning of the day-long session when Leslie introduces and the themes of rebirth and rejuvenation, he simultaneously refers to these themes as part of a universally symbolic process of self-development *and* as personally meaningful images in peoples’ lives. Specifically, he asks participants what these themes mean to them and what their unique associations are to rebirth and rejuvenation. He has them reference their own personal knowledge and experience to position these abstract concepts in their social

and cultural space. He does not impose meaning but through a process of give-and-take, Leslie and the group co-construct a story of hope and renewal. As Schieffelin (1985) explains, symbols are effective less because they communicate meaning but more because through performance meanings are formulated in social rather than cognitive space. Symbols are not abstract concepts but are made meaningful through a process of social consensus.

1. *L: ...today's theme is you know is you know um rebirth and rejuvenation*
2. *and uh I don't know how that is for you but it certainly seemed to fit in*
3. *with the season*
4. *and with the day*
5. *uh and*
6. *with the time of of of*
7. *our own cycles*
8. *and*
9. *I think of um...*
10. *attuning to seasons in in in the yearlong program and other programs we go*
11. *outside we probably won't go outside today but uh*
12. *we will go outside every weekend just to sort of mark the season*
13. *attune to the season*
14. *just to mark the sort of whatever to the space we're in*
15. *and there's a sense in which that kind of attunement is uh is uhis not*
16. *always easy to do*
17. *in this kind of in our culture,*
18. *so to even pay attention to that*
19. *so that with this theme of rejuvenation and rebirth it seems to me that it*
20. *that it has a lot of*
21. *amplifications*
22. *and and um*
23. *resonances at a lot of different levels and*
24. *I mention the word archetype*
25. *in the in the*
26. *set*
27. *set*
28. *the write up*
29. *and I think of*
30. *and what archetypes do you think of related to this this theme*
31. *PI: The spring theme? (0)*
32. *L: Yeh*

31. *spring*
 32. *rebirth (0)*
 33. **P1:** *Persephone, Demeter(0)*
 34. **L:** */yea*
 35. *Persephone Demeter do people know that /story*
 36. *the the the mother earth whose daughter was whisked away by Hades into the underworld*
 37. *she just wiped everything out basically no flowers no nothing for a while*
 38. *so until she renegotiated that whole*
 39. *relationship and got the*
 40. *her daughter to come*
 41. *[*2renegotiated @ (0)*
 42. *she did she was heavy handed*
 43. *and got the possibility of*
 44. *of Persephone coming up every spring*
 45. *and being up for three seasons and then going under*
 46. *under*
 47. *to the underworld for that*
 48. *for that winter season*
 49. *so we're coming out of that winter*
 50. *um*
 51. *death*
 52. *and into a kind of rebirth resurrection*
 53. *other archetypes that you associate with this/(0)*
 54. *Season*
 55. **P2:** *[Like an egg (0)*
 56. **B:** *Pardon (0)*
 57. **P2:** *Like an egg/(0)*
 58. *Like an !egg/*
 59. *Yea*
 60. *so that sort of*
 61. *What is that for you*
 62. **P3:** *Potential (1)*
 63. **P4:** *Birth (1)*
 64. **L:** *~~Yea (1)*
 65. **P5:** *regeneration*
 66. **P6:** *fertility*
 67. **L:** *fertility*
 68. *yea*
 69. *So there a lot of things that uh*
 70. *sort of emerge*
 71. *in ancient pagan rituals that get merged with uh*
 72. *Christian Easter*
 73. *and then of course »the archetypes of death and resurrection*

74. *in that story and practice and then um*
75. *and then there's /Passover \in that same week/*
76. */deliverance being passed over being saved*
77. *from destruction*
78. *freedom (0)*
79. *freedom (1)*
80. *dayanu*
81. *just one deliverance of us and that would have been enough*
82. *but then you did this ~and this*
83. *so the so the*
84. *archetype of a of a number of things that that rem:ind us of that new life new*
→ birth ~ rebirth
85. *!Rejuvenation*
86. *what does that word (1)*
87. *make you think of (0)*
88. **P7:Water**
89. **L:/Water**
90. **P8:Refreshment**
91. **L: /Refreshment**
92. **P9:Sleep**
93. **L: what?**
94. **P9:Sleep**
95. **L: !sleep @**
96. *~mother of two young kids(0)*
97. *this is the mother talking @*
98. **P10: wisdom**
99. *yesterday I saw groundhogs*
100. */wow*
101. *on the side of road*
102. *eating*
103. *so I thought things « look really good @ woken up*
104. *yeh we have two huge willow trees*
105. *and we have \porcupines that come every night and eat the the green sprigs*
and you know in the morning we see them all over the ground they sort of
prune the tree a little bit and have a snack right/
106. **L: so a lot of things waking up and then this city !am\azing evidently in the**
last couple of days the blossoms are just come froth so (0)
107. **P11: Rejuvenation has color for me**
108. **L: !Color ~yea**
109. **P11:~color yea**
110. **L:Now juven juvenile or juven you know or youth for me I want to be clear**
I'm not talking about the the the obsession with youth that our culture has
111. *that kind of looking younger ~all that*
112. *but the sense that there is a child within us*

113. *there is youth within us and there's uh*
 114. *there is a constant different ways and we'll explore some of this during the day ways of*
 115. *feeling*
 116. *feeling uh (1)*
 117. *!energized or re reconnected to our*
 118. *to that kind of open spontaneous energy and !that's what this work does that*
 119. *a lot of*
 120. *!in fact we were talking at dinner last night that this this practice will keep you young*
 121. *keep you*
 122. *from aging (0)*
 123. *@*
 124. *[no well maybe who knows (0)*
 125. **P12:** *Like sap flowing*
 126. **L:** *!Sap flowing*
 127. *right ~ right (0)*
 128. **P13:** *I like the word uh*
 129. *Incuba/tion*
 130. *you know before the rebirth*
 131. *too*
 132. *that there's that*
 133. *festering*
 134. *swelling you know um*
 135. *then shooooo*
 136. **L:** *yea (1)*
 137. *Some of these you have move right/*
 138. *it's hard to*
 139. *get the words so you'll get to do that (0)*
 140. **P14:** *I wanted to add the word Shedding (0)*
 141. **L:** *Shedding (0)*
 142. *Yea I feel the impulse to clean and toss things you know*
 143. *get clear*
 144. *pick up the socks*
 145. **P15:** *I like the word sprout*
 146. **L:** *Sprout*
 147. **P15:** *Sprouting (note prosody)*
 148. **L:** *~Sprouting (2)*
 149. *The other word that comes to me*
 150. *I mentioned it in the write up was the word transitions*
 151. *I'd like to invite us*
 152. *to maybe not just arche mm archetypal level necessarily*
 153. *but meta/phorical level*
 154. *that that*

155. *all these*
 156. *words and images of spring uh*
 157. *can be just a*
 158. *mark of*
 159. *!any kind of transition*
 160. *that you're in the midst of*
 161. *that you can track today and*
 162. *see if this metaphor relates to it or the other way around the other seasons →*
but but for me cycle of year uh
 163. *Dina and I did year long class in which we observed every*
 164. *ritual that took place during the it was the ninth month period*
 165. *so that we were marking the seasons and the rituals from religions around the*
*world so that we were noticing how how in that **cyclical** way of marking time*
 166. *you get to **re-experience** those metaphors each year*
 167. *you get to access them*
 168. *you get to embody them*
 169. *and and for me that seems like a movement toward wholeness (1)*
 170. *because those are aspects of us too when we're looking at the world*
 171. *so transitions so notice any transitions that you have (0)*
 172. *Clear vision creating making plans have a vision for yourself energy's going*
/up
 173. *[uh*
 174. *and it's going out like a tree so it's like setting a goal and actually having*
 175. *a vision for something in the future whereas in the winter*
 176. *you don't see any possibility*
 177. *and then spring is like oohhh*
 178. *I can see something out there a possibility for something for myself*
 179. *well thank you*

In contrast to the highly structured sharing encounters following the movement meditations, this opening conversation is a fluid, playful, and animated interchange on rebirth and rejuvenation. Participants form a chorus of voices, sometimes overlapping and following one another without pause or reflection, demonstrating alignment with the antimodern fascination with myth and nature as sources of authenticity.

Following Leslie's lead, participants reflect upon rebirth and rejuvenation as a metaphor of self-transformation, wherein "words and images of spring uh can be just a

mark of any kind of transition.” They envision rebirth and rejuvenation as the story of Persephone and Demeter (33–35), an egg (55), potential (62), fertility (66), Easter (72), Passover (75–83), water (88–89), refreshment (90–91), sleep (94–97), groundhogs in spring (99–102). Leslie elaborates on the myth of Persephone and Demeter (33–35), intimating that like the earth, these participants too can use Authentic Movement to find renewal and hope from times of emptiness and dormancy. They can be like an egg that embodies potential for transformation. Rejuvenation is color (107–110), spontaneous energy (118), sap flowing (126), incubation (129), festering (133), swelling (134), sprouting or more truly, “sprouting (146–148).” Rejuvenation is also about tapping into the child within us (112), not as part of the cultural obsession with youth and looking young but as a source of spiritual renewal. Even more authentic, rejuvenation is beyond words, like “shoo (135)” “some of these you have to move” (137). Forging consensus by eliciting responses from the group rather than through lecturing and imposition, participants take ownership over these images. The terms and categories might be part of widely circulating discourses of authenticity but they feel, as Gilmore and Pine (2007) explain in marketing, like they are unique and that these images speak directly to them. The icons of authenticity are of their own construction, not that of the “other.”

Authentic Movement works on two levels, through propositional framing of the practice as more true to human nature and through enacting this version of reality. Leslie centers the thematic content and practice in antimodernist sensibilities, positioning himself and the practice in opposition to popular culture. He argues that the order of reality accessed in Authentic Movement is not a part of popular culture and suggests that

it is a reality of a special kind—one that moves through the world through energetic “amplifications” and “resonances,” rather than through ordinary social discourse. But more significantly, as Leslie explicitly speaks about the contrasts of Authentic Movement from more superficial aspects of everyday life, he also interacts with the group differently than he would in the everyday world. Returning to my argument, he foregrounds the personal self as the embodied self. Accordingly, as he and the group are playful, sensual, contemplative, and communicate through movement rather than through words they perform a more authentic self. By foregrounding the nonverbal aspects of communication in movement and narrative performances (which are deemed to be a more honest form of communication), Leslie and the others authenticate the practice as authentic.

But in addition to feeling like they themselves are the creative forces in their own lives, participants must also feel like they are part of something larger than themselves. These icons of authenticity must not just belong to them but part of a larger order. In tune with this concern, at the same time that the group grounds the concepts in their own embodied knowledge (Csordas 1994), Leslie also guides the group back and forth from the personal to the transcendent. In particular, he asserts that the actions that will be performed on this day are meaningful in relation to the events in the larger context of the natural world. They “fit in with the seasons” “with the day and with “time of...our own cycles” (lines 10–12). These performances are part of the many important transitions in our lives and more significantly, part of the natural world from which modern society has taken them. Leslie brings into play what Fernandez (1986) calls the “return to the whole.” Rituals, Fernandez claims, create the feeling that all actions and events are part of a

higher order of reality. In this way, Leslie presents a remedy for the “lightness of being” that plagues modern society. By framing unique and idiosyncratic performances in Authentic Movement as simultaneously personal and universal, he enables participants to simultaneously feel they are the architects of their own lives, but also part of something larger than themselves. In particular, as Authentic Movement facilitates a lived experience in which the mover experiences the body as if it is being moved by a force that is emanating from inside the body, the force is to be understood as coming from both the personal and *collective* unconscious. In this way, icons of authenticity are both personal and transcendent. Yet, subjectivity insofar as it is experienced in body movement is intelligible as authentic insofar as it also points to socially circulating discourses of authenticity.

Performances of Authenticity: Ineffability, Nature, Emotions, and the Body

As stated, underlying the philosophy of Authentic Movement is the idea that free improvisational dance reflects a truth of the self, whereas verbalizations are constructed, planned, and potentially artificial reflections of the self. “*Dance is movement, movement is life, dance is life....only words can lie, represent that which is not. Dance is. Dance is honest.*” It follows that practitioners consider performances (even narratives) more authentic when performances downplay their semantic aspect. In other words, it is the relative unintelligibility of improvisational performances which makes them intelligible as authentic; as the performance and witnessing of these types of movement, and sometimes nonverbal sounding performances, engenders a sense of mystery and awe and

a sense that words cannot adequately represent such an experience, the movers and witnesses are likely to interpret this as authentic. Foregrounding body movement, which in itself has little denotational force on its own, thus, directs attention to the sense of mysteriousness and unintelligibility that is associated with authenticity.

Yet, it is not that unintelligibility in and of itself is a return to a state of authentic consciousness. Unintelligibility can only function as an icon of authenticity under certain conditions. If all signs were maximally unintelligible, the experience would end up meaning nothing. Participants would have no grounding or point of reference with which to make sense of the experience. It would be like having a map but not knowing where you are on the map. Without a point of origin, the map serves little purpose. Similarly, unintelligibility might be iconic of authenticity but without an index or discourse (symbol) with which to interpret the experience as authentic, unintelligibility cannot function as a sign of authenticity. In particular, the ineffability of the body movement experience in Authentic Movement is intelligible as authentic when the iconicity or feeling of authenticity is both sign and metasign—it points to itself as authentic and is combined with other indexical and symbolic signs of authenticity. Now, this indexicality and symbolism need not be obvious to the participants or stated explicitly. In fact, by making the indexical and symbolic aspects of performance implicit, participants are less likely to notice the constructed nature of authenticity.

For example, as Leslie and others direct attention to the body experience as the source of information about the self, they simultaneously point to discourses that relate this sensuality to authenticity. The following narrative illustrates this point.

1. *my experience*
2. *was in many ways*
3. *also felt*
4. *just physical @*
5. *um I (2)*
6. *felt like I was checking in with different parts of my /body*
7. *and particularly my s:oreness*
8. *and my ~tightness*
9. *in my back, in my spine, in my hips, in my head, in my neck, and my face and*
10. *in my fingers*
11. *and it felt to me like that they were speaking to me in different ways*
12. *at different times so at times it*
13. *felt a bit fragmented and then*
14. *and then*
15. *it kind of*
16. *it was like they were just \talking*
17. *and I*
18. *was \listening*
19. *and and allowing the feeling of soreness to come and and*
20. *speak to me*

Body sensation is at the center of this narrative. In fact this narrative seems to be only about sensation, not relating movement patterns to archetypal themes or to personal issues at all. However, simply by indexing the body as the focus of her experience, she simultaneously points to culturally- salient discourses of the self that associate indulgence in sensation with authenticity. As feminist scholar Mary Buhle (1998) explains, “being in the body” is one primary way for women to assert their freedom of self-expression (see chapter 3). Leslie reinforces this value when later in the day he says that “simple sensation is equally valuable” as spiritual or mythical experiences. This participant does not need to explicitly state, “I am being true to myself because I am experiencing my body.” She performs this free and sensual persona implicitly in her movement and narrative. As mover, she concentrates deeply on the sensations in her body as she curls

her body into a ball or sits with legs crossed, shifting her weight smoothly from side to side. She is not restricted and not afraid to feel her body. Periodically she shakes and twists and turns. Yet she is quiet and introverted. She is performing “not performing.” She is not stereotypically “showing” her sensuality to others. Her focus remains private, and she performs as if it is for her own benefit (which it very well may be, that is not the issue). As narrator, she calls attention to her internal focus in her narration, recounting how she was attuned to herself and that she was “checking in” and “listened” to her body “speaking to [her] in different ways,” and did not force herself to act outside the needs of the body.

Her performance of “being in her body” recalls a number of heroic images of women in popular culture. For instance, her performance calls forth the female spa-goer, “the heroine of her own adventure” (Slyomovic 1993: 50), or the more recent heroine of the best-selling *Eat, Pray, Love*. Elizabeth Gilbert, the heroine of this novel, takes a “voyage of self-discovery” to “to explore the art of pleasure in Italy, the art of devotion in India, and in Indonesia, the art of balancing the two” (Gilbert 2006:30). Women’s need to find pleasure is a widely circulating and recognizable discourse, so that even narratives that explicitly speak only of sensation implicitly point to cultural discourses of authenticity as sources of the self.

With the body as the center of attention, movement and narrative performances also draw attention to nature as a source of authentic experience, also a culturally-salient discourse of authenticity. As shown in chapter 3, the idea that civilization has drawn people away from their connection to the natural world has been a strong influence in

antimodernist discourse in the U.S., especially in early modern dance. The idealization of nature as source of freedom was never so clear (and ironic) as in the romantic discourse from the urbane Isadora Duncan.

The movement of the free animals and birds remains always in correspondence to their nature, the necessities and wants for that nature, and its correspondence to the earth nature. It is only when you put free animals under false restrictions that they lose the power of moving in harmony with nature and adopt a movement expressive of the restrictions placed about them. So it has been with civilized man [Ruyter 1979: 50].

Duncan finds hope and redemption in nature and, given the strong influence she and other early modern dancers had on Mary Whitehouse, nature as a trope of authenticity is a pervasive sentiment in Authentic Movement. This was evident even at the outset of this session, in the associations to rebirth and rejuvenation, and in the associations to the guided improvisation.

“the image that I had the last image that I had was of a wave on the shore coming to the shore always coming again and again to the shore”

“my image was a waterfall, arriving, a mountain waterfall that I sat and had lunch by one day”

“I had this image of being out in the universe all the subatomic particles and constellations just like the big bang just all coming together”

“my image um sort of the crevices you know like the cracking of the shell for me it was the in between the cracking of the surface where the sprout starts to breath and um that possibility or potential in those cracks”

Leslie also revisits the discourse of nature as a source of authenticity several times throughout the day. For instance, Leslie introduces each activity with a reading of a poem and several of these poems including the “Song of Solomon” and Mary Oliver’s “Wild Geese” that invoke the call to nature as a source of the authentic self. His reading of the

“Song of Solomon,” in particular, illustrates how Leslie brings together body, self, nature, and spirit.

1. *Rise up/ my love\.*
2. *my fair one...*
3. *and come away...*
4. *For lo the winter is past,*
5. *the rain is over and gone;*
6. *The flowers appear on the earth*
7. *the time of the singing of birds is come*
8. *and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land*
9. *the fig tree..*
10. *put forth her green figs..*
11. *and the vines with the tender grape*
12. *give a good smell...*
13. *arise my love*
14. *my fair one*
15. *come away..*
16. *oh my dove*
17. *thou art..*
18. *clefts of the rock and the secret places of stairs let me see thy countenance*
19. *let me hear thy voice*
20. *for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely*

The poem voices a longing to take reprieve from winter and find personal renewal in spring when the “flowers appear,” the birds sing, and the senses are stimulated with sounds of turtles, visions of fig trees, and the scents of grape vines.

Obviously, poems are polysemic and elicit more than one interpretation.

Nevertheless, the repetition of images of nature in Leslie’s descriptions of Authentic Movement classes, in his witnessing narratives, and in his poetry reading directs attention and intensifies the propositional force of the idea that nature is a resource for finding the authentic self. The reproduction of images of nature in participant narratives (e.g., mountain waterfalls and waves coming to the shore) is evidence that the group is aligned

with this Romantic sensibility toward nature. Most relevant, however, is that participants perceive that these images of nature as arising “naturally” from their movement improvisations such that the discourses of the body and nature are mutually reinforcing. As the association of the movement with nature strengthens the interpretation of the movement as an index of the authentic self, embodiment also solidifies the idea that nature is a source of the authentic as well.

The following narratives are representative of how images of nature are embodied in Authentic Movement and how this embodiment creates an expanded sense of self.

1. *P: I wanted to be as close to the earth as possible*
2. *and I got there*
3. *I found that as I got closer and closer to this floor*
4. *that I actually sunk to this place um uh*
5. *in when I used to live in New Mexico with uh Abiquiu dam*
6. *all these sandstone bluffs and cliffs over the water where the Chama River is dammed*
7. *so even though I was here*
8. *I I sunk right into one of those sandstone*
9. *Cliffs » they're beautiful they're so sculptural and with the sun you just « bake into the rock until you are*
10. *the rock and um so*
11. *uh how to explain what happened I'm not sure but I felt*
12. *like swim:ming*
13. *and then baked*
14. *and then I could feel that I was so close into the earth*
15. *that I could fe:el my mother's heartbeat*
16. *and that was seismic and volcanic for me so (3)*
17. *L: (clears throat)*
18. *I associated both rejuvenation and place in nature like that*
19. *and then rebirth was I mean I'm not trying to overly it on you like that but it just (0)*
20. *P: that's my home*

In this narrative, the participant recontextualizes the space as part of the natural world rather than the disenchanting mechanistic world of everyday life. The floor is not merely a floor, but is the “ground” or the “earth.” Recontextualizing the space, she also recontextualizes her perceptions of movement, sound, vision, and touch as also being part of the natural world so that she could be both “here” in the church hall and in the sandstone cliffs by Abiguiu Dam. This participant emphasizes that she was not just located by the cliffs or on the cliffs, she was *in* the cliffs. She became nature herself. As she said, she “*actually* [my emphasis] sunk to this place.” Slowing her words as she describes being baked into the rock, she draws her audience into the drama of this return to nature, where she was so close to the earth that she could feel “[her] mother’s heartbeat.” This was “her” earth, not “the” earth. Her identity, as she performs it in this narrative, is merged with the entirety of the natural world. She further authenticates her performance as she portrays, and thus, experiences, her emotions from the point of view of being in the earth. Her feelings were “seismic” and “volcanic,” as if she were an earthbody herself. For her finale, she introduces another trope of authentic self, “home.” Pushing away Leslie’s cautiousness with her (“not trying to overlay anything on you”), she boldly asserts her comfort with her performance, stating she felt at “home.” Like others who found themselves “hibernating,” or imagined themselves as “universal subatomic particles,” frogs, trees and dogs, this woman incorporates the natural world into her image of self. She incorporates the “other” and breaks down the boundaries between the empty self and the longed for authentic other.

The above narrative gains force through propositional framing and the construction of an “argument of images” (Fernandez 1986) and metaphors, a complex configuration of icons of authenticity that all point to the image of “being in nature.” By contrast, the following narrative performance presents a convincing image of authenticity by enacting nonverbally what she is saying in language. She embodies what she is saying and thus presents herself as sincere (see Speech/Movement Transcript 2 on the following page).

This participant commences her narrative with an attitude of lightness and humor, which demonstrates her comfort with performing in this venue. Her relaxed demeanor and familiarity adds a sense of authenticity and honesty as well. Even as she refers back to the tearful beginning of her improvisation, she speaks and moves casually as she presents herself to the group with open arms and walks over to the wall to demonstrate her movement experience. But as she goes on to describe what happened to her, her mood becomes more serious. Holding on to the ledge on the paneling of the wall, she recalls that as she was at the wall crying and “something” made her start this jumping. She then reenacts this moment and states in a tone of both assuredness and surprise, that the earth moved *her*. She was recipient of a message from a transcendent force. Facing the wall, and continuing to hold onto the ledge on the wall, she jumps up and down as she speaks. Accentuating the lower parts of her body, her movement indexes that the source of the movement is from the ground. Then, turning around to face her audience, she articulates what she has just demonstrated in her body. She states over and over that it was not she but the earth that was initiating the action. She continues to repeat this

Speech/Movement Transcript 2

Speech

well, the poem immediately put me in tears but um

before the bell I was already crying but

after the tears I thought about if I went to the corner I could keep it quiet

*[Group: @
this moment was something for me because um*

something made start this jumping

in the ledge was helping me and it was (2)

I wasn't jumping

like the earth was

I I wasn't using the earth like when you push against the earth

but the earth was throwing me up

and I really I didn't feel like there was any I was doing it I really was being moved and um to have that um

support which I ended up on the floor at the end on my back and that support of the earth um

but to have it uh be a support that isn't just rest but to have the earth actually move me

[other voices: mmmm

was a new experience I mean as a dancer we would use it or make our bodies use it but it felt like the earth was doing it rather than the body

and it was re:ally a surprise um

it just felt like the um

sort of you know for me almost like

this the earth too the community of this like a uh (1)

something in me that's able to enliven it

without having to know what I'm doing

L: (hmm mmmmm)

Movement

As she begins to speak, she moves to a standing position and as she utters the word "tears" she briefly stands erect facing the group circle and opens her arms out to the side in presentation.

She walks toward the wall where she had performed her movement improvisation.

Standing facing the wall, she turns her head toward the group as she talks. She is smiling, and abruptly her hands flop down to her side.

She faces the wall and holds onto the molding on the paneling which is about shoulder height

She is jumping up and down, a movement which is initiated first by the bending at the knees but then activated by the flexing of her feet.

She bounces higher and higher with more strength and free flow and then walks back to the group circle.

Standing just outside the circle, she faces the group, with hands palms up and then, she moves them up and down with a free flowing soft quality

With palms down, her forearms are flopping up and down

Hands cross and then out to the side as if wiping surface and then palms face down and push toward the floor with sustainment and strength.

With her palms up and forearms flopping up and down she emphasizes an upward motion this time

She adjusts her shirt and goes back to her pillow and sits down

She places her right palm down and touches the floor Her arms are at rest in her lap

With palms up, her hands bounce lightly to the rhythm of her speech

A slight punch with right hand as say "use"

A sustained motion of hands pointed down

Her hands rest on her legs

With palms up, she draws a circle in space with hands

With a sagittal motion of arms, she marks out the group circle

Palms face her torso, she moves her torso up and down. The movement is initiated from the lower abdomen and then flows up and down the torso, an elaboration of inhalation and exhalation

As she utters the word "know" she presses her thumb and pointer against each other and points forward, and then smiles

She nods her head

assertion, using the same or similar words in different order and different emphasis: “I wasn’t jumping,” “I wasn’t using the earth,” “I really didn’t feel like there was...I really was being moved.” She complements her assertions with mimetic gestures of the arms and hands, again enacting what she was saying. Overall, the coherence and harmony between the verbal and nonverbal aspects of her performance projects her sense of assuredness and strength in her connection to her body and to nature. Her tone of surprise also calls attention to the spontaneity of the movement impulse which in turn lends an added feeling of authenticity to her narrative.

Finally, with an inadvertent bow to Emile Durkheim, she wraps up her narrative with a recognition that the source of transcendent power she felt may not only been from the earth, but also the community of movers (“this” is the earth too). She explains further that her connection to the group creates something in her that enlivens her, implying that “being moved” is a social experience and “being in nature” is an expression of her connection to the Authentic Movement community. Again, in gesture and demeanor, she enacts what she is describing and thus projects herself as someone who is connected to community and to nature. The authentic self is an expanded self that embraces the collective.

In concert with the tropes of sensuality and nature, narrative performances bring into play a wide variety of discourses of authenticity where body movement is linked to spirituality, personal memories, expression of emotions, and the artistic creative impulse. As I have already shown how performances are able to link the sensible (the domain of the body) with the intelligible (discourses of authenticity) I will not review each and

every narrative performance, but will conclude my analysis with one final example. I choose the following narrative performance to show how narrative performances can sometimes provide little in the way of a coherent denotational text, but through a poetics of performance, point to a variety of discourses of authenticity and project a persona which can be interpreted as authentic (See Speech/Movement Transcript 3 on the following page).

The most obvious quality of this narrative is this woman's emotional investment in what she is saying. Merely by projecting her comfort with her feelings, she brings into play one of the most salient discourses of authenticity, the Romantic idea that it is by loosening the restrictions that civilization places on the free expression of emotions that we can gain access to our true inner self.

The overall structure of her narrative, in fact, is iconic of emotion, and this indexes that her performance is most likely an honest rendition of her movement experience. She presents a free flowing, sometimes tangentially related, series of images, with a variety of intensities, tones, and rhythms. She jumps from "swirliness" to "busyness" to "*budududbdbd and the !!awhhh,*" shaking her head and rubbing her hands through her hair, to doctors and nurses, to "*fheew*" to "terrible scramble" then a the slow steady direct movement of an "aim."

Speech/Movement Transcript 3

Speech

The Strongest

experience I had

was this swirliness and » busyness inside of my head and »» all this stuff coming inside and

»»!the doctor and the !nurses and my !sister and the »» bududududbdbd and the !!awhhh !=

*~and it's like
sheew*

[A: (H)]

*I just got out of a
terrible scramble
and then after that though there were these
these
like this aim*

*this archery or gun **kind of** thing
which was figured into my father's story
also but **just** this like steel
cold
choo*

*aim
and it happened it **just** repeated it **just** and anananan sleep
and almost into sleep in between them
they really were demanding **just** like
there's nothing else to do but that and then back to the thing
without choosing
it at all it **just***

*A: ~a taste of that being moved by uh an impulse kind of
direct (0)*

*yah, I feel like it was **just** a real uh cellular need to **just** hoo
you know*

Motion

She is seated with legs stretched out in front, torso relaxed

She moves her arms in an upward motion.

She frantically shakes her hands.
She rubs her hands through her hair, with strength, quickness and indirect free flow

She stops abruptly, with hands opened out to the side, arms bending at elbow

Her forearms move toward central axis of body with slow, direct, light motion.
Her focus is on Leslie, her hands and toes pointing toward Leslie.

Small gestures of hand follow rhythm of her speech

She uses her arms and hands to mimic the motion of shooting an arrow, her movements being very slow and sharp

She throws her hands in the air with quick and indirect motion
Her arms flop down to her side

Her right hand slaps her thigh

With hands in her hair, she shakes her head lightly

There is no coherent story here. Yet, at the same time, she inserts a few key words that give her audience enough information to identify and possibly empathize with her.⁶² For instance, we know that she felt scattered and upset when she remembered being in the hospital with her father (which she talked about earlier). Thus, her performance not only recalls her movement experience, but also refers back to her original experience of being in the hospital with her dying father. Enhancing the authenticity of her performance, she creates a complex layering of reference and poetics. As the few words she uses to describe the movement are iconic of the hospital experience (busy, swirl), the tone, rhythm, and gestures that accompany her speech are iconic of the words she is uttering. Her tone is busy as she describes the busyness of the hospital, her gestures are swirling as she says swirling. And through the intensity of her performance, the audience can be convinced that she felt these emotions as she performed the improvisation and again as she narrates the experience. Her varied use of pitch, tone, and rhythm gives her audience the impression that she experienced a wide range of affect in her improvisation. Her frequent use of nonsense words and onomatopoeia is evidence that she is acting in the moment and not thinking too much about what she is saying, which persuades her audience of the authenticity of her performance. But in the end, after the forceful and provocative portrayal of experience, she concludes her narrative with a simple “just hoo you know.” Ultimately, there are really no words that can express her feelings, and more than anything, that is indicative of authentic experience.

⁶² As in many healing ceremonies, shamans and healers often perform incantations which are unintelligible to their audiences. The insertion of a few words or actions that *are* intelligible allow their audiences to understand what they are doing. (Briggs 1996)

Conclusion

I conclude my analysis with an anecdote about one of the participants at the workshop. B, mother of two, had been studying Authentic Movement as part of her “lifelong quest to figure out how to be in the body and maybe figure out how to share being in the body with other people.” Quiet, yet passionate about Authentic Movement, she drove six hours to be at this particular class. This was obviously meaningful to her and by her own account she found what she was looking for, a sense of “quiet” “religion” and “connection.” Yet, observing her performances on this day, there were no obvious signs of her investment in the process. She was generally quiet and self-contained. She mainly stood in meditation or sat in contemplation, and only once did I notice her moving her hands with light and diminutive gestures, what Leslie in his witness narrative associated with “mudras,” symbolic gestures in Indian dance. As she mentioned later, “I think there’s this real solitary practitioner in me.” On the surface, at least, there was nothing that she did in this situation that she could not literally do in the privacy of her living room, or with a few friends. So what brought her so far for seemingly so little? If she just wanted to be away from home, why choose this destination? If she didn’t really need to actually perform a lot of movement or to speak very much, what did Authentic Movement provide for her that she could not find at home?

The answer to this question, I found, is at the heart of how moving with eyes closed in the presence of a witness can be a performance of authenticity. Authenticity is not found in a particular movement. Meaning is not in a gesture or pattern of actions. As Steven Feld (1982:79) explains, it is in the world. Movement communicates meaning as

part of a semiotic system and finding meaning in movement is “dependent upon interpretive action which is in alignment with cultural knowledge and epistemology with the experience of sound [or movement]” (1982:99). Interpretation should not be concerned with the apparent simplicity of her movement performances, but rather in how the aesthetic qualities of her performance match with shared values and sensibilities within the Authentic Movement community—antimodern–modern sensibilities that call for a return to the body, to nature, and to a less rational more emotionally-invested way of being in the world. An experience of the authentic is emergent in Leslie’s charismatic performance as guide, in the creation of a mood of hope and possibility, in a participant-framework that encourages trust and self-acceptance, and in stimulating and evocative movement and narrative performances.

Chapter 6

Concluding Thoughts

Rebirth, Rejuvenation, Reintegration

Authentic Movement is a ritual of transformation that opens possibilities for new ways of being in the world and embodying ideals of authenticity and personhood.

Gradual changes in phenomenologies and ontologies of self take place as participants move further and further away from their everyday roles. There are shifts in attention or in the self-awareness along the way, and moments when movers and witnesses reflect upon their liminal experiences. But even at these times, there is usually not a full shift back to ordinary consciousness. The focus rather is on the present moment. By contrast, in closing the sessions, leaders consciously draw attention back to the outside social world and to how Authentic Movement might be relevant in everyday life. Consistent with the ideological framework of the practice, movement and narrative performances serve as the bridge between Authentic Movement and the everyday world.

With this purpose in mind (recall that Leslie is well-versed in ritual theory and this influences how he structures the activities of Authentic Movement sessions), at the end of this Authentic Movement workshop on rebirth and rejuvenation, Leslie asks participants to “go inside” again to find one image, a word or gesture, in his words, a “talisman” that participants can take with them to remember the day and to empower them in their everyday life. Framing this final performance as both ending and

beginning, the group *stands* together in physical preparation for the leave-taking. Revisiting the themes and images that emerged throughout the day, participants conjured their talismans –“layers in a vault,” a “beating heart,” “freedom to move,” “meandering,” “rustling sound,” “excitement,” “spring mudras,” “hmmm”—and then listened to one last reading for the day.

The ending ritual was aesthetically congruous with the rest of the day. The open-ended yet concise presentations produced a *feeling* of intelligibility in the midst of unintelligibility and thus, were sufficiently mysterious and provocative. I wondered what these images reveal about what Authentic Movement means in the everyday lives of its practitioners? These final performances, like the other performances and like sensorial experiences in general, were maximally open to interpretation, inspiration for indeterminate semiosis. Their meaning was highly uncertain, giving little information about how the work of this day is actually meaningful in people’s everyday lives. I thus remained curious about whether and how these individuals embodied the personae that they performed here in Authentic Movement.

According to the Authentic Movement Community website, Authentic Movement can be applied in various ways including

as a *meditative, spiritual practice* that integrates body and mind for increased access to consciousness; as part of *psychotherapy process*, for enhanced sense of self and well-being, often bringing unconscious thoughts to awareness; as *artistic support*, to connect with creativity and creative process, unblocking and opening to new ideas; as *community outreach* and development in community long circles, that address and solve community-wide problems [McNeal and Reid 2008]

This description reveals the diversity of commitments in the Authentic Movement community and the deep faith in Authentic Movement to accomplish great feats of transformation. These basic facts are true. Many members of the Authentic Movement community are dancers, artists, actors, and writers who use the practice for “inspiration” and creative development. Choreographers, for instance, use movement patterns that develop during a session and build performance pieces based on this material. Leaders and therapists also organize groups for specific therapeutic purposes. I once conducted research on a group in California organized especially for survivors of breast cancer. In addition to strengthening the bonds that were formed by their shared relationship as breast cancers survivors, members of this group also reported that Authentic Movement gave them a better relationship with their body, an acceptance of their individuality, and the ability “to get more in touch with and express their emotions.”

In addition to these applications, many leaders also focus on the witnessing aspect of Authentic Movement. Martha Lask, for example, uses Authentic Movement in her organizational development workshops to teach corporate executives and management consultants how to incorporate witnessing in their work. Playing down the dance aspect of the practice, she coaches them on how to observe and work with their employees without projecting their own feelings and issues. Similarly, some appropriate the witness stance in diversity training workshops. Other Authentic Movement groups just like to explore. For example, in the long term monthly meetings I attended, we experimented with a variety of witnessing structures and narrative forms, the most unusual when we allowed ourselves to use words in sounding performances. We were amazed at how

difficult it was to “speak” as sound and how distracting it was from the process. This one experiment spurred further conversation and in turn further experimentation, merely for the sake of “experience.” One of the members of this group was even in a monthly group that actually met online. The witnesses would be present “offline” while the movers performed their improvisations. Following the set time, the witnesses would share their witness narratives over the internet, even when they did not “witness” anything. The possibilities with a practice as open-ended as Authentic Movement are not limitless, but they are many.

Even with the variety of forms I have described, the depiction of Authentic Movement on the website does seem romantic and far-reaching. One wonders how moving with eyes closed in the presence of a witness can help solve community-wide problems. On the other hand, this list of possibilities, if thought of as performative constructions, may not be an empty assertion. As narratives of redemption and self-reclamation that people can enact in their lives, they can be motivators for change. In asserting that Authentic Movement is artistic resource, spiritual practice, psychotherapeutic process and community outreach, the website projects how the goals and values of Authentic Movement may be realized in the everyday world. One story in particular reveals the commitment to creativity and change entailed in these descriptions, and the ever present contradictions that practices like Authentic Movement embody.

I met Lily at a workshop in Spring, 2006. I had asked her about her interest in Authentic Movement and she kindly invited me to her house to tell me about her introduction to “the form.” She had a gentle demeanor with a soft voice and a demure and

warm smile. She was stereotypically “proper” but commanded a strong and confident presence as she looked at me confidently and directly in the eye. As she told me, she was raised with Victorian values, vestiges of which were also apparent in the quaint English interior design of her house. As she relayed her story, her eyes shone and she seemed to physically grow as she talked about what Authentic Movement had done for her in her life, a manifestation of the sense of self-expansion she described.

Lily was not ready for Authentic Movement when she first heard about it from a friend who was a dancer. Authentic Movement was something she wanted to do but was afraid to explore, like “gazing through the window wishing I could do that.” Her upbringing, she explained, had made her very constrained, so much that “there were a lot of things I wouldn’t even let myself think about.” During a life crisis, however, Lily started trying “a lot of new things.” She became involved in a Gestalt therapy⁶³ group and thereafter Authentic Movement, two therapeutic venues she related with “experiential experiences” that had the power to “subvert” her social upbringing. She was particularly intrigued with the phenomenological aspects of Authentic Movement.

I just loved it, I just loved it. That first week had this feeling, experience as I moved into what I called altered space that I felt like a shaman, I felt as though I was going to the other side...I felt this transcendent feeling like being connected with this other person in a sort of all the divisions of life and boundaries have gone away mesmerized state of ...universal love or something.

Lily immersed herself in Authentic Movement. Her involvement began with

⁶³ Gestalt Therapy, originated by Fritz Perls and popularized among followers of the Human Potential Movement is process of psychotherapy that facilitates self-awareness and self-expression through enactment of conflicts in one’s life. This takes place through role-play and drama games such as the “empty chair” in which the individual speaks to the empty chair as if it were the person with whom they are engaged in a conflict. It is closely related to Jacob Moreno’s form of psychodrama.

weeklong retreats, later enrolling in the two-year program in Contemplative Dance, and now attends weekend workshops “whenever the opportunity arises.” She recalled one workshop, in particular, that she said best explains the process of integrating unconscious material into one’s life.

Her experience, amusingly, was based on a vision of a red raspberry. Lying on the floor against the wall, “deliciously comfortable” in a state of quiet and calm, fully aware but with “no intellectual thoughts in her mind, *at all*,” as she emphasized. She was just playing with the architecture, running the soles of her feet up and down the wall, when suddenly an image of a “great big luscious red raspberry” came to her. This was the “most wonderful raspberry,” she thought. It was hanging on a branch in a field, but the branch had “really sharp nasty looking thorns on it.” She knew immediately what the image meant. The raspberry and the thorny branch were both parts of herself, her “raspberry self” and her “thorny self.” She maintains that she did not “think” this, rather the feeling just came to her. It was the quality of the knowing that was unique and meaningful to her. The revelation was visceral and came to her in a “nonintellectual way.” “I wasn’t thinking it through analytically, I wasn’t being a therapist about it and yet that part of me knew what its meaning was, I was just noticing what I noticed... It’s very mysterious for me...I wasn’t working at it.” She had mastered the art of receptivity so treasured in this discourse. She did not consciously invoke the image of a raspberry but came to it through “unpremeditated surrender,” the state of mind in which the authentic self can emerge.

I asked Lily how she went from being so constricted, as she described herself, to being so open. She said that in Authentic Movement she was “so accepting of [herself]. There was no judgment in any of it...It makes me more honest to myself, and when I’m more honest with myself then I’m more honest in my dealing with others.”

Lily is now a therapist in private practice, still, she says, “following her bliss.”

Lily concretized for me the upper-middle-class educated woman “burst[ing]out from under Victorian sensibilities” (Lears 1994:6) to find her authentic self. While one might stereotype Lily’s story as a narrative of “escapism” or “dilettantism” as Lears (1994) characterized many early antimodernists, experientially, her story was more truly a narrative of self-transformation. For Lily, authenticity, even if it is a socially constructed notion, is an aesthetic ideal that represents something good in the world, something bigger than her individual self, and something in which she has a deep embodied emotional investment.

Ethnography, Authenticity, and Intersubjectivity

In an essay on the appropriation of native cultures as representations of authenticity and redemption for white people, Deborah Root (1997) notes that since the advent of modernism, antimodernists have located the solutions to the disasters of Western culture someplace else: in “exotic” tribal cultures.... or in an aristocratic past”—in the space of the redemptive other. She explains that valorization of the other is a way of rejecting mainstream, bourgeois, white society even though white middle-class concerns have nothing to do with other peoples. These redemptive images of counterculture come from mass-mediated forms of communication in which native peoples and the exotic other are

portrayed as heroic victims. White people want to be those heroes—we want our own stories and lives to be interesting, meaningful, and potentially redemptive. However, she notes that white people are left with images of oppressor—a colonizer role with few positive models of resistance to oppression. Thus, she claims that appropriation becomes the main escape. But valorization and imitation of the other is not just innocent or naïve. White peoples—new-agers and environmentalists —while having good intentions can still hide problematic assumptions about history and culture. “Sincerity is not enough and can be damaging in its own right” (Root 1997:230) because it can be used as pretext to gain discursive authority while evading the issue of who controls the discourse.

On the surface, Authentic Movement seems to facilitate self-awareness and respect for difference. I have shown why participants come away feeling this way. My argument is, however, that this practice is rooted in middle-class antimodern sentiments and nostalgia for an authentic past that they believe all of humanity shares, and in this way they implicitly do not support difference as such. As one woman shared with me, she sees the relationship with the witness as a spiritual wish shared by all, a wish for an all-knowing God that is compassionate, “that translates into how I see myself.” They therefore seemingly ignore the social, cultural, and political space in which their fantasies arise.

I think of Robert Desjarlais’s (1996) work at a homeless shelter. He explains that the notion that sensorial experience of the body necessarily represents authenticity is only one discursive construct about what is authentic. He describes life in a homeless shelter where interiority is not necessarily a given and not everyone focuses on this aspect of

experience. Life in the shelter is not a quest for self-fulfillment, a longing for intensity, but rather the goal of life is looking for balance, to not be too sad or too excited, to just hang in there—an aesthetic of just keeping it together. The so-called modern condition of an unbearable lightness of being from this perspective is a privileged dilemma of the educated class—where intense experience is therapeutic when it is only a periodic escape from ennui, not the entirety of existence. Being authentic means different things to different people. Authenticity is not a universal but a value rooted in time and place.

More critically, social theorists Bell (1978), Bellah (1996) and Cushman (1990) describe “the cult of authenticity” as a form of narcissism. They equate authenticity with self-centeredness and the collapse of public self (Braman 2008:4). Charles Taylor (1991), in spite of these strong warnings, however, claims fears for culture of narcissism are needless if authenticity is seen in relation to moral ideals. While narcissism, he asserts, is a “deviant or trivialized mode” (1991:56) of social action, self-realization is a creative act in which its aesthetic or beauty gives it intrinsic fulfillment. Continuing, he asks, does “originality” pit authenticity against morality? (1991:65) In other words, does the fact that people focus on themselves preclude a moral foundation for their actions? He answers that authenticity, when it reaches beyond the ordinary, is, in fact, a value that connects us to an order beyond the self. Taylor’s optimism may be noble but I see the answer to this question in less dualistic terms. It seems to me that Lily, and the rest of the Authentic Movement community, are both *in* and *beyond* that order. We are both narcissistic and moral.

Ethnography, Authenticity, and Intersubjectivity

In closing, I reflect back on that warm summer day moving and witnessing with Dara and Elyse in Mona's small but welcoming attic studio in Mount Airy. Engrossed in my fieldwork, I was cautiously yet eagerly exploring the space between participation and observation. For instance, as I marveled at the beauty and authenticity of Elyse and Dara's dance of self-discovery, I was also engrossed in critically discerning the social and historical sources of their creative efforts. And to be sure, the feelings of uncertainty and disorientation that came with dealing with the contradictions between my roles as participant and observer are still palpable. Yet, in the end, I believe that by wading through the liminal spaces between these two perspectives, I was able to explore more deeply the dual nature of authenticity as well as the social and phenomenological realities of Authentic Movement. Indeed, I came to accept the social reality that "authenticity itself is never an objective quality inherent in things, but simply a shared set of beliefs about the nature of things we value in the world," (Grazian 2003:12) *and*, the phenomenological reality that authenticity, however it is defined, as lived experience, is the ground of identity that is the substance of life itself. Authentic Movement is simultaneously a decontextualizable social discourse with historical antecedents in the antimodern movements of the late 19th century *and* an experiential model of personhood with which participants can discover a new way of being in the world. Authenticity can be illusive and malleable or substantive and concrete, as most objects of culture are.

As I negotiated the role of participant-observer, I also grappled at times with the classic question in ethnography of how an outsider can begin to understand the experiences of others and the extent to which we can “grasp the emotional and sensorial life of another person or people?” (Desjarlais 1992:14). I found it important to keep in mind that ethnographers deal with this issue not as an abstract existential inquiry, but as it arises within particular social and cultural settings where the people with whom they are interacting already presuppose and act upon a set of possibilities and limitations of intersubjectivity. Certainly, fieldwork experience affects how and to what extent ethnographers can understand the experience of the other. Ethnographers deal with a variety of phenomena—dreams and dream narratives, trances and dances, economic transactions and social exchanges—that have varying degrees of transparency and accessibility. My fieldwork took place in a setting where participants act on a presupposition of radical subjectivity. They are suspicious of language’s capacity to reveal one’s inner being and, correspondingly, reticent to assume that one can know what is going on in the minds and bodies of another person. And though my subjects spend a great deal of time talking to one another, as I explained in my discussion of the witness–mover relationship, practitioners of Authentic Movement go to great lengths to construct the interpersonal boundaries they believe should exist between individuals. As participant, I was constantly pushed to concentrate on the workings of my own mind. The turn toward radical subjectivity was so strong during extensive encounters with Authentic Movement that I sometimes felt that the universe was a mere projection of my imagination.

Nevertheless, while it was important for me to understand and experience modes of intersubjectivity from the point of view of the Authentic Movement Community, I did not have to be bound by them. I discovered that the question of whether the meanings ethnographers infer derive from objects of those ethnographic experiences or are superimposed from the ethnographer's own culture (Urban 1996:1-2) could be answered from two points of view, as the participant and the observer. I acknowledge the dangers of assuming my ethnography could be a singular authoritative account of the practice and I do not presume that I can see directly into the "visionary world" of Authentic Movement practitioners, as if my "ethnographer's imaginings produced photo equivalent of native's own histories" (Desjarlais 1992:14). However, as a social scientist, by investigating principled relationships between the production of signs within the practice and similar patterns of sign production in the larger social arena, I do gain analytical purchase on the phenomenon. Authentic Movement is intelligible as a discourse of authenticity because it so clearly a part of socially circulating discourse. Individual actions are meaningful to self and other by virtue of their social connectedness. Ultimately, even the most private action has a publicly cultural dimension.

Appendix

Transcription Conventions

(based on transcription conventions in Schiffrin 1994:422–433)

.	sentence final falling intonation followed by noticeable pause
,	clause-final intonation
...	indicates pause of ½ sec or more
..	pause of less than ½ sec
[overlap, two voices going at once
(0)	latching
/	rising intonation
\	fall intonation
?!	exclamatory intonation
!	animated tone
~	soft tone
~~	very soft tone
=	self-interruption with glottal stop
:	lengthened syllable
::	longer elongation
...	ellipsis, parts omitted in quotation from other sources??
'	primary stress
<i>italics</i>	quote
<u>underline</u>	emphatic stress
CAPS	very emphatic stress
“”	highlight dialogue
bold	highlights key words and phrases
→	at right indicates continuation without interruption
/word/	uncertain transcription
/?/	inaudible utterance
()	Vocal Noises
Inhalation	(H)
Exhalation	(Hx)
Laughter	@

- » quick rhythm
- »» very quick rhythm
- « slow rhythm
- «« very slow rhythm

Audio/Video Authorization

Project: Speaking and Sensing the Self in Authentic Movement: The Search for Authenticity in 20th Century U.S.

My dissertation project examines the nature of aesthetic experience in the constitution of the self as this realized in healing and therapeutic encounters. Authentic Movement, a Euro-American therapeutic modality integrating improvisational dance and narrative forms of expression, will be examined as a means of self-transformation and self-empowerment. This work builds upon the work of aesthetic and semiotic anthropology and makes significant contributions to the development of methodologies for examining symbolic dimensions of ritual process as both a phenomenological experience and a semiotic (meaningful) transformation.

All videotapes and audiotapes of Authentic Movement will be used solely for the purpose of ethnographic research of Authentic Movement.

The purpose of this research is to gain information about the therapeutic and discursive properties of Authentic Movement. This research will not focus upon any particular individual participants or teachers/facilitators of Authentic Movement.

The confidentiality of all participants will be maintained. I will not use any names or identifying data in my transcripts or analysis of the audio/videotapes. The tapes will be stored in a private secured area.

The videotapes and audiotapes will not be shown to anyone without explicit permission from all personnel involved in the production of the tapes.

Any videotaping or audiotaping of sessions will only take place upon the consent/ approval and authorization of all participants of the sessions.

The researcher will take full responsibility for any breaches of this agreement.

Seran Schug

215-836-9255

Signature

Participant Signature

Phone number

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