Between The Waves

by

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PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Between The Waves is an examination of empathy through a choreographic creative process, grounded in themes of recovery and resilience, and culminating in a dance work. Looking to the body as a site of embodied memory and personal narrative, the work of this project was to facilitate engagement with these embodied layers of experience, and to draw upon them as a primary source of movement generation. Questions within this research include: what is the choreography of recovery and resilience? How do these processes of recovery live in the body? What capacity does personal narrative have for the potential facilitation of empathy – in process and performance? Can metaphor be used as a tool for movement development, thematic engagement, and/or connection across differences of personal experience? How can/might improvisational movement practice be used as a choreographic tool to draw upon embodied memory (or to facilitate embodiment in a memory space), and cultivate vulnerability and kinesthetic specificity within movement choices and performance? Can such kinesthetic specificity create the potential for empathetic connection, in process and performance?

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INTRODUCTION

As the physical containers for our experiences, the body carries so much more than we often realize – particularly our experiences of loss, failure and trauma. Within the fields of psychiatry, psychology, and therapeutic practices, we are beginning to see a shift towards understanding the body as a key focal point in journeys of recovery. So too, when looked at from a choreographic perspective, this rich, autobiographical archive of experience makes the body an extremely effective grounding place for the catalyzation of empathetic connection. The intersection of empathy and recovery is where the research of this project lives. Looking to the body as a site of embodied memory and personal narrative, the primary goal of this process was to facilitate engagement with these embodied layers of experience, and to draw upon them as a primary source of movement generation. The key intervention of this research, however, is that it does not stop at the stage of embodied practice, but then weaves this movement into a choreographic work that is able to be shared. Within many disciplines of therapeutic practice, it is generally accepted that to move on from a trauma we need to be able to process our memories, and to some extent, tell our stories. Psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk points out that "[i]f you've been hurt, you need to acknowledge and name what happened to you . . . [and that] Feeling listened to and understood changes our physiology" (2015, 234). In addition to telling the story and feeling heard, scholars in psychiatry also identify a need to be "truly seen and met where and as [we] are," and to feel "that we are held in someone else's mind and heart" (Fuchs 2013, 167; van der Kolk 2015, 81). In creating choreography from real and authentic places of personal memory and embodied experience, and then sharing them via a witnessed performance, this project creates opportunity for dancers to not only process their experiences, but also to be seen and heard. In creating a piece designed to facilitate empathetic connection, this work creates an experience where performers can feel "seen and met where and as they are." For audience members who open themselves up to connecting with the work, they are given the opportunity to feel the same.

Empathy and Choreography

To start this investigation of the intersection of empathy and recovery, a working definition of empathy is necessary. My own work has been greatly influenced by that of Brené Brown, author, researcher, and professor in the field of social work, who emphasizes that empathy is feeling *with* another person, unlike sympathy, which is feeling *for* another person (2013). Dance scholar Ariel Nereson goes on to point out that "empathy is not itself an emotion but rather a capacity of responding to other people's emotional states" (2019, 137). Added to that, my own perspective has been enhanced by Pema Chödrön's[1] definition of what she refers to as compassion:

> Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It's a relationship between equals. Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity (2017, 50).

It is this sense of shared humanity that I seek to highlight in my work as a choreographer, to open opportunities for "recognition" and connection. But as Chödrön points out, an empathetic or compassionate relationship is not one-way. People must first be willing to look inward, to bring their own experiences to the surface, and to allow themselves to use that experience as a lens for understanding and connecting to the experience or emotion of another – whether that emotion is dark or light. In some ways, empathy is a choice – a choice to be vulnerable, to open oneself up to another human being.

As author and researcher Jonathan Gottschall[2] points out, as a result of the discovery of mirror neurons[3], "many scientists now believe we have neural networks that activate when we perform an action or experience an emotion, and also when we observe someone else perform an action or experience an emotion" (2013, 60). This connection, however, requires the viewer to be fully engaged in the witnessing of this action or emotion, which draws us to the idea of choreography. My task, I have discovered, is that of cultivating a process and a product that presents the most *opportunity* for empathetic connection –

[1] Pema Chödrön is an America Buddhist nun, teacher, and best-selling author.
[2] Jonathan Gottaschall is an author and a professor of English at Washington and Jefferson College, whose research lives at the intersections of science and art.
[3] "the brain-to-brain links that give us our capacity for empathy" (van der Kolk 2015, 113).

work that presents an *invitation* for audiences to be fully engaged and to connect. As choreographer and dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster points out, there are "many ways in which the dancing body in its kinesthetic specificity formulates an appeal to viewers to be apprehended and felt, encouraging them to participate collectively in discovering the communal basis of their experience" (2011, 218). Foundational to this project is the pursuit of developing a language of movement that creates such an appeal.

Recovery

The choice at play in the cultivation of empathy - to look inward and allow experience to come to the surface – is one that intersects beautifully with the realm of recovery. Recovery is generally thought of as a return to normalcy, but engaging in this area of research, my question has become: what is "normal," especially when the event in question leaves one's self or situation permanently altered? As Bessel van der Kolk, psychiatrist, author, and industry leading researcher in the study and treatment of trauma[4], points out: "what has happened cannot be undone. But what can be delt with are the imprints of the trauma on body, mind, and soul . . . The challenge of recovery is to reestablish ownership of your body and your mind – of your self" (2015, 205). As humans we carry the imprints of our experience and memories around with us, and recovery cannot take place until we begin to grapple with and learn how to own and carry them in a way that allows us to heal and move forward. Within his research, van der Kolk also points out "four fundamental truths" that some approaches to therapy and recovery often overlook.[5] For my own purposes, I have summarized van der Kolk's truths into three key areas of focus in recovery: relationships and community, language, and body work. Through my research, both scholarly and embodied, I have discovered that the choreography of recovery and resilience is movement that turns to these areas, implementing and engaging them as choreographic elements and tools of recovery.

[4] Bessel van der Kolk, M.D., has been a pioneer in developing approaches to trauma treatment, many of which center the role of the body in recovery.

[5] "(1) Our capacity to destroy one another is matched by our capacity to heal one another. Restoring relationships and community is central to restoring well-being; (2) language gives us the power to change ourselves and others by communicating our experiences, helping us to define what we know, and finding a common sense of meaning; (3) we have the ability to regulate our own physiology . . . through such basic actions as breathing, moving, and touching; and (4) we can change social conditions to create environments in which children and adults can feel safe and where they can thrive" (van der Kolk 2015, 38).

Interwoven throughout this project, both in process and in performance, these three elements are a constant.

RESEARCH GOALS AND METHODOLOGY

Goal 1: Facilitating Choreography from Embodied Experience - Authentic Movement

To start, I feel it is important to note that at no point has it been my intention, nor my qualification, to serve as therapist or counselor in the development of this work. What I *have* done throughout this creative research process, is to create space and opportunity for self-directed introspection and processing – which happens to be a key aspect of recovery. As Bessel van der Kolk points out, "Neuroscience research shows that the only way we can change the way we feel is by becoming aware of our *inner* experience and learning to befriend what is going on inside ourselves (2015, 208). Likewise, as we have seen in research on empathy, looking inward and calling upon this "*inner* experience" is an integral first step towards facilitating empathetic connection with the emotions and experiences of others. The question for the dance artist then becomes, how might I draw upon this experience in movement?

According to Susan Leigh Foster, "[to] 'choreograph empathy' . . . entails the construction and cultivation of a specific physicality whose kinesthetic experience guides our perception of and connection to what another is feeling" (2011, 2). I have found that in order to cultivate such a physicality, one needs first to be vulnerable and honest with oneself, and to allow that honesty to inform movement choices. This need has led me to the improvisational movement practice of Authentic Movement. Daphne Lowell, a leader in the area of Authentic Movement, describes that this practice relies on "[w]aiting to be moved. Following the body's lead . . . making time and space for the unconscious to manifest in the movement and stillness of the body" (Lowell 2002, 13). Of relevance to recovery processes as well, Konopatsch and Payne[6] point out that "Authentic Movement, as an approach to self-exploration, intends to create a space for hidden, unconscious and sensitive personal themes to be explored" (2013, 342). Through practice, and my own experience within previous research, I have come to agree with Konopatsch and Payne's views

[6] Ilka Konopatsch is a psychologist and a practitioner of Authentic Movement practitioner. Dr. Helen Payne is a accredited psychotherapist and a pioneering dance movement psychotherapist within the United Kingdom.

of Authentic Movement, as well as Christopher-Rasheem McMillan's[7] framing of it as a "research tool for articulating embodied experience" (2018, 79). To cultivate this embodied research, I developed a process, rooted in Authentic Movement practice.[8] I, along with my cast, engaged in this process a total of three times throughout the development of this piece. In my journey within this contemplative movement practice, I have discovered, as Konopatsch and Payne point out, that:

> [w]e are entering into Authentic Movement with a physical history and we may connect to it though our body. Memories can be triggered through a certain movement, a body position, at other times a memory can be the initial impulse to move. Either way, the cognitive recollection is connected to the body experience . . . (2013, 345).

This intertwined experience of body and memory has led me to think of this process as *embodiment in a memory space*. To help evoke and aim this memory space towards recollections of recovery and resilience, I employ a journaling practice at the beginning of each session, drawing up memories on a cognitive level that can then be explored and engaged within the body.

As psychiatrist and philosopher Thomas Fuchs points out, "[b]ody memory does not represent the past but re-enacts it . . . Thus, it may unexpectedly open a door to explicit memory and resuscitate the past as if it were present as such" (19). Throughout our Authentic Movement research, I witnessed this happen in real time. In the post-movement reflection, we created a safe space for reflection on an individual level, with an invitation (but no requirement) to share with the group. It was not uncommon for tears to be shed, and on multiple occasions dancers expressed that the process was therapeutic for them. On one occasion, a dancer shared that the embodied processing had brought up elements of her memories that she hadn't thought of before. In addition to communal opportunities for reflection and processing, built into our process was the element of a "witness," a key element of the Authentic Movement practice (discussed later in greater depth). In our sessions, we often had the opportunity to witness and hold space for each other's embodied processing – a key aspect of our community building. What was a bit more unique from

[7] Christopher-Rasheem McMillan is a scholar in dance and performance practices, as well as Body Theology and Queer Theory.
[8] Process: (1) ten minutes of journaling (focused on themes/memories of recovery/resilience); (2) five minutes of meditation/prayer; (3) twenty minutes of filmed Authentic Movement; (4) Approximately five minutes of written post-reflection (with opportunities for discussion and verbal reflection spread throughout).

typical Authentic Movement processes, however, was that we also had the constant witness of a camera filming each session. The camera created the opportunity for us to witness ourselves in process, which was the foundation for our translation of improvisational movement into choreography.

Following the movement practices, after some time had passed, we then went back and watched the videos of our Authentic Movement sessions. The task for each dancer was to examine their own movement choices as "witnesses" after the fact, and to identify movements that resonated – as a viewer, but also remembering the choices that felt most impactful throughout the movement practice itself. They created a "bank" of these movements and moments, and this became the source material for each individual to craft solo pieces of choreography. The results of this work were deeply personal and individual to each dancer, rooted in their personal experiences of hurt, loss, trauma, and the pursuit of recovery. These solo materials became the foundation for much of the final piece.

Discoveries: Gesture, Touch, and Self-Compassion

A significant movement discovery made in the Authentic Movement research process, was the prevalence of touch within the movement generated by all participants (including myself). Every dancer had elements of tactile connection to their own bodies – brushing the forehead, squeezing muscles, cradling the head. When we took this pattern into consideration, we realized that there was often an element of self-soothing to this physical contact – a sense of grounding or of care. Bessel van der Kolk describes touch as "the most elementary tool that we have to calm down" explaining that "you can't fully recover if you don't feel safe in your skin" (2015, 218). In a time when physical connection with other humans is limited (due to the COVID-19 pandemic), these moments of touch seem to hold even more significance and weight – a model of self-care and self-compassion.[9]

According to Bessel van der Kolk, "[g]estures of comfort are universally recognizable and reflect the healing power of attuned touch" (2015, 217). While the concept of universality in this area is certainly

[9] As a viewer, these movements resonate deeply with me on a personal level, evoking my own feelings and memories of physically trying to comfort or hold myself together. The idea of an audience potentially being drawn into a performance through gestures of touch opens up an avenue of consideration for choreographic facilitation of empathy.

up for debate, as Ariel Nereson points out, "our faculty of proprioception, of sensing where our bodies are in space and how to move them, is neurologically intertwined with our capacity for empathetic response" and "[l]earning others' gestures is a tangible way to empathise with their emotional states" (2019, 141). In the process of creating the choreography for this piece, deep consideration was given to the weight of these personal, tactile gestures and their potential capacity for facilitating connection, empathy and compassion. Not only do many of the gestures show up throughout the work in multiple places, but we also took the time to learn each others' gestures. Each dancer picked a tactile, gestural moment to share with the group, and the very first movement for most of the dancers in this work, is this embodiment of each others' movements.

Beyond connecting the dancers, gesture has potential as a recognizable movement language to connect with audience members. As dancer and choreographer Liz Lerman points out, ". . . many of us choreograph as if our audiences still remember how to listen to their bodies and comprehend ideas through the language of movement . . . most audiences need a place to park their brains . . ." (2011, 70). Royona Mitra[10] also points out, "principal triggers for immersion are generated through attuned familiarity with the visual gestural codes of the performances that resonate with an audience's own embodied knowledge of its themes" (2016, 93). If van der Kolk's assessment of gestures of comfort as "universally recognizable" is accurate, then such gestural movement could be used as an access point for viewers to engage kinesthetically (and potentially empathetically) with a performer or a choreographic work (2015, 217). The incorporation of gesture in both the process and the performance of this work is made in the hope that this potential is realized.[11]

Goal 2: Autobiographical Narrative as a Means of Facilitating Connection and Empathy

In developing material from Authentic Movement, I have been consistently impressed by how

[10] Dr. Royona Mitra is a Reader in in Dance and Performance Cultures at Brunel University London and the author of the award-winning book *Akram Khan: Dancing New Interculturalism* (Palgrave, May 2015).

[11] With limited access to evaluate audience engagement, given the performance conditions of the current pandemic, this area of inquiry is difficult to measure, but will continue to hold as a point of investigation in future research.

loudly the body has the capacity to speak without words. However, as psychologists Jung and Sparenberg point out, "it is not the movement kinematics that are important for motor priming, but rather the underlying intention of the movement" – suggesting that the intention behind the movement may be just as important as the movement itself in facilitating connection between a mover and a viewer. Early into the creative process for this work, in the development of a duet built from two dancers' Authentic Movement sessions, we discovered that the movement they were generating from an incredibly personal place on a solo-level was no longer reading as powerfully when integrated into a duet context. The dancers no longer had a clear sense of the narrative/purpose of the movement now that it was relational and not solely individual. In order to deepen the dancers' internal connections to the movement and to each other, I asked the dancers to collaborate on writing down their inner "monologues" or "dialogue" within the duet – the underlying narrative to their relational experience. The difference this exercise made in the dancer's performance, and in my capacity as a viewer to *feel with* them as I watched, was substantial. Learning from this experience, the process of writing down the inner narrative/personal connections within the movement, what I began to call "movement stories," became a practice we repeated throughout the creative process.

Throughout the development of this project, the dancers were asked on multiple occasions to write "movement stories" for their solo choreography. These movement stories were comprised of two key areas of information: the "facts" of the movement (describing what happened literally), and the internal monologue/dialogue/narrative going on within the piece. This became a valuable opportunity to bring the depth of connection from the Authentic Movement experience, into the present performative moment. Particularly when we did this exercise later in the creative process, after more time had passed since the original movement development, the act of putting into language the inner experience of the performance served as a refreshing renewal of performative connection and intention. In this way, written narrative served the overall story that lived within the language of the movement.

Outside of enhancing the performative clarity and experience, which arguably then makes the work more accessible to an audience, I was curious about the potential empathetic/connective impact of

integrating spoken narrative into performance. Liz Lerman emphasizes that "[m]ovement as meaning for itself is possible, but *context is everything*, and we should make no assumptions of a universal language" (2011, 70-71, emphasis mine). Drawing from their movement stories, I walked my cast through a process of narrating and providing context for some of their movement.[12] Employing again the vehicle of self-witnessing, the dancers each determined what information from their movement stories seemed important to share (valuable movement-narrative connections the audience wouldn't know if we didn't tell them), and which moments were more powerful if left to the body. Each dancer then recorded their narration while watching themselves perform over video. This created a voice performance that was connected to the established physical performance and rhythms, but then added an extra layer to play with in performance – a relationship to the inner voice made external.

Discoveries: Body-First Relationship to Text and Agency of Voice in Performance

While not unheard of in the world of text and dance performance, in developing speech in this manner – starting with the body and then allowing the embodied experience to determine the speech – creates the opportunity for embodiment and speech to be on even ground in both process and performance. Taking this one step further, however, by giving the performers agency over when, how, and what is said (through the self-witnessing/self-narration process), this project creates the opportunity for deeper ownership, investment, and performative connection to both what they are saying, and the movement that is entwined with their spoken narrative. From a therapeutic/recovery perspective, this is giving each performer the opportunity to do exactly what Bessel van der Kolk outlines as the fundamental goal of recovery: "to reestablish ownership of [their] body and [their] mind – of [their] self" (2015, 205). Approaching this incorporation of voiceover in performance from an empathy-minded perspective, there is much research in support of narrative as a means of facilitating empathetic connection. As Jonathan

[12] In previous research I have experimented with both live speech and pre-recorded voiceover audio within autobiographical performance, and found that speaking the words out loud made it an external experience, whereas using a recording made it a degree more separate from the live performance. Drawing on this as a device used frequently in film, hearing the voice without seeing the performer speak seemed to keep its sense of inner-voice, rather making it an outer voice.

Gottschall points out, "when we are absorbed in a story, we drop our intellectual guard. We are moved emotionally, and this seems to leave us defenseless" – in this case defenseless toward connection (2013, 152). Brené Brown, too, discussing the research findings of neuroeconomist Paul Zak, points out that: "hearing a story – a narrative with a beginning, middle and end – causes our brains to release cortisol and oxytocin. These chemicals trigger the uniquely human abilities to connect, empathize, and make meaning. Story is literally in our DNA" (2015, 6). While linear narrative to the degree Brown and Zak describe is likely not at play in this particular creative work, I would argue that there are additional connective factors at play in a kinesthetic dance performance that has likely not been considered in their research. Extrapolating further, Karen Wood[13] points out that "[e]motion can be the linchpin to engaging the audience and narrative can be a key factor in this" (Wood 2016, 12). Given that our use of narrative within the movement of this piece tends toward enhancing emotional context, I believe that this area of inquiry is valuable, and worthy of continued research.

Goal 3: Metaphor as Unifying Agent and Common Lens for Experience

During the course of my research into processes of recovery and resilience, I discovered the following description of the therapeutic process:

> [w]e help our clients move forward by acknowledging their pain and helping them see that grief, like all powerful emotions, comes in waves. We remind them to look for relief between the waves, reassuring them that the pain will not go on forever. It is important to help our clients to learn to accept support and to care for themselves (Danlychuk & Connors 2017, 70).

This image of waves (and this quote in particular), as a metaphoric illustration of grief and recovery, became a recurring theme in my research. Given the frequency with which I came across this imagery, across authors and fields of research[14], I was led to consider the role of metaphor in facilitating engagement with these themes of recovery and resilience. According to Konopatsch and Payne,

> [t]he emergence of metaphors and the conscious dealing with them are important factors in the integrative process . . . Due to their multi-modal nature, metaphors are especially useful in

[13] Karen Wood is a dance practitioner whose research lies in the areas of kinesthetic empathy and screendance. She has her PhD from the University of Manchester.
[14] The imagery of waves came up in the areas of psychiatry and social work research, as well as the recovery and resilience themed visual arts catalog developed for this project (discussed more later).

accessing themes otherwise too complex to grasp" (2013, 346).

Given the complex and individual nature of recovery, along with the diversity of experiences with recovery in the room, I became curious about the use of metaphor as a tool for a common engagement with the work. Recognizing that there is no one way to recover, nor one uniform experience from which we all needed to recover, the metaphor of waves became a common entry point for our individual explorations within the process, leading to the development of a rich improvisational score (discussed below). Metaphor also aided in the dancers' abilities to put language to both their movement and recovery experiences, and diverse examples of this are sprinkled throughout the piece. What is particularly significant about the initial wave metaphor though, is that beyond giving us a point of connection on a physical level, it provided common language to connect to our experiences as a group. This concept of personal and communal connection via language is a key element within recovery processes.

Discovery: "Same Wave, Different Ride"

An early step in integrating this wave metaphor into our physical research and practice, was the development of an improvisational score. In this score, the dancers were offered three simple movement choices: to get tossed/swept up, to regain/rebuild, and to find stillness or grounded-ness between the "waves." What developed out of this score was an exploration between an external locus of control (feeling that you are controlled by your circumstances) and an internal locus of control (feeling that you are in control of what you do/what happens to you), using the real-world physics of gravity and momentum. What also developed, were opportunities to concentrate on your own waves, or to get swept up in the momentum of the people around you. This became a new structure or mode of working, with each dancer having the opportunity to influence the choice-making of the community, while also navigating their own personal landscapes of recovery. Dancers described feeling that though they were usually "riding" or experiencing different waves, that they were sharing in the same wave-system. Like the pattern and rhythm of waves crashing into a shore, some were receding while others were coming in to land, but no one was independent of the journeys of those around them. In entering into the physical

idea of waves, the dancers were able to find common ground for their individual connections to recovery.

Goal 4: Integrating Empathy into the Process – Drawing from Outside Voices

In the interest of expanding our research of recovery processes beyond the six people in the room, we also looked to the work of other artists as inspiration for three short choreographic studies. I compiled a collection of visual art pieces[15], musical works[16], and poetry, all connected to themes of recovery and resilience. For each category of artwork, all five dancers and myself picked a piece we were particularly drawn to, and did quick twenty minute choreographic responses for each.

There were three main ways that these experiments ended up being significant to the overall research and work. For one, these choreographic exercises were additional experiments in empathy. Each dancer, myself included, received a window into the experience of another artist, and then found a way to connect with these works by calling upon their own experiences. Second, these different works helped push our own perspectives beyond ourselves or our prior patterns of thinking.[17] Third, these choreographic experiments gave us new ways of thinking about our own experiences (new *language* in some cases). Typically in the experiments, we often found a wide range of works that spoke to us with little overlap (emphasizing how individualized experiences with recovery are). When it came to the poetry experiment though, most of us felt drawn to pull from multiple poems, and four out of the six of us chose to incorporate W.S. Merwin's "Separation" in our choreographic reflections/responses (1993). The poem is short and simple, but offered up imagery that resonated with many of us. It reads: "Your absence has gone through me/Like thread through a needle./Everything I do is stitched with its color." This image resonated significantly with the description of recovery one of my dancers offered on the very first day of our rehearsal process, saying that recovery doesn't mean the experience disappears – that "it's still there,

[15] In collaboration with Kimberly Datchuk, Curator of Learning & Engagement at University of Iowa's Stanley Museum of Art
[16] With assistance from Kristin Marrs, faculty member in The University of Iowa's Department of Dance
[17] For example, in my own creative processes, I typically focus on recovery in the realm of grief (relating to lost loved ones). In my choreographic response to a musical selection, however, I chose to respond to Steve Reich's "WTC 9/11," which evoked in me a slew of memories from being an eleven-year-old student when that tragedy occurred. The experience of listening to that piece of music gave me the opportunity to recall and engage with experience beyond the individual level, to a more collective or communal level, and this phrase of movement ended up serving as a collective/group phrase within the final thesis work.

you just hold it differently." Merwin's metaphor also ended up being the catalyst for one dancer's movement story and voiceover – the opening line of the attunement duet (discussed later). Beginning with Merwin's line, "Everything I do is stitched with its color," she then used this metaphor to diverge into her own reflections on grief and how she navigates through life while "holding" that experience. This was just one vivid example of many instances in which these choreographic studies impacted our perspectives and choices, manifesting in choreographic moments throughout the work.

NEW KNOWLEDGE: COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION WITHOUT CONTACT

Returning to our initial understanding of recovery, we see that relationships and community are essential. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, my primary modes of facilitating and depicting connection on stage were no longer available to me: weight sharing, contact, and tactile partnering. As a result, I had to seek new methodologies for establishing relationships, connection, and community.

Reciprocity, Mirroring, and Shared Movement

When it came to the process of creating this work, I was blessed with a cast that already had years of comradery and friendship amongst them. When it came to the more vulnerable work of the process, however, social support was already built into the research process itself, via the Authentic Movement process. On the therapeutic side of the spectrum, it is explained that:

> Social support is not the same as merely being in the presence of others. The critical issue is *reciprocity*: being truly heard and seen by the people around us, feeling that we are held in someone else's mind and heart. For our physiology to calm down, heal, and grow we need a visceral feeling of safety" (van der Kolk 2015, 81).

Within Authentic Movement practice, such a relationship is prescribed between the witness and the mover, emphasizing that the witness "is not 'looking at' the person moving, she is witnessing, listening – bringing a specific quality of attention or presence to – the experience of the mover (Adler 1987, 20). Dance/movement therapist Janet Adler goes on to describe that, "[t]he attitude of the witness toward the mover is nurturing, protective, empathetic, and parental at times (1987, 23). In this way, the movement practice of Authentic Movement became not just a release and processing opportunity for the mover, but

an opportunity to practice active listening, attunement, and empathy for the viewer – the *witness*.

Watching these movement sessions as a witness myself, it was very clear that relationships and experiential resonance between certain dancers already existed. This resonance led me to have those dancers continue working in pairs to develop duet material from their individual processes. Each duet pairing, of which there were two developed in this manner, watched the videos of their Authentic Movement sessions together to look for common themes, movements, and moments of connectivity. Developed over time and integrating multiple movement sessions, these duets revealed much about the nature of facilitating relationships and connection without employing the modality of touch.

Drawing on mirror neuron research (see footnote #2), one element of relational connectivity we implemented in both duets was mirroring – with one duet being encouraged to develop a mirrored relationship from the outset, and the other discovering this connection on their own. This proved to be a powerful tool for facilitating relational and empathetic connection between dancers, as the shared movement created a sense of shared experience. Spatially, we discovered that a direct, face-to-face relationship between dancers created a sense of oppositional or interpersonal experience, while a side-by-side relationship created a more supportive, communal space of mutual attention or processing. Within both duets however, the sense of connection and relational community was palpable.

Attunement

After experimenting with relationships that grew naturally out of Authentic Movement, I began to consider how a relationship that did not come from a common experience might be built. As psychologist and psychotherapist Diana Fosha points out, "The roots of resilience . . . are to be found in the sense of being understood by and existing in the mind and heart of a loving, *attuned*, and self-possessed other" (van der Kolk 2015, 107, emphasis mine). Toward this end, I decided to add a real-time witness to a section of one dancer's solo work – someone whose job it was to deeply and actively watch and "listen" in the body, shifting posture and echoing movements and gestures on an improvisational basis. While seemingly simple as a prompt, this ended up being one of the more complex sections to navigate. The

main challenge we faced was the politics of the gaze, particularly since the primary mover was a female, and the witness was male. Without being able to incorporate the element of supportive or comforting touch, it became difficult to visually define the nature of that relationship. In collaboration with the dancers, we experimented with the position of the male dancer in space and in relationship to the female dancer, as well as the timing of their interactions. We opted to keep the witness upstage and visually beside (rather than directly in line with) the mover, and to have the witness's movement always be in response to seeing the primary mover's actions (never at the same time or ahead of time).

After much conversation, we also introduced a few more elements to better define the relationship: (1) we entered into the duet from a phrase of shared movement/activity, in attempt to put both dancers on an equal footing in terms of roles within the landscape of the piece; (2) we took time to pause and establish a significant moment of eye contact, both initiated and broken by the female dancer (in a moment of decision to share her more personal movement); and (3) we incorporated speaking (via voiceover) into the duet. In conversation with the dancers, we analyzed the differences between words of support, and words that are actually supportive – that make a person feel seen and heard (a key element of recovery). [18] The language defined in these conversations was then woven into the soundscape of this portion of the solo, with the witness interjecting a couple of questions into the voiceover narrative of the primary mover ("Can I be here, and feel joy for you?" and "Can you describe him?"). These conversations helped to define the nature of the relationship between the two, both verbally and physically. Interestingly, the dancer in the "witness" role chose to frequently take his posture of listening to a low-level, echoing the primary mover's gestures in a less pronounced manner, with an intent, yet non-possessive gaze. These choices served the goal of the phrase – to listen, rather than to be the focus of attention. We also experimented with how close the witness should be to the mover. When speaking with the primary mover, she said that even though she did not often look at her witness, she could feel his presence and sometimes his movement, and that it felt significantly supportive to her as she engaged in

[18] For example *telling* a person you see them or hear them, is not as effective as asking them a question that makes them *feel* seen or heard. In the piece, the witnessing dancer asks the primary mover, "Can you describe him?"

what was a more vulnerable section of movement. As Danylchuk and Connors[19] point out, "[w]hen people are truly seen and met where and as they are, then they become free to move . . . [and that] Leaving without connection is a kind of dissociation, continuing the myth that some things can't be faced" (2017, 167). Through physical proximity, attuned listening, and physical resonance/response, we were able to facilitate an actual sense of relationship and community, that enabled the mover to be seen and to be taken into account, in a safe and supportive manner.

Communal Attunement and "Holding the Traces"

Taking what we learned from the "attunement" duet, we then attempted to see if this process/score could work within a whole group setting. We set up the same relationship with space and time – having the primary mover start within a communal pattern of movement, stop (downstage, with the other dancers in a semi-circular formation around her, but in their own lanes "beside" her visually), take the time to make eye contact with all four witnesses, and then allowing the audience see her make the decision to start her movement. With only a few choreographed moments/directives within the duration of this new solo (for the sake of legibility and aesthetics), the four witnesses maintained primary agency over what movements they wished to echo or mirror, based on what resonated most with them in the moment. Interestingly, within this new improvisational structure, we discovered that there was a new social dynamic at play: the actions of the other witnesses. Not only did each witness have to navigate their own relationship to the primary mover, but also to navigate the question of whether to join in the echoes chosen by others (even if they weren't initially drawn to the movement), or to keep to their own moments of resonance and connection. I realized that within this improvisational structure, we had created a similar dynamic to that of choosing to engage and pursue connection or support within a social environment. The dancers each had to navigate their roles within the group, while also seeking to support the one who was separate.

[19] Lynette S. Danylchuk is a clinical psychologist and past president of the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation (ISSTD). Kevin J. Connors is a licensed marriage and family therapist, and a past vice president of ISSTD. Both have been active leaders in the field for decades.

In watching the dancers navigate these social dynamics, I noticed that often, in the echoing or adopting of the primary mover's actions, they would become momentarily engrossed in their own experience of the movement, and would continue to engage it after the primary mover had moved on. We began to refer to this as "holding the traces," and I was struck by how much these connections resonated with me as a viewer. Originally a concept discovered and named while developing one of the mirrored duets (the idea of following along and embodying the movements of another person after they leave them), this aspect of attuned connection seemed even more important within a group setting. Without a need to continue on with a phrase or duet, the dancers could simply *be* with the other dancer, and then *be* with themselves as they processed in their own bodies. It seemed to speak to the very nature of empathetic connection: making the choice to listen or attune yourself to another person, and then opening yourself up to identify with the emotion of that person's experience by accessing a similar emotion or experience within yourself – feeling *with* that person, and in this case, feeling *with* them to the point of action.

Creative Impact Moving Forward

While necessitated by COIVD-19, the methods for developing connection discovered within this project have turned out to be more fruitful than I could have anticipated. Touch is valuable, I appreciate that now more than ever, but it is also the easier method in terms of communicating relationship or relational context. The physically attuned, active-listening, and gestural resonance methodology employed in this piece almost feels stronger or more impactful, because they take more effort, work, attention, and *intention* on the part of the movers, which I believe reads in performance. Additionally, these methodologies could arguably be considered as more relatable or accessible to a non-dance/pedestrian perspective than more elaborate partnering. Given my goal of facilitating attunement and connection with the audience, having the performers employ similar methodology in performance feels important, and worthy of further research.

BRIDGING THE GAP: FROM PROCESS TO PERFORMANCE

Navigating the Roles of Choreographer-Director-Facilitator

Within most therapeutic practices that include Authentic Movement or other embodied therapies, the process itself is the point. While the process for this research was incredibly rich and valuable, it was only one part of the project. The other objective, to choreograph a dance work to be shared – creating opportunities to see and be seen, hear and be heard – this required shifting the focus from process towards a shareable product with a new "witness" in mind: the audience. Given the collaborative nature of this choreographic process, and the intensely autobiographical nature of the work for the individuals involved, the first obstacle was in identifying where my own voice belonged as a choreographer. Given that one of the foundational premises operating in the work is that the authenticity and vulnerability of the performer could serve as a device for connection, giving the dancers my own autobiographical work felt unsupportive of this goal. An early way I attempted to navigate this was to utilize my own movement vocabulary primarily in the group unison sections - movement that already needed to be shared amongst dancers. As the work progressed, however, I realized that my role was far more complex than the simple matter of who made what. My role was in the facilitation of the process, in directing and supporting the dancers' development of individual pieces, and then choreographing how all those pieces might fit together in a way that "formulates an appeal to viewers to be apprehended and felt, encouraging them to participate collectively in discovering the communal basis of their experience" (Foster 2011, 218). To do this, I employed the following methodologies.

Juxtaposing Internal vs. External

One of the primary methods I used to bring the personal and intimate nature of the creative process into the performance was to make the internal processes visible (or audible) – effectively making it external. Some examples of this have already been discussed – movement based in Authentic Movement, and autobiographical context integrated through voiceover. Additionally, to some of the voiceover solos, I added external elements to navigate, such as a witness, or in the case of one dancer,

four people running back and forth around her as she kept to her inner landscape in performance. In this instance in particular, the dancer's voiceover discusses "repetition," her "busy mind," and "a great chase I can't win," and so through a repetitive running score, we made external some of the issues and imagery she was navigating internally. These conditions made it so that the solo performer had to navigate the pull of external stimuli while trying to give attention to her internal state, in real-time. Throughout the rest of the piece, I sought additional opportunities for making the internal external, such as integrating sections of silence and stillness. In silence, the sounds of breath and movement could be more audible, revealing the inner state of the performer. In moments of stillness, we created opportunity for the audience to attune with more depth to what was happening internally for the performer (in the absence of movement).

This juxtaposition between inner landscape and external experience is one that resonates quite strongly with my own experiences of recovery – the feeling that your internal experience is so enormous that it should impact what is happening around you, but in most cases the rest of the world continues on unmoved. Beyond its interest for me on a recovery-level, however, I was also interested in this process as a potential device for empathy building. In moving and narrating from deeply personal places, and in some cases magnifying that further through the removal of everything but the performer and their experience (in silence and stillness), we are hopefully heightening the sense of vulnerability and trust on the part of the performer. As neuroecomomist Paul Zak points out, "the neurochemical oxytocin [scientifically correlated with empathy] is synthesized in the human brain when one is trusted and . . . the molecule motivate[s] reciprocation" (2015, 2). In making visible the internal, we are extending an invitation to the audience to engage with their own vulnerability and to trust.

Choreographic Structure: Narrative vs. Episodic

At the end of the purely generative portion of the process, we had collectively created five solos (condensed down from 4-5 solos per dancer), two duets, four unison/group phrases, and two improvisational scores. The challenge then became directing how they might live together in one piece. It was here that my research into empathy and processes of recovery were at odds with one another.

Considering my research into the potential of narrative to facilitate audience engagement, a narrative structure seemed to make sense. At the same time, as I had learned through reading and through witnessing the creative journeys of my dancers, there is no *one* way to recover. Looking at the pieces of material we had created, there *wasn't* one narrative authentically at work. We had created from the perspective of many different people's journeys of recovery. The decision I arrived at was to take one dancer's solo and divide it into three sections, effectively using her experience to frame the work and offer an overall arc for the piece.

The rationale behind the sequence of these sections was the dancer's use of her gaze. Her opening solo held a predominantly internal focus, relating more to the internal impact at the beginning stages of hurt or loss – the grappling before a shift towards recovery. The second section was predominantly a mid-range focus, navigating the immediate space around herself (this solo grew to become the attunement/witnessing duet). Her third and final solo was predominantly externally focused, spending much more time reaching beyond herself both physically and with her gaze (this solo grew to become the whole group attunement section). In a similar fashion to that of many recovery processes, over time this dancer was able to process what was happening on an internal level, and gradually expand to look outward and see relationship, community, and vision beyond herself. Around these three sections of one person's narrative, we wove in episodes of other experiences and perspectives, as individuals, pairs, and as a whole community. In weaving these pieces together within the framing of an episodic narrative arc, we were able to create a sense of everyone on their own journeys, but in relationship and community.

This episodic-collage structure to the movement material also facilitated opportunity for new relationships, connections, and context to be born in the transitional space between pieces - ones that could not exist in isolation. One of the most significant was the sequence of development from a whole group phrase, into a voiceover solo (performed by Michael Landez), into a duet between the soloist and another dancer (Erin Evans). After the whole group phrase, which ended with a walking pattern on a grid (spatially), the whole group crosses near or around Michael with their walking, but eventually they all go offstage, leaving Michael alone. In Michael's voiceover solo, he ponders the need and societal pressure to

"just keep going" and the fear of stopping or resting (because you then might not know how to start again). In overlapping this solo with the whole group literally moving "on" without him, we highlight his isolation in this moment, and give additional context to his impetus to "keep going." This solo concludes with a prolonged period of stillness, and eventually silence. In transition from here to a duet phrase, a new dancer enters the space, walks over to the dancer on the floor, and then pauses as they make eye contact. Then, in a moment almost more significant than the duet itself, we see the standing dancer make the decision to get down on the other's level (laying on the floor), first laying on her side, and then fully matching his posture, laying on her back and meeting him where he is, both in space and physicality. They take a moment to be still together, and as the music starts, they look over at each other, seemingly drawing on each other for the impetus to move. This moment has become one of the most profound for me as a viewer, witnessing the decision to join a person, and then to physically put oneself in the position of another – a physical enactment of empathetic connection, and one that would not have existed without the necessity for transition created by the structure of the work.

Live Choice-Making: Active Listening and Individual Navigation

Recognizing throughout the research that both empathy and recovery are active rather than passive processes, employing live choice-making in performance became an important element within the final product. Starting with the "Ocean" improvisational score discovered early in the process, opportunities for real-time, individual choice making were then woven throughout the work. Perhaps the most important of these were the attunement scores, and what I call the "choose your own adventure" score. Within the attunement sections (discussed previously), the opportunity to make choices in the moment meant that the dancers needed to actively "listen" to and watch the primary mover's embodied experience. On the other side of this engagement in communal listening, however, the dancers then enter into the "choose your own adventure" score. This score starts with a set phrase of movement material, and then, as the name implies, they navigate their way through this material in whatever manner feels resonant in the moment. They are allowed to experiment with tempo, energetic qualities, rhythm, stillness, and

even when they start the phrase. Within this phrase, created by myself and inspired by Emily Dickinson's poem "'Hope' is the thing with feathers – (314)", the dancers are grappling with the idea of hope, and navigating their own relationship to the themes brought up by the poem and integrated into the movement.[20] The piece then ends in an improvisational variation of the beginning "ocean" score. Each dancer falls upstage, and then returns to the patterns of falling and finding ground that existed within the original, but this time they are physically initiating, via a gesture of catching their own leg, a cessation of the falling and the arrival in moments of stability. This integration of self-determination, both gesturally and through live choice-making, creates moments of internal locus of control – a return to the sense that your choices can have an impact on what you do and how you proceed.

Translations for Film

An additional challenge in the choreographic communication of this work, was the necessity of a filmed release, rather than a live performance, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to develop a filmed version of this work that could reach and connect with an audience in the way I had created my live piece to do, I collaborated with my colleague - dancer, choreographer, and dance film maker, Katie Phelan – who both filmed and edited this piece. The primary objective I communicated surrounding filming was that I wanted to facilitate as much sense of intimacy and closeness as possible, particularly during solo and duet moments, without losing sight of the bigger picture of the work. To do this, Katie and I experimented with three main types of shots: wide shots, mid-range close-ups, and extreme close-ups. Within the editing process, we then sorted through which shots best served the intention of the work.

For all large group moments, we primarily kept to wide shots, giving the audience a sense of the overall design in space, but also creating a sense of the community and communal processing. For solo and duet work, we shifted to tighter shots, employing mid-range close-ups that kept the performers as the central focus in the frame, rather than the predominantly empty stage around them. This also served to

[20] This individual "adventure" then offers itself as a contrast as the dancers build to a repetition of the phrase, this time in unison, with a more direct and determined energy.

bring the audience closer to the performers – far closer than they ever would have been in a traditional theatrical setting. This proximity ended up heightening the smaller, relational moments within the choreography, such as moments of eye contact, synchronization of breath, and emotional expression (no small feat given that they were all wearing COVID-19 face masks). Taking it one step further, in a few key places we pushed this proximity to extreme close-ups, zooming in on parts of the dancers' bodies to highlight specific moments of gesture, movement, or touch. The goal here was to evoke in the viewer an embodied sense of the performer's movement, almost as if they were inside the dance itself.[21]

One last methodology Katie and I employed within the translation of this dance to film, was a focus on its audio. Within the live version of this piece, I was struck by the sounds of the dancers as they moved – their breath, their feet, the fabric of their clothes. In an attempt to preserve this sense of live-ness, I decided to keep these diagetic performance sounds within the filmed version of the work. This meant that we did not add any audio into the final product after the fact, but kept the music, voiceover, and silence to be heard as they existed in the live performance. This presented some challenges, such as differences in audio between takes and the loud room tone which created a humming noise instead of true silence in the quiet moments. However, I firmly believe that the results were worth making this trade. The living sounds of this piece of choreography were preserved, offering additional layers of life and embodied points of connection through the breath, weight, and movement of the dancers.

CONCLUSION: INSIDE-OUT AND OUTSIDE-IN – MOVING TOWARDS HOPE

Throughout this research, in the journey from process to performance, the most significant discovery I made about recovery is that it requires two modes of working and thinking: Inside-Out and Outside-In. While neither of these concepts are entirely novel across fields of cognitive and therapeutic practices, linking the two together is less common. The results of my current research have emphasized the need to work first from the Inside-Out, like many talk-therapy practices, which then creates space for

[21] While I have had limited opportunity to engage with the audience of my work, given its virtual release, these proximal moments seem to be some of the most poignant, with some viewers specifically communicating an embodied response/connection to them.

drawing in a new vision/imagined future. Of importance too, is our inclusion in this process of actual physical embodiment in both manners of processing (in the lane of more embodied therapies).

To start, you need to look inward, to process or to "rumble" (Brown 2017, multiple locations), and then find a way to get it out of you – to tell your story, in some fashion. As Bessel van der Kolk highlights, "[t]elling the story is important; without stories, memory becomes frozen; and without memory you cannot imagine how things can be different (2015, 221). As one of my dancers described, the work of internal processing (Authentic Movement and autobiographical embodiment) was initially difficult, almost like they were re-experiencing or re-inscribing these experiences in the body. However, after they had done the work of creating the final solos and duets, they said that it was incredibly freeing – that they had made them, and put them outside of their bodies (in visible/set choreography), and that now they never had to put them back in to their bodies (unnamed or invisible) again. In performance, this dancer shared that those pieces were now some of the most impactful parts of the experience for them.

While I entered this creative process expecting to engage with an Inside-Out process, the most significant discovery I made in my research was that inside-out is not the only direction that work needs to happen. This became abundantly clear when for one of the Authentic Movement sessions, I offered the following prompt (for journaling and then movement):

> Focus: "All revolutions start with a new vision of what's possible. Our vision is that we can rise from our experiences of hurt and struggle in a way that allows us to live more wholehearted lives. . . ." (Brown 2017, 225). → What does/might full recovery look like? Think about your own recovery stories – pick one and describe what that might look/feel/sound/be like.

Entering into this prompt, I thought this would be a lighter, more hopeful embodied reflection. As it turned out, it was the *most* emotional of all our sessions, by a significant margin. What I realized through this experience is that you cannot draw from within you something that is not there, because the body cannot be where it is not. The mind can imagine, but for the most part, if you are moving authentically from within your own body memory, you cannot go where you haven't been, and you cannot call up experiences you haven't lived. In order to make this shift, we must look outside of ourselves, working from outside to inside, stepping into an embodiment that you draw from outside yourself. It is here that

the work we were already doing, looking to outside artists' expressions, took on a new level of significance. In order to "imagine how things can be different," and find "a new vision of what's possible," we need to look to the experiences and perspectives of those who have found healing and shared it (van der Kolk 2015, 221; Brown 2017, 225).

The closing movement phrase of this piece (before the final improvisational score) was drawn from my own embodied interpretation of Emily Dickinson's perspective on hope[22]. In a large portion of the material developed for this piece (from an inside-out approach), the focus is much more internal and the movement much more closed. Shifting to working outside-in, with this phrase I was able to engage a much different language of embodiment. The body became more open and expansive, taking more risks with balance, and operating with more strength. To end this piece entirely happy or wholly "fixed" would be false. Recovery is a journey, and one that cannot be fully summarized in a thirty-seven-minute work. In drawing on imagery and themes of hope, I discovered that there is an energetic shift necessary to move towards recovery. There needs to be a shift from frustration towards determination, two similar states in terms of energetic embodiment, but with one operating from a position of being stuck where you are (frustration), and the other directing that energy towards some form of progress (determination). To make that shift, you need to have a vision of something to imagine or look towards, and that impetus is most often found outside ourselves.

It is in the dual processes of recovery – Inside-Out and Outside-In, that we see yet again the immense value of choreographic intervention. In Inside-Out processing, choreography gives us the capacity to name and share our stories, both in language and in movement. In Outside-In processing, as I have discovered throughout this process, choreography is essential for developing a new mode of embodiment – in the case of this work, a shift towards hope. It is through choreography that we are able to share and step into this movement that may be beyond our own personal experience. With a new vision before us, we can step into a new mode of embodiment, towards recovery.

[22] "'Hope' is the thing with feathers – (314)"

CONCERT PROGRAM

Between The Waves

Choreography and Direction: Jessica Madden

Choreography and Performance: Danica Clayton, Erin Evans, Michael Landez, Juliet Remmers, Jensen Steinbronn

Text: Danica Clayton, Michael Landez, & Juliet Remmers (with reference to a line from W.S. Merwin's "Separation")

Music: Evan Olds

Additional Sound Editing: Ramin Roshandel, Michael Landez, Jessica Madden

Costume Design: Juliana Waechter

Lighting Design: Kim Fain

Videography and Editing: Katie Phelan

Thesis Committee: Rebekah Kowal, Jennifer Kayle, Kristin Marrs

To a world in need of recovery: this work is as much for you as the process of making it was for us. It is my hope that as you receive it, you might feel seen, and a little less alone. May you be met with listening ears and empathetic support on your journeys. – Jessica Madden

"We help our clients move forward by acknowledging their pain and helping them see that grief, like all powerful emotions, comes in waves. We remind them to look for relief between the waves, reassuring them that the pain will not go on forever. It is important to help our clients to learn to accept support and to care for themselves." - from "Treating Complex Trauma and Dissociation: A Practical Guide to Navigating Therapeutic Challenges" by Lynette S. Danlychuk and Kevin J. Connors (2017, 70)

First and foremost, I'd like to thank my cast. This piece would not exist without your creativity, your artistry, and your willingness to be vulnerable and delve into your stories. It was an honor for me to witness and share in your journeys. To my committee: Rebekah, Kristin, Jennifer – thank you for supporting me, for holding space for my processing, and for encouraging me to challenge myself and push my work further. To Evan: what a miraculously wonderful journey this has been! Thank you for your beautiful music, your openness to working in a new realm, and for the first of what I hope will be many creative collaborations to come! And Elizabeth – thank you, not only for 20+ years of friendship, but for sending me one of Evan's compositions last year, just for fun because you thought I'd like it (I did!). To Katie: thank you for sharing your expertise and artistry with me, and for capturing my work in a way that still connects, despite this season of no live audiences. I am forever grateful. To Ailey: thank you for three years of sharing – your insights and sources in our shared areas of research, your time and wisdom in offering feedback, your ears when I needed to process, and your snacks. To my parents, Meg and Karl: thank you for your tireless, endless support! For the millions of phone calls to process – tears, rants, self-doubt, celebrations, and everything in between. For your willingness to show up, despite the distance. Dad, for reading and editing every paper of significance over the last three years – you deserve an honorary degree. Mom, for your tireless enthusiasm, and for consistently covering me in the prayers of a whole community of women (to all my long-distance prayer warriors, thank you, from the bottom of my heart). To my local support system – Julia, Anna, Sam, Ethan, and my beautiful community of fellow grads, both present and graduated – I wouldn't have made it without you. And to my community of long-distance supporters – Michael, Kacie, Elizabeth, Alexis, Rahs, Tink, Miss Janet, Sarah, Pam, and so many others – thank you for being there through all the twists and turns. And finally – for me, my creative work is an extension of my faith. Without Christ, and the ways he's worked in my life, this piece wouldn't exist. Lord, thank you for the ways you've used these three years to shape and grow me, and for giving me a heart to support and come alongside people in recovery.

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