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Reimagining Dialogue:  
How can embodiment teach?

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DANCE PEDAGOGY

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ABSTRACT (min. roughly 250 words)	
<p>In this thesis, I attempt to further entangle theories of embodiment and dialogue in order to teach. The majority of my observations come from a workshop I participated in Taiwan during January, 2020. I, along with 14 other guest pedagogues, had to find new ways to teach without the use of verbal language because we did not share a common language with the students. I began to ask myself: How can embodiment teach?</p> <p>At first, I was unable to think of myself as a researcher. The term “research” held power over what I could imagine it to be. Through renaming the term “research” as “archive” I was able to overcome the preconceived power that “research” had over me. By reflecting on my own learning style, I uncovered a method of naming and renaming that helps me to dialogue with the world. Karen Barad refers to agency as “response-ability”, or the ability to respond. This phenomena brought me to thinking about imagination as a main tool for agency in dialogical practices.</p> <p>By further entangling agency and embodied dialogue I found a link towards anti-oppressive education. I wanted to trouble my understanding of the teacher and student relationship. Through my reflections I found a surprising paradox in my search to deconstruct the teacher-student relationship. I realized that in order to be the teacher I aspire to be, I would need to always remain a student. This unlocked a future imagining of the group as a teaching agent of its own.</p> <p>The workshop in Taiwan brought along new suggestions for how embodiment could teach. By placing an emphasis on intention and transformation, rather than verbalization, one can begin to transform the body into a tool for dialogue. I explored 2 different ways to teach without a common language. One, a collaborative touch practice I created with a fellow colleague, Marisa Martin. Another, a drawing practice about outlining yourself on a piece of paper and reimagining all of the possibilities that the human form can be. What this archival has unlocked in me is the unlimited amount of possibilities that exist when one entangles imagination, embodiment, dialogue, and pedagogy.</p>	
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*Hokusai says look carefully.  
He says pay attention, notice.  
He says keep looking, stay curious.  
Hokusai says there is no end to seeing.*

*He says look forward to getting old.  
He says keep changing,  
you just get more who you really are.  
He says get stuck, accept it,  
repeat yourself as long as it is interesting.*

*He says keep doing what you love.*

*He says keep praying.*

*He says every one of us is a child,  
every one of us is ancient,  
every one of us has a body.  
He says every one of us is frightened.  
He says every one of us has to find  
a way to live with fear.*

*He says everything is alive –  
shells, buildings, people, fish,  
mountains, trees, wood is alive.  
Water is alive.*

*Everything has its own life.*

*Everything lives inside us.*

*He says live with the world inside you.*

*He says it doesn't matter if you draw, or write books.  
It doesn't matter if you saw wood, or catch fish.  
It doesn't matter if you sit at home and  
stare at the ants on your veranda or the shadows  
of the trees and grasses in your garden.  
It matters that you care.*

*It matters that you feel.*

*It matters that you notice.*

*It matters that life lives through you.*

*Contentment is life living through you.  
Joy is life living through you.  
Satisfaction and strength is life living through you.*

*He says don't be afraid.  
Don't be afraid.*

*Love, feel, let life take you by the hand.*

*Let life live through you.*

*by Roger Keyes*



## 1 *The Earth* – Introduction

How can embodiment teach? When I look at my research question as a dance pedagogue, I hear the echoes of my mother reminding me to “Keep things simple, David.” It would seem that someone who has been dancing half of his life would be able to answer this question pretty easily. However, I am entranced by the implications of this question when it comes to learning, dialogue, and embodiment. This is my attempt to make sense of this question in order to have a stronger understanding of just how powerful embodiment can be in a learning environment.

In section 1, I will begin by defining the concepts and theories that I explore within this research. These include entanglement, embodiment, agency, dialogue, and imagination. From there, I will unpack the elements I will be using to help support my ideas in forms other than text, such as illustrations, silent spaces, poetry, and metaphor. By creating a solid grounding of how and what I will be working with in this research, I hope to give the reader a clear understanding of what to expect in the journey of this thesis.

In this research, I attempt to further entangle myself with the pedagogical theories with which I have found companionship. “Entanglement” is a concept that has been defined and reimaged by Karen Barad in her book, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. Barad (2007, 1) writes:

To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating.

This definition of entangling as intra-relating helps me realize that I do not only encounter my research concepts through formal study, but I live, embody, and experience them every day in my daily life. Thus, I aim to further embody the pedagogical knowledge within these theories in order to influence and enrich my own teaching practice.

When looking at the term “embodiment,” I would like to define it using Esther Thelen’s work in embodied cognition. Thelen, along with co-authors Smith, Schöner, and Scheier (Thelen et al. 2001, 1), defined embodiment as:

To say that cognition is embodied means that it arises from bodily interactions with the world. From this point of view, cognition depends on the kinds of experiences that come from having a body with particular perceptual and motor capabilities that are inseparably linked and that together form the matrix within which reasoning, memory, emotion, language, and all other aspects of mental life are meshed.

This definition of embodiment began to create what is known as the perception-action cycle in which “the contents of perception are determined (in part) by the actions an organism takes, and the actions an organism takes are guided by its perceptions of the world” (Shapiro 2010, 53). This creates a loop between perception and action that ultimately unites them (Shapiro 2010, 53). In the dance classroom, there is a direct connection to perception and action in the way that one can use embodiment to teach. The teacher shows, and the student does. However, in this research I am interested in deconstructing this process of teacher-to-student replication into one that allows both parties agency within a an entangled teacher-student relationship.

“Agency” in the teacher-student relationship emerges when “...students intentionally act and interact with someone or something,” including when a student is interacting with themselves (Klemenčič 2015, 6). I will also be exploring the implications of Karen Barad’s definition of agency regarding the teacher-student relationship. Barad (Dolphijn et al. 2012, 54-55) proposes in an interview that:

Agency is not held, it is not a property of persons or things; rather, agency is an enactment, a matter of possibilities for reconfiguring entanglements...agency is about response-ability, about the possibilities of mutual response, which is not to deny, but to attend to power imbalances. Agency is about possibilities for worldly re-configurings.

In this research, I will be exploring agency as a renegotiation or dialogue between two individuals. In this widening of possibilities for what agency can look like in the classroom, I hope to uncover new

ways to intra-act with my students. Through a reimagining of two individuals’ intra-actions in “response-able” dialogue, I can become further entangled with the world around me.

Through the definition of embodiment as a tool to teach movement while maintaining a student’s agency, I begin to see threads of entanglement with dialogical practice. Rens van Loon (2017, 113) defines “dialogue” as, “...a ‘participative’ mode of interacting, physically, rationally, and intuitively”. Dialogue, in this definition, is proactive action in various forms. When applying this definition to the action-perception cycle, then, embodied dialogue can be defined as the transformation of embodiment into action. When entangling learning with embodied dialogue, this can go one step further. Van Loon (2017, 113) suggests:

Dialogue is an ethical and epistemological theory, as it starts from the fact that both parties in conversation don’t know the answer, and decide to explore possible answers by researching their own and other’s values and assumptions.

This reveals that “dialogical practice,” as a tool for teaching, is a search for answers through collaboration between teacher and student. This aligns with the maintenance of a student’s agency in regards to the teacher-student relationship. It is a definition entangled with my aims as a pedagogue. If what I am searching for is, “How embodiment can teach?” then it is actually through the tool of embodied dialogue as a method for learning that I can search for my answer.

I find these definitions of “embodied dialogue” aligned with Brené Brown’s (2010) book, *Gifts of Imperfections*, where she explores the idea that through connection, compassion, and courage, we can ultimately approach the world in a “wholehearted” way (2010, 21). In Brown’s (2010, 19) definition of “connection,” I find my own definition of a dialogue with maintained agency: “the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard and valued”. In her definition of “compassion,” I find the perception-action cycle of embodiment. She writes, “The heart of compassion is acceptance. The better we are at accepting ourselves and others, the more compassionate we become” (2010, 16-17). Finally, it is in her definition of “courage” that I find the entanglement of embodied dialogue: “to speak one’s mind by telling

all one's heart" (2010, 12). My aim is to be able to share my inner world sensations through an outer world dialogue and to find tools to experience and facilitate others doing the same. The aim for teaching through embodied dialogue is to connect on a deeper level with my students and to reimagine, together, what the world can be.

In this research, I define "imagination" as a metaphor for the limitless possibility of what can occur during an encounter, whether this encounter be within ourselves or with the world around us (Biesta 2017b, 78). It is an entanglement of anti-oppressive ideas and otherworldly phenomena. Imagination, in this research, is an enquiry of, "What could life be beyond what we expect?" It is the agency-driven action that allows me to ask "Who am I?, Who says?, Who benefits from this definition?, and What must change and how?" (Brown 2006, 49).

My hope with this dialogical approach to embodied practice is to connect with and emancipate my students in the classroom setting and beyond. Through these definitions, I find my aims to approach not only my research question, but the world. With courage, fueled by compassion and a yearning for connection, I begin to walk the path of the unknown to discover how I can use my own embodiment as a tool for teaching.

I will now introduce the elements used within my research structure to help support these ideas and concepts in forms other than text. First, there are the elements of illustration that appear within my research. These illustrations are transformations of my teaching practice into visual form. They are created by students who took my class during a workshop in January 2020 in Taiwan. I will delve deeper into the illustrations, where they come from, and how this practice was created in section 7 of this research. In these illustrations, I find space for my imagination to transform.

I have also left premeditated space within the formatting of my thesis to allow breath and thought to co-inhabit the pages. These represent moments of break from the verbal realm of research—a break to listen, reflect, and transform. They are metaphorical "homes." I was searching for a representation of what *thought* and *space* could look like crystalized into the pages of my research, and it is within these empty spaces that I find reflexivity, enquiry, and dialogue with the Self.

The third element I would like to open up is the poems that inhabit the beginning of each section. These are direct transcriptions of words I have used in my teaching practice. They are taken from a video of my class on November 2, 2018. In these poems, I reveal the methods and ideas of how I bring imagination, metaphor, and the greater world into my practice. Through these poems, I allow my words the opportunity to exist in the dream world and, in doing so, attempt to deconstruct the logocentric nature of textual research methods.

Audre Lorde (2007, 39) talks about dreaming by saying:

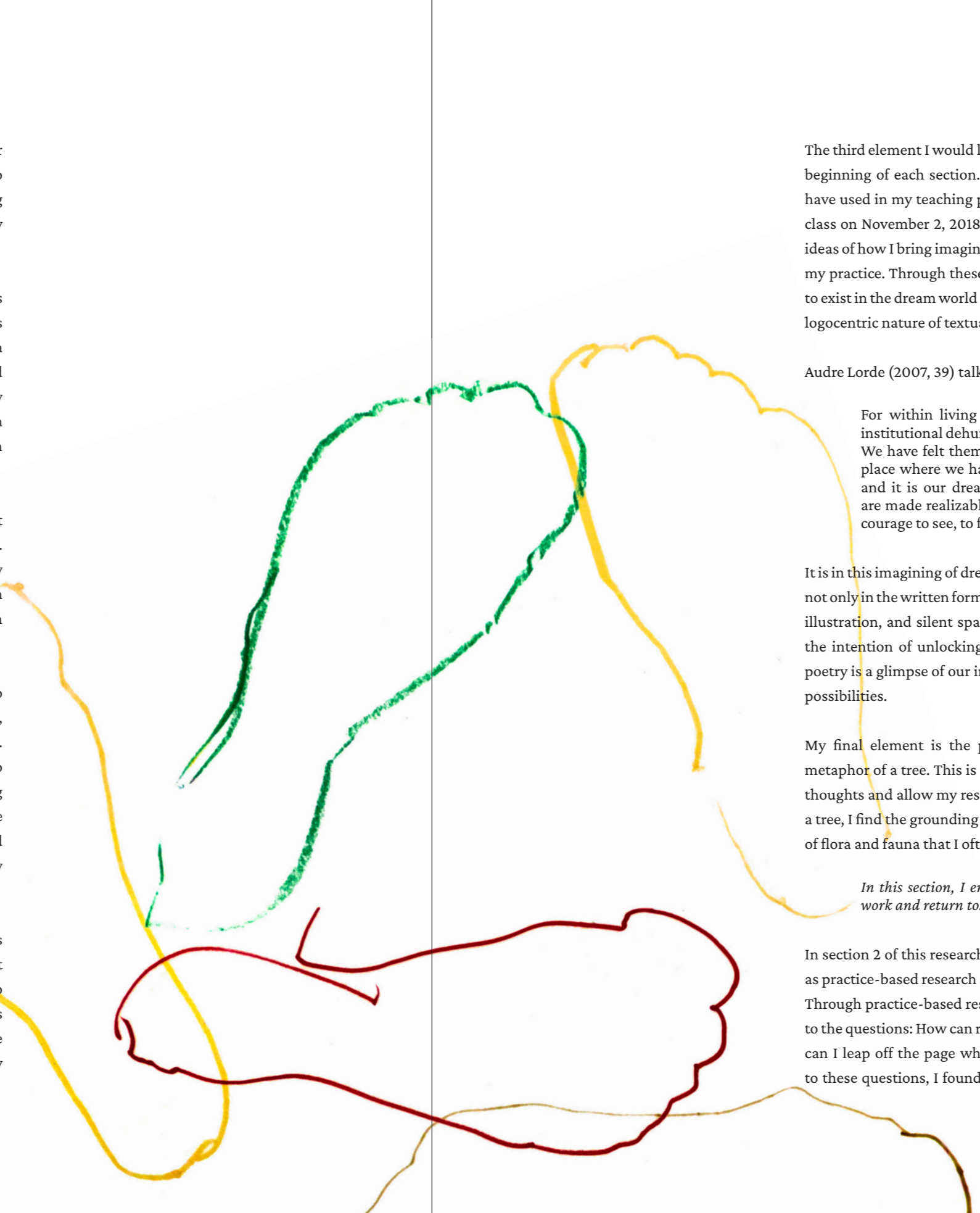
For within living structures defined by profit, by linear power, by institutional dehumanization, our feelings were not meant to survive... We have felt them all already. We have hidden that fact in the same place where we have hidden our power. They surface in our dreams, and it is our dreams that point the way to freedom. Those dreams are made realizable through our poems that give us the strength and courage to see, to feel, to speak, and to dare.

It is in this imagining of dreams that I find my fascination with poetry—not only in the written form, but in everything we do. Dance, pedagogy, illustration, and silent spaces can all become poetry when they hold the intention of unlocking the power held within our dreams. This poetry is a glimpse of our inner spirit—a crystallization of our limitless possibilities.

My final element is the presentation of my research through the metaphor of a tree. This is to help better understand and organize my thoughts and allow my research to grow with me. In this metaphor of a tree, I find the grounding of my research by using the tool of imagery of flora and fauna that I often cherish in my practice.

*In this section, I encounter the earth, the stable ground on which I can work and return to. It is from this section that I will begin to grow.*

In section 2 of this research, I will dive into my research methodology as practice-based research and reimagine what research can be for me. Through practice-based research methods, I hope to uncover answers to the questions: How can research become its own method? And, How can I leap off the page while trapped in a written form? In response to these questions, I found the tools through which I approached my



research: the need to add illustrations, the need to add silence into the text, and the need to add poetry. By reimagining research as an archive, I was able to remain resilient despite the resistances that I originally had towards research practices.

*It is through the roots that the tree gets the most support. The roots are rarely seen, but always growing. It is from the roots that a tree receives its nutrients in order to sustain its growth towards the sun.*

In section 3, I will attempt to encounter my practice in dialogue with myself while introducing the literary companions used as the basis for the dialogue in section 4. By placing my current practice side by side with the theories and ideas I am interested in, I try to uncover the connections that are already present within my teaching practice in order to better understand where my practice can go. Without critically reflecting on my own intuitive approach to practice, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to realize and regain agency over the choices I make while teaching.

*The trunk is the hardest part of the tree. It is through the bark of the trunk that the tree maintains its protection from the harshness of the outside world. It is in the solidity of the trunk that I find the passage of the roots to the entanglement of the branches.*

In section 4, I attempt the difficult task of further entangling myself with the theories and concepts I align with. This includes theories of embodiment, dialogue, and learning. Through deepening my entanglement, I uncover a personal learning process of naming and renaming that I have used to help intra-relate my own understandings with the definitions of these theories. In doing so, I uncover a dialogical practice between *Subject* and *Subject* that reveals the importance of response-able agency in the teacher-student relationship. By looking at the ways I learn, I find methods and tools for the ways I would like to teach.

*It is only fitting that this section is a metaphor for the entanglements that can be seen in the branches of a tree. Each branch sprouting and shooting off in different directions, but all with the same core. It is in this act of widening that the tree maintains its ability to find the sun, but it is through the returning of the nutrients to the trunk that the tree can continue to grow.*

In section 5, I ground myself in my data collected during the workshop in Taiwan. I use tools of autoethnographic storytelling to analyze and present the phenomena I witnessed as an observer and participant within the workshop. I uncover these ideas through the same process of naming and renaming found in section 4 in order to continue the thread of entanglement between my theoretical companions and my research voice.

*It is in the leaves that a tree is the most reactive to the wind. It is where the stability of a tree is revealed as an intra-active object. In the leaves, we see the ability of a tree to change with the seasons and time. The leaves are a representation for the tree's ability to remain present and reactive.*

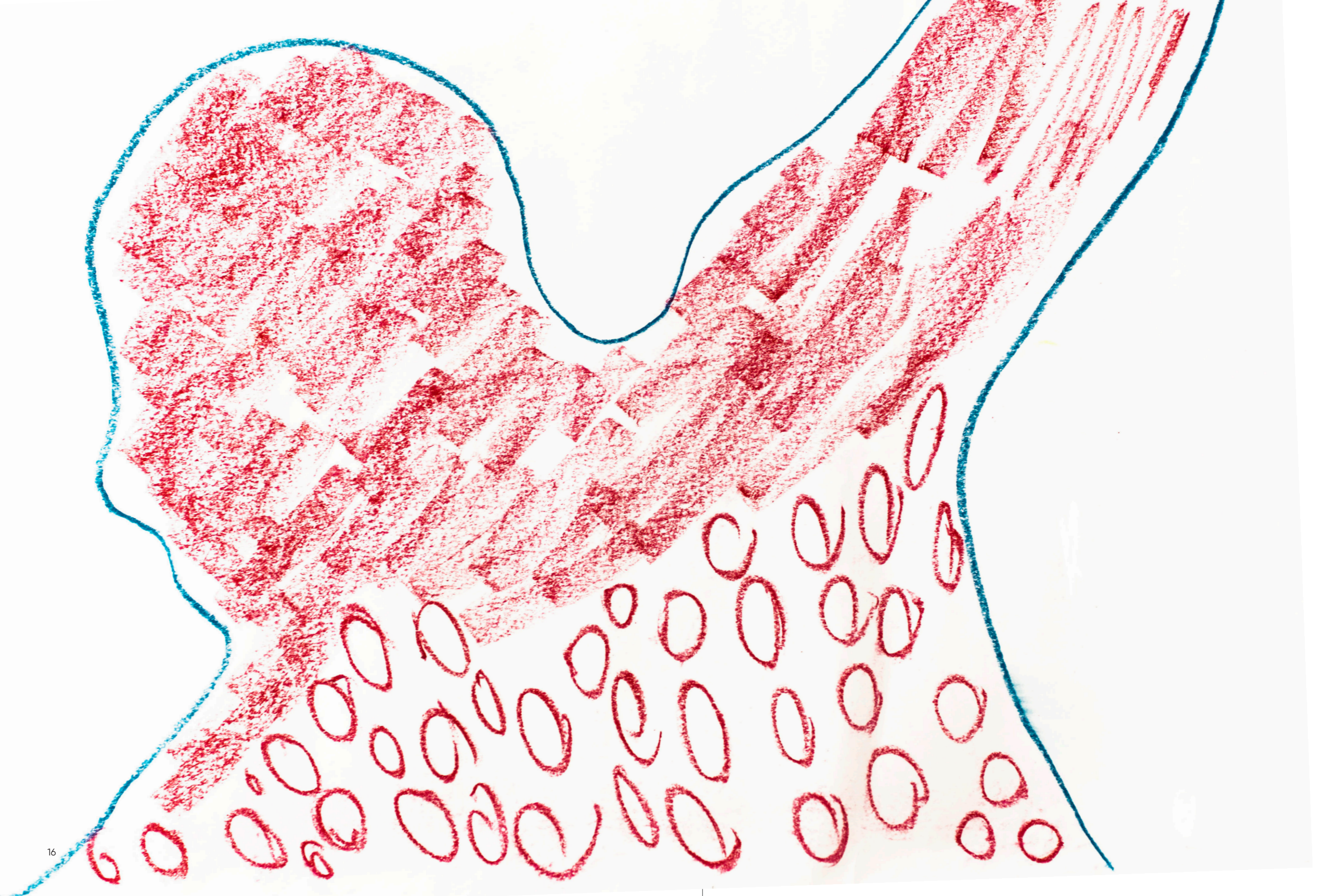
In sections 6 and 7, I open up the two practices that I created while working with my research question in Taiwan. They were attempts to teach without a common language—a true test for how embodiment can teach. In section 6, I share a collaborative embodied touch class that I taught with a close friend and colleague, Marisa Martin. We explored a collaborative writing practice to research the class we taught together, and her voice is present throughout this section. In section 7, I reflect on a class I now call “tracing your edges”. It was an attempt at showing how by drawing ourselves and outlining our edges on paper we can experience embodiment in a new way. Through these classes, I ultimately participated in the dual movement of practice-based research by allowing my research to dialogue with and influence my practice, and by allowing my practice to influence my research in the form of the stories and illustrations that ripple through the pages of this text.

*It is here that I find the blossoms of my research, the fragile flowers that are an accumulation of all of the work I have placed into this exploration. The blossoms may only stay for a short moment, but it is the sweet smell of their fragrance in the wind that lives on in my memory the most.*

Finally, in section 8, I will return to the foundation of my research question in order to gather my findings while looking towards the future. How have I transformed and what have I learned for myself?

*It is after the blossoms have faded that they actually return to the earth to fertilize the next season's growth. It is in this returning that the tree actually prepares for the future; it is in this returning that I find my future growth.*





*Slowly allow your feet to root down into the earth*

*Widening the feet*

*Wiggling the toes*

*Wiggling the heels*

*Taking a deep breath down*

*into your roots*

*Imagine yourself*

*Standing on the edge of the ocean*

*The waves crashing over your feet*

*Feel the water*

*Splash*

*over the crowns of your feet*

*Smelling the saltiness of the air*

*Noticing the temperature of the water*

*Encountering the particles of each grain of sand*

*Then,*

*As the wave recedes back into the sea*

*The sand pulls out from underneath you*

*Rooting you deeper down into the earth*

*Surrounding your feet with sand*

*Holding you up*

*Trust that you can let yourself go*

*The earth will carry you*

*The earth will move you*

## 2 *The Roots* – Research Methodology

The methodology I used in this research is practice-based research. The data I have collected comes from personal observations of fourteen different dance classes, critical reflections of my own practice, and illustrations from students that participated in my teaching practice in Taiwan. I will dig deeper into my data and findings in Section 5. In this second section, I will open up my ideas and the methods used to analyze and format my research material.

I have written over 100 pages of text and gone through more than three iterations of what this research could look like. I now realize that I went through my own experience of what Brene Brown (2006) calls Shame Resilience Theory. Brown (2010, 6) says:

Owning our own story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it. Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy- the experiences that make us most vulnerable. Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light.

Through reflecting on myself throughout this research, I have been able to unlock my own empowerment by owning my story. My first iteration was a deep dive into my privilege, asking myself, *Who am I?* and *Who says?* My second iteration was a meta-level paper about researching research, where I asked myself, *Who benefits from this definition?* My final landing—this iteration—helps me delve deeper into the world around me through my practice, allowing me to ask, *What must change and how?* (Brown 2006, 49)

My transformation would not have been possible without the massive amount of support I have received through supervisors, peers, mentors, and friends. Thus, the ultimate transformation in this research proves that, for me, collaboration, community, and companionship are an important part of remaining resilient in the world (Brown 2006, 51).

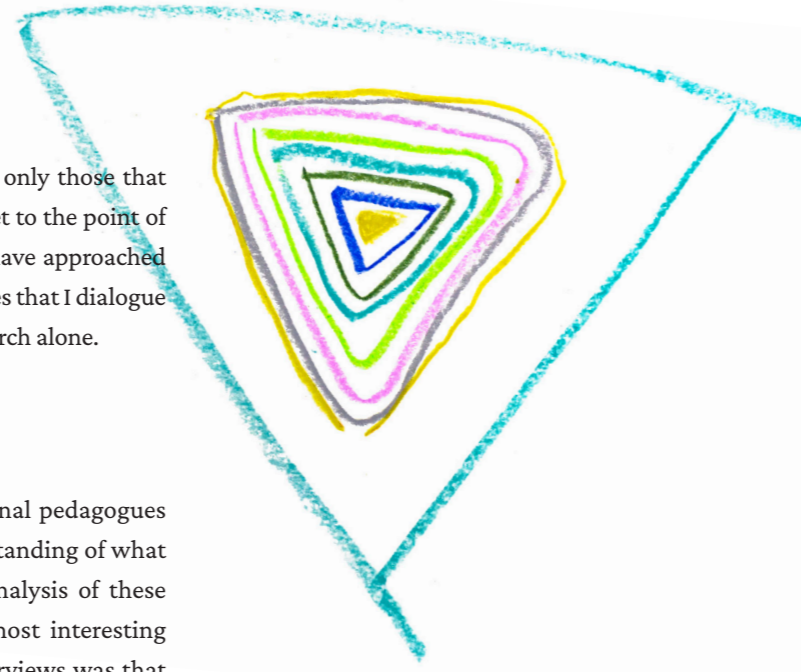
Sara Ahmed (2017, 488) talks about writing by saying, “Sometimes, writing can seem rather lonely, but really there is so much

companionship, so many conversations including not only those that turn up as citations, but also those that enable us to get to the point of writing and that leave rather more obscure traces". I have approached this research as my companion. The authors and theories that I dialogue with are a reminder that I do not walk this path of research alone.

## 2.1 Future Whispers

I was able to collect interviews from eight international pedagogues during my visit to Taiwan, but without a clear understanding of what I was searching for, I found that I must save the analysis of these interviews for another time. However, one of the most interesting findings during the transcribing process of these interviews was that when the participants were given time, space, and silence to explore a question, there was almost a doubling in their beings. They began to dialogue with themselves. One participant even said, "It's almost as if I have two brains." I would like to dig deeper into the implications of this doubled-being in regards to entanglement of theory with pedagogy in my next research.

I, too, have felt this dual-natured brain when approaching this research. It was brought to my attention that I often use the term "we" instead of "I" for the stories I try to tell. I feel this is my attempt to represent my inner feelings of entanglement with the world. However, when looking deeper at this phenomenon, I can imagine that it is also a crystallization of the dual nature of my being—a teacher and a researcher, a student and a pedagogue, a human and the world. In these subconscious whispers, I found a group feeling inside my internal being, a dialogue that was trying to escape. It is here that I return to the idea of collaboration and community. In my next project, I look forward to finding new and creative ways to dialogue with my research practice in collaboration with other researchers, artists, and companions in order to better reflect and unlock phenomena from a more collective perspective.



## 2.2 Storytelling

In this research, I have placed an emphasis on practice-based research methodologies. However, I believe there is always an element of autoethnographic storytelling in everything that we share. It is through the stories that we share and the dialogues that we participate in that our intra-action with the world exists. As Carolyn Ellis (2004, 194-195) suggests, "there is nothing more theoretical or analytic than a good story," because, "when people tell their stories, they employ analytic techniques to interpret their world. Stories are themselves analytic ...their goal is to evoke a situation the author has been in or studied". Through this storytelling, I aim to convey my research to the world. Through the editing process, it is revealed what I think is important to share and what can be left out.

## 2.3 Internal Struggles of Research

While anticipating the task of "research," I had an intense internal struggle that originally prevented me from approaching myself or my practice as researchable. I had a strong pre-understanding of positivist scientific research, or "problem-solving" research, as Paul Carter (2007, 18) would suggest. I had convinced myself that research was about the findings and the answers. My dissonance came from wanting to know how I could reflect on, encounter, and question my findings rather than simply "prove" them. After many hours of work and many pages of reflection, I was able to reimagine my understanding of what research could be. Through Ben Spatz's and Paul Carter's work in practice-based research, I was able to rename the word "research" for myself as "archive."

The act of not wanting to "research" has actually given way to the power of archives. By not partaking in research, I was actually succumbing to its power over me. I needed to change my internal dialogue with research. Rather than asking the question: What can embodied practice give to academia? I needed to ask: What can academia give to embodied practice? Spatz (2011, 57) suggests, "What academia can offer the performing arts is...epistemology," meaning the building of a lived experience archive filled with knowledge that is supported, heard, and respected by a large community.

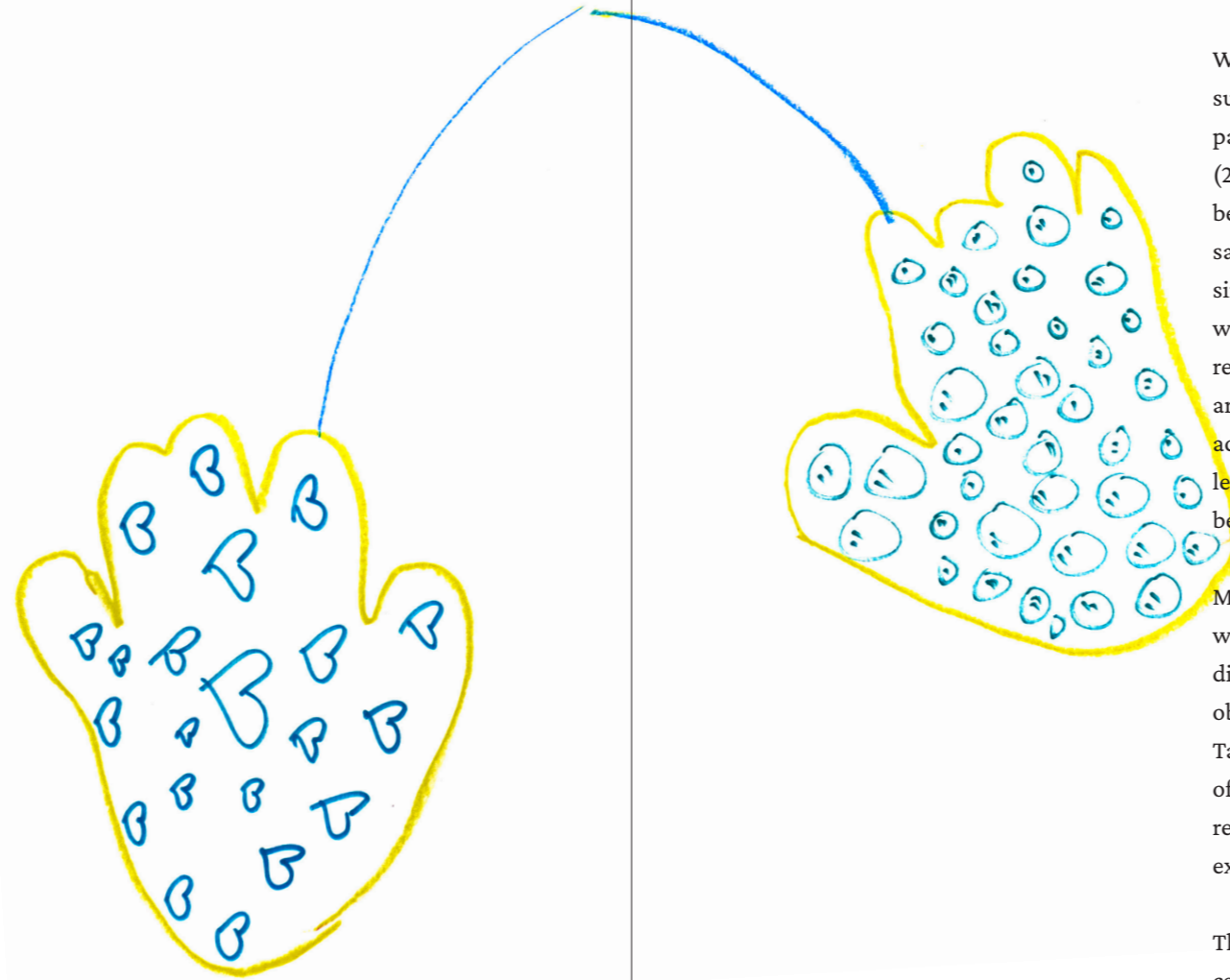
As a dance pedagogue, I struggled with the thought of, “Why should I trap myself in the unfamiliar form of written language?” I had romanticized the ephemeral nature of dance (Spatz 2011, 50). I believed dance to be fleeting, impermanent, and about the spirit, which made it feel economic and oppressive to try to write it down. I did not want to attempt to force embodiment into a logocentric structure (Carter 2007, 18).

By renaming “research” as “archive,” I began to see the importance of lived experience as an integral capsule to knowledge for the future. Ben Spatz (2011, 55) suggests that, “scholarly knowledge appears stable as a result of the history of the written and later the printed word. Likewise, embodiment appears ephemeral and lacking in ‘knowledge’ precisely because it has no archive”. This very truth ignites the importance of archiving embodiment, not in the way of capturing or limiting it, but in the way of archiving the knowledge of our time so as to influence future actions.

## 2.4 Archive

My archive is a collection of stories, observations, and illustrations from the people and thoughts around me while I was dialoguing with this research question. In a sense, my archive became a practice of its own. By dialoguing with myself and my own findings, I began to create a double movement of influence between my archive and my embodiment (Spatz 2011, 54). This double movement is an integral part of the practice-based research methodology. The archive enters into a dialogue with the practice, and the practice enters into a dialogue with the archive (Spatz 2011, 55).

Through this archival process, I found tools to research in a more embodied way. By transcribing my class verbalizations into a new poetic format, I found a way to remove the logocentrism that can exist in textual space. The illustrations, which embody the resonance of my practice in visual form, helped me to find transformation of imagination. In the empty spaces of my research, I find space to reflect. I was interested in creating research that mirrored the form of my practice, which is itself an embodied archive. It is through the cohabitation of all these elements that I have created a living archive



that captures this time and place in my life. Through these elements, I have found a way to leap off of the page by making my own archive reflect the interests of my practice.

## 2.5 Practice

What is left after this archive has been created? Carter (2007, 22) suggests, “In reality, all that is preserved in this way is a myth of the past as past”. This is where I find pedagogy comes into play. Spatz (2011, 54) presents the idea that without pedagogy, we would only be left with documentation, saying “If documentation were the same as knowledge, there would be no need for pedagogy. We could simply tell our students to read a large list of books, and then they would be scholars”. It is through dialogical pedagogy, or the constant reimagining of this archived material, that it can begin to live. The archive begins to have an embodied history of its own. Through the active entanglement of my pedagogical approach with transformative learning, dialogical practice, and anti-oppressive education, I can begin to uncover my archive in relation to the world.

My first class in Taiwan, taught on January 17, 2020, was a collaboration with another pedagogue that looked to explore teaching through the dialogue of touch. The inspiration for this collaboration came through observing the practices of the other pedagogues during the workshop in Taiwan. In my second class, on January 21, 2020, I explored the concept of tracing the body into the world around us. It was an exploration in reimagining what our bodies can be. Both of these practices will be explored in more depth in sections 6 and 7.

Through the dual movement of practice and archive, this research centers itself around collaboration. My archive is only a small capsule of a moment in history. I represent the time, culture, and place I come from, and so does my archive. Through archiving my lived experience, I hope to continue to dialogue and teach even when I am gone. My end goal is not about answering the single research question, “How does embodiment teach?” Actually, I am asking, “What is a world that I can begin to reimagine? What is a world that I wish to inhabit and promote?”



*Your arms reach beyond the clouds  
Grabbing the light of the sun*

*Taking the sunshine  
down on top of your head*

*As the tips of your fingertips reach the top of your head  
You begin to grow out from there*

*Your head like a seedling growing from the earth  
Towards the sun*

*Your hands pressing the crowns of the feet  
as they root further down*

*your head reaching into the sky  
like a giant looking over the clouds  
looking over at your kingdom*

*Here I am, World, and I'm here for you!*

### 3 *The Trunk* – My Practice: TERO Technique

I entered the world of pedagogy through my experience as a dancer with TERO Technique. I have been working for Tero Saarinen Company since 2013. Even though TERO Technique has become the focus of my teaching practice, I would like to emphasize that I do not place this technique on a hierarchy above other pedagogical practices. I personally find great inspiration in the freedom, creativity, and drive that this technique has given me through its embodied approach to moving. Of course, there are many different ways to find these same tools that I hold so valuable within other practices.

First, I would like to give a little more background information on TERO Technique itself, its overall goals and aims, and how those translate into the studio. TERO Technique was created by Tero Saarinen through the process of developing the Tero Saarinen Company. It is an amalgamation of dance styles from Tero's background, influenced by ballet, jazz, contemporary, and butoh (TERO Technique 2019).

TERO Technique is ultimately about using tools of embodiment, imagination, and dialogue to help unlock transformations beyond the edges of a person's original understanding of how they can interact with the world. Tero Saarinen (TERO Technique 2019) says:

The aim of Tero Saarinen's technique is to activate every cell and nerve ending in the body, to become fully Aware, Alert, Attentive, and Alive – 360 degrees present and resonating. The goal is to make full use of each dancer's technical knowledge and explore, liberate, and further nourish the potential of each individual.

The search for sensations that are Aware, Alert, Attentive, and Alive is one that is entangled with embodied dialogue and transformative experience. In a way, the search for unlocking a reimagination of the physical form gives way to that reimagination in others. I often say in my classes, "Celebrate your choices, and in doing so, you can begin to celebrate the choices of those around you." It is in this celebration of the world and its unlimited possibilities that I find a way to enter into an equal dialogue between student and teacher.

In this section, I will more thoroughly open up my practice in order to help the reader understand why I chose to dialogue with the specific literary companions found within this research and how they have helped me develop the theories I present regarding embodied teaching practice. This section will contain observations towards my practice alongside a list of these companions, whom I will more thoroughly dialogue with in the following section. I have placed my own words from my classes in italics to help support and give examples of the concepts I will explore. I will examine the four central points of TERO Technique: focus, fingertips, imagery, and trust. By opening up my own practice and placing it side-by-side with my chosen literary companions, I hope to set a groundwork that allows me to dialogue with the theories and literature in section 4.

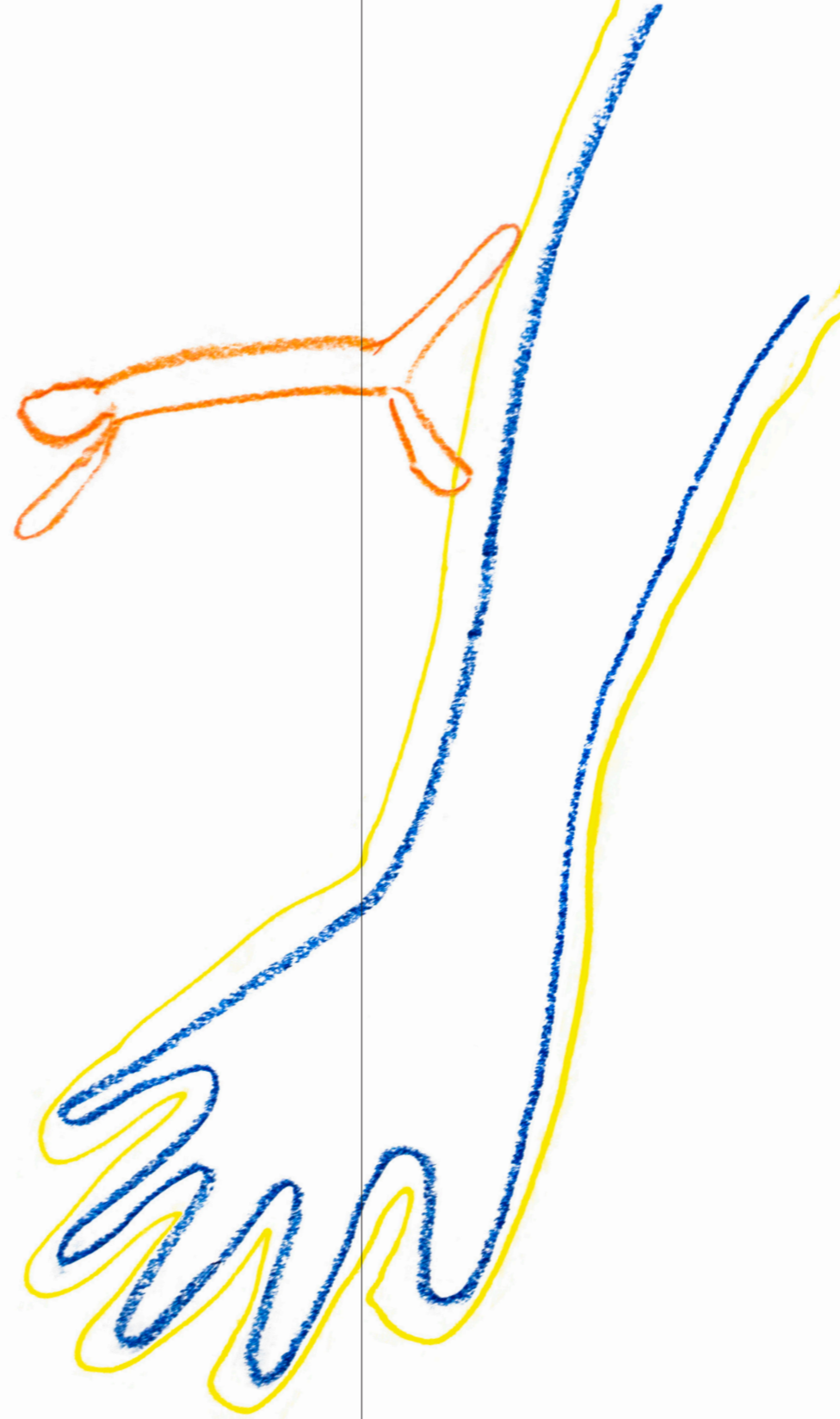
### 3.1 Dance as Embodiment

Before diving into the specifics of TERO technique, I would like to take a moment to reimagine—and further entangle—dance and embodiment. During my master’s degree studies for dance pedagogy, I have delved deeper into my understanding of embodiment as an integral key to my pedagogy. However, through my infatuation with and inspiration from this new concept of embodiment, I have subconsciously placed it above the idea of dance.

I find that one of the goals of my teaching is to unlock the sensations of being Aware, Alert, Attentive and Alive in my students. Within this aim, I find that the definitions of dance and embodiment have always been entangled for me. My practice is an embodied dance practice that attempts to unlock the imagination as a tool that can dance along with our physical forms. It is in this partnered dance of imagination and physical form that I am able to find the goal of my practice: the feeling of being alive in every direction.

### 3.2 Focus

When reflecting on why I have been so inspired by dialogue as a method for teaching dance, I notice that dialogue is held within the element of focus in TERO Technique. Focus, in this definition, includes both the



physical use of the eyes as a tool to see and the internal awareness of one’s inner feelings and sensations. In placing the attention on the focus, we activate an embodied tool for dialogical practice.

I see this connection to dialogical practice in the dual movement of transforming inner awareness into outer experience. I also begin to see the connection of my inner nature to autoethnographic storytelling. Through this transformation of inner dialogue to embodied dialogue, a student can begin to “tell” their inner story to the world. This storytelling enables a dialogue to open up between one’s own imagined world and those who witness this enfolding. It is in this storytelling that there is a sharing of one’s own imagined world in dialogue with others. In my practice, I often say, “*Hello world! Here I am, and I’m here for you!*” In this statement, my goal is to encourage students to not only focus on themselves, but to encourage them to share their inner workings in a dialogue with the world around them.

### 3.3 Fingertips

It is in the element of the fingertips that I uncover my fascination with the edges of the physical form, which in turn is about understanding what our bodies can be. In my practice, there is an unlocking of each individual fingertip from itself. There is a search within the joints for the in-between places that can be forgotten about without a mindful approach to moving. However, the practice of *waking up the fingertips* is not only about one part of the body, but actually about waking up all the edges of the skin in order to remain curious, alive, and resonating in all directions.

Through reflecting, redefining, and reimagining how a dancer’s embodiment can exist beyond its physical form, I come face to face with ideas of transformational learning. I see an awakening of the senses beyond the physical. It is about unlearning, transforming, and changing preconceptions in order to free the imagination. When I tell my students to “*give up your expectations of what a movement should be and give in to what the movement feels like,*” I encourage them to remain present with themselves in order to notice and change the unconscious pathways of what is expected.

I ask students to ground themselves in the simple truths that every day is different and that their skin can remain curious and alive. We are searching for the ability to “*be bigger than you are!*” Fullness of self can help emancipate, empower, and transform the students’ preconceived knowledge of how their physical form can interact with the world around them. It is an aim of my practice that students begin to reimagine—and thereby, transform—their embodied beings both inside and outside the dance studio walls.

### 3.4 Imagery

The third element—perhaps my favorite—is actually the element that has inspired this research the most. This is the element of imagery and metaphor as a tool to unlocking the imagination of each student. Most of the imagery within TERO Technique is based on the flora and fauna of our world. This comes from the philosophical belief that we, as humans, are part of and equal to all of the nature in our world. It is in the imaginings of these metaphors that I find most pleasure in my teaching practice. As one can see from the transcriptions of my class within the text of this research, I often refer to the natural elements of the world as metaphors for the human form. My aim is to ignite the imaginations of the students through the use of imagery so that they can begin to see and transform their bodies in new ways.

Ironically, in my favorite element of the practice, I also found the most difficulty in my research question. When considering how I can teach without a common spoken language, it is immediately apparent that I may not have access to the tools of imagery and metaphor without the use of a translator. Through this realization, I was inspired to research new tools for continuing to work in the realm of metaphor and imagery without the use of the verbal world. How can I continue to teach in metaphors through embodied teaching methods?

### 3.5 Trust

The final element is one of the most important when it comes to deconstructing the teacher-student relationship, and that is the

element of trust. Trust, in my experience of dance, is about believing in the physical structure of the body. The bones and musculature of the human form hold and support certain positions within a technical dance class. However, on a deeper level, trust is about the emancipation of the student’s agency within the classroom. If a student believes in the movement choices they are making, it can help them to better support themselves on the difficult journey of learning.

I find that when a student begins to trust themselves and celebrate their response-ability (agency), they begin to let go of the tensions held within the body. There is a freedom and an ease gained in both the physical and the mental forms. It is in this act of trust that a student can begin to find extra space in their bodymind to support themselves through the learning process. Therefore, trust and its subsequent agency are tools that help enable a student’s emancipation from dependency on the teacher-student relationship in such a way that frees them to reimagine what their definition of the world can be.

### 3.6 Literary Companions

I have found literary companionship in Karen Barad’s, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Barad’s ideas of entanglement and agential realism have become a catalyst for my journey into embodied dialogue. Sara Ahmed’s, *Living a Feminist Life*, began to help me reimagine what life structures can be imagined to be. Both Ahmed and Barad, help me to understand the intra-related existences of myself in regard to the world and to my practice.

Eeva Anttila’s, *A Dream Journey to the Unknown: Searching for Dialogue in Dance Education*, has helped me reimagine and rename “dance” as “embodiment” and “embodiment” as “dance” for my research and practice. Anttila’s deep dive into dialogical practices and transformative learning has helped me understand what becomes possible when I break down the barriers of my own preconceived limitations of the body in regard to the dance classroom.



Paulo Friere's, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, has given me insight on dialogical practices entangled with anti-oppressive education. I have further explored these ideas through Kevin Kumashiro's, *Troubling Education: "Queer" Activism and Anti-Oppressive Pedagogy*. Through dialogue, reflection, and unlearning I feel a continuous search for a better future, brought by education.

Brené Browns', *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are*, has helped to inspire joy, resilience, and hope into my teachings and into my life. Audre Lorde's, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, allowed me to bring poetry, dance, and art back into theoretical texts.

The dialogue between my own practice and the theoretical framework provided by these literary companions has transformed my understanding of what pedagogy can be. In the next section, I will deep-dive into the concepts that are revealed in the resonance of my practice, such as transformational learning, anti-oppressive art education, agency, and embodied dialogue. I hope to more fully entangle myself with these theories and, in doing so, better teach them through my own embodiment.



*As you wake up the length of your arms*

*You wake up the fingertips*

*Each fingertip alive in its own being*

*It has its own mind*

*Its own brain*

*Its own destiny*

## 4 *The Branches* – Entangling Dialogue, Embodiment, and Learning

### 4.1 The Tool of Critical Reflection

In this section, I will examine theories of dialogue, learning, and embodiment in order to entangle these definitions for myself and for my research. I will begin by delving deeper into embodiment and dialogue. By critically reflecting on the way I learn, I have found a process of naming and renaming. Through naming and renaming the theories of embodiment and dialogue, I begin to understand their implications within my teaching practice. The renaming process is an attempt to alleviate the preconceived hierarchical powers that these concepts may hold over me from past experiences or understandings.

The goal of this exploration is to further dissect my research question in order to understand not only how embodiment can teach, but how embodiment itself can be dialogue, and how dialogue can be a tool for learning. In doing so, I hope to find tools for approaching my own practice with a stronger theoretical framework, as well as find a feeling of entanglement with the tools that I will use to teach. Through the process of naming and renaming, I attempt to unravel the thread connecting my archive to my practice, giving way to the dual movement that exists within practice-based research.

Underlying the process of naming and renaming is the act of critical reflection. Jack Mezirow (1990, 12) talks about critical reflection by saying, “We become critically reflective by challenging the established definition of a problem being addressed, perhaps by finding a new metaphor that reorients problem-solving efforts in a more effective way”. Eeva Anttila (2003, 23) discusses this tool by saying, “Mezirow’s notion of critical reflection is akin to questioning constructions of mind...critical reflection may lead to deconstructing mind’s conceptions”. I find that Mezirow’s theories on transformational learning also aid my understanding of critical reflection, and, in doing so, have become further entangled with my own understanding of dialogue and embodiment. He defines transformational learning

as “the process by which adults learn how to think critically for themselves rather than take assumptions supporting a point of view for granted” (Mezirow 1990, 103). Through the act of thinking critically, I find the agency to rename and reimagine my preconceived knowledge. This type of internal dialogue can begin a deconstruction process that changes the way we intra-act with our definitions of not only ourselves, but of the world as a whole. Through the process of critical reflection, we actually begin to gain control of the definitions of our named world and unlock our agency for making active choices.

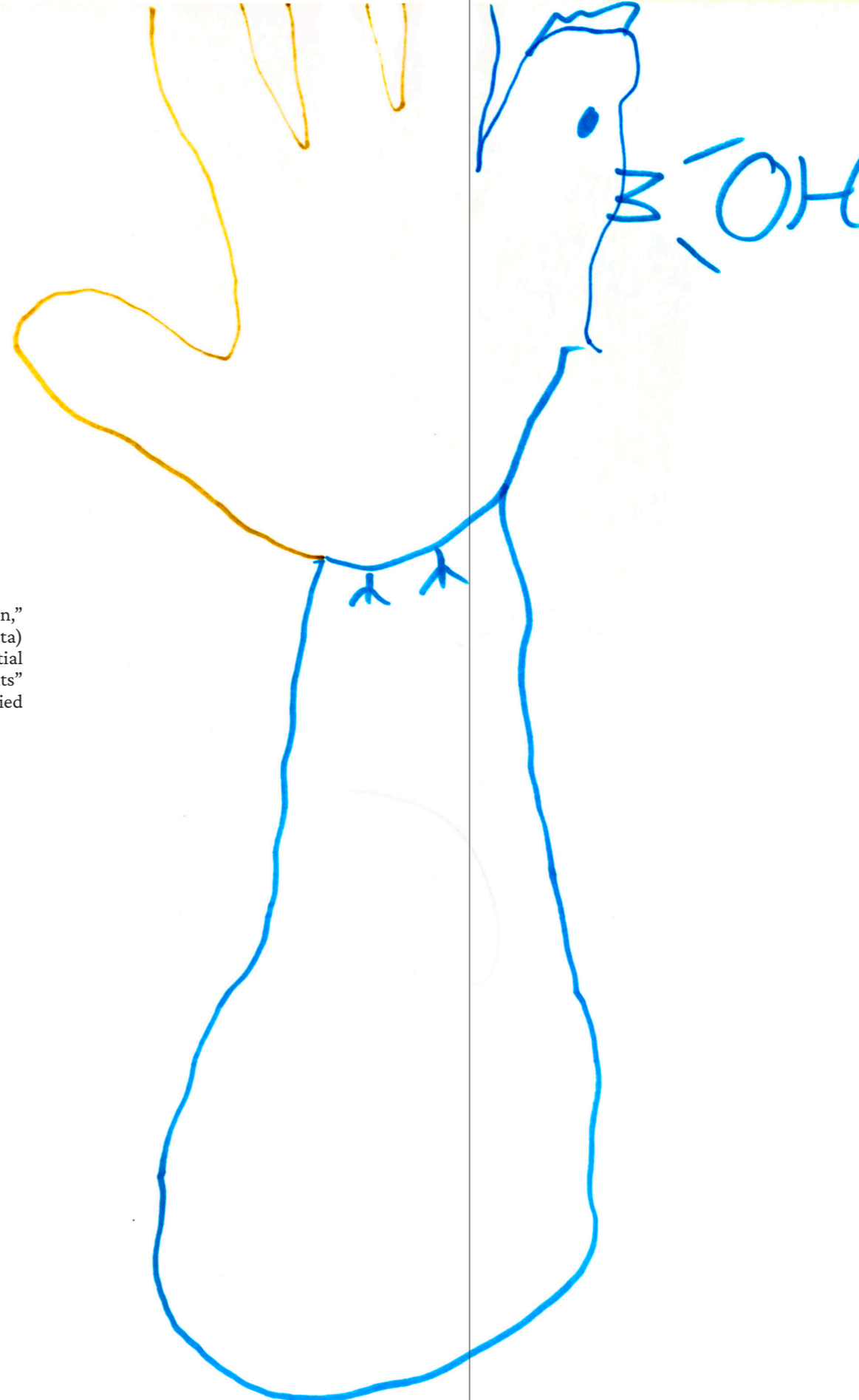
I will use this tool of critical reflection to delve into the idea of *Subject to Subject* dialogue in order to conceptualize how this process of naming can be applied within dialogical intra-actions. As Barad (2007, 139) suggests, it involves a reimagining of interactions into intra-actions:

...the notion of intra-action (in contrast to the usual “interaction,” which presumes the prior existence of independent entities/relata) represents a profound conceptual shift. It is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the “components” of phenomena become determinate and that particular embodied concepts become meaningful.

Barad’s definition of intra-action suggests that agency cannot be formed by an individual alone, but is rather formed by the relation between two “components,” such as teacher and student. I will use the name *Subject* (as a subject with agency) in order to abstract the ideas I am exploring to delve deeper into this concept. In doing so, I hope to approach these ideas without the emotional entanglement that certain terminology holds over me as a researcher. It is within the intra-actions of *Subject* and *Subject* that I find how the maintenance of agency of both parties is ultimately essential for reimagining the world in collaboration with others. This form of response-able dialogue allows for a deconstruction of the traditional teacher-student relationship, alleviating the idea that teachers hold the power to give agency to their students.

## 4.2 Dialogue and Embodiment

Dialogue is an action toward connection. It creates an entry point that would not be imaginable if individuals were isolated from one another.



It is through equal parts of giving and receiving that dialogue creates an entanglement between individuals’ intra-actions (Barad 2007, 141).

When searching for the tools to teach dialogically without a common language, I turn to how embodiment can exist as a dialogical form. Colombetti (2013, xv) discusses how bodily empathy is a way of encountering dialogue with others. “In everyday life, affective phenomena such as emotions and moods come with a variety of bodily experiences, and others’ bodily posture and facial expressions undoubtedly play a part in how we understand them when we are in their presence” (Colombetti 2013, xv).

In Friere’s book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he begins to reimagine what dialogue can mean. Friere (2014, 88) proposes:

Human existence cannot be Silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world. To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming*. Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection.

This reveals that dialogue implies being in constant flux. When considering dialogue, I am interested in the fact that dialogical practices can easily become lost in the hierarchies of the verbal world. Once we name something, as in bringing it into language, it immediately reveals itself as being a problematic subject by limiting the possibilities of what it can be imagined as. We must then approach this newly named subject with curiosity and reflection in order to try to rename the subject, thus beginning the process over again. True dialogue exists in fluctuation. It is a search for the deconstruction of assumed hierarchies that present themselves as problematic. He believes that through the renegotiation of dialogue, we can find cooperation, unity in liberation, and cultural synthesis (Friere 2014).

If dialogue’s goal is an aim towards synthesis, then I can begin to rename embodiment as the original dialogue. According to Nancy Krieger (2001, 694), “Embodiment is a concept referring to how we literally incorporate, biologically, the material and social world in which we live, from in utero to death; a corollary is that no aspect

of our biology can be understood absent knowledge of history and individual and societal ways of living”. Embodiment is ultimately about the mind and body being reimagined as one entity, or the bodymind as Merrell (2003, 93) has reimagined it. In Friere’s search for synthesis through dialogue, I find the same strings of entanglement to Merrell’s reimagining of the bodymind. This united bodymind is able to compile ages of information into a mere moment of existence. Although we are restricted to the present moment with our physical selves, our embodied selves can travel across all of our imaginings. This reimagining of the physical form as an entity that can travel across worlds is what I am interested in studying within the dance classroom. How can the body transform into something beyond that which we have already imagined it to be? Each moment offers us a glimpse into the possibilities of the dialogue between physical form and imagined being, a duality that gives way to a plurality.

Imagining the duality of the body and mind comes from the notion that they are separate units. This is supported by the fact that many languages, like English, have dissected this entity into two pieces. Carter (2007, 18) discusses the need for “problem-solving research” in which we dissect and abstract materiality in order to understand it, rather than looking at a phenomenon as a whole. Anttila (2003, 103) discusses the impact of this approach to the mind/body split:

...as a result of Cartesian duality, the human body has been excluded from the process of knowing. The desire to control nature and the quest for universal reason and knowledge that transcends time and place has led to negating the body as a source of knowledge.

From this separation came the thought that the body cannot hold knowledge, but is merely a vessel for the unlimited power of the mind. In this separation of terminology, I find the problem of naming and evolving dialogue brought up by Friere. The named *Subject*, in this example, is the separation of the terms body and mind. This named *Subject* has interacted with and influenced the world, revealing itself as a problematic *Subject* by insisting on a divide between the body and the mind. In order to solve this problem, the *Subject* needs to be reflected upon in order to be reimagined and renamed, just as Merrell has done with the “bodymind.”

### 4.3 Naming and Renaming

I have found the process of naming and renaming to be a crucial learning tool that enables me to reimagine the terms and definitions of the world around me. Through renaming, I begin to reimagine my own interpretations of each object or term in order to gain a greater understanding of what these forms can be. When Merrell (2010, 3) renamed the bodymind, for example, he spoke about entanglement of the mind’s doings and the body’s doings. This renaming is not only a combination of the didactic words, but a full reimagination of their existences. By renaming embodiment as the original dialogue, I begin to see that these theories have always been entangled. Through critically reflecting on the way I learn, I hope to find tools and methods to teach.

I see the process of renaming as an individual process that reveals which terms may hold specific power over a person through different connotations. Reimagining a term, such as “research,” to have a new name, such as “archive,” does not insinuate that the newly named term is better, but rather allows the creator of the name to approach that term in a new way. Kevin Kumashiro (2012a, 63) says that, “Desiring to learn involves desiring difference”.

Kumashiro (2012b, 1) defines anti-oppressive education as “...a form of education that actively challenges injustice and oppression at both the micro level of teaching and the macro level of education reform”. This is, of course, an enormous discourse, but in this research, I will concentrate on the oppressive nature that can be held within the teacher-student relationship. The theory of anti-oppressive education has been integral in helping me reimagine what this relationship can be in the classroom. I find that I need to challenge my habits of intra-action in the classroom in order to bring response-able dialogue to the forefront of the teacher-student relationship. This will involve unlearning what I already know, or “troubling [my] education” (Kumashiro 2012b, 63).

Within the renaming process, I am not looking to deny or refuse any terms, but rather to further embody each term in a way that is

accessible to me and thus discover how my teaching practice can evolve. Just as dialogue is a search for synthesis, I aim to meet these concepts and theories in a place where I can deepen my entanglement with them. It is in the regaining of my own ability to reimagine that I find my goal, not simply in the action of doing the renaming, but in the effort to deepen my entanglement with the topics I study.

I would like to emphasize my awareness of the privileged nature of what I am implying. There is power in the ability to rename the world. This concept of renaming is itself trapped in its own problematic structure of terms. Judith Butler spoke about the dangers of being trapped in terms in an interview with Sara Ahmed about her book, *Gender Trouble*. Butler (Ahmed, 2016) said:

All these terms have the potential to become prisons, of course, so I am often challenging them...But I would not deny or refuse such terms. I would only dedicate myself to not letting them become ossifying in their effects. After all, these terms have to be living, have to become embodied in a life, have to be passed along, or passed between us, if they are to remain living, if they are to remain terms we need in order to live, to live well.

I must admit that it is difficult work reimagining the world again and again. Knud Illeris (2009, 14) speaks about transformative learning as “both profound and extensive”, hence referencing the incredible amount of work that is required to reimagine and rethink all of the terms around us. I am reminded of my own transformation with regard to “research,” and I recognize the massive amount of work that was required for this transformation to occur. However, I can say that after this intense amount of work, I am left with a feeling of empowerment over my own understanding. As Brown (2010, 21) would suggest, “The Wholehearted journey is not the path of least resistance. It’s a path of consciousness and choice”.

#### 4.4 Naming the Unnamed

When looking at anti-oppressive art education, I take inspiration from the work Kumashiro has done to entangle teaching with the politics of anti-oppression. One of Kumashiro’s (2000, 25-26) aims towards anti-oppressive education is to emphasize the idea that teaching is about

“‘looking beyond’ the field to explore the possibilities of theories that remain marginalized in educational research”. I am reminded of all the things that are left unsaid or unnamed in a classroom. Addressing the power of the unsaid, Kumashiro (2000, 61) states that, as “...identities have meaning because of what they are not (i.e., whom they exclude), so too do texts have meaning because of what they leave unsaid. The unsaid is what gives the said its meaning”. The established hierarchies of the verbal world provide us with a reference point for what is said, and thus also for what is unsaid.

I have found further inspiration in the term “brave spaces,” renamed from the original term “safe spaces,” by Alison Cook-Sather, Brian Arao, Kristi Clemens, and many others. These “brave spaces” are pedagogical spaces that encourage a supportive environment in which resistance can be both present and overcome through bravery and dialogue (Arao et al. 2013, 136). How does this idea of creating a “brave” external space interact with that of creating a “brave” internal space? When a student creates a “brave” internal space, it gives them the groundwork to explore beyond where they are comfortable. They can begin to enquire towards the unnamed and unsaid. Perhaps it is by learning to build our own “homes” that we can protect ourselves from the resistances we feel at the edges of our understanding.

In my own practice, the metaphor of “returning home” represents a place that we can always return to within our learning process. When doing a big movement that grows out from the earth on one leg, for example, it is in the process of returning “home” to two feet firmly planted on the ground where I find the space to reflect on what I have just experienced. “Home” is a space I know and a space I am comfortable being in for a long duration; it is a metaphor for feeling the body in a natural state. Once I have established where my “home” is, I have a stable place to which I can continually refer. From there, I can begin naming and renaming everything surrounding that place. If a student lacks this point of reference for what is known, it is difficult to enter a space that is unknown. This highlights the importance of providing tools, space, and time for students to build their own “homes” within the classroom. In this way, I as a teacher can ensure that students are safe to explore all of the things that have been left unsaid and unnamed.

Jan Meyer, Ray Land, and Peter Vivian (2014, 200) describe conceptual gateways where students begin to let go of their prior views of seeing things. They (Land et al. 2014, 200) suggest:

...a state of 'liminality'—a space of transformation in which the transition from an earlier understanding (or practice) to that which is required is effected. This transformation state entails a reformulation of the learner's meaning frame and an accompanying shift in the learner's ontology or subjectivity.

It is in these liminal spaces, the expanses between the home and the unknown, that I begin to find dialogue. When thinking about the implications of the unsaid towards pedagogy, I realize the importance of giving space and time to the exploration of this in-between world, what Biesta refers to as the "middle ground." The middle ground is where the most difficult journey of the student occurs; it is here that a student begins to dialogue with the world (2017a, 118). It is in the worlds that live between the said and the unsaid that one can imagine a "liquid space," one that ebbs and flows just like the fluctuation of dialogue. This idea can be reimagined as a liminal space for learning. "Learning in the liminal space further entails the acquisition and use of new forms of written and spoken discourse and the internalizing of these ... as a 'liquid' space, simultaneously transforming and being transformed by the learner as he or she moves through it" (Land et al. 2014, 201). Here is where a student can begin to name what is unnamed and unsaid, forming questions about what can be reimagined and how.

For the student, this process is about entering into enquiry with what is left unsaid by the teacher in order to reveal the infinite choices and possibilities available. If, as a teacher, my movement or my terminology is the only thing that can exist, then there is no room for the imagination of a student. It is in this absence of imagination that I see the absence of agency. If we only explore what is told or what is named, then we never surpass mere replication of understanding. Guided by our response-ability, it is through this search for dialogue with the unnamed that we begin to transform.

#### 4.5 *Subject to Subject* – Maintaining Agency

If a student is allowed space to maintain personal agency, then teacher and student can begin to dialogue on an even playing field. I, as a teacher, must let go of the assumption that I know the best way a student can learn. Larissa Haggrén (Suominen 2018, 150) suggests:

The need to know "how to do things right" includes the belief that it is possible for a teacher to know the results of certain actions carried out with the pupils. This assumption clings to the idea that somewhere down the line the change is complete, and it is the teacher who knows this goal better than others.

Agency can be further defined by a student's ability to have the power of voice and choice over what they are learning. I return to Barad's (Dolphijn et al. 2012, 54-55) words that "agency is an enactment, a matter of possibilities for reconfiguring entanglements...agency is about response-ability, about the possibilities of mutual response, which is not to deny, but to attend to power imbalances". This maintains that agency is not something that can be given, but is rather a cause and effect of intra-actions between two equal *Subjects* (Barad 2007, 214). Agency is an action towards response-able dialogue.

Through the process of reimagining "research" as "archive," I regained the agency to choose how I will approach it. I needed to regain awareness of my own agency—to become an equal *Subject*—in order to dialogue with the *Subject* of "archive." By providing tools for a student to access their own agency, I begin to dissolve the oppressive nature that can live within teacher-student relationships and to create space for response-able dialogue between two equal *Subjects*.

Anttila (2003, 199) has imagined, "If I, as a teacher, within my quest of becoming me, realize that my students have that same quest within themselves, waiting for space and time for it to surface as emerging questions and self-initiated actions, I can be someone who provides them with that opportunity". This gives way to the deconstruction of the teacher-student relationship that is historically rooted in hierarchical power. The idea that the teacher holds the solutions is actually born out of the desire to maintain power over the students in the room (Suominen 2018, 150). It is about controlling what can

and cannot be imagined in the space, thus refusing the students their own agency to choose what can be imagined. With reflection, awareness, and sensitivity, it is possible for pedagogues to use their implied hierarchical power to actually emancipate the students' "self-initiated actions" and response-ability by offering clear space, time, and opportunity for the difficult work of reimagining and exploring the unnamed.

It is ultimately about letting go of control and approaching the student with enough vulnerability to allow them to see me as they imagine. From here, I can encounter, dialogue with, and learn from an equal *Subject*, if they are willing to do the same. When I define embodiment as the original dialogue, I find how the duality of meeting a separate, equal *Subject* gives way to the plurality in which we are all entangled.

#### 4.6 Implications of COVID-19 and Embodied Dialogue

While I did not conduct my research during the COVID-19 pandemic, I am writing this thesis in the midst of it. During this time of mass social isolation, we are experiencing a real-time research on how much information we lose by not being in each other's presence. The implications of this phenomenon are exponentially exaggerated when thinking about it in terms of dance education. Gianpiero Petriglieri (@gpetriglieri), an associate professor in organizational behavior at INSEAD, spoke of this phenomenon on Twitter, saying:

I spoke to an old therapist today, and finally understood why everyone's so exhausted after the video calls. It's the plausible deniability of each other's absence. Our minds are tricked into the idea of being together when our bodies feel we're not. Dissonance is exhausting. It's easier being in each other's presence, or in each other's absence, than in the constant presence of each other's absence. Our bodies process so much context, so much information, in encounters, that meeting on video is being a weird kind of blindfolded. We sense too little and can't imagine enough. That single deprivation requires a lot of conscious effort.

Our embodiment needs to be able to encounter the others' embodied histories in order to understand the deeper dialogues that can exist and expand the limitations of what we can imagine. It is in the loss of this imagination that we feel the dissonance. When intra-acting

through a computer screen, there is a lack of embodied dialogue. My body creates a hierarchy of the senses. Sight and sound begin to dominate what informs my ability to respond. When the other senses are diminished, I disconnect from my embodied agency. My senses need to be able to engage and respond fully in order for there to be true imaginings for intra-action. Through awareness of the finer details of someone's embodiment, I enter into response-able dialogue. When I acknowledge the embodied dialogue that exists within the classroom, I can remove the "blindfold" that creates dissonance in the teacher-student connection.



*Your fingertips become vines  
growing up opposite walls*

*finding the widest place  
away from yourself*

*slowly growing up the walls  
climbing towards the clouds  
towards the sun*

*wider and taller than you are*

*growing towards the sunlight  
reaching  
reaching into the sun*

*feel  
feel  
feel*

*Not moving  
But feeling*

## 5 *The Leaves* – Taiwan Workshop

The data in this section is collected from a workshop that was held in Taiwan from January 11-22, 2020. Within this workshop, there were fifteen teachers present representing nine different countries, including Taiwan, Japan, the United States, the Netherlands, Switzerland, France, Sweden, Finland, and the Faroe Islands. The workshop was broken up into two week-long sessions. The first week, January 13-17, hosted 38 professional-level students with an age range between 18 and 40. The second week, January 19-22, hosted younger dance students between the ages of 11 and 18. Each day, the workshop consisted of two 2-hour classes with an hour-long lunch break in between. Later in this research, I will delve more specifically into the two classes that I personally led during this workshop. They were conducted on Friday, January 17, at 10am (with Professional Dancers) and Tuesday, January 21, at 1pm (with Younger Dancers). This second class on January 21 produced the illustrations that I have included in this text.

This workshop provided me with the unique opportunity to observe fourteen different teachers from around the world within their own unique pedagogical practices. It was exciting to witness my research question through the lens of fourteen different pedagogues. During this workshop, the majority of participating students did not speak English. The international guest teachers, including myself, did not speak the local language. Within this environment, I was able to witness, contribute to, and experience many pedagogical practices without a common language. The fact that I was able to understand the teachers (as they all taught in English) gives my observations a unique perspective into the use of speech on the part of the teachers and how it affected the students' learning processes.

As pedagogues, we all faced the same question: How can I continue to teach without the use of a common language? This workshop provided me a rich integration into a group of pedagogues interested in exploring new approaches to the task at hand. The teachers all shared a living space and the nights were often filled with long discussions sharing ideas and concepts. It was amazing, both as a researcher and as a pedagogue, to realize just how vast the world of dance pedagogy can be.



I noticed a few commonalities that presented themselves as internal dialogues transformed outwards during the pedagogical practices of the other teachers in the workshop. Behind the scenes, many teachers discussed the anxieties of teaching without a common language. Will the students understand? How will I create safety? How can I make the students comfortable? All of these questions hold in them the primary intention of care. In my experience, most pedagogues share a common desire to do our best in each situation presented to us. I find hope in thinking that if our intention is to take care of the students, then our bodyminds will dialogue with the classroom in that way.

## 5.1 Analysis

I will be analyzing and opening up my observations from my time in Taiwan as a final task for my research. In returning to my teaching practice after my attempt to thoroughly entangle myself with pedagogical theory, I hope to uncover a deeper understanding of what I was able to witness in Taiwan. My hope for further entangling myself this way was to embody the pedagogical theories that I align with and am challenged by. In this section, I will be dialoguing mostly with myself as an embodied knowledge carrier of the theories and concepts I have been working through in the previous sections. As I sail into these uncharted waters, I will use section 4's process of naming and renaming as a guiding structure.

Although I have minimized my literary companions in this section, it is not because I look to walk this path alone. Rather, I am attempting to unlock the support of the collective that is now embodied within me. After acknowledging, being inspired by, and learning from the literary companions and theories mentioned in sections 3 and 4, I look to add myself to the collective voice of communal knowledge through my own explorations, findings, and practice. Through my embodied understandings of these theories, I can begin to analyze and critically reflect upon my observations and embodied practice.

## 5.2 Naming a “Home”

I will first dive into my observations of the fourteen unique classes given by the other guest pedagogues in Taiwan. In doing this, I hope

to unlock a deeper entanglement with the collective knowledge of these pedagogues in response to the challenge of how to teach without a common language. I am looking to ground these observations into methods and tools that can be used to help other pedagogues in similar situations and also reveal the tools I used to inspire the two classes I taught at the end of this workshop.

One of the first things I noticed when the workshop began was the need for the teachers to build the “home” of the studio they would like to work in. I found the tools of sound, play, repetition, and duration to be important methods for helping a teacher build a “home” in their classroom. It was through these tools that teachers were able to transform the quality of the air into the qualities that they were searching to find in physical form. These choices were often premeditated and aligned with the movement ideas that were going on within the classroom. It was an active curation of both the space and the air surrounding the students that created the intention for what the students could expect.

### 5.2.1 Sound

I noticed that many teachers felt the need to speak continuously, even with the knowledge that the students did not share a common language. Speaking was used as a tool to evoke the memory of language as a means to connect. I began to think about words as rhythms or music—music that was able to fill the void of linguistic disconnection. I asked myself: What would silence bring? Is it our own internal dialogue that takes over in this situation? Who are we speaking for?

In a classroom where there was no common language, the music set a clear expectation of the qualities that could be imagined in the room. Music was an explanation of expectation. One teacher played music for a half hour before the students entered the classroom. It was a calming, earthy beat that created the sensation of being grounded in the space immediately upon entering the studio. It calmed everyone in the space and gave a visible light of what could be expected from the class ahead. It was as if the music was already informing what was going to exist within the space.

### 5.2.2 Play

Another teacher created his working space by setting up a simple game that repeated many times throughout the class. He would say, “Alright Everyone! Breathe it out. One. Two. \*scream\*,” and everyone would scream at the top of their lungs before continuing with what was being taught. This created a gesture, or a “home,” for the class to continuously return to together. The game helped to release the buildup of expectations in the room. It facilitated a release of energy and was something that is not normally done in the “real” world. It allowed the space to become a place where imagination and dreams could exist. It transformed the classroom into a playground for the un-normal and removed it from the mundanity of the real world.

### 5.2.3 Repetition and Duration

In the idea of creating “homes,” I find that the tool of repetition creates space for reflection. The safety of repeating something that the students may already know can create a dialogue with the self within each student. What feels different? What feels the same? One teacher circled around the idea of bouncing for twenty minutes, but in many different ways. What if my elbow bounced? What if my knee bounced? What if my hip bounced? Bounce was a way to find release in the body. There was a strong rhythm explored, and this created a parallel rhythm in the space. It was an exercise in taking time to explore all of the possibilities of that one rhythm within the body. Repetition began to create freedom within the students. The return to one idea many times allowed for the exploration and imagination of many different possibilities. Choices can begin to blossom when there is both the space and time to repeat something because it removes the immediate need to produce a result and move forward.

This brings me to the idea of duration as a tool that can be combined with repetition in order to create an internal dialogue within a student. As a teacher, I question: if a student is lost in the expectations of the future, how can they actually have time to choose and question what is happening in the present? I seek insight through my own experiences as a student. I have an incredibly fast internal clock. I want to be



moving, thinking, and active all of the time. I have the desire to move quickly through everything in order to learn as much as I can from this short life. It is in the expectation of a short future that I actually begin to feel resistance to the duration of the present.

By examining my own learning experiences, I can find the tools to help me teach. Despite this hunger and drive to constantly move forward, I must remember that an important part of the present moment is the awareness that it is happening. It is about giving both myself and my students enough time to maintain our agency over the actions that lead us forward. If we allow momentum and energy to become *Subjects* that we cannot dialogue with, then we have lost all control of our present and future actions. If a pedagogical goal of mine is to remind students of their own agency, then it is through ideas of duration and the awareness of the present that I find the most stable points to work from. Choice is led by the actions of the present leading to a more continuous future.

### 5.3 Reimagining the Communication of Intention

In the beginning of the workshop, I noticed that translation felt necessary when teachers were using ideas of images and metaphors as a way to initiate movement, like the tools that I use in my practice to transform embodied memories into movement storytelling. Realizing that I would depend on a translator to teach this way, I became fearful of how I would be able to approach my practice effectively without a common language to guide the students. However, after the first few classes of the workshop, it became clear that all of the teachers were interested in finding new methods for continuing to teach with the intent to share embodied knowledge. It is in the word “intent” that I begin to uncover a tool hidden in its own enquiry. In the intention of igniting a student’s imagination, I find the deeper meaning of what I am searching for within my questioning.

It was interesting to notice that even marking, or lightly showing, a movement with clear intention was often enough to create a clear quality within the space. Looking with intent in one direction would often lead the whole group in that direction. It was not about hitting

specific shapes, but the intention of the movement revealed how a movement felt, which helped to nonverbally unfold what it was made up of. When the intention of an action was clear, the results seemed to not only be understood but also reimagined through the agency of each student. Even long talks about the quality of the movement with an attention to intent could transform the group's understanding without the use of a common language.

One example from a class that I felt encapsulated this idea nicely was when a teacher stood in the center of the students when she was teaching. It created a natural circular feeling of intention towards and across one another in the room. The eyes, the body, and the intention were all centralized, creating a focal point for the group's axes. As the teacher would move, so would the students. There was a passing of instruction through example and intention. From the outside it felt as though this focal point actually became a "home" that could support the group's movement. However, I noticed that this stable structure was then very difficult to break. When the teacher would stop the students would also stop. It required a constant flow of intra-action from the teacher in order to sustain this centrally-focused structure of teaching.

Another example of the communication of intention came from a storytelling exercise based on the idea that the body was a living sculpture and could be moved and shaped in order to reflect a story. This method felt easier to sustain because it was not dependent on the teacher, but rather created a group agency of its own. It was an exercise about embodied gestures as intentions that built off of the fact that gestures themselves carry many associated emotions and attachments. Students took turns moving one student and shaping them into a sculptural element. It was exciting to be reminded just how much can be expressed by placing someone's hand on someone else's head, or someone's hand on their own heart and moving their head downwards. It was in the emotional intention shown through the bodily forms that the storytelling began to take place; it was through these emotionally-driven stories that embodiment began to teach. The intention that began to have the most agency in the room was the emotional connotation of each statue, which suggested to the students where and how to place the next statue in order to create a story. It

was in these quick, reflective moments of gestural dialogue—a person's bowed head, for example, can be read as an expression of sadness, so someone might respond by giving them a hug—that I began to see how emotional embodiment can teach. The process began slowly, but sped up quickly as it became clearer what stories the group wanted to tell.

My intention, as a pedagogue, is not the removal of speech as a tool to access embodiment. It is about deconstructing the idea that the verbal world is the main tool that leads to understanding, and instead reimagining the voice as an embodied tool for effective teaching. For example, embodying screaming can help to convey big movements that take up a lot of space, while embodying small whispers can help convey something that needs to be slow or soft. We can allow language to exist in the classroom without the intention of being understood by using it as a tool for conveying qualities in the body. This frees both students and teachers to continue using their voices in the classroom, through language and sound, while continuing to teach and learn from embodiment in an equal manner. It is not uncommon in my own practice that I use the tool of the voice as an instrument to try and replicate or transform my inner feelings into otherworldly dialogues. When the voice emulates bodily qualities, it becomes a collective tool of voice and embodiment that "speaks" the intention.

What these observations have revealed to me is that I do not need to recreate my teaching practice, but rather, I need to be clear with my own intentions in order to effectively guide the journey of the student. When I know clearly where I am going and what my intentions are for the class, then each student is free to listen and choose whether or how to follow me, thus designing their own learning path. If my intention is to continue to use image-based and metaphorical tools, then I must reimagine what these can be within my practice.

#### **5.4 Naming the Unnamed - Bodily Listening**

Through my realization that embodied dialogue is a powerful method for students to learn, I was able to find a way to connect with my teaching. The tools of respect, openness to change, bodily listening, and

touch begin to act as gateways to help facilitate these transformations. This revealed that the body can become a tool for listening that is capable of continuing to dialogue even without a common language. I can continue to use dialogical practice as a teaching method even without entering into the verbal world. It is not about removing spoken language from the room, but rather going beyond the expected use of verbal language and opening up the sensitivity to the dialogue that lives through our embodiment.

#### 5.4.1 Transforming the body into a tool for listening

As I looked around the classroom during the workshop in Taiwan, it was interesting to see the focus and attention that was present from the beginning of every class. Often, I perceived, the students who did not speak the same language as the teacher had the greatest attention within the body. I felt there was an active focus in the skin, not only towards the teacher, but towards the overall space. The skin felt curious and alive with both anticipation and expectation, and this created a transformation of the body into a tool for listening.

The eyes became a tool for listening to what existed in the space as well as a tool for focusing toward the teacher's intention. As a student, I realize that I usually rely on my ears to ground me in the dance classroom. I believe that I will be told what to do through my ears, and my eyes will only confirm that information for me. It was interesting to sense that the students who spoke the same language as the teacher did not activate the same attentiveness in the skin as the students who did not share a common language with the teacher. It was as if the eyes as a listening tool were not actively transformed without the critical need for them to be the primary listeners.

I witnessed a similar phenomenon occur in the resonance of the body and through the "eyes" of the back. A sense of special focus arose from the back body of the teacher when they were facing away from the students in order to show the movement. I felt the back was alive, resonated towards the group as a whole, and even seemed to hold the group together. This realization has implications in reimagining the back of the body as being able to have focus, attention, and care

when involved in embodied teaching. It was nice to see that even when everyone was facing forward, including the teacher, there can be an active feeling of eyes in the back of the body to help support the learning of the group. This revealed to me that there is the possibility for a teacher to remain alive, attentive, and reactive even without the eyes as a main tool for support. It is in the embodiment of listening that I can unlock the entire bodymind as a structure that can inform my pedagogical choices.

The embodiment of listening was also emphasized in the group by the empathetic awareness in the group's movement. If one person would stop dancing, often a large portion of others around them would stop. I felt a physical empathy that often rippled from different focal points in the space. There was a desire to follow and to be united within the group. However, what was noticeably different in this setting compared to what I typically observe in a dance class was just how fast and how many people were affected by a singular unit. In dance classes, it is common that someone misses a step, forgets the next movement, or moves a bit slower than the dancer next to them. What was different in this case was that everyone reacted to these ripples. With embodied listening within the group as a whole, there was a surrender of individual focus in order to create a group agency of movement. Through this relinquishing of personal agency to the agency of the collective, I felt the echoes of equal *Subject to Subject* dialogue.

It is through the awareness of and investment in collective agency that one can find tools to move people in the classroom. If it is revealed that an individual can stop movement, then it follows that the opposite is also true. Was it just harder for me to witness? My expectation as an observer in a dance classroom was to see movement. With this in mind, I did not notice when an individual moved a group, but rather, when they stopped. What my notes neglected to reflect was that the group would always start up again. When an individual would continue, the same ripple effect would begin. An individual would begin to move, which would collect the group into an agent of movement again. Quickly, everyone would be back in the same rhythm and moving together until the end—or until the next stopping moment.

Usually when I teach, I try to use the focus of my eyes to help convey my attentiveness to the classroom and the students. The eyes, for me, allow me to access both focus and attention, but also care. I often face the students, even if this means that I will show the movement on the opposite side. For me, it creates a sense of being with the others in a group. If it is my aim as a teacher to ultimately support the student's journey, then I can harness the power of listening through embodiment to remain present and reactive to a student's needs even without this reliance on visual focus. Through the entanglement of my whole body as a tool for listening, I begin to equalize the structures of sensitivity that previously held hierarchy over one another. This knowledge helps me to emancipate my imagination of my own body within the classroom as a tool for teaching. I can react, stop, start, and change directions all to help follow the journeys of the individuals in the space that I am sharing rather than being a lonely stone in the waters of the classroom.

#### 5.4.2 Sharing Respect

Often, in the most difficult moments of classes, I noticed that language burst into the room. After a new or difficult movement was taught, there was usually an explosion of dialogue, commentary, and a searching for the validation that, "This is so hard!" This was usually intermingled with laughter, agreement, and then a refocusing of energy. It was again a ripple of individuality moving the waters of the group in order to find the calmness of group agency.

This same phenomenon existed on the sides of the studio space as well. The side of the studio is often where students watch and wait their turn so as to allow more space for the ones who are actively dancing. The side space of the studio in Taiwan transformed into a place for community building. It was often a place where laughter, shared feelings of muscular soreness, and the greatest intermingling of people occurred. The "home" that the dancers often occupied in the space of the studio was disrupted after moving everyone to the side. In this exchange, the students often began to interact with new people without the need to have a common language. It was easy to share the journey of what they were going through together simply by placing

Love you

their hand on a body part that was sore or tired and making a whining sound. There was no doubt that the feeling of soreness and work could be felt and acknowledged by every student in the room from the intense schedule of the workshop.

I noticed that it does not require an excessive amount of work to form connections without a common language. In fact, it is about listening, learning, and respecting the others in the space through the activation of embodied dialogue into communication of intention. In Taiwan, it is a common gesture to cross the thumb and forefinger tips to make a small heart, showing love and appreciation for a friend. This simple gesture was quickly adopted by all the international pedagogues involved in the workshop. It was one of our ways of showing that we were listening to their culture. It was a way of saying, "We are listening to your way of life, and we respect your way of life." It does not escape me that this gesture, a heart, is also a way of showing love or care for the other individual. As a teacher entering this space, it was important for me to remember that I not only have something to teach, but I have a lot to learn.

An exercise that encapsulated this idea of respect was when one teacher asked the students to sit back-to-back in a long line, creating two long rows of students. From there, she simply asked them to close their eyes and breathe out with their lips in the shape of an "O." Once the group grasped what was expected of them, she began to play with the task. She asked if the breath could become a sort of wave through the rows of students. With eyes still closed, the first person in line started with a \*breath,\* then the second person in line \*breath,\* then the third, ... etc. When the breath reached the end of the line, it continued back the way it came towards the first person. It was about listening for the breath not only with the ears but with the body, listening to the actions happening on either side and also the action happening at their backs. This simple but effective exercise reminded me of the fact that we are always breathing and that this action of breath unites us.

I am wondering: Why does this exercise feel so intuitively like it grasped the essence of respect? I believe this can be answered by looking to the present moment. During the COVID-19 pandemic situation, it has become abundantly clear how much we take for granted within classrooms, especially when it comes to dance. There

are many different implications to this, and I cannot delve too deeply into them during this research. However, I would like to highlight that when we are in a shared space together, we also silently say, “I trust you enough to share this air with you.” Just by approaching and sitting next to another person and sharing breath with them, I have already said, “Now my internal workings can be influenced by what you give me.” It is an allowance of respectful, equal dialogue that enables transformation of embodiment between two individuals. For teaching, I believe it is important to remember that just by simply sharing breath with the classroom, I already begin to share messages of trust, respect, and oneness with everyone in the room as long as I continue to remain aware of this as an intention for my practice.

#### 5.4.3 Touch as a form of communication

In the thread of sharing our embodiment, I found touch to be another valuable tool for embodied teaching. A question that came up repeatedly in my observations was: How do we continue to work with a released human body? I am defining “released” here as having a sense of trust in one’s own bodily workings that allows us to let go of unneeded tension within the physical form. This tension greatly inhibits the freedom for movement to blossom. It is not about releasing all of the tension from the body, but about letting go of the tensions that are unnecessary and inhibit a student’s freedom. It is about letting go while still remaining resilient, supported, and ready for change.

I found that partnering is a tool that can help students access a released body through repetition and duration. At first, there is a reconfiguration of whose body is whose, who is in control and who is following. There is a constant naming and renaming of who initiates the agency and the power of choice within the partnered being. However, once the pair begins to intra-act as one unit with a common agency, there is actually a release in both partner’s bodies. There is both support, in order to continue working together, and the absence of what is unnecessary. This process of finding partnered release, of course, is aided greatly by tools such as repetition, an outside eye adding perspective on what may be difficult to see from within the structure, time (duration), and space to discover and rediscover what it means to embody dialogue with partnered agency.

I want to remind myself that physical touch is not required as an access point for trust between myself and others. As a student, I know that I do not need physical touch to feel everyone around me on my skin. I can experience a sensation of expanding my internal sensations beyond my physical borders. I reach into the energetic ties that connect us all to each other. I can be physically in my own body and my own space while connecting ephemerally to the energies given off by the people and world around me.

I have found support for these methods of extendedness beyond physical form in the concepts of imagination and dreams. These ideas may sound otherworldly, and that is exactly what they are. There is a place where teaching can continue to exist beyond the structural limitations of reality. In this place, I find the sharing of respect blossoms the most. Without the openness to approach a person in their fullest capacity of imagination, we cannot fully see who they dream to be.

With this in mind, alongside my belief that touch can be an effective tool for promoting trust and release in the body, I remind my students at the beginning of every class I teach: *“I may not always have the words for everything, so I often use touch as a tool to help me teach. However, if anyone is uncomfortable with touch, please let me know in any way that you feel comfortable. You can simply say no or move my hand or any other way you would like to let me know. Also, please remember that this choice can change day to day.”*





*“While I incorporate stillness and silence, much of class is focused on transitioning and movements—it’s as though I’m leading students through an hour-long dance without teaching them the choreography beforehand. In my usual teaching practice, I aim to use minimal demonstration. I do my best to demonstrate only to provide clarity, not to provide an example of what is “correct.” Instead, I use my words to lead the majority of class, and then I am free to walk around amongst students, provide individual suggestions, and use hands-on adjustments to guide a deeper understanding. I feel that walking through the space and interacting with students in this way creates a sense of equality. I am not at the front of the room as an aspiration, but rather I am here in this shared space with you and you are now free to focus your attention inward, rather than on me”*

Marisa Martin

## 6 *The Blossoms* – January 17, 2020 at 10 am: Collaborative Embodied Touch

With the first week of the workshop almost behind us, another guest pedagogue and I decided to create a collaborative teaching practice. The class took place on January 17, 2020 from 10:00am-12:00pm and included thirty professional level students alongside eight guest pedagogues. My collaborator, Marisa Martin, has a professional dance and yoga background. Her current practice is teaching yoga in various studios throughout New York, with a concentration in teaching yoga to dancers. I felt an alignment between the intentions of her teaching practice and the intentions of my own.

During the workshop week, we had long discussions about embodied dialogue and teaching without a common language. We both wanted to discover how we can use the dialogical nature of touch to teach. We agreed that we wanted to imagine something new. I have written this section collaboratively with her using Google Docs in order to properly share agency and voice within the collaborative practice we created together. Marisa’s voice is included in this section with the use of italics. Through this partnered agency, we are able to reflect on the practice we created and continue a dialogue between ourselves as individuals and as a collaborative unit.

Marisa and I both wanted to explore similar questions. *To teach without a common language felt challenging - it was undeniable that I would have to demonstrate the movements I wanted to lead students through. How could I create a sense of sharing an equal space with my students? How could I allow them the opportunity to focus inward if they had to watch me?* It was through this questioning that our collaborative practice was born. Our practices are entangled in intention but inverted in the methods by which we teach. We are both searching for embodied dialogue: I approach this through imagination and Marisa approaches it through physical form. It is through this dual movement that we began to discover our collaborative practice in the middle ground of both forms. The realization that our access points are different but our intentions are the same allowed us to entangle our practices into a new collaboration. We became one teacher with one bodymind.



Although it was a goal of ours to teach without translating the entire class, we wanted to acknowledge that a translator was present and could be utilized as another doorway for learning. At the start of class, we felt it was important to translate that touch would be used, but was not required to participate. For the first hour, we stood in a large circle that encompassed the entire studio. *We began standing with arms outstretched and palms open towards the center of the circle. I led the group through a breathing exercise with the intention of the students connecting their awareness to their own breath as well as to the shared breath of the group.* The awareness of breath unlocked each student's choice to breathe intentionally. Once breathing becomes a choice, it is an action of the present moment. This idea allowed for each student's agency to become entangled with the agency of the group, giving way to a shared space.

We then asked each student to partner with the person next to them. This became the person they would explore dialogical touch with during the first section of this practice. In the duration spent working with the same partner, we were able to find trust between two people. We used my knowledge of biomechanical touch as a reference for finding points of release in the body that allowed us to share our intentions of creating dialogue without the tool of language. We started with simple exercises. First: "How does it feel when your partner presses down through the backs of your ankles?" Then: "How does your partner feel when you press down through their toes?" We reimagined a simple yoga sequence as a reflective "home" for the students to return to in order to witness the transformations they felt between each exercise. *We discovered when touch comes into play, there is an exchange of embodied dialogues: my inner landscape has now been both shared with you and transformed by yours.*

*In the second half of the class, I led the group through a yoga flow practice. David and I decided that as I taught, I would demonstrate the majority of the physical practice as he walked around to provide directive touch. In this section of class, the movements were sequenced and led by me while David provided individual insight and feedback through his own agency of touch. Given the trust I felt in him as my collaborator and the knowledge that our intentions aligned, I felt as though his hands were an extension of my own being. I was able to both be at the front of the room showing the physicality and at the same time, through David, be with the students and provide them*

*with the one-on-one care I seek to give. Furthermore, because we began that day's practice with an opportunity to unlock the deep listening and reflection that comes from embodied touch, I felt this gave each student the opportunity to focus inward and listen to their own experience, even as they were responding to external cues.* Marisa and I identified our entangled embodiment through this collaborative teaching method. Through trust, sharing of respect, and aligned intention, we were able to co-inhabit a collaborative bodymind through which we could teach. My hands carried Marisa's thoughts, and my thoughts were carried in Marisa's movement. *I also found that after days of discussing and planning with David and partnering with him for the first half of class, my teaching voice was fortified by the thoughts and knowledge he had shared.*

We also found that in this collaborative practice, we were able to deconstruct the teacher-student relationship as an example for the students. Marisa and I encountered each other in the classroom as equals, both as beings who can teach and as beings who can learn from each other. *I felt that I was both a teacher and a student simultaneously. I realized that in this collaborative teaching process, we were able to become both students and teachers of one another.* In this entanglement of the teacher-student relationship, we actually began to teach through our experience of equal *Subject to Subject* dialogue. Our equal dialogue transformed how dialogue could be reimagined for everyone in the space we were building together.

*Just before the end of class, David led us through one more partnered touch exercise, this time with new partners in the room.* My final contribution to the classroom was a return to the breath from the beginning of class. As one partner laid on their stomach, the other placed their hand on the small of the back to find an equal breath together. This led to a lengthening of the spine to create more space for breathing. *I was paired with one of the Taiwanese students. I was struck by how much knowledge she conveyed through her fingertips. Her unspoken intention to encourage lengthening and spreading was clear, and her hands felt as though they were listening to my body underneath them. It was the first time we'd worked together, but after two hours of listening to our own bodies and the bodies of others, it felt that we were well-primed to connect instantly in this way.* The rules of the world outside the studio had been deconstructed; we no longer needed a long duration of time to establish trust between two

Subjects. Response-ability was created through embodied dialogue between teachers and students. It was through our aligned intentions of building a space to share, imagine, and care for one another that our collective embodiment was able to teach with a clear goal.

By the end of class, I felt the energy in the space had shifted. There was a resistance to leaving the imagined world we had built together. Dismantling this world meant returning to the outside world, which held its expected definitions of what life is, rather than our reimagination of what life can be. *After class, one of the Taiwanese students who had been shy throughout the workshop week approached me. Her voice was shaky. I thought it sounded as if she were fighting back tears of release. I often find that the release of tension in the physical body gives way to an emotional release as well. "I want to do this more," she said. "I feel so calm."* To me, this calmness speaks of trust. It demonstrates an equal dialogue in the imagined world we built together. Once experienced, it can be difficult to leave behind.

One of the biggest findings from this collaborative practice was that a collective embodiment can teach. Marisa and I deepened our entanglement through our intention to share our knowledge with the classroom. By dialoguing through embodiment with another pedagogue, we were able to demonstrate that we can always be teachers and students simultaneously. *I am inspired by the ripple effect embodiment can have. By David and I sharing our embodiment with each other and allowing ourselves to receive and integrate what the other had to offer, we were able to show this to those around us. We created a space where we could experience the same giving and receiving with our students and, by the end of our time together, we had created a collective where everyone was both affecting and affected by each other.* This gives way to the idea that a group's embodiment can become a teacher of its own.



## 7 *The Blossoms* – January 21, 2020 at 1 pm: Tracing Your Edges

My second practice that was shaped during the Taiwanese workshop was one that I am calling “Tracing Your Edges.” The class took place on January 21, 2020 at 1:00pm with ten young dancers, ages 11-18, with whom I did not share a common language, and six other pedagogues from the workshop. The illustrations I have interlaced here within my text were drawn by the students and pedagogues during this class. They are transformations of my practice created by the people who practiced with me during my quest to teach without a common language.

The class was two hours long and I divided the class into two sections. The first hour was a more “typical” dance class. I shared the movement ideas of TERO Technique inspired by ideas of integration, connection, and unity. I implemented tools such as touch, laughter, sharing respect, and the intention of care. The second hour was an exploration in tracing the body to see how much space we actually take up in the world. I imagined this would allow emancipation and respect for our physical forms. However, what ultimately unfolded in the studio was unexpected and it is the moment I cherish the most from my stay in Taiwan.

To begin the class by implementing touch, I had us all stand in a circle small enough that when we reached our arms out to their furthest lengths, our hands could touch and interlock. This was unusual, since the dance studio we were in was big enough for us each to have our own dancing space, plus extra room to spare. After having observed the power of both touch and building a home, I consciously kept the group close enough to feel each other as we began to dance. My aim was to build a group structure that could offer support and resilience in the face of any individual resistances in the learning process.

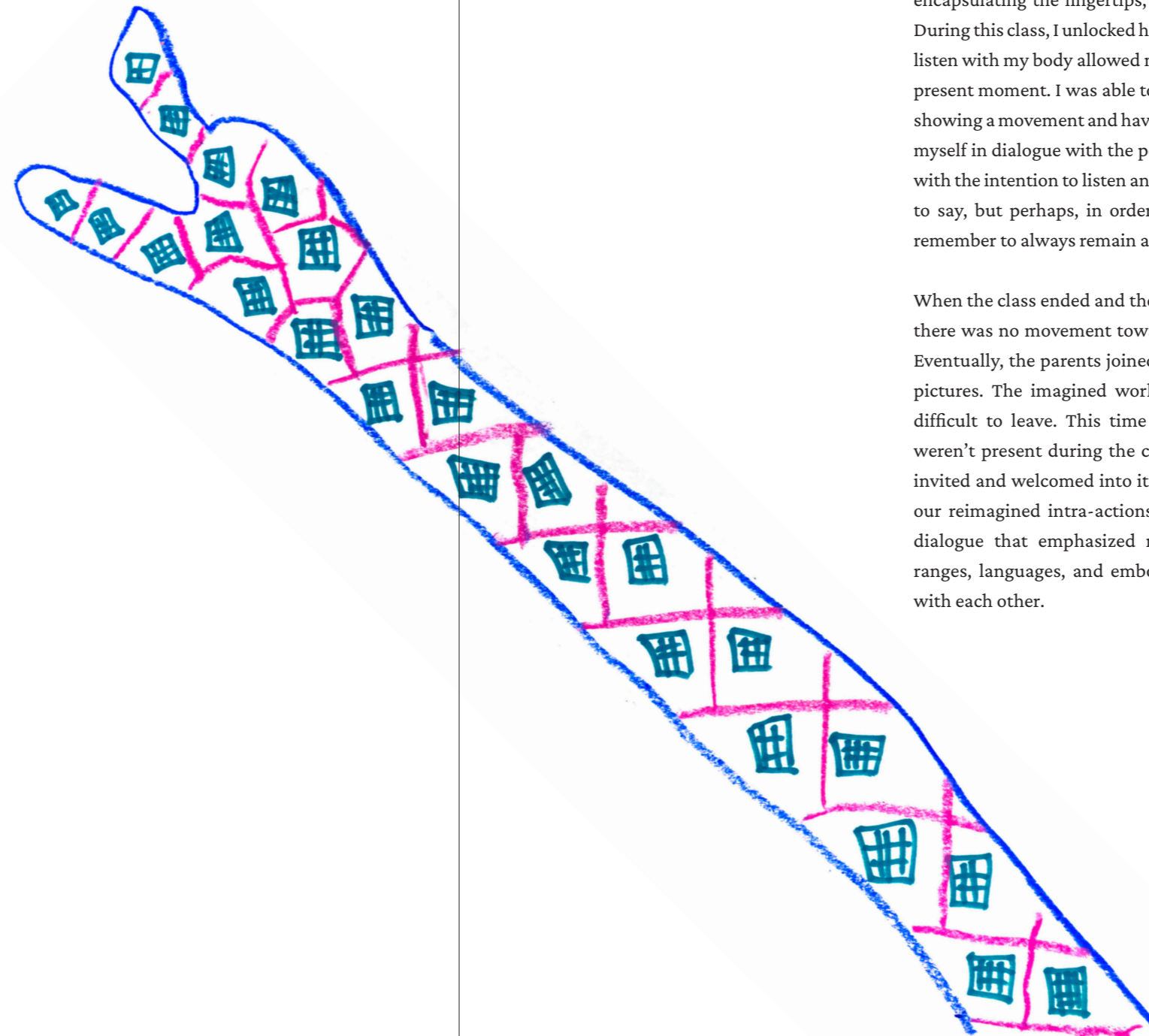
The next tool I used within the first hour was laughter, and this had a direct connection to the technique used to implement touch. Due to the closeness of our group, it was not uncommon that as we reached

to the sides and in every direction, we found ourselves intertwining and interlacing in unique ways with each other. This led to moments of intense laughter where we eliminated the serious nature that embodiment practices can sometimes hold and simply enjoyed the play of the moment and of the movement.

The third tool was the sharing of respect with the students. The other pedagogues from the workshop were intermingled with the young dancers in the circle, and we all danced together as equals. I also included myself in the group and played and explored with them from the very beginning of class. By saying thank you in both my mother tongue and the mother tongue of the students, I attempted to meet the students halfway by showing respect through cultural listening in the class. As I made this gesture of cultural awareness and exchange, the students also responded by saying thank you in their own languages. By creating space for many mother tongues to co-inhabit the space, we were able to explore the power of the verbal that goes beyond simple comprehension. In this practice of thanking each other, I found an element of the deconstruction of the teacher-student relationship that I strive for within my practice.

After the first hour, I laid two large strips of paper on the ground and asked the students to outline each other's bodies in strange and funny shapes. My thought was that this exercise was an embodied metaphor encompassing the idea that we are both all entangled and all unique. My hope was that through the traced bodily forms on paper, there would be the recognition that I can fit inside their traced form, and they can fit inside my traced form. I introduced the idea that after tracing each other, we could attempt a movement exercise where we would begin to use these tracings to create patterns of movement through the space. My idea was that we would attempt to fit our three-dimensional bodies into each other's two-dimensional tracings, creating a dance of group identity.

However, the teaching had already given space for the emancipation of the students' agency. From my idea of tracing each other came the students' choice to fill in these bodily forms and reimagine them as something else. The students began to color and draw their traced bodies into new forms. Trees, cats, hearts, and diamonds began to



blossom around the room. The students were laughing and filled with excitement at all of the possibilities that could be imagined from their bodies. They began to teach each other how to write each other's names in Chinese and English letters. They created a tapestry of their embodied experience transformed into pastel colors.

In the reimagining of people to become animals and plants, diamond encrusted arms growing from all angles, and a rainbow of hearts encapsulating the fingertips, I felt a return to my research question. During this class, I unlocked how my intention to care and my ability to listen with my body allowed my practice to transform and react to the present moment. I was able to allow my embodiment to teach, not by showing a movement and having the students repeat it, but by offering myself in dialogue with the people around me and approaching them with the intention to listen and learn from them. It may be paradoxical to say, but perhaps, in order to be the teacher I aim to be, I must remember to always remain a student.

When the class ended and the parents came to pick up their children, there was no movement towards the door. Everyone just continued. Eventually, the parents joined in with drawing, laughing, and taking pictures. The imagined world we had created together was again difficult to leave. This time it became clear that even those who weren't present during the construction of this world could still be invited and welcomed into it. It was possible for others to enter into our reimagined intra-actions with each other. It was an unspoken dialogue that emphasized my belief that amongst different age ranges, languages, and embodied knowledge, we are all entangled with each other.





## 8 *Returning to the Earth* – Conclusion: Silent Classes and Future Imaginings

### 8.1 Silent Classes

To promote the idea that we are all teachers and students of each other, I am currently developing a practice of “silent classes.” These “silent classes” are targeted for students who are familiar with me and the technique that I teach, because I do not demonstrate or speak at all throughout class. Instead, I allow the students to lead their own class as a group based on their individual and collective interests. My intention is to provide a space where time and exploration can exist for the students, giving up the idea that the only method for teaching is to provide more information. In the student’s understanding of my pedagogical intentions, I establish trust and a “home” from which they can explore their own paths.

I begin these classes with simple instructions: “Today, I will be giving a ‘silent class.’ This is not to leave you alone in the space, but to allow you to explore the ideas and concepts that are of interest to you. I will not speak in this class, but you are allowed to do so. You can also be influenced and taken by the energy and choices of others in the room. You do not have to take this class alone, but this is *your* class.” I then offer the idea of focus to connect the group by watching and following each other, not by mimicking, but by taking inspiration from the flow of energy from one being to another, a waking up to the finer details in the room. From there, I often sit off to the side of the room and observe the journeys and outcomes of their explorations. I aim to be a silent presence with a caring gaze.

I play a set soundtrack in the classes I teach with speech, and I use the same soundtrack for these “silent classes.” The music suggests the memory of the “home” we have built together in prior classes. I have noticed, in this same memory of “home,” that the students often start with the same warmup they are familiar with. The movements and connections that I have suggested during prior classes infiltrate the room’s curiosity. However, by the middle of class, the imagination of

the group tends to blossom to become the teacher of the space. Within these “silent classes,” there have been explorations of touch, sound, and drawing. One commonality I have noticed is that these classes always end in a group, whether that be in a giant circular hug, laughter amidst wild bowing and clapping, or an entanglement of flesh where it is impossible to tell where one person ends and another begins.

When I first started developing these classes, I worried that I was abandoning the students. I remember distinctly feeling a loss of connection. I felt that, without speech, I had severed a thread that connected me to the students. However, if my voice as a teacher dominates the said, then by letting go of that power, I can provide the space for the unsaid to exist. I began to look more deeply at the other forms of connection active within the room: the focus, the intention, the quality of movement. I came to see that these classes are about the group as a whole connecting beyond the borders of teacher and student. The group becomes a teacher of its own.

I hope to continue developing these classes in the future as I continue my journey of learning through teaching. By asking the students to teach their own class, there is an entanglement of identities that begins to influence the dialogue. There is a deconstruction of teacher to student, student to student, and *Subject* to *Subject* when the group transforms into a collective “teacher.” The classroom becomes a place where response-able group action allows everyone to learn in dialogue with one another. It is ultimately a method of pedagogy that asks the students to lead their own journey in the classroom, with the acknowledgment and encouragement that I walk this path with them. We become companions of each other as students on our aligned path toward knowledge. Through embodied dialogue and building a home together, we can reimagine a space where everyone and everything belongs.

## 8.2 Returning Home

As I begin the journey of “returning home” in order to reflect on the transformations I have experienced through this process, I am reminded that my goal for this research was not only to answer the question “How does embodiment teach?” but also to further entangle,

enquire, and deconstruct the power structures of the linguistic world in conjunction with the experience of learning. I return to Audre Lorde’s (2007, 39) reimagining of dreams: “Those dreams are made realizable through our poems that give us the strength and courage to see, to feel, to speak, and to dare”. In this proposal of our dreams pointing the way towards freedom, I find my definition of imagination entangled with the anti-oppressive possibilities that maintaining agency of my dreaming can give me.

In the maintenance of my agency, I remain an equal *Subject* to dialogue with, and through the process of releasing my power over each student’s imagination, I find an aim for my own practice. By reflecting on my own learning process of naming and renaming, I allow myself to question and reimagine. By understanding the importance of naming things for ourselves, students can maintain the power of choice in their intra-actions with the world.

In the idea of imagination, I return to the poems, illustrations, and literary companions that I have been dialoguing with while creating an archive of this question. Through the self-awareness gained through reflective practices, the groundedness of my real-life teachings, and the literary companionship of the authors I dialogue with, I find myself entangled in collective knowledge. As a teacher, this frees me from the oppressive teacher-student relationship—including the implied need for the teacher to be “right”—by unlocking the awareness that we learn together, teacher and student, simultaneously. Together, we can reimagine the “I” as “We,” both within the classroom and beyond.

My fascination with imagery and metaphor as tools for teaching has only deepened in the findings of my question. The bodymind is not only a carrier of knowledge, but is a tool that can teach. My observations and teaching practices during the workshop in Taiwan have highlighted for me how powerful it can be to teach through embodiment. The desire to meet in equal dialogue between student and teacher can unlock the transformation of the physical form to speak through intention and listen with the skin. The double movement of intention and curiosity allows for response-able dialogue to occur.

The power of verbal speech in dialogue is maintained only when I do not do the work to reimagine what it can be. I discovered in Taiwan that embodied dialogue can be equal to, if not more effective than, verbal dialogue as a teaching method. Even without sharing a common language, the workshop sustained the goals of my practice—and the goals of all the guest pedagogues—in finding new ways to connect, teach, and integrate in a multicultural classroom. Through dialoguing, learning, and entangling, I found my original intent for beginning this research enquiry.

I return to the deeper questions I asked at the end of section 2: “What is a world that I can begin to reimagine? What is a world that I wish to inhabit and promote?” The difficulty of answering these questions is that the answers live in my idealist dreams. It is an idealist wish that we can all find equality in society. However, allowing myself the space to dream allows me the ability to reimagine what life can be, both inside and outside the classroom. I find a part of my answer in Barad’s diffractive methodology. Barad (Dolphijn et al. 2012, 50) explains this methodology in an interview by proposing that it is about “building new insights, and attentively and carefully reading for differences that matter in their fine details”. Here, I find a parallel to my search for being Aware, Alert, Attentive, and Alive in 360 degrees, through waking up an awareness to the sensations that fill the physical form while still imagining what else there could be. By awakening the curiosity of students to listen to the finer details that live within themselves and in the world around them, I find an awareness of the idea that we are all entangled blossoms.

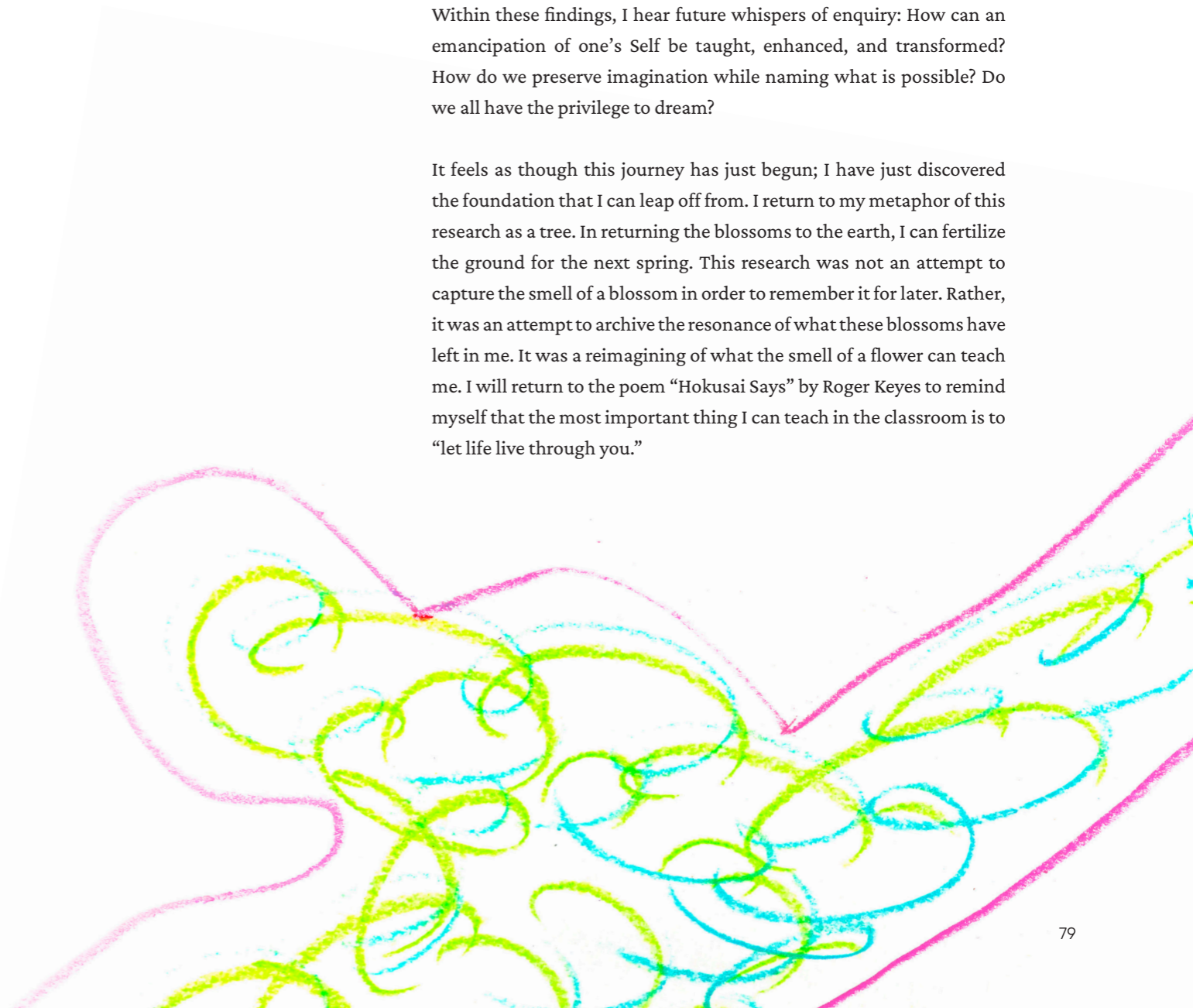
### 8.3 Future Imaginings

When learning to walk, we do not simply learn to walk. We are learning about gravity, physics, balance, falling, and suspension. Learning is always holistic, but it is not always allowed the space to show all of its unique angles. A phrase said often by the workshop teachers in Taiwan was, “If you laugh, it’s ok!” I realized that even with laughter, we are learning. We are learning to breathe, relax, connect, and feel the reverberations of our own voice resonating within our body. Through laughter we also learn how to approach life with joy.

If I continue to find joy in the simple moments of life, rather than only in the extraordinary, I arrive at the profound realization that I am enough just the way I am. With gratitude for the mundane, I can maintain agency in my imagination towards the world. Brené Brown (2013, 76) thinks of joy as the most vulnerable emotion. Through the courage to be vulnerable, I find the ability to learn. Brown (2013, 76) proposes we must not “dress rehearsal tragedy,” but rather we must practice gratitude. I find that the light of my imagination guides me in the darkness of the unknown. Above all else, this is the sensation I hope to be able to teach my students.

Within these findings, I hear future whispers of enquiry: How can an emancipation of one’s Self be taught, enhanced, and transformed? How do we preserve imagination while naming what is possible? Do we all have the privilege to dream?

It feels as though this journey has just begun; I have just discovered the foundation that I can leap off from. I return to my metaphor of this research as a tree. In returning the blossoms to the earth, I can fertilize the ground for the next spring. This research was not an attempt to capture the smell of a blossom in order to remember it for later. Rather, it was an attempt to archive the resonance of what these blossoms have left in me. It was a reimagining of what the smell of a flower can teach me. I will return to the poem “Hokusai Says” by Roger Keyes to remind myself that the most important thing I can teach in the classroom is to “let life live through you.”







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