UArts SCHOOL OF DANCE

INCONCLUSIVE COLLECTION

by jags
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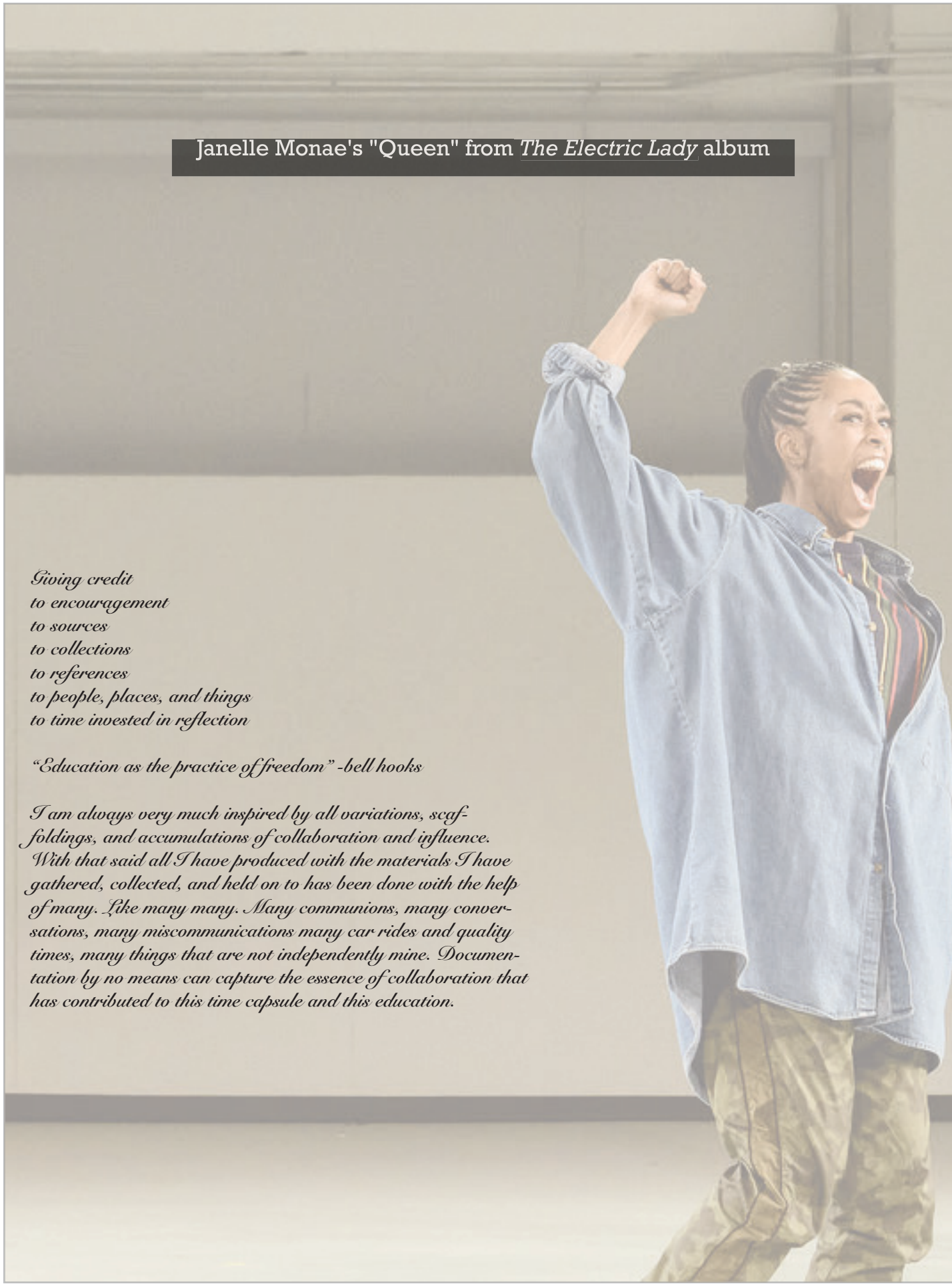
Wilmer Wilson IV, Thesis Thinking Partner
VK Preston, Program Advisor

Inconclusive Collection

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts, Dance
2020
The University of the Arts



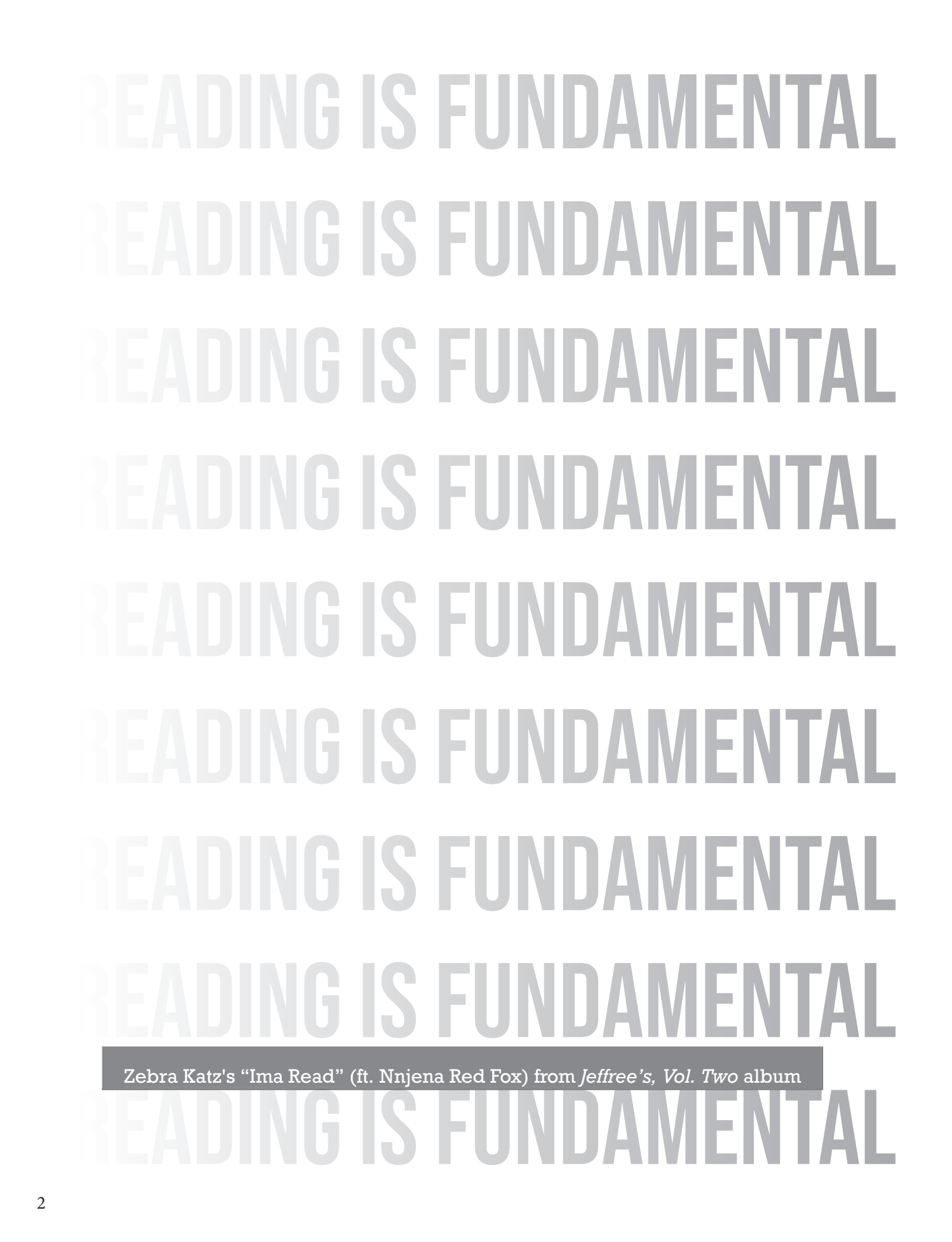
Janelle Monae's "Queen" from *The Electric Lady* album

Giving credit
to encouragement
to sources
to collections
to references
to people, places, and things
to time invested in reflection

"Education as the practice of freedom" -bell hooks

I am always very much inspired by all variations, scaffoldings, and accumulations of collaboration and influence. With that said all I have produced with the materials I have gathered, collected, and held on to has been done with the help of many. Like many many. Many communions, many conversations, many miscommunications many car rides and quality times, many things that are not independently mine. Documentation by no means can capture the essence of collaboration that has contributed to this time capsule and this education.

Thank you

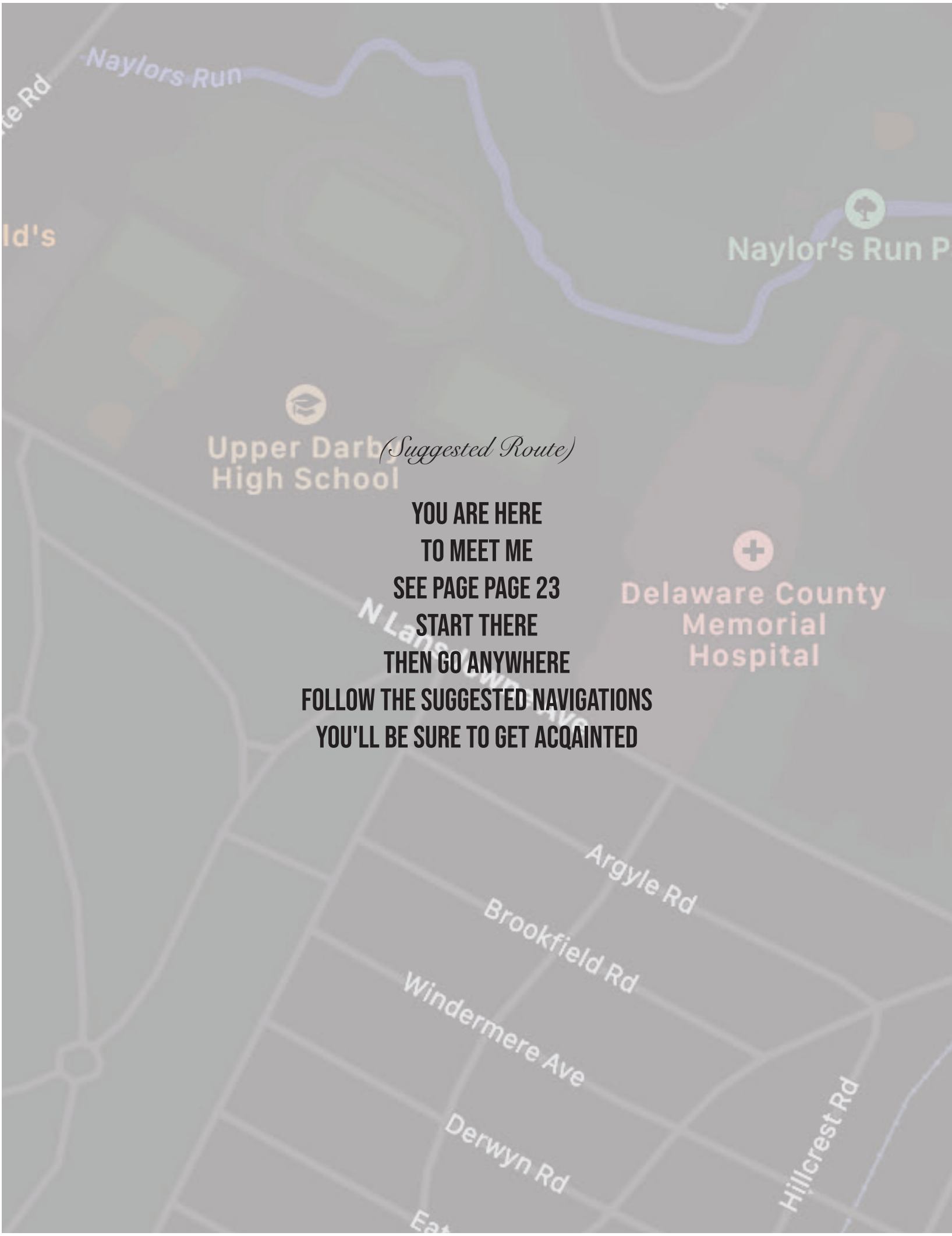


Zebra Katz's "Ima Read" (ft. Nnjena Red Fox) from *Jeffree's, Vol. Two* album

Précis

By experimenting with the improvisational tools of dance, one can begin to understand how to rectify trauma in the body. The black body is central to the work presented. This work studies historical oppression and its manifestations. Here the black body is portrayed as a site of research and liberation. The black body once in service is always in service of having provided the labor that has built and continues to build the foundations and expansion of this country. My research in literature, writing and improvisation permits this black body to manifest as a site and source for persisting and insisting through the hold of colonialism.

This repository examines the pertinence of putting energy back into the earth to confront trauma. To embrace the practice of ecological restoration it would take demanding a humanitarian and ecosophical revolution. Thinking of this catalogue and book as a devices helps send the reader in many directions. Sending the reader to me, to references, to the biographical, to material, and to dance is about encounter. Dance is about encounter. This research examines how this black body encounters dance, how dance encounters this body while being in conversation with other dancing bodies. Dance can explain more than physicality as it can model ways to disrupt, dismantle and destroy regularly understood systems of oppression. This book can be read in multiple ways which demonstrates my thinking that is circular, non linear, associative, and abundant. Here's to responsibly celebrating and sharing the geographical, ecological, and the biographical.



(Suggested Route)

YOU ARE HERE
TO MEET ME
SEE PAGE PAGE 23
START THERE
THEN GO ANYWHERE
FOLLOW THE SUGGESTED NAVIGATIONS
YOU'LL BE SURE TO GET ACQAINTED

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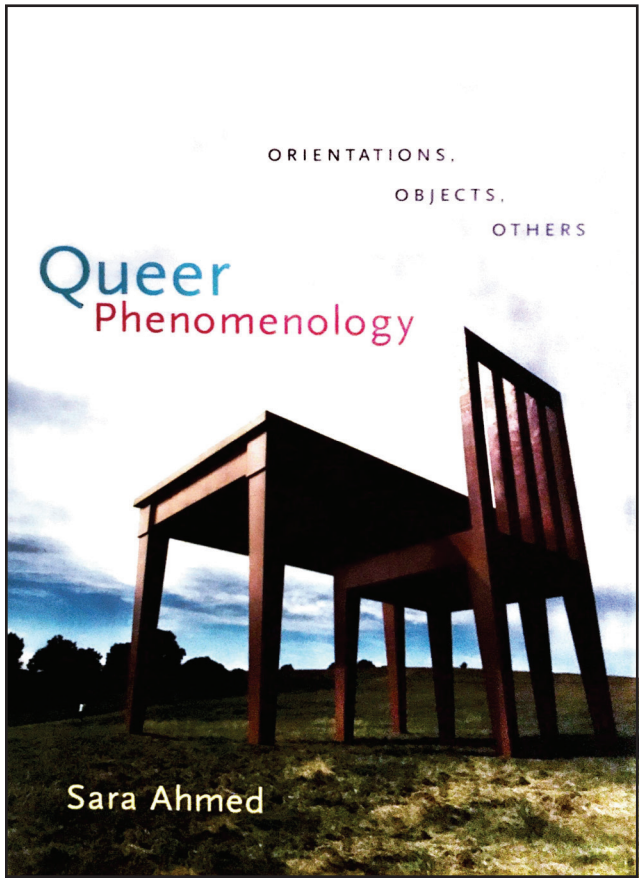
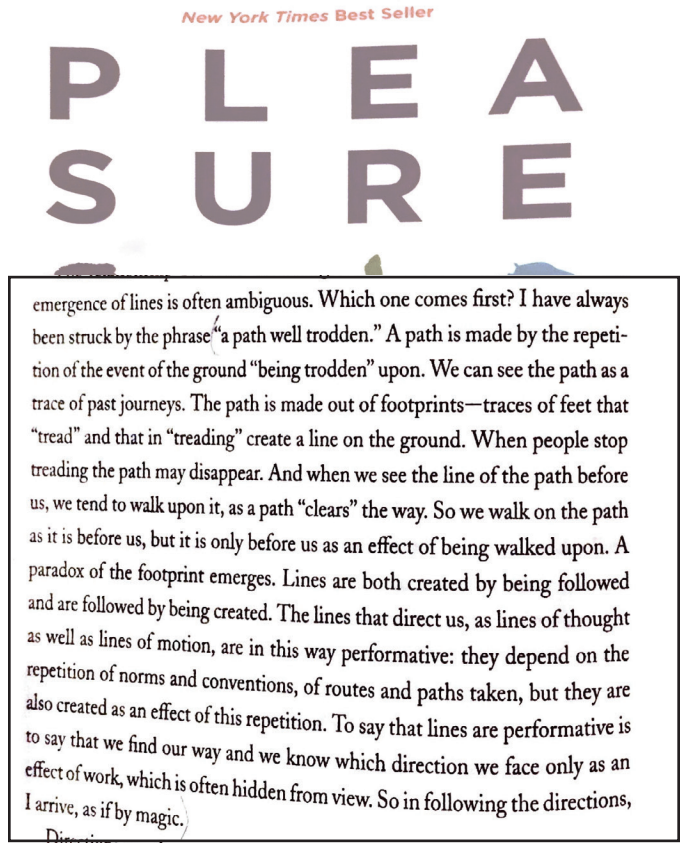
Solange's "Weary" from *A Seat at the Table* album





emergence of lines is often ambiguous. Which one comes first? I have always been struck by the phrase "a path well trodden." A path is made by the repetition of the event of the ground "being trodden" upon. We can see the path as a trace of past journeys. The path is made out of footprints—traces of feet that "tread" and that in "treading" create a line on the ground. When people stop treading the path may disappear. And when we see the line of the path before us, we tend to walk upon it, as a path "clears" the way. So we walk on the path as it is before us, but it is only before us as an effect of being walked upon. A paradox of the footprint emerges. Lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created. The lines that direct us, as lines of thought as well as lines of motion, are in this way performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition. To say that lines are performative is to say that we find our way and we know which direction we face only as an effect of work, which is often hidden from view. So in following the directions, I arrive, as if by magic.

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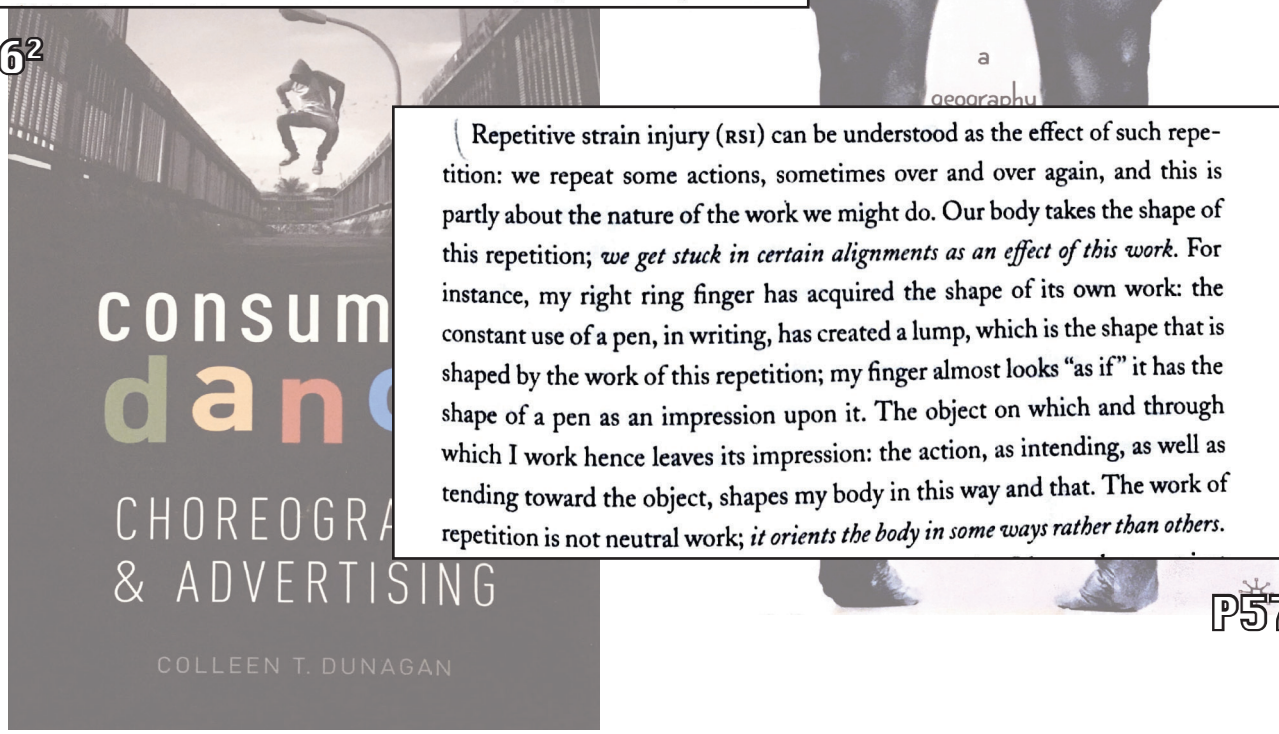
of bodily action, that makes it a useful resource for feminism (1997a: 406). What bodies "tend to do" are effects of histories rather than being originary. We could say that history "happens" in the very repetition of gestures,

P56[2]



Repetitive strain injury (RSI) can be understood as the effect of such repetition: we repeat some actions, sometimes over and over again, and this is partly about the nature of the work we might do. Our body takes the shape of this repetition; *we get stuck in certain alignments as an effect of this work.* For instance, my right ring finger has acquired the shape of its own work: the constant use of a pen, in writing, has created a lump, which is the shape that is shaped by the work of this repetition; my finger almost looks "as if" it has the shape of a pen as an impression upon it. The object on which and through which I work hence leaves its impression: the action, as intending, as well as tending toward the object, shapes my body in this way and that. The work of repetition is not neutral work; *it orients the body in some ways rather than others.*

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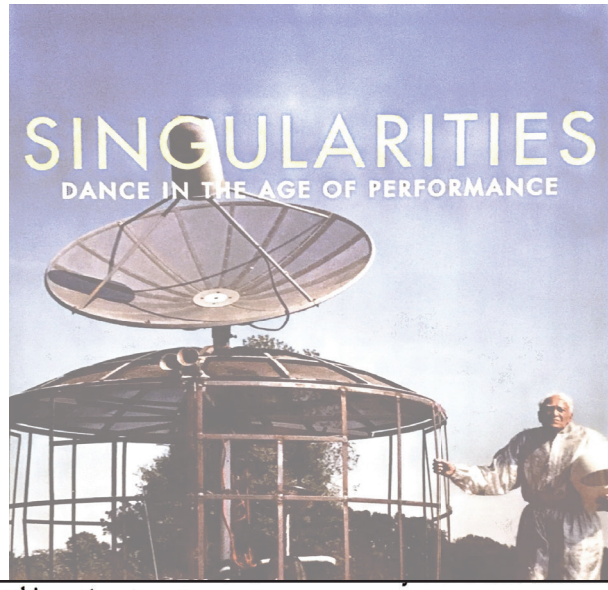

"WITH"

CONtributors

"AN ACT, STATEMENT, OR GIFT THAT IS INTENDED TO SHOW GRATITUDE, RESPECT, OR ADMIRATION"

something other than the reproduction of the facts of the matter happens. The hope that reproduction fails is the hope for new impressions, for new lines to emerge, new objects, or even new bodies, which gather, in gathering around this table. The "new" would not involve the loss of the background. Indeed, for bodies to arrive in spaces where they are not already at home, where they are not "in place," involves hard work; indeed, it involves painstaking labor for bodies to inhabit spaces that do not extend their shape. Having arrived, such bodies in turn might acquire new shapes. And spaces in turn acquire new bodies. So, yes, we should celebrate such arrivals. The "new" is what is possible when what is behind us, our background, does not simply ground us or keep us

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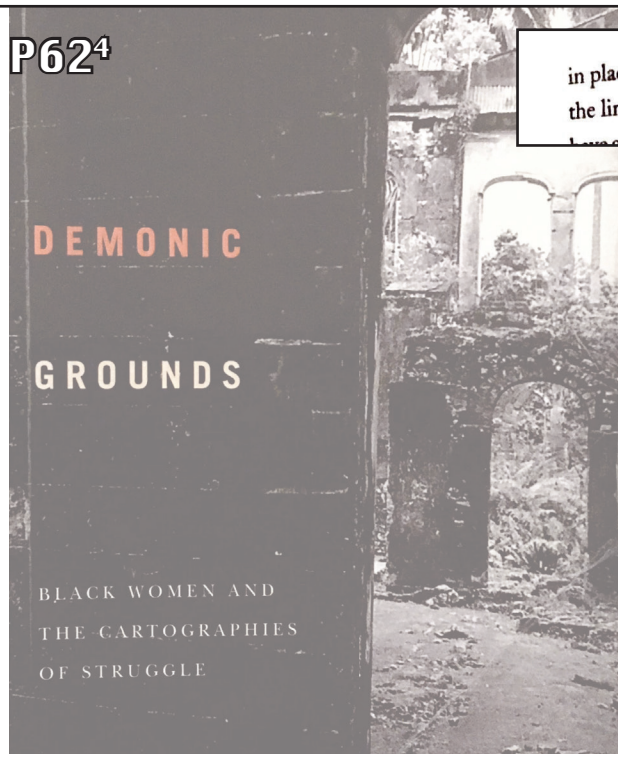

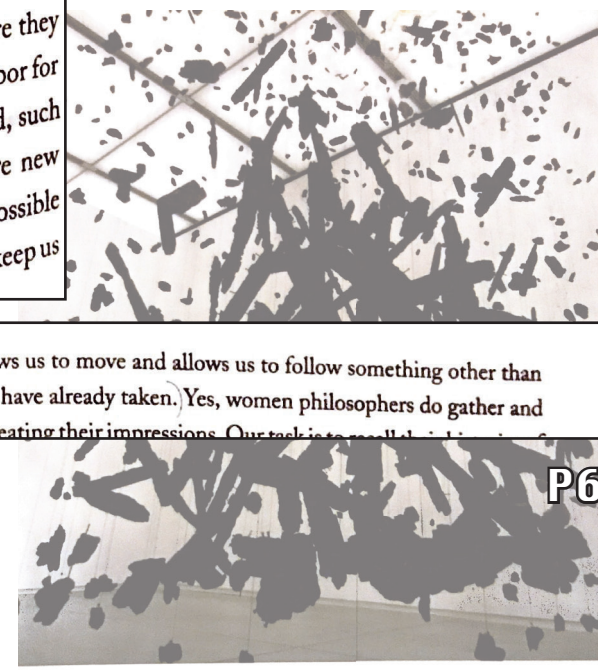

in place, but allows us to move and allows us to follow something other than the lines that we have already taken. Yes, women philosophers do gather and

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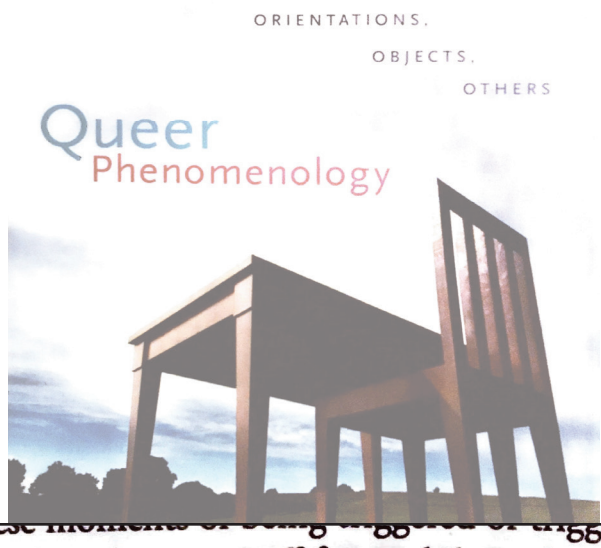
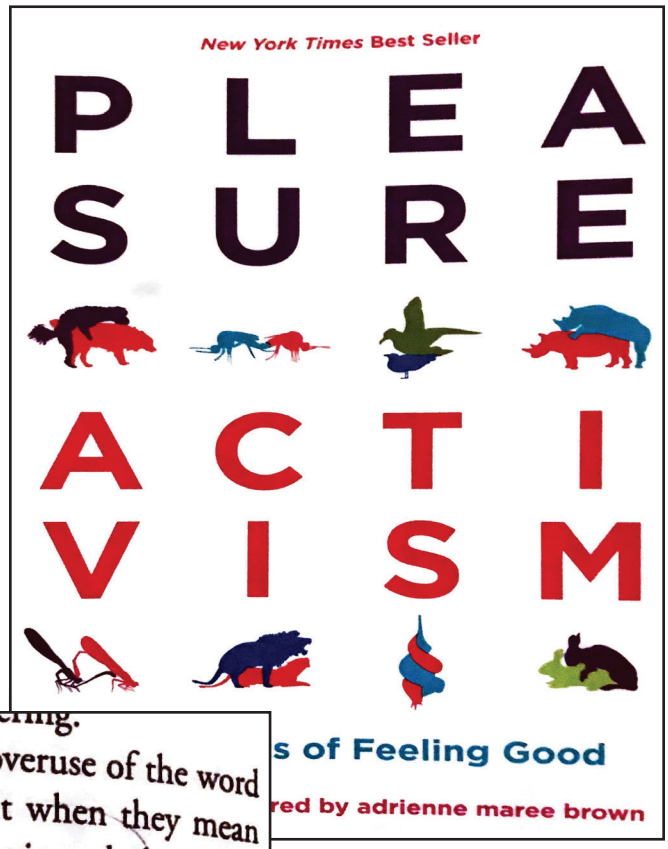
On Blackness and Being





I have been put off for a while at the overuse of the word "trigger"—I think too often people use it when they mean annoyed or offended or something less visceral than triggered. Inside that sense of overuse, I am simultaneously glad that people are finding ways to say, in real time, "something happening right now isn't right for me."

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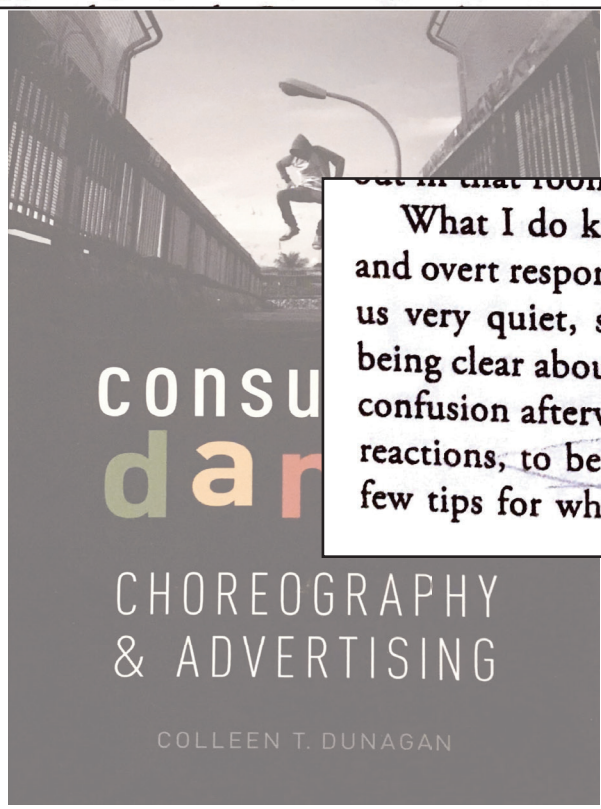

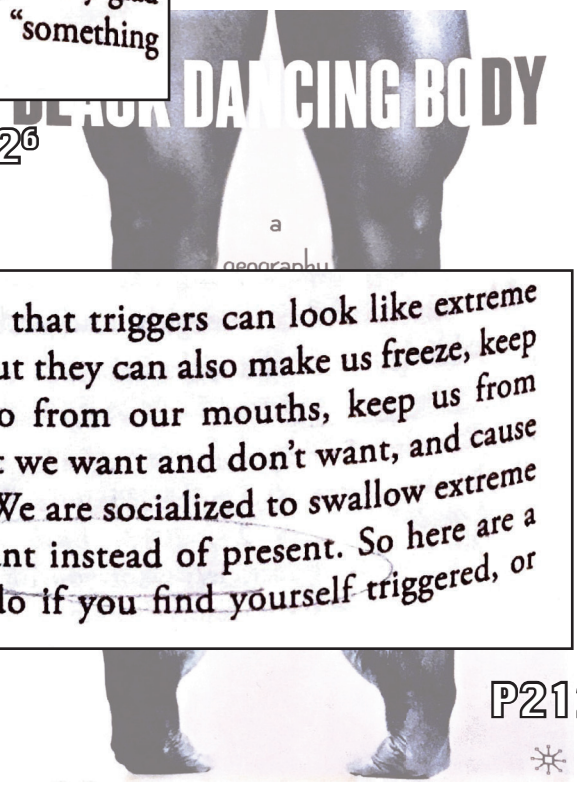

What I do know is that triggers can look like extreme and overt responses, but they can also make us freeze, keep us very quiet, steal no from our mouths, keep us from being clear about what we want and don't want, and cause confusion afterward. We are socialized to swallow extreme reactions, to be pleasant instead of present. So here are a few tips for what to do if you find yourself triggered, or

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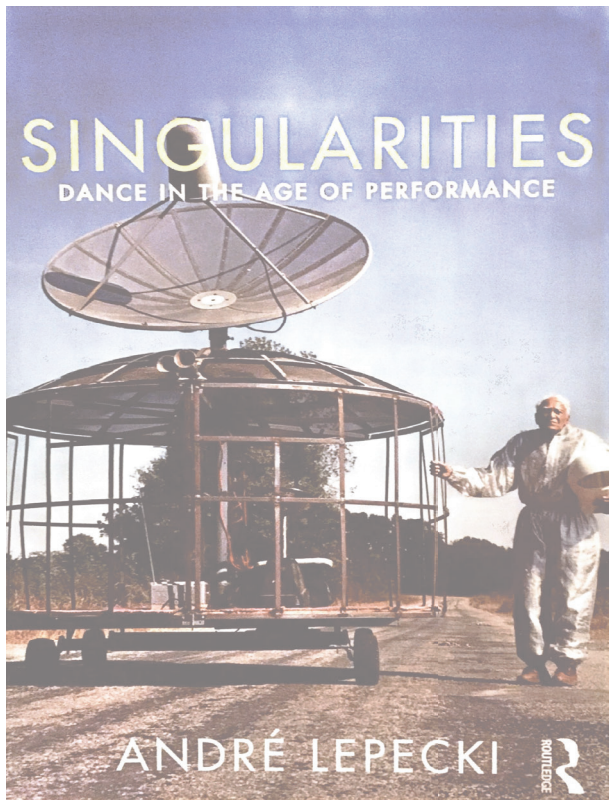
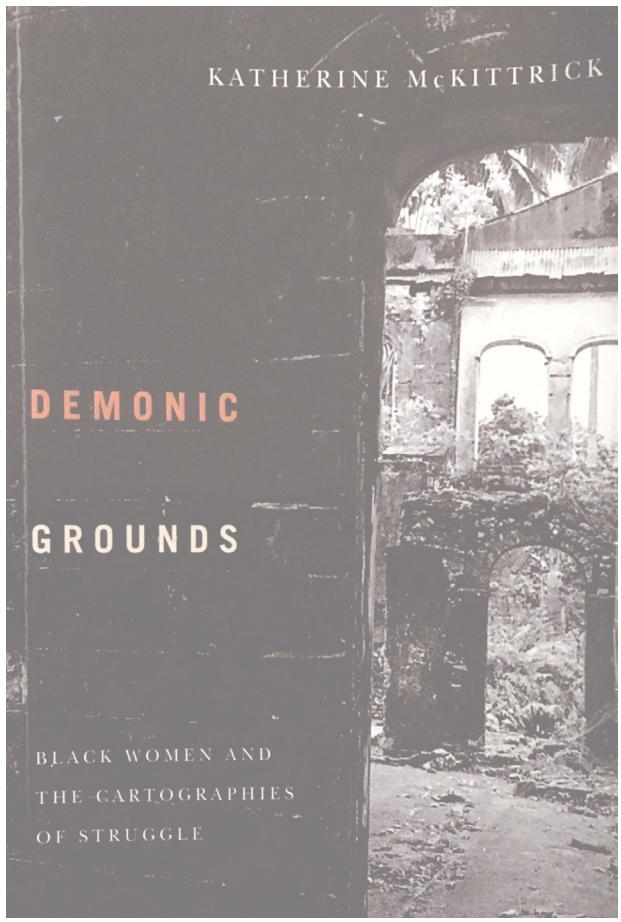


"WITH"

CONtributors

"AN ACT, STATEMENT, OR GIFT THAT IS INTENDED TO SHOW GRATITUDE, RESPECT, OR ADMIRATION"



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On Blackness and Being

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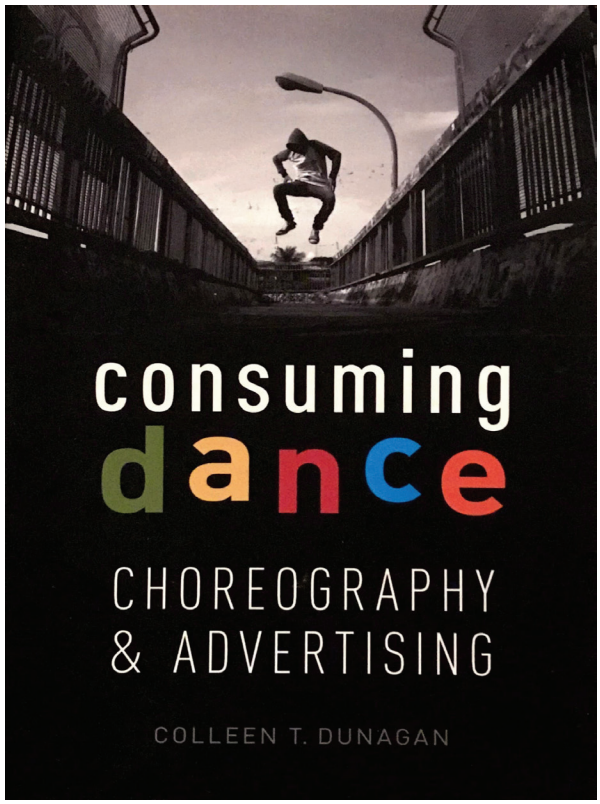
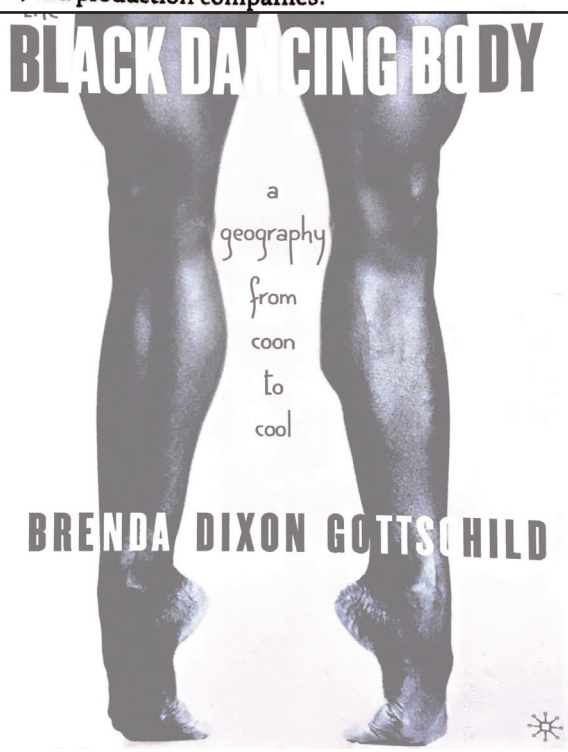
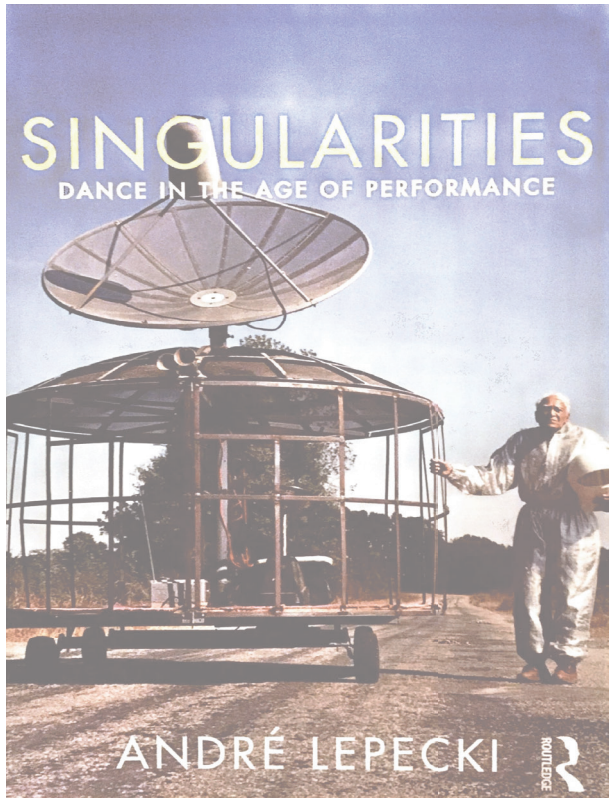
In advertising, many choreographers and performers are not celebrities. Consequently, they typically remain nameless, hired bodies whose creative contributions go largely unrecognized outside of the industry. While advertising agencies house contracts and detailed production credits, information regarding performers and choreographers is often not released to the public. Press releases, news stories, and archives do not typically record the names of performers—this practice is true for both dancers and actors—and they only sometimes identify choreographers. Credits go to production and celebrities. Thus, advertising primarily promotes the authorial presence and recognition of film directors, ad agencies, and production companies.







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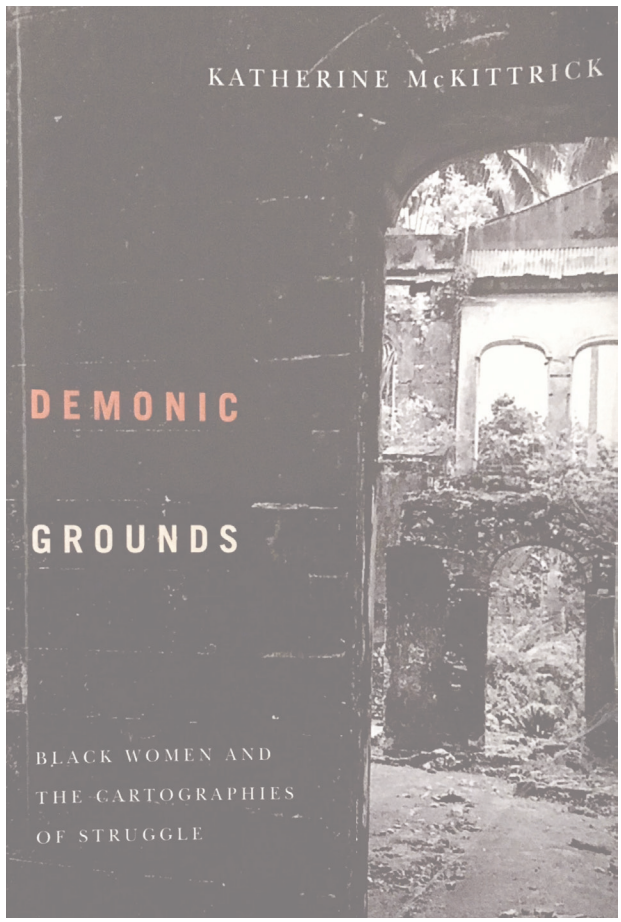
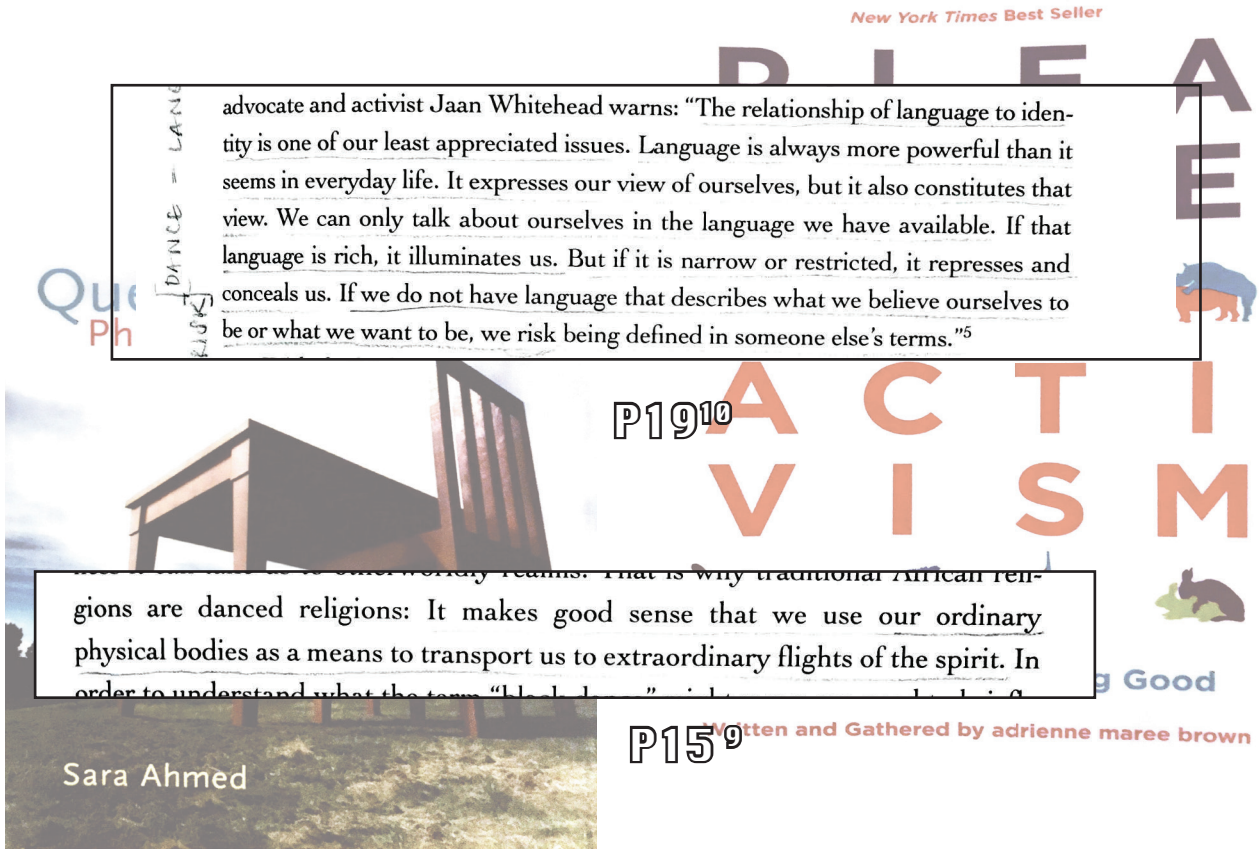


CHRISTINA SHARPE In the Wake
On Blackness and Being


New York Times Best Seller
advocate and activist Jaan Whitehead warns: "The relationship of language to identity is one of our least appreciated issues. Language is always more powerful than it seems in everyday life. It expresses our view of ourselves, but it also constitutes that view. We can only talk about ourselves in the language we have available. If that language is rich, it illuminates us. But if it is narrow or restricted, it represses and conceals us. If we do not have language that describes what we believe ourselves to be or what we want to be, we risk being defined in someone else's terms."5
P19
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gions are danced religions: It makes good sense that we use our ordinary physical bodies as a means to transport us to extraordinary flights of the spirit. In
Sara Ahmed
P15
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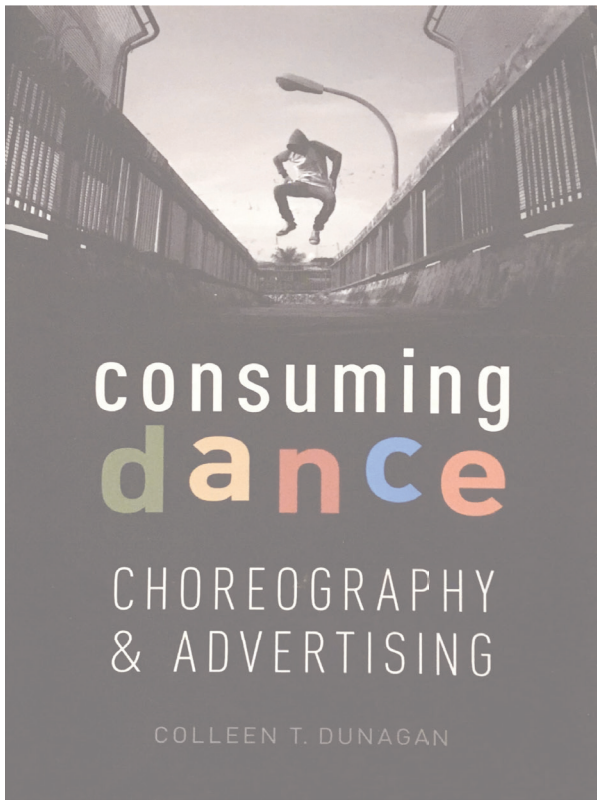
Good
Written and Gathered by adrienne maree brown


consuming
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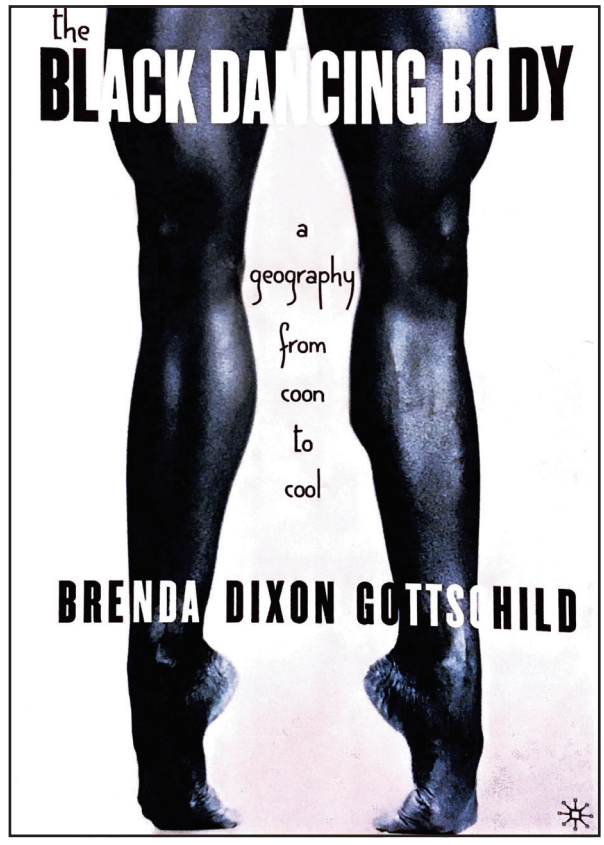
CHOREOGRAPHY
& ADVERTISING
COLLEEN T. DUNAGAN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BLACK DANCING BODY
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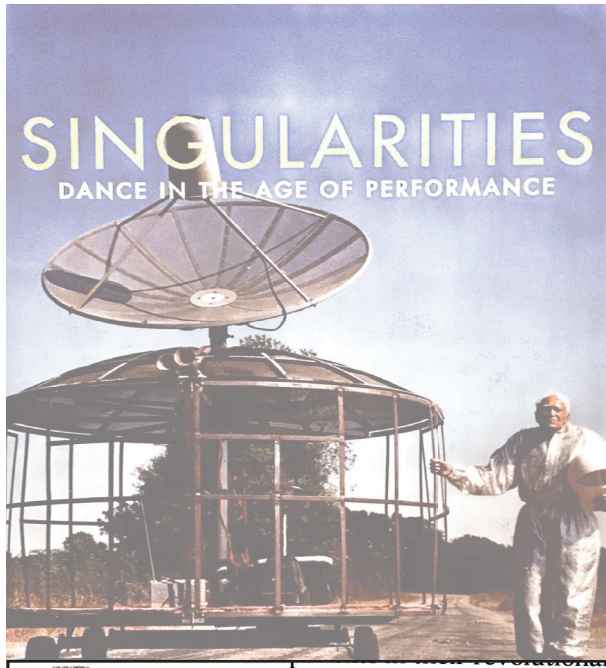


"WITH"

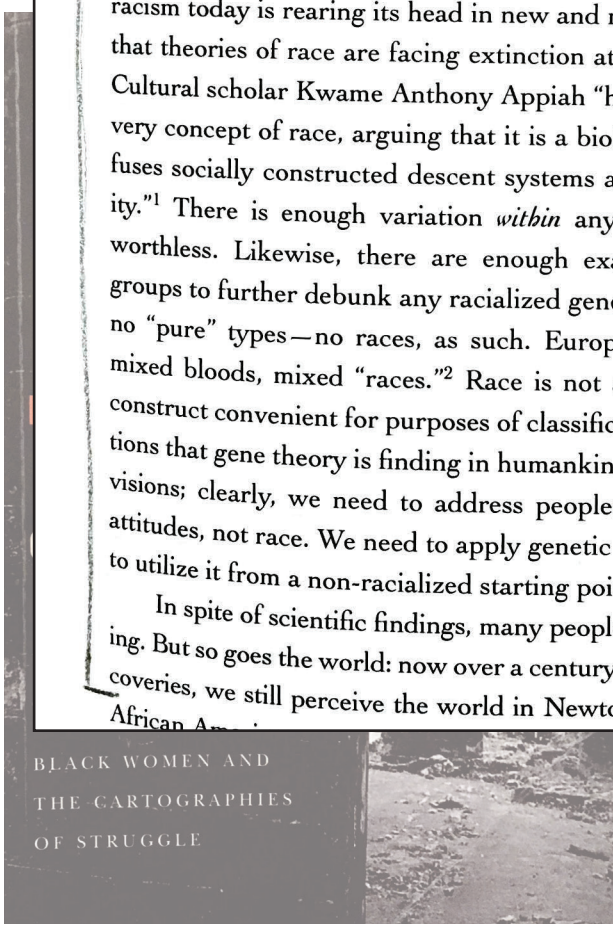
CONtributors

"AN ACT, STATEMENT, OR GIFT THAT IS INTENDED TO SHOW GRATITUDE, RESPECT, OR ADMIRATION"

Why was it that the white world loved the culture but disdained its creators—loved black dance but oppressed/repressed the black dancer, the black dancing body?

The only answer I have found to this question is the ongoing power of racism and its perpetual grip on world consciousness. The sobering reality is that racism today is rearing its head in new and more complex ways at the same time that theories of race are facing extinction at the hands of academic scholarship. Cultural scholar Kwame Anthony Appiah "has called for an abandonment of the very concept of race, arguing that it is a biologically meaningless term that confuses socially constructed descent systems and prejudice with biological heredity."[1] There is enough variation *within* any ethnic group to make the theory worthless. Likewise, there are enough examples of similarities *across* ethnic groups to further debunk any racialized genetic theory. Why? Because there are no "pure" types—no races, as such. Europeans, Africans, Asians—we are all mixed bloods, mixed "races."[2] Race is not a biological imperative but a social construct convenient for purposes of classification and differentiation. The variations that gene theory is finding in humankind do not fall within the old racial divisions; clearly, we need to address peoples in terms of context, culture, and attitudes, not race. We need to apply genetic theory from a different perspective, to utilize it from a non-racialized starting point.

In spite of scientific findings, many people still buy into the old ways of thinking. But so goes the world: now over a century after Einstein's groundbreaking discoveries, we still perceive the world in Newtonian terms. On the one hand, some African A



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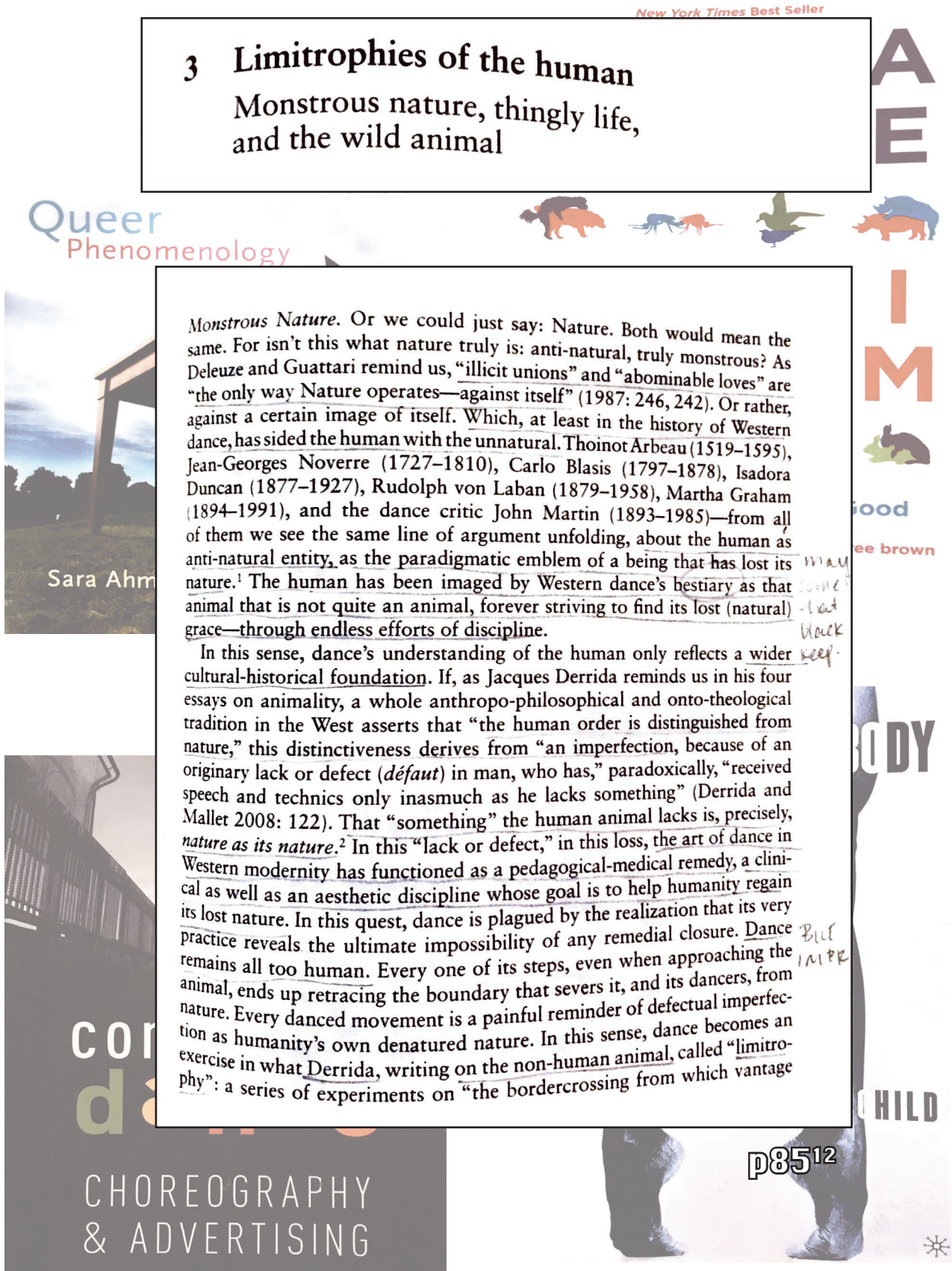
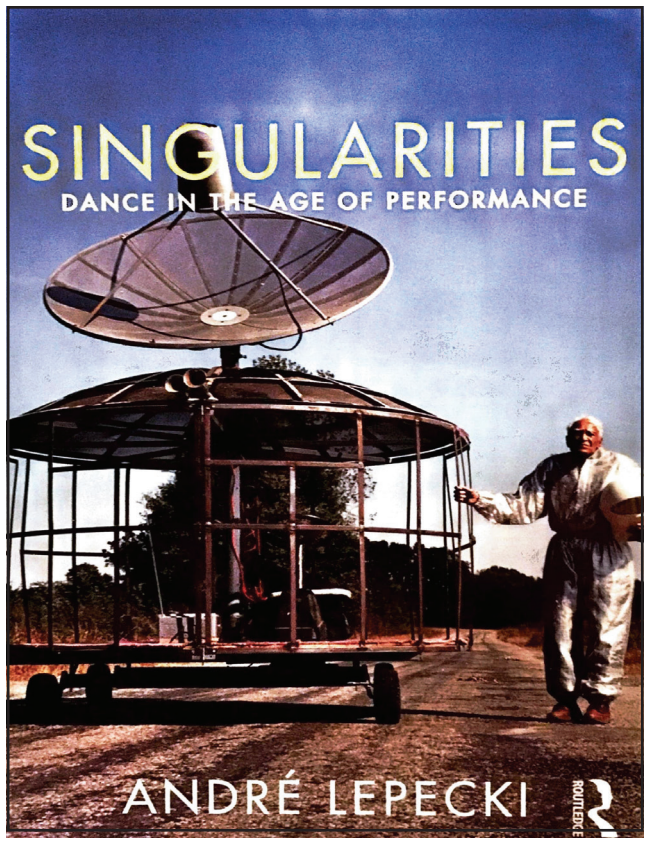


3 Limitrophies of the human

Monstrous nature, thingly life, and the wild animal

Monstrous Nature. Or we could just say: Nature. Both would mean the same. For isn't this what nature truly is: anti-natural, truly monstrous? As Deleuze and Guattari remind us, "illicit unions" and "abominable loves" are "the only way Nature operates—against itself" (1987: 246, 242). Or rather, against a certain image of itself. Which, at least in the history of Western dance, has sided the human with the unnatural. Thoinot Arbeau (1519–1595), Jean-Georges Noverre (1727–1810), Carlo Blasis (1797–1878), Isadora Duncan (1877–1927), Rudolph von Laban (1879–1958), Martha Graham (1894–1991), and the dance critic John Martin (1893–1985)—from all of them we see the same line of argument unfolding, about the human as anti-natural entity, as the paradigmatic emblem of a being that has lost its nature.[1] The human has been imaged by Western dance's bestiary as that animal that is not quite an animal, forever striving to find its lost (natural) grace—through endless efforts of discipline.

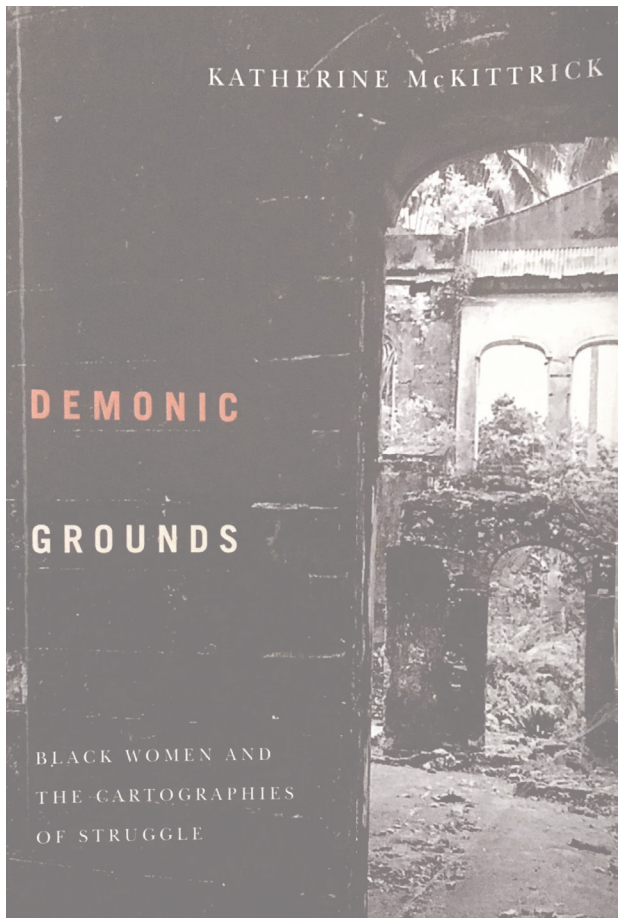
In this sense, dance's understanding of the human only reflects a wider cultural-historical foundation. If, as Jacques Derrida reminds us in his four essays on animality, a whole anthropo-philosophical and onto-theological tradition in the West asserts that "the human order is distinguished from nature," this distinctiveness derives from "an imperfection, because of an originary lack or defect (*défaut*) in man, who has," paradoxically, "received speech and technics only inasmuch as he lacks something" (Derrida and Mallet 2008: 122). That "something" the human animal lacks is, precisely, *nature as its nature*.[2] In this "lack or defect," in this loss, the art of dance in Western modernity has functioned as a pedagogical-medical remedy, a clinical as well as an aesthetic discipline whose goal is to help humanity regain its lost nature. In this quest, dance is plagued by the realization that its very practice reveals the ultimate impossibility of any remedial closure. Dance remains all too human. Every one of its steps, even when approaching the animal, ends up retracing the boundary that severs it, and its dancers, from nature. Every danced movement is a painful reminder of defectual imperfection as humanity's own denatured nature. In this sense, dance becomes an exercise in what Derrida, writing on the non-human animal, called "limitrophy": a series of experiments on "the bordercrossing from which vantage



"WITH"

CONtributors

"AN ACT, STATEMENT, OR GIFT THAT IS INTENDED TO SHOW GRATITUDE, RESPECT, OR ADMIRATION"



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On Blackness and Being

virtue) establish that the auction [illegible] racial-sexual domination and measurable documentation. Racial positionings—of the auctioneer, the buyers, the onlookers, the enslaved—hold steady this domination through the gaze, the exchange of money, and bodily evaluations.

While the authenticity of stories about the Green Hill auction block have "not been documented," seeing and engaging with geographies of captivity, human sale, and dehumanization render the auction block much more than a well-constructed stone object. Engaging with the materiality of the

Figure 2. Green Hill [illegible]

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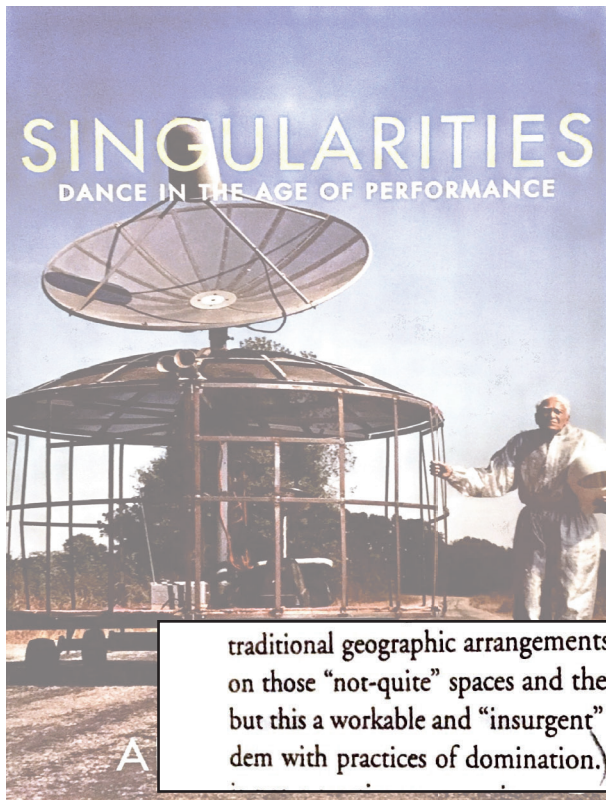
think of hooks's [illegible] with telling spatial consequences. Second, and Harriet Jacobs helps us think about this, black women have always had a meaningful relationship with geography. In addition to important contemporary feminist theories and their interruption in white Euro-American social theories, black women's lives are underwritten by ongoing and innovative spatial practices that have always occurred, not on the margins, but right in the middle of our historically present landscape. Marlene Nourbese Philip makes this ongoing geographic relationship very clear when she sites the space between the legs as a location through which the material New World is socially and materially produced. But we can see this elsewhere. There are other maps and other "non-hooksian" geopolitical strategies. In addition

P60[13]



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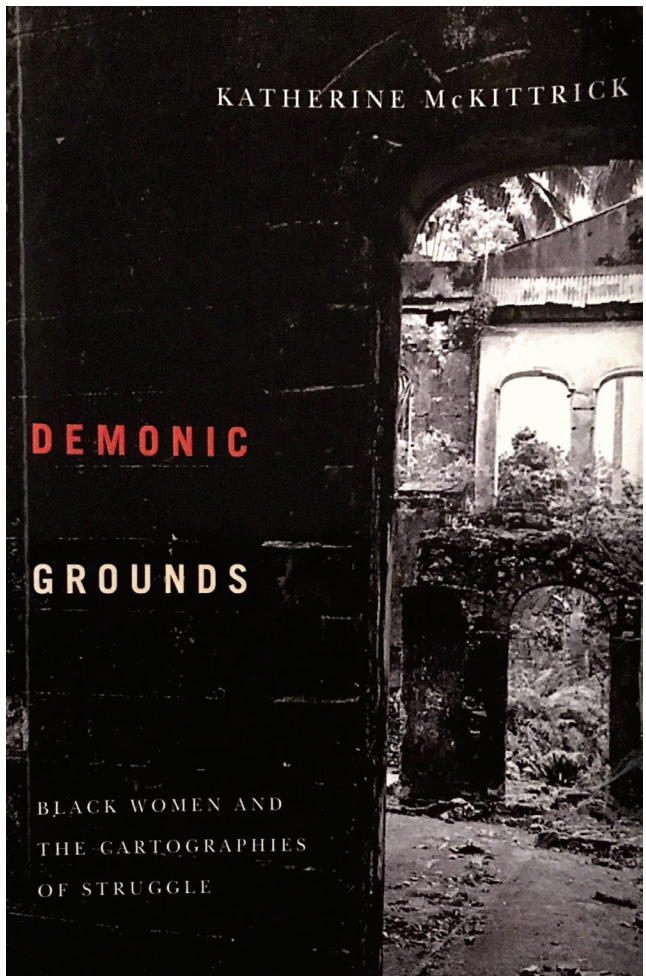
traditional geographic arrangements. Black women's geographies still rest on those "not-quite" spaces and the "different stories" of displacement—but this a workable and "insurgent" geography, which is produced in tandem with practices of domination. While "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe"



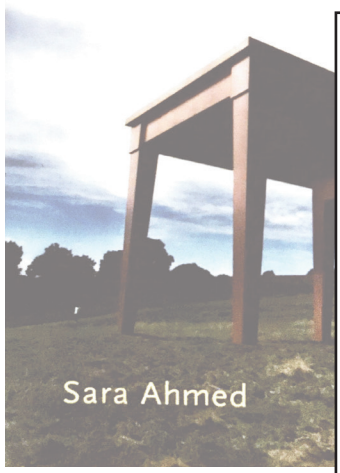
CHRISTINA SHARPE In the Wake
On Blackness and Being

*

FOR ALL BLACK PEOPLE WHO, STILL,

INSIST LIFE AND BEING INTO THE WAKE.

*



P12[16]

Those of us who teach, write, and think about slavery and its afterlives encounter myriad silences and ruptures in time, space, history, ethics, research, and method as we do our work. Again and again scholars of slavery face absences in the archives as we attempt to find "the agents buried beneath" (Spillers 2003b) the accumulated erasures, projections, fabulations, and misnamings. There are, I think, specific ways that Black scholars of slavery get wedged in the partial truths of the archives while trying to make sense of their silences, absences, and modes of dis/appearance. The methods most readily available to us sometimes, oftentimes, force us into positions that run counter to what we know. That is, our knowledge, of slavery and Black being in slavery, is gained from our studies, yes, but also in excess of those studies;[18] it is gained through the kinds of knowledge from and of the everyday, from what Dionne Brand calls "sitting in the room with history."[19] We are ex-

torical and ongoing rupture. With this as the ground, I've been trying to articulate a method of encountering a past that is not past. A method

P13[17]

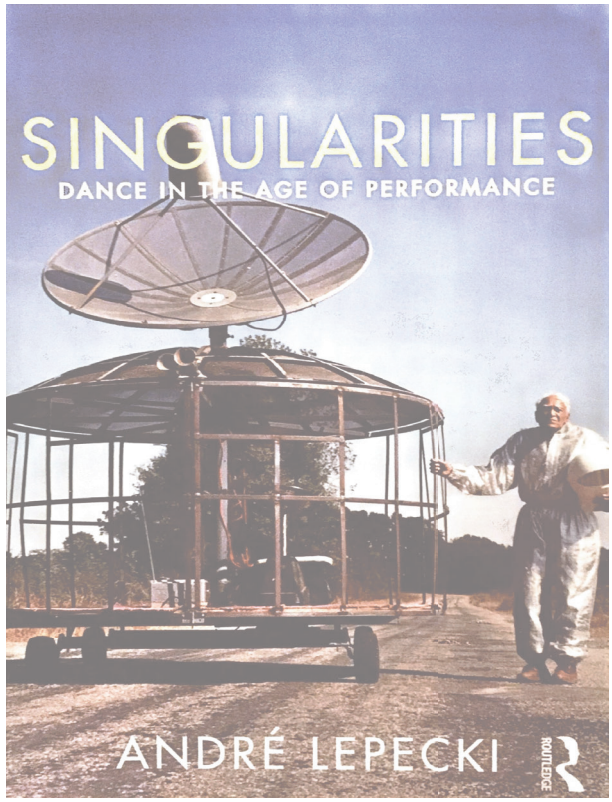
continuous and changing pres... ing. *To be* "in" the wake, to occupy that grammar, the infinitive, might provide another way of theorizing, in/for/from what Frank Wilderson refers to as "stay[ing] in the hold of the ship."[20] With each of those definitions of wake present throughout my text, I argue that rather than seeking a resolution to blackness's ongoing and irresolvable abjection, one might approach Black being in the wake as a form of *consciousness*. Political scientists, historians, philosophers, literary scholars, and ... question for thought the endurance of ...

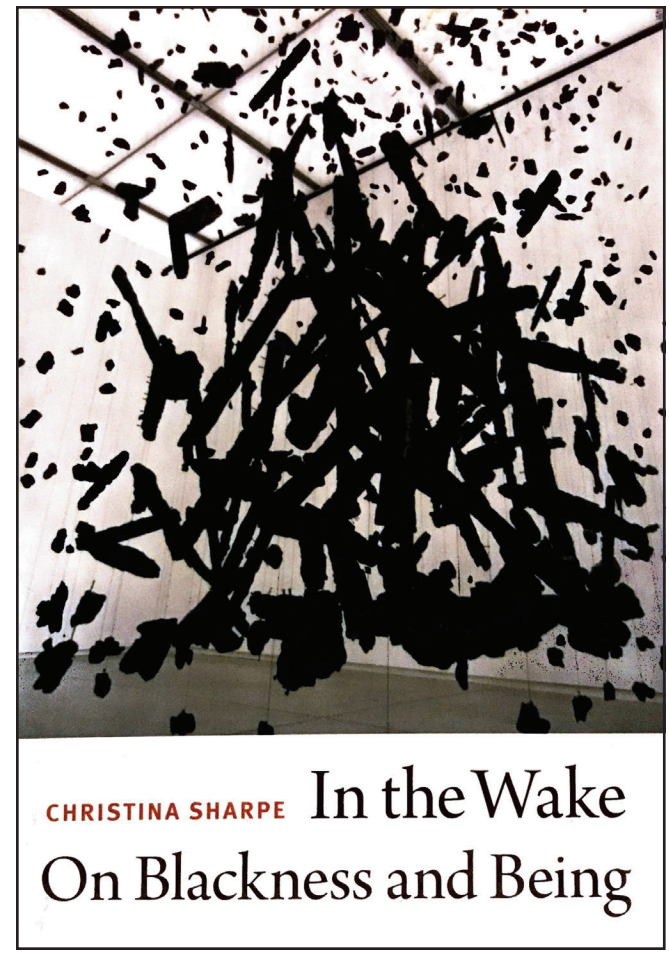
P14[18]

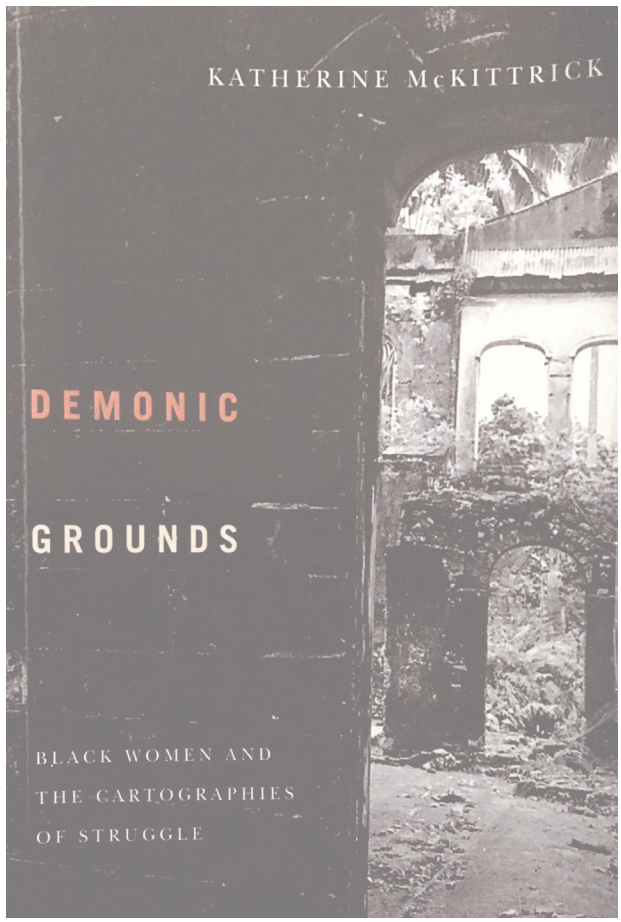
"WITH"

CONtributors

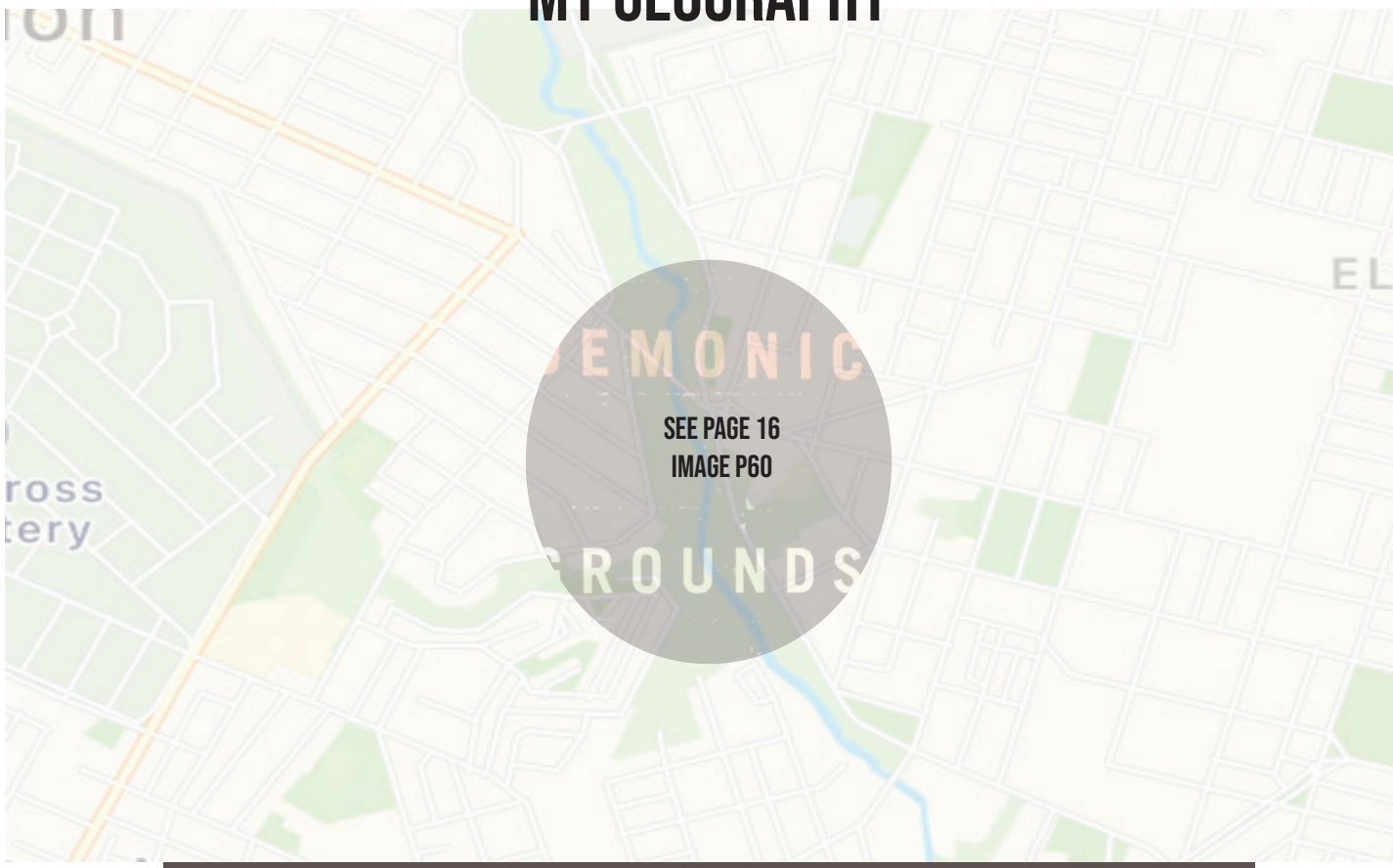
"AN ACT, STATEMENT, OR GIFT THAT IS INTENDED TO SHOW GRATITUDE, RESPECT, OR ADMIRATION"







MY GEOGRAPHY



Jill Scott's "Womanifesto" from *The Light of the Sun* album

To acknowledge that the black body is compromised is crucial. Here it is central to the source of celebration. Having accumulated much from this particular perspective, my greatest desire is to share. If it weren't for those who shared their perspective in the form of writing, making, performing, or explaining, I wouldn't have much of a perspective of my own. I am grateful for the critical and experiential language that has influenced the way I interpret the world around me. I think sharing is to humanity as recycling is to the environment. Sharing proves and produces mobility, which reveals the porosity

circulation amidst our physical boundaries. It's how we facilitate information. When we share, we move in opposition to the restrictions that have long kept ideas like collaboration and progression at unattainable distances. The force behind distance and division has molded the world we are situated in and not only exists as an external obstacle. This force also drives the division between the mind and body. I argue that the mind is the body. In thinking with the body, improvisation is a tool that resonates with my history. Improvisation counters a systems of hierarchical reality. Improvisation models ways for sustainable living.

This is important because the journey of this book acknowledges that I am improvising through the wake of transatlantic slavery, auction blocks, systemic racism, institutionalism, police brutality, oppression, suppression, expression, the Harlem Renaissance, Michael Jackson, Michael Jordan, Baltimore Club Music, dollar parties, Catholic education, Baptist church-going, praise and worship, nature walks, sunsets, and rigorously coloring inside the lines.

"I enter this conversation as the daughter of a black woman had by a black woman in hopes of having a black woman. I enter this conversation learning from many disciplines and engaging with social activities that breed curiosity and bonds worth exploring the intersections of. I enter this conversation with Jon because dance (education/art), social media, location, and culture feed our bodies in relatively close proximity to one another; and we're both black".[19]

Hi,

My name is Jhelan Ashané Gordon - Salaam (Zh län "Asia" nA Gôr dän Sä läm). I publicly go by "jags" and use the pronouns she, her, and they. For as long as I can remember I have run into pronunciation issues with my name. I hope that was helpful. I identify as a queer black woman, which locates me as part of an underrepresented minority group in more ways than one, especially in the field of education. With relatively quiet and suburban beginnings, I am from a small neighboring town to the city of Philadelphia, and dance has been a part of my life for 20 years. It is because of my relationships with Philadelphia and with dance, and after assessing my long-standing relationship with codification and choreography, that I have developed my research around stillness, endurance, improvisation, and ethics. I am a "young" black woman concerned with making and sustainability. My interests have expanded through the lens of dance into written language, theory, critique, and what feels like socio-static understandings of our current events. "Socio-static" describes how I feel towards social structures, standards, statuses, and stereotypes or anything else that binds people to the positions and problematic hierarchies we face in all of society. Falling victim to society is easy. Getting up is a privilege. I would also argue that getting up is a right, however, some of us were never meant to experience an "up" in life.

I spent several months thinking about how to make a book that gives the viewer a less-than-usual experience. This book was made to perform. This book puts all of the information I have been collecting in dialogue with one another. To activate the matter within, this book requires intimate interaction. You are here. From here you could go anywhere. However, perhaps you are here because you followed the suggested route. I encourage you to find a journey through this book that suits your curious desires and relative stillness. Allow this book to perform for you.

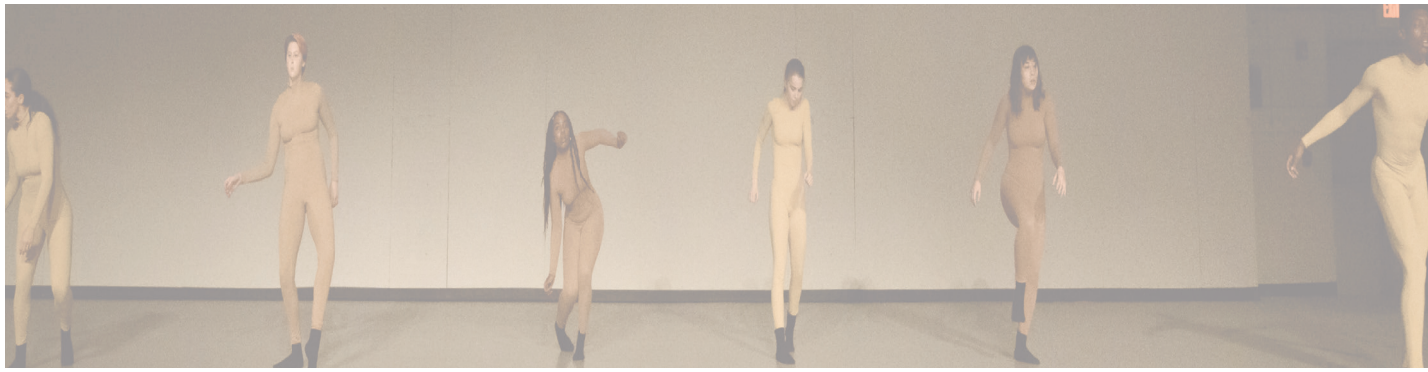
I find something profound about stillness that is counteractive to the nature of capitalism. Also, there is something equally compelling about improvisation: if codified technique comparatively resembles systemically racist structure than improvisation models a pedagogic approach to experiencing the body in opposition to colonization. To exercise my right to create stands in opposition to the tightly coordinated work of oppression. It is imperative that I find and keep finding ways to sustain the evolving shape of my voice. My responsibility to creativity as a young black person is to-simply, yet complexly-continue. In continuing, setting an intention is imperative. This is an Artist's Book, and I haven't offered the world much of my art yet, but this compilation of material is meant to promote all things process-related, including the process of one becoming acquainted with the work I am presenting here. With this in mind, I have developed a question that has remained central to my research...

HOW MIGHT RESEARCH IN PRACTICE OFFER A TEMPORAL AND SPATIAL OCCASION FOR GATHERING, FOR ORGANIZING, FOR RESISTING, AND FOR THINKING?

"Inconclusion holds the information provided which hereafter is that of their own and proves as working research. We wonder what the acknowledgement of these patterns that have been realized before means for the black body that continues to learn and unlearn the systems for training the human to be antithetical to its nature. Inconclusion is dedicated to the responsibility of collecting, mapping and figuring out their findings toward making visible better black living lives. This essay intends to highlight their perspectives that are experiencing afrofuturism and their curiosities around the complexities of location, insistence, activity, possibility, movement and the meetings in between".[20]

RESEARCH AS ACTION
THE ACTION IS RESEARCHING
RESEARCH IS ACTIVE

SEE PAGE 18
IMAGE P14



move and make decisions

I make tea

I record myself in pieces

I make paper

I read

I listen

jags.cargo.site

...process

I chose two poses

...actions

I cut the pictures into pieces

...happenings

I recomposed my body on paper

Robert Glasper's "Let It Ride" from *Black Radio 2 (Deluxe Version)* album

We move around motivations that are fastened to physical sustainability therefore we comply with the responsibility of our personhood by feeding ourselves, working to feed ourselves, paying our bills, paying off debt, or affording to call a place home. Movement toward survival brings into the foreground a person's interests or maybe just what's available.

SEE PAGE 10

It has been important for me to declare my relationship to time. I no longer experience time as dictation and manipulation of my body and where it is.

Instead I submitting to my body and where it is as where it is supposed to be.

ORIENTATION TOWARD AFFORDING LIFE

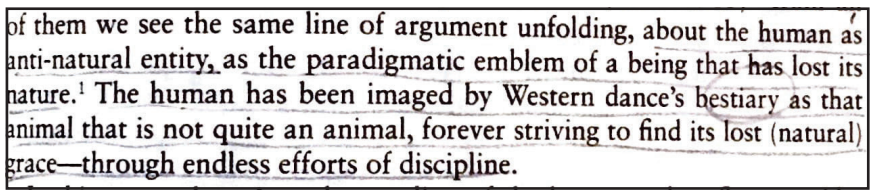
"bread winning," "paper chasing," "bringing in bacon," "making cheddar," "making paper"

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT I FIND AND KEEP FINDING WAYS TO SUSTAIN THE EVOLVING SHAPE OF MY VOICE.

If I can, for a moment, continue to speak about human centered determination I understand that we have intentions to be able to provide for ourselves over the course of time. I have determined that I move because I am a researcher.

Erykah Badu "The Healer" from *New Ameryak, Pt.1 (4th World War)* album

SEE PAGE 14


of them we see the same line of argument unfolding, about the human as anti-natural entity, as the paradigmatic emblem of a being that has lost its nature.[1] The human has been imaged by Western dance's bestiary as that animal that is not quite an animal, forever striving to find its lost (natural) grace—through endless efforts of discipline.

The more I move the more I find.
I like finding things

The action becomes finding and I cannot imagine a place where I could be haphazardly or irresponsibly looking and not find something. What's even better is I've stopped looking so hard and now I see that things turn up all the time.

The value and concept of money play a dominant role in maintaining any of life's necessities.
Money also contributes to the portion of this essay that speaks to “paper making.”

Gil Scott Heron's poem "Whitey on the Moon" from *The Revolution Begins: The Flying Dutchman Masters*

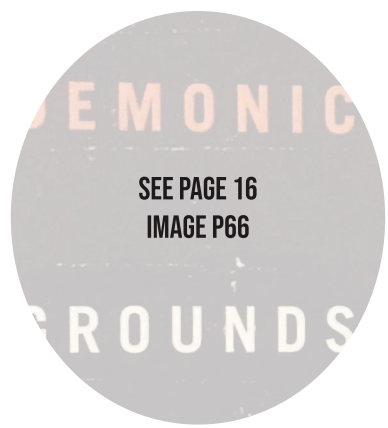
SEE PAGE 46

I CARE

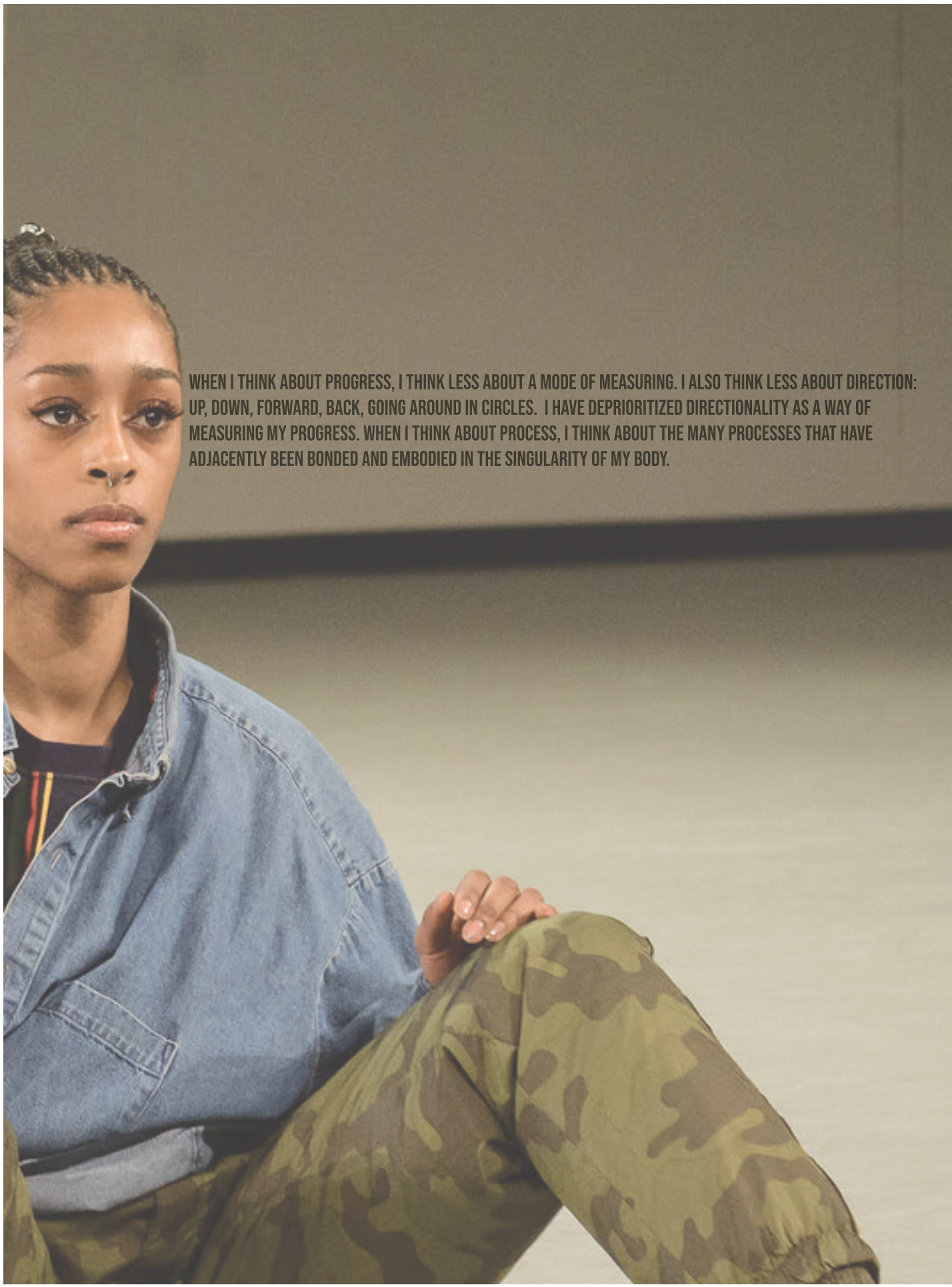
To care is to believe in every effort **toward,** not forward.

I care about sustainability. I care about expressivity. I care about relationality. I care about the process. I care about progression.

Through engaging with the world's histories of domination, discrimination, and displacement, I have been able to assess my existence. One might think we would want to center our conversation around progress because of the information that I have impled as primal in relation to this research. In comparison to progression, progress is not the same. Progression is about always arriving.



PROGRESSION AS THE MOVEMENT BETWEEN THE TRANSITIONS



WHEN I THINK ABOUT PROGRESS, I THINK LESS ABOUT A MODE OF MEASURING. I ALSO THINK LESS ABOUT DIRECTION: UP, DOWN, FORWARD, BACK, GOING AROUND IN CIRCLES. I HAVE DEPRIORITIZED DIRECTIONALITY AS A WAY OF MEASURING MY PROGRESS. WHEN I THINK ABOUT PROCESS, I THINK ABOUT THE MANY PROCESSES THAT HAVE ADJACENTLY BEEN BONDED AND EMBODIED IN THE SINGULARITY OF MY BODY.

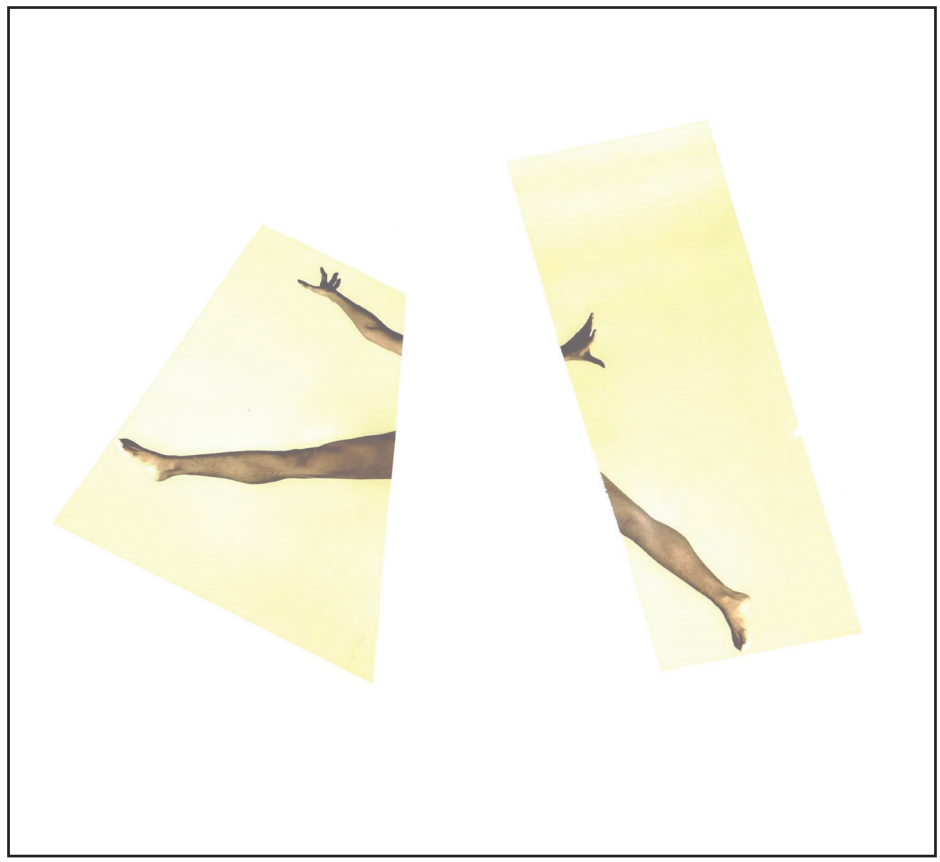
Many things at once.
Many life spans at once.

Antony and the Johnsons' "Future Feminism" from *Cut the World* album

With attention to the many, some things are “older” than others. Some things come to an end.

Dance

In the case of dance, there's a lot to tend to because dance comes in contact with and through the body directly. With "through-ness," dance makes its impression in the body, on the body, and around the body as it moves in space and from place to place. Also with through-ness, the emphasis is on mobility. I admire dance for being about more than physical mobility. I am interested in talking about non-exclusionary mobility so that we're not just talking about physical ability but more broadly about how dance has the capacity to facilitate information. I'm interested in the transaction of the physical experience between dance and the dancer. This relates back to the porosity of our physical boundaries. I encounter the dance and the dance encounters me. The material isn't tangible, though it is felt and lived through. Now I am talking about process.



SEE PAGES 27 AND 46

Kaytranada's "Need It" from *BUBBA* album

BOX *Address*

I believe it was recycling day in a city rampant with shipments, consumerism and excess when I noticed a large pile of brown cardboard boxes stacked anywhere between 7 and 8ft tall in a funktified Philadelphia alley. My impulse told me I needed those boxes. However, I was a lot less interested in trading my bird's eye view in for the labor of lugging these large brown boxes to anyplace where I would then assume responsibility for them. From my perspective these "brown bodies" were performing their disposability for me. I knew where they were headed. Then I started to relate to the boxes. The disposable brown boxes. The disposable brown bodies.

Then it was Christmas time 2019. I don't particularly like shopping in stores due to my self-diagnosed obsessive compulsive disorder plus stores are especially disorderly during gift giving season. However, I was interested in gift giving. A lot of online ordering and waiting for gifts to arrive "in time." As I was receiving packages I was keeping the boxes that the gifts were coming in. I had started a collection. I kept collecting boxes past that moment as well. The more I gathered the more I noticed how boxes showed up. I thought a lot about what had come inside of them already, the content they were carrying, where those things were going and why. Then I became more aware of the information on the outside of the boxes, the information that more obviously reflected me, my name, address, and the address of the box's departure. There was something about the labels, barcodes, fragile warnings and all of their trajectories and movement in the world. I was fascinated by where they were coming from and where they were going. I felt more than the gratification of receiving something I had bought. Looking deeper into advanced technology and "tracking" packages, I had started to understand something about myself, not to say that I have at all met the ends of that understanding, but it has certainly revealed a beginning. I also started to understand my issues around waste.

Then it was March 2020. Who knew after the first week of March and an academic retreat that that would be the last time I went out in public for almost 8 months. A tragedy pierced not only the country but the world at large. We experienced an outbreak that achieved pandemic status due to a lack of urgency toward a life threatening issue, an invisible threat. This virus, COVID-19, sent waves of panic, unemployment, and complete uncertainty through the hearts and households of many. What started as a two week mandate to quarantine has lasted through the remainder of the year 2020. In the case of dance I will always grieve how hard the hit was. To sacrifice the community that dance cultivates, especially in the School of Dance at the University of the Arts, was an intense compromise that had to be made.

In April 2020 adjustments were made and everything appeared in the frame of a square or a box. It took no time to recognize the obnoxious overuse of the boxes that are our computer screens, video call windows, TV screens, cell phone screens, auto-fill electronic forms, four walls of bedrooms, bathrooms, jail cells, or a myriad of other sites and spaces. These frames mirror the conceptual boxes that are meant to contain and restrain a body. These are the same frames that make us choose identity as if there could only be an extremely narrow set of options. These frames are so unfavorable and intolerable of my existence that my actual being is sensitive to the spaces or frames in which I present my presence (see page 17 image P62). To experience suppression as a child in Catholic school was to know a persistent energy in every instance toward uniformity and an effort to equalize my uniqueness

and historical difference. There was pressure for me to wear my hair relaxed so that it looked manageable. To move inside of most institutions is to try to move in boxes that are already about ten sizes too small; it is to know viscerally that a space is not meant for me. It is to know that I do not belong with my body, not because it was said but because it was felt. Whereas, when I receive a package, the box is at least three sizes too big with extra padding to ensure the safety of the contents. Here it is important to recognize how we have moved through the issues I raise around boxes as disposable brown bodies and boxes as white spaces.

I acknowledge that these architectural, digital, institutional, socializing and cardboard boxes are not able to fully contain what is inside. However, to function on the inside of these boxes as a black woman, I have had to learn how to build my own padding. The padding as I've experienced it secures and sustains me within the system. For a long time, I didn't have this padding. I experienced the cushioning others had. The work is threefold: learning the system (the box), learning how to cushion my being within the system and now learning how to resist the system (tearing the box apart). Ironically, building my own padding also taught me how to obliterate the box. The more I gather my creativity, my family, my history, daily rituals and practices, the more I am able to push against the limits of the physical, conceptual and literary boundaries the boxes set before me. My brown body lives by existing and rupturing in the boxes that are white spaces. There's already much waste in the world; with the boxes in pieces I want to do anything but add to it.

Since I am not interested in trash, I am embarking on a repurposing journey. I am turning these boxes into paper.

Turning to paper making is helping me understand the importance writing has played in my life. Writing has been a part of my life even longer than dance, and I have been training in dance since I was 4 years old. I was always practicing my letters, print, then cursive, then my mom's signature, then my signature, then journaling. Writing became well rehearsed for me and I always sought refuge on a piece of paper. If I didn't have the courage to say how I felt to someone, I had the power to get it off of my chest and onto a piece of paper. How can one inscribe or impress with the body? There is a correlation between writing with the hand onto paper and writing with

Roddy Rich's "The Box" from *Please Excuse Me For Being Antisocial* album

the body through movement. As I think about writing into space with the body I think about legibility and being able to see or feel what is being said. However, I do not think that legibility is synonymous to being recognizable or identifiable. I'm thinking more generally about when something is felt intuitively versus being identifiable by name. I think of legibility in relation to sensation.

There is a sensation that I am leaning towards with the desire to make paper. The sensation is urgency. It is urgent to make paper. The urgency is in the making of the art, the making of the thing, the making of the money; it's in the making. This paper is significant because of the conditions through which the boxes have been sourced. The conditions of contamination, dis/ease, socially distanced exchange and fear are embedded in this paper making process as they are in the fabric of the boxes themselves. The process of making paper represents tearing up and destroying the institution then making its debris my material. The pulp I produce conforms to my needs as I use it to hold my black thoughts.

Again, how might research in practice offer a temporal and spatial occasion for gathering, for organizing, for resisting, for thinking?

"Making paper" to be sustainable in this world answers this question. As previously mentioned, I think sharing is closely related to recycling (see page 21). Through the lens of dance I've arrived at recycling because dance teaches me that energy can be shared and repurposed. Recycling energy in and through the body is necessary in order to stay engaged with dance. Improvisation in dance is where I practice energetic circulation. Improvisation is available to me when my movement is restricted by an unforgiving system. In relation to the boxes I've had to maneuver inside of, improvisation has been the tool that has allowed me to persist inside of white spaces. The task was to build my own padding because it wasn't innately there. This ability to improvise gives me the capacity to both negotiate constraint and create support. Improvisation as both negotiation and creation gives me a way to maneuver inside of the box while moving towards a way to get out of the box.

Being invested in research as a practice offers a temporal and spatial occasion for gathering, organizing, resisting, thinking through or otherwise assessing what's around and inside of me. What's important about the occasion of research is that it provides the frame for practice. I am thinking about practice in relation to life and death and how time gets physicalized, endured, or enjoyed. No matter how alive a person is, it doesn't mean they are living and just because someone dies doesn't mean that everything dies with them. I think of boredom as being close to death though boredom can also be considered a privilege. What we practice animates our state of being. I have been thinking about excess, scarcity, resilience, and abundance. What is it to confront excess and waste? Why do we experience scarcity when there is more than enough? What is it to have endurance for resistance, restoration and revolution? How can we responsibly nurture the potential of our abundance?

How to Make Paper

1. Tear, break, rip, or cut the cardboard into pieces (manageable enough to put in a blender)

2. Put the pieces in a bucket

3. Soak the pieces in water overnight

4. Fill the blender with your soaked cardboard pieces

5. Add more water if needed

6. Blend to a pulp

7. Pour pulp into a container that satisfies your desired paper measurements/dimensions

8. Dip a framed wire screen into the pulp

9. Lift and sift gently

10. Distribute the pulp evenly

11. Add any dried accessories to your pulp for decoration

12. Use a sponge to gently soak the remaining water out of the pulp

13. Flip the frame over

14. Remove formed pulp from the screen

15. Sponge the opposite side

16. Set or hang until dried

PHOTOGRAPHY

Ian Douglas, *Still Three Fifths* by Jon Baldwin, April 2018, photograph, Philadelphia, Gershman Y Gym.

Ian Douglas, *Still Three Fifths* by Jon Baldwin, April 2018, photograph, Philadelphia, Gershman Y Gym.

Paula Court, *Faye Snow Tribute* reworked by Wayne St. David, May 2018, photograph, Philadelphia, Merriam Theatre.

Ian Douglas, *i.e. daydreams* by Jhelan Gordon-Salaam, November 2017, photograph, Philadelphia, Gershman Y Gym.

Ian Douglas, *i.e. daydreams* by Jhelan Gordon-Salaam, November 2017, photograph, Philadelphia, Gershman Y Gym.

Talya Whitley, *untitled*, December 2018, photograph, Philadelphia.

Cornelia Parker, *Hanging Fire (Suspected Arson)*, 1999, Charcoal, wire, pins, and nails, 144 x 60 x 72 inches (365.8 x 152.4 x 182.9 cm), Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston.

Ian Douglas, *i.e. daydreams* by Jhelan Gordon-Salaam, November 2017, photograph, Philadelphia, Gershman Y Gym.

Ian Douglas, *i.e. daydreams* by Jhelan Gordon-Salaam, November 2017, photograph, Philadelphia, Gershman Y Gym.

Ian Douglas, *Still Three Fifths*, April 2018, photograph, Philadelphia, Gershman Y Gym.

ENDNOTES

1 Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 16

2 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology,* 56

3 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology,* 57

4 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology,* 62

5 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology,* 63

6 Brown, *Pleasure Activism* (Chico and Edinburgh: AK Press 2019), 212

7 Brown, *Pleasure Activism,* 212

8 Dunagan, *Consuming Dance* (New York: Oxford University Press 2018), 192

9 Gottschild, *Black Dancing Body* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian 2003), 15

10 Gottschild, *Black Dancing Body,*19

11 Gottschild, *Black Dancing Body,* 5

12 Lepecki, *Singularities* (London and New York: Routledge 2016), 85

13 McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press 2006), 66

14 McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds,* 60

15 McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds,* 62

16 Christina Sharpe, *In The Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham and London: Duke University Press 2016), 12

17 Sharpe, *In The Wake: On Blackness and Being,* 13

18 Sharpe, *In The Wake: On Blackness and Being,* 14

19 Baldwin and Gordon-Salaam, *Inconclusion* (Philadelphia: Unpublished 2020), 1

20 Baldwin and Gordon-Salaam, *Inconclusion,* 2

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