“Let the rhythm speak to you. We dance for liberation”:

Bodies and Belonging in a Haitian Dance Troupe in Montreal

Elizabeth White

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Sociology and Anthropology

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts (Anthropology) at

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

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Entitled: "Let the rhythm speak to you. We dance for liberation": Bodies and Belonging in a Haitian Dance Troupe in Montreal

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MA Anthropology

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Date April 20th, 2016

This thesis presents original ethnographic research on embodiment, creativity, and relationality in a Haitian *folklorique* dance troupe in Montreal, Canada. The research explores the ways that the dance troupe *Racines* carries forward their *roots* practice, with tenacity and love, in the face of racial discrimination and stigmatization. It looks at the how the joy, exhilaration, and challenge of *roots folklorique* dancing converses with memory, belonging, identification, and liberation. I discuss the social dimensions of dance practice and performance, the harmonious and dissonant relationships entangled with *roots* dance. Relations - moments of intersection, gathering, and sharing - generate spaces that are celebratory, creative, and cathartic. These spaces sustain the life of the dance troupe, who for 40 years have continued to connect around dance, rhythms, and *roots folklorique* Haitian culture, in spite and confrontation of their many challenges.

I dedicate these words to The Girls and Guys of Racines, their elders, and their children, who, bridging centuries and great distances, were instructors in much more than dance.

I dedicate this work to all those who showed me how to bring the body and mind closer together into passionately engrossed scholarship.

Deepest thanks to

all my dance class girls for sharing your time and hearts

my parents Vivienne Vella and Gerald White

the smallest cohort of all time, Jordie Struck, Ravi Jilwah, and Isabelle Simpson

Dr. Sally Cole, Dr. Kregg Hetherington, and Dr. David Howes for helping this project keep its spirit

To Sara Breitkreutz

To E. Mercury

Thank you for ceaselessly believing in this work

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We cannot make the dance for us. We have to make it for a bigger purpose. I mean it's a heritage. It's not mine. I want to take care of it, I want to make it bigger, I want to make it look good so that somebody else would be very proud to take over. And hopefully carry it for another 40 years, and on and on (Lisa in interview)

Figure 1

Introduction

This thesis emerges from 2 years of ethnographic research as a student member of an intergenerational Haitian Folklorique dance troupe in Montreal, Canada, and from the relations that developed with their friends, families, students, and adversaries during this time. At the center of the thesis is an exploration of the creative practices and social dimensions of the troupe and their dance school, and how dancing *roots folklorique* dances and rhythms converses with the senses of belonging. *Racines'* dance practices and performances entangle with relationships between individuals, and between *Racines* and diverse Haitian social groups. The climate of diverse relations is central to why they dance, and also to the different degrees of freedom to dance when, where, and how they wish.

Through my intimate time with *Racines* I came to better grasp the importance of embodiment, and the ways the body and *roots* intersect through the dances and dance events. Sharing history and embodied knowledge are central for the continuity of the troupe's lineage of *roots folklorique* dances. The act of gathering for dance events supports the individual by creating inclusive spaces to explore senses of identity and culture, and is a performative strategy to generate new ideas about Haitian *roots*. The troupe works to valorize their heritage through dance, by gathering to share with one another, and also by looking to history and bringing it forward for themselves and others through moving bodies.

Racines dance events involve teaching mostly, but not exclusively, to Haitian students ranging from 4 years to 60+, as well as dancing in public performances. Teaching and performing link to and confront the politics of the *roots folklorique* dance complex and *roots* Haitian culture.

The research is situated in the anthropology of dance, and is in dialogue with innovative scholarship on embodiment and creativity. Concepts of communitas encompass these themes, being both proponents of and the bedrock for the dance activities.

The practice of collective dance is celebratory and acts of remembering in and with the body, yet also negotiate challenges to cultural integration and senses of belonging. Dancing responds to the discrimination against Haitian *roots* by the local and international Haitian population. Stigmatization associated with *roots* is an historical product of colonization and

slavery, which is often adopted and transformed to self-hatred. The troupe aims to transform stigmatization, exclusion, identity conceptualizations, and low senses of self-worth through the very practices that are stigmatized, using play and formal performance.

Dancing, gathering, and sharing time help manage and challenge the experience of discrimination, but also are simply part of the experience and joy of a dance event. The dancers strive towards emancipation and re-appropriation of the social, spiritual, and semiotic power of dance and *roots* through their own moving bodies, while also moving forgotten or resisted histories and heritage into the present. The emotional dimension of *roots folkorique* dance and rhythms, the embodiment of *roots* Haitian culture as literal historical narratives or abstract expressions, creates a conversation between bodies, and between the individual and their senses of corporeality, belonging, and liberation.

Processes of identification, senses of identity, and relationality are cultivated and enacted in dance not only *through* or *in* body but *as* the moving body. My work discusses how senses of identity and embodied activities are in conversation, the quantifiable changes in physiology and corporeality made by dancing, and how these transformative dialogues contribute to ideas about being *roots* Haitian, and interrupt other ones.

Following the presentation of a conceptual framework and a brief history of *Racines*, I open the lives of the dancers to you beginning with a discussion of the embodiment of rhythms and stories, and the embodied learning (and automatization) involved in embodied practices. Next, I take you into the dance spaces created by *Racines'* dance events to share with you the unifying and differentiating relationships which play out in, and as a consequence of gathering to dance and perform.

Racines is a political, aesthetic, social, and affective gesture made from the gestures of their bodies, which are invested in a new approach to being differentiated and to making difference. It is an approach where sharing, dancing, and remembering liberation come to bear on how the dancers feel socially and in their bodies as *roots* Haitian, and which also aims to shift *roots* Haitian positionality itself. As Eve concludes:

There are different opinions around [folklorique] dancing. A lot of people will see the dancing that we do as related to religious side of it. And they just forget, when they come here they forget how it was in Haiti, where they had troupes that were representing it everywhere in the world as

their cultural way of dancing. To them, folklorique is already related to bad stuff, to magical stuff. Yeah, it's just…there are different people. In the same Haitian community there are the people who will embrace it and you will have people who don't want anything to do with it and, yeah, that's another struggle. (Eve in Interview)

Chapter 1 - Conceptual Framework

In Susan Reed's (1998) exemplary and comprehensive review on the history of dance in social sciences, she discusses the emergence of dance as a scholarly focus across many disciplines in the 1980's, particularly as it relates to anthropology and the development of anthropology of dance. Prior to the 1980's, the discipline of dance studies consisted of descriptions of dance movements and studies of the semantics and semiotics of movement studies with the help of linguistic analysis (Lewis 1992, 1985; Blacking 1986), attempting to make parallel dance and systems of verbal communication (Novack 1997). Descriptive accounts of the events were mostly focused on the context of their unfolding.

Now, the anthropology of dance is invested in comprehensive studies of dance, context, and content. It considers dance in and of itself as well as in conversation with society; it makes the effort to discuss both context and form of dance. Reed hails to Anya Peterson Royce, Judith Hanna, Drid Williams, Adrienne Kaeppler, Joann Kealiinohomoku, and Anya Peterson Royce as the founders of the anthropology of dance, whose work in the 60s and 70s (Reed 1998:505) problematized scholarly perspectives of dance as secondary process or object vis-a-via all other cultural phenomena.

Following the work these scholars, I consider the context of *Racines* dances as centripetal to dance and dancing, as well as centrifugal from it. Dance is both "one aspect among many in a culture" (Peterson-Royce 2002:210) and also "a phenomenon unto itself" (213), therefore constituting a multilayered nexus of insight into individuals, collectives, and their activities. Jonathan Skinner (2010) supports this idea and, following the argument of anthropologist Deborah Thomas, he states "performance is a useful 'point of entry' with other – often unfamiliar-- people" (Skinner 2010:112). In my research with *Racines* I experienced the potency of sharing performance, and shared moments of individual embodiment and performativity in the field, having dedicated a significant amount of my research time to participating in classes, performances, and troupe activities. I have been more intimately included into the members' lives pertaining to, or beyond dance. Being part of performance, in class and on stage, has helped me transition from an etic to emic understanding of Haitians *roots*.

Skinner's and Thomas' works resonate with Eduardo Archetti's in which he says, "The anthropological analysis of sport is not a reflection of society, but a means of reflecting on

society" (2003:217) and this statement aptly describes the potential of dance analyses. The point(s) of entry which are centripetal to the dance enable a centrifugal perspective into society. My research is situated in both positions, approaching the matrix of *Racines* and *roots dance Folklorique* from the field of anthropological literature of dance, identity, embodiment, collectivities, creativity, the field of phenomenology, but is also embedded within these themes as they are lived by the dancers. And consistent with the anthropology of dance, my work stays aware of both the aesthetic and social movement of dance events.

The 'dance-event' is an important term that was well developed by Jane Cowan in her ethnography *Body Politic in Northern Greece* (1990), which looks at the performance of sexuality and how class and gender politics are implicated in the dancing body and articulated through it. 'Dance event' is also used by Jonathan Skinner in his works on Ceroc Dancing in the United Kingdom, mainly Scotland. Cowan descries the dance-event as non-ordinary contexts of activity and sociality that are "temporally, spatially, and conceptually 'bounded' [spheres] of interaction […]", and each dance-event is a "site, both physical and conceptual" (Cowan 1990:4). Further, she describes dancing "as an activity in which the body is both a site of experience (for the dancer) and a sign (for those who watch the dancer)" (Ibid). These concepts, developed from other scholars, Kealiinohomoku (1973) for one, help to delimit an understanding of the contexts of dance activities for *Racines,* and what dance is in relation to corporeality, phenomenology, and performativity.

The spheres of interaction demarcated in my work, the dance-event sites, are depart from strict, or formal boundaries (i.e. studio, proscenium theatre). They embrace spontaneous contexts of dance, for instance moments of inspired choreographing in front of a mirror in the bedroom, or amongst the troupe in an ice-cream cart line-up on the streets of Jacmel, Haiti. Dance-events become creative kinaesthetic potential carried inside the body, or within a corpus of travelling dancers.

Jane Cowan's use of the notion "framing" is useful for discussing this research. Something framed is "conceptually set apart from the activities of everyday life" (Cowan 1990:18). Racines dance events (student classes, troupe practices and meetings, performances) are framed in a variety of ways that are specific to the audience, context, and purpose of the dance event. Different frames influence how both dancers and spectators connect with the dance

and its affective quality. It also changes how and what the dances, and dancers, are able to communicate.

The definition of dance cannot be taken for granted, based on our often universalised concept of Western forms and meanings. Joann Kealiinohomoku's (1983) work on ballet as a form of ethnic dance radically challenged the understandings of dance cross-culturally (Reed 1998:505). She critiqued the early dance scholarship, demonstrating "how dance scholars' blanket categorization of non-Western dances as ethnic, folk, or primitive was based on an evolutionary paradigm in which Western theatrical dance, especially ballet, emerged as '...the one great divinely ordained apogee of the performing arts'" (Kealiinohomoku 1983:35 and *in* Reed 1998:505). Dethroning ballet helps spectators and readers of non-western dance, particularly African and dances of the African Diaspora, level their relationship these dance forms, and hopefully neutralizes their exoticisation. Kealiinohomoku investigation brought the following definition:

> Dance is a transient mode of expression, performed in a given form and style by the human body moving in space. Dance occurs through purposefully selected and controlled rhythmic movements; the resulting phenomenon is recognized as dance both by the performer and the observing members of a given group. (1983:38)

The extension of the Western concept of 'dance' is illustrated by Brenda's Farnell's (1990) work on the sign language of the Plains Indians, 'Plains Sign Talk', an intertribal gestural communication system, the movements and gestures of which are a central component of their narrative singing tradition. It is an example of a study weaving together dance context and content.

Anthropology of dance has enhanced studies of context in related to dance events, integrating the social and political that converse with dance practices and performances. Studies of form have developed, with a new awareness of historicity, cultural specificity, syncretism, and the implications of individuality and collectivities.

The context of a dance event, and the contained rhythms and dances are cohesive forces between individuals, and between individuals, spirits, and history. Dance can (re)imagine ideas of self and of possible futures by physiologically (neurologically) re-scripting the body (Downey

2010). There are also the important phenomenological features of dancing, the affective experience of movement and of sharing in creation of the dance's aesthetic form. The act of dancing itself is a pleasurable and fun, sometimes cathartic activity unfolding in the body and shared as a group.

Greg Downey's work complicates the concept of embodiment by engaging disciplines of "human biology, functional morphology, neurosciences, cognitive and neuropsychology – that specifically study the human body, its malleability, and the material dimensions of learning processes", showing that embodied learning is far more than mimeses, or not simply the "'embodiment' of 'knowledge'". Instead, it results in "physical, neurological, perceptual, and behavioural change of the individual subject so that he or she can accomplish tasks that, prior to [the embodiment of skills or automatization], were impossible" (Downey 2010:S35). Downey's work is radical shift to the concept of Habitus which, he argued, leaves a lot unaccounted for. His conceptual elaboration of embodiment allows us to see how the acts of practicing together, and carrying-forward and innovating with a dance tradition and its values (in *Racines'* case, freedom and liberty), literally script the body in more than a conceptual way.

I follow the objective of the contemporary anthropology of dance which, as sketched by Kaeppler does not aim "simply to understand dance in its cultural context, but rather to understand society through analyzing movement systems" which requires dancing between form and context, history and present day, and individuals and collectivities (Kaeppler 1996:103). I demonstrate the ways that creativity, improvisation, experiences of collectivity and belonging, senses of identity, and dance intersect and inform one another.

Phenomenology and Embodiment

Roland Barthes' (1986) provides a useful distinction between the body and embodiment. According to Csordas (1990). Barthes defines the body as substance, a material object taking up space in the world. Embodiment on the other hand, made analogous to text in a book and according to Barthes, is an indeterminate methodological field that exists only when caught up in a discourse, and that is experienced only as activity and production" (1986:57-68 *in* Csordas 1990:1); a field "defined by perceptual experience and the mode of presence and engagement in the world" (Ibid). Further, Csordas (1993) states that the paradigm of culture-as-text contrasts

with the natural and analytical role of embodiment: "embodied experience is the starting point for analyzing human participation in a cultural world" (135).

For our purposes, then, dance is a toolkit for acts of embodiment, and dancing is the activity through which embodiment occurs and is productive. Embodiment is a process undergone by the body, or is a methodological field of performances which inhabit and impress upon the body, and which expresses ideas, qualities, or feelings. Embodiment fuses the body, fleetingly or enduringly, with discourse, much like the paper and binding of a book are conceptually bound to the ideas they hold. Embodiment activates the meanings of a particular discourse of movement, gesture, and comportment. This is not to reduce the body again to a utility for the mind, a medium for expression, or to a sign or a "'thing' onto which social patterns are projected" (Bruner 1986:329). Rather, embodiment entails the body's cellular memory, relying on practice, but also affect which Jackson (1989, 1996), Lindsay (1996), and Hughes-Freeland (1996), connect to the phenomenology.

The postmodern turn in the 1980s into critical reflexivity shifted anthropology schools of thought away from the pursuit of truth and towards explanations of life in abstract language unreflective of lived experiences. A growing distrust of abstractions, symbols, and semiotics, and skepticism about attributing agency to structures among scholars moved many anthropologists toward phenomenology, where they could instead explore *"experiences* of reality" (Knibbe and Versteeg 2006:49). For instance, Merleau-Ponty's work on the body argued that the body is not simply semiotic, and this supports Michael Jackson's (1989) position that what is meaningful cannot be reduced to a sign (122). Embodiment, and practices in the body, of the body, are meaningful, irreducible sites of experienced reality. As Best (1978) puts it, the body "does not symbolise reality, it is reality" (in Jackson 1983:329). Or as Benke puts it:

> the lived body is a lived center of experience, and both its movement capabilities and its distinctive register of sensations play a key role in […] how we encounter other embodied agents in the shared space of a coherent and ever-explorable world... [Lived] embodiment is not only a means of practical action, but an essential part of the deep structure of all knowing" (Behnke 2011:1).

Kinesthetic consciousness is important in Husserl's phenomenology, particularly as it is used in combination with embodiment in the anthropology of dance, and is a strong point from which to discuss the productive dynamics between embodiment and embodied learning. Kinesthetic consciousness is described further by Elizabeth Behnke as "a consciousness or subjectivity that is itself characterized in terms of motility [see Ness (2010)], that is, the very ability to move freely and responsively" as opposed to merely moving and being conscious *of* movement (Behnke 2011). Kinesthetic consciousness is the force behind embodied practices, embodied knowledge, and embodied creativity.

I agree with Felicia Hughes-Freeland (2007) and Crease's (1997) call for a "phenomenological, first-person, experience based account of embodied creativity as performance in relation to temporality" (Hughes-Freeland 2007:210). Crease's discussion of phenomenology in performance offers the idea of performance as a *poesis* "a bringing forth of phenomenon [that can be new in a multiple ways], of something with presence in the world'" (Crease 1997:214 *in* Hughes-Freeland 2007:210). Embodied creativity buzzes in the muscles and wills of the dancers in *Racines,* and in their social bonds, and becomes present in the spaces and frames dance events. It brings forth memory in aesthetic forms and affect.

Embodied creativity relies on motility, as Ness describes in her work *Choreographies of Tourism in Yosemite Valley: Rethinking 'place' in terms of motility* (2010). Ness' use of motility has a perfect place in discussions of *Racines*: she says it "specifies a phenomenological and semiotic experience of movement as a primordial, life-producing, and life-sustaining condition of being" (79). *Racines* movements, the *poesis* of *Racines'* social and danced phenomena, ability to move bodies, and the joy of moving together, do produce and sustain life, corporealities, embodied feelings, collectivities, and a long tradition they are challenged to keep present. *Racines'* continuing dancing is a creative practice of motility. But also, their continuing motility indicates the growing ability to execute/take advantage of their motility – the primordial condition of being – through their unique expressions.

Embodied creativity involves a *praxis*, the crucial honing and "application of a skill, technique or practice" (Crease 1997:214 *in* Hughes-Freeland 2007:210), which inscribes kinesthetic and cognitive memory through process itself, and enables a channel through which to bring forth and experience Crease's "presence" (Crease 1997).

Lindsay's (1996) ethnography on hand drumming researches a context similar my field, and his understanding of phenomenology and embodiment overlap with my own. Lindsay conducted his research, part ethnography and part autoethnography, on practical mimesis and embodied learning by taking up the hand drumming. His work shows that, at once, embodied learning through mimesis is a highly personalized, subjective experience, and is socially embedded and directly involved in interpersonal relationships. He experienced synchronization with the other two drumming students as they mastered a rudimentary level of drumming, and this revealed that social conditions and contexts of practice are also embodied (201). *Racines* embodied practices require a personal journey, but also involve (and invite) relationality. At once, in their dance events, the personal is infused with interpersonal – my body's experience in dancing is hard to detach, and is indeed woven to, the experience of others and to the group. In performance contexts, the personal opens in some ways to the audience and aims to connect what the dancer emotes to spectator.

"Flow", a concept invoked by Lindsay (1996), is imperative to embodied learning, and marks the transition from mimesis to automatization, or embodiment (Downey 2010). Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes it in terms of optimal experience, when:

> people report feelings of concentration and deep enjoyment…a state of concentration so focused that it amounts to absolute absorption in an activity…[here] people typically feel strong, alert, in effortless control, unselfconscious, and at the peak of their abilities. Both a sense of time and emotional problems seem to disappear, and there is an exhilarating feeling of transcendence" (Csikszentmihalyi, Harper and Row 1990:1).

Lindsay's (1996) articulation of Csikszentmihalyi's "flow" coincides with the idea of "background and focus disappearance". This can be described by the above mentioned "transcendence", by the "absent body" (Leder 1990:31 *in* Lindsay 1996), or Husserl's "null-body" (Casey 2013:218), which is intensified by deep submersion into the activity where mental preoccupations unrelated to the activity at hand and awareness of surroundings fade. It also involves experiences of the merging of action and awareness (practice and perception [Hallowell 1955 in Csordas 1996]); concentration on the task at hand; the paradox of control (letting go, ceasing 'trying' to be able to do); the loss of self-consciousness; the transformation of time. When we stop thinking, as my instructors remind us to do often, and 'feel the rhythm', our

bodies are present but feel transformed. In dancing, the idea of our body's disappearance (from our thoughts) is the automatization of the practice and full immersion into the feeling of dance.

Creativity

Current scholarship on dance is working to re-inspire ideas of creativity, what Wulff (1997) encountered in the transnational field of ballet culture as the "tension between tradition and change" (161). In the past, non-Western dances were typically associated with concepts of static tradition and thus were rarely associated with modernity or innovation. Rather, the dances were denied creative capacity. Where innovation occurs in non-Western contexts it is often treated as a departure from tradition and authenticity. Acts of creativity, thus, are seen as movement from the past into a dynamic and innovative Western present.

Felicia Hughes-Freeland's essay on tradition and creativity in Balinese dance (2007) invokes Robert Crease to complicate the concepts of innovation and creativity. She shows how the reproduction of convention is a creative act, and innovation is tied to the "carrying forward" of tradition (Crease 1997:222 *in* Hughes-Freeland 2007:210).

For Crease, innovation or carrying-forward is a process in which one "[applies] everything that has been culturally and historically transmitted to [them], and inevitably winds up acting originally and with fresh involvements" (Hughes- Freeland 2007:209). On the other hand "creativity depends on the product's gaining value (or reception, or meaning) in relation to the larger whole. 'Let us call creativity the process by which new phenomena are sought and brought into the world'" (Crease 1997:220 *in* 2007:209).

Though the *poesis* of honing and practicing a skill set inevitably involves creativity, the process can be individuated only to a degree. Discussions of innovation in tradition, of the ever transforming style complexes (Peterson-Royce 2002), must bear in mind that "newness is meaningless unless it can be received: recognition is one of the 'three essential characteristics of performance'" (Hughes-Freeland 2007:210). A comment by Alrick Cambridge ties this principle to identification. He states that "reference to a validating community" is typically involved in an encompassing definition of one's identity (1996:174). Though the personalized phenomenological and embodied learning experiences of dancing *Racines' roots folklorique* dances allow for personal creativity, individuation must remain continuous with some recognizable elements to be validated as Haitian *roots*.

Theories of Freedom

Freedom is significant as at once an aspiration but also a practice. In the case of *Racines,* steps towards freedom involve the memory of freedom and also experiencing it in the body. This links to a discussion of metaphor in creative acts which are embedded in *Racines'* embodied knowledge and practices of the body and the dancers' investment in n *libète.*

Michael Jackson's concept of knowledge in the body rather than *through* the body is enlightening. Jackson, following Merleau-Ponty, asserts that:

> meaning should not be reduced to a sign which, as it were, lies on a separate plane outside the immediate domain of an act. For instance, when our familiar environment is suddenly disrupted we feel uprooted, we lose our footing, we are thrown, we collapse, we fall. But such falling […] is not 'something metaphorical derived from physical falling', a mere manner of speaking; it is a shock and disorientation which occurs simultaneously in body and mind, and refers to a basic structure of our Being-in-the-world (Binswagner 1962:222-5, cf. Reich 1949:435 *in* Jackson 1983:328).

Further, Jackson states that metaphor "is not merely a figure of speech, drawing an analogy or playing on a resemblance for the sake of verbal effect" (Jackson 1983:131). Meaning is not only signifying, nor is it an expression only for external effect.

Racines' dances and dance events can be understood as acts of innovation that move towards creativity. Their practices build on past traditions, but are also unique strategically, in their framing, and also in their ability to create the safe social spaces in the context of the diaspora. *Racines'* practices are "gaining value (or reception, or meaning) in relation to the larger whole" (Crease 1997:220 *in* 2007:209). Creativity is kinesthetic, emerging from within the body. Creativity also emerges in, and as, the social and political dimensions of the troupe. Carrying-forward Haitian *roots folklorique* dance traditions inevitably leads to individual play on the 'tradition', which can become a creative act that brings new imaginations, subjective positions, and political possibilities into the world. The dancers

carry forward the history and affective dimension of *libète* through dance events and dance movements.

Libète is a theme expressed literally in certain dances, particularly the *Ibo* dance, and also is alive in experience of moving with the drum rhythms. Daily practices and innovations are the tools used in the pursuit of *libète,* which in themselves give birth to creative moments in the dancing body and social sphere.

The innovative and creative act of danced *libète*, particularly in *Ibo* dance, is not solely a political or semiotic act. Rather, it is an embodied experience of freedom that warrants somatic analysis.

Dance Disciplines

Western dance (classical, contemporary, ballet) is typically (and uncritically) connected with modernity and mind. Verticality, a politically and aesthetically connotative term, is implicated in these dance forms (Grau 2005:142) and has synthesized long linear dance movements with ideas of technique, discipline, control, and reason (2005:142). Verticality, or Apollonian verticality, as a Western concept referring Western ideals and [products, alienates non-Western dance forms and their discussion in conversations about reason, order, thought. My research, along with that of many others, transcends the notions.

Non –Western dances, and bodies that dance them, are ascribed with ethnic alterity and situated as inert traditional, sometimes primitive, and sometimes carnal. Styles defined as non-Western or non–classic are often characterised by deeper pliés and more knee bending and articulation, which cause the hips and pelvis to move and also enhances intentional pelvis movement. For instance, many dances of the African diaspora, and Indigenous dance styles have grounded steps and a low base and returning point for movement. These types of movements, and the dancers associated with them, were points of contention. They were deemed inappropriate, transgressive, and threatened Euro-American dance styles and stages. Dance performances were undesirable, as were the dancers. Bodies of dancers of colour were deemed not only unsuitable, but *unable* to perform the Plato's "*Noble"* bodily movements which were tied to the "divinely ordained" Apollonian verticality of Western dance (Kealiinohomoku 1983:3; Sullivan 2004:10). According to Western points of view, bodies of colour seemed forever bound by the "*Ignoble"*, meaning "distorted movement" (Sullivan 2004:10).

"Traditional" or "ethnic" dances did syncretise with classical or modern Western forms, which both promoted and diluted the pride in the non-Western dance forms and dancers. An example of the former is the work of Alvin Ailey, African-American activist and choreographer. In 1958 he founded the revolutionary Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in New York City. He pioneered the training and public valorization of African-American ballet dancers, thrusting their performance and abilities onto popular stages. His work, bringing marginalised dancers of colour into concert dance, was radical and unprecedented.

On the other hand, there are instances of Western dance principles invited into the non-Western dance. Renowned dancer/choreographer/instructor Viviane Gauthier of Haiti gave force to a turn in a branch of *folklorique* dance that based its training in the fundamentals of classic ballet. Disciplining kinesthetic consciousness first with the grammar of ballet changed the appearance of *folklorique* dance moves. The signs of "control" and verticality in the ballet comportment changed the reception of dances and dancers, eliciting ideals of respectability that were a product of colonial thought. The Gauthier form of *folklorique* dance training, and the aesthetic difference it made, gained value Haiti and carried into the Haitian diaspora. Classically (ballet) trained Haitian dancers profit from the idealization and superior valuation of *folklorique* infused with "verticality". These entrenched values bear impact on *Racines'* work, which adheres to the values and aesthetics of *roots.* Among dance companies with Western-based training, their work is seen as less professional, refined, and thus undervalued.

The concept and performance of discipline in dance differs between Haitian or African based dances and Western ethnic forms such as ballet (Kealiinohomoku 1983) or standard-ballroom genres. Haitian or African movements rely on greater looseness, fewer straight lines, more bounce in the joints, undulations, and hip and bust articulations. When exploring Haitian dance forms and dance practice, the concept of discipline demands a more critical definition – one that begins with a broader consideration of how, and in what context, a particular dance-style complex operates and disciplines bodies.

Sociality

Anthropological discussions of collectivities draws on the work of a number of key scholars whose theories gave a critical explanation of the reasons for and dynamics within the many forms of groupings of people. This includes Edith Turner's (2012) inspiring work

Communitas: The Anthropology of Collective Joy, where she illuminates the social and affective elements of communitas by leading the reader into senses of fellowship and togetherness through a series of reflexive stories. *Communitas*, also a concept elaborated on by her husband Victor Turner (1969), is defined as a sudden, effervescent (sense of) togetherness that, in its original theoretical form, was used to describe sociality in liminal contexts during ritual or rites of passage. Here a collective of individuals are rendered equal and "submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders" (359).

Communitas explains processes of transition, moments "in and out of time," and the relationships developed in these moments is useful for understanding the consociations and connections experienced while dancing, whether in a class or performance. The effervescence of *communitas* was overwhelmingly present in the dance instruction and performances in my research. *Communitas* is temporal and evasive, but its affect and effects may leave impact. As Turner states, while it is "hard to pin down, it is not unimportant" (1969:372).

According to Victor Turner's theorizations, the structural ties of society fragment into a "generalized social bond" that is considered to exist underneath, or beyond the constructions of social positions (1969:96). Moments of the sudden, or intense, coalescence and collective action of numerous people can intensify this sense of a generalized social bond and results in an ephemeral, "rudimentarily formed [social] structure" (Turner 1969:360). *Communitas* is a "model of a form of [effervescent] human interrelatedness" (360) that permeates dance events, and propels moments of dancing dances. The ability to live within such differently-structured time and space, to move unrestrainedly, and to create social and cultural interconnectivity is powerful for *Racines,* a collectivity of individuals who, outside the dance events, are still considered immigrants, inferior, and belonging elsewhere. It makes a space to belong.

Olwig (2002:124) aptly describes community as a "field of belonging", which are "imagined and sustained by individuals and collectivities" in various ways. Applying the concept of a Haitian *roots* "field of belonging", as opposed to group or community, better encapsulates why, and how, ideas of Haitian-ness become a nexus for identification and sharing. The *Racines* dancers are Haitian, but mostly 1st generation Haitian-Canadians. However, being ancestrally or territorially Haitian is not a prerequisite for dancing with their school – though senses of the imagined community are carried in *Racines'* pan-Africanist attitudes about *roots* heritage. Mostly, locating oneself in a field of (senses of) belonging, and actively relating to a field of

intersecting values and objectives, is how most any open minded individual can find themselves rooted in *roots*.

Olwig considers how communities, or fields of belonging, are constructed and maintained through a "variety of social, economic and cultural factors, grounded in local as well as in global relations" (2002:124). The acts of relationality are the "concrete fields of social relations and cultural values within which [communities] are realized" (124). The dance events of *Racines,* their instances of gathering, are the creative proponents to their senses of collectivity and belonging.

Within ideas of community are instances of individuation and fragmentation; being singular-self oriented, or individuating oneself, while holding a place in the field of belonging. This relates to my research field where the dancers and dance practices are often limited by the demands of life in an individualistic Euro-American world, and also where ideas of creativity challenge ideas of Haitian "tradition". On the other hand, lack of individuation is part of *Racines'* experience as *roots folklorique.* Often they are lumped into an undifferentiated category of the black exotic, or coloured foreign. The troupe members are situated in a place in-between (not Canadian nor Haitian, and simultaneously Haitian but not 'good' Haitian), but are also pluralistically situated (from or belonging to Haiti, but residing in and belonging to [i.e. citizens of] Canada). A distinct Haitian *roots* identity is blurry, and they are not always the authors of that identity.

Identity

One of the purposes of this research is to explore the modalities in *Racines'* dance forms and events that sustain senses of Haitian identity. I also explore the position of *roots* identity vis-à-vis other Haitians in Montreal. The discussion of identity involves the *ways* and *contexts* in which identity is cultivated, qualified and recognised. In other words, the *processes* of identification. I am concerned with the similarities and differences between individuals who form the *roots* collectivities based on elements held in common, what is involved in navigating stigmatised identities, and the power both implicated and contested in the processes of identification. How is identity felt, imagined, or lived? How is it amplified, represented,

conserved, or transformed? How does identity operate in, and through, *Racines*, and what occurs when it abuts other Haitians and dancers.

Different identities and processes of identification are involved in participating in dance groups and dance events. Also, there are different ways that dance style complexes and dancing contribute to or implicate senses of identity. Dance can cultivate, contribute to, or contest identifications and identity narratives – those which are self-produced or externally ascribed. What I argue is consistent across these experiences is the impact of embodiment.

Scholarship on embodied identity, embodied learning, and phenomenology in anthropology express that knowledge or information more profoundly impacts individuals through experience, through activities that engage the body kinaesthetically. Ideas of belonging or of identity become *senses* through enactment, where the body and mind in sync actualize the concepts that define self and belonging. Movement moves ideas into senses, or affects, and instills senses into the body. This has affective and physiological results (see above Downey 2010). Embodied practices can also alter senses of self and space. Embodiment helps explain how ideas of self connect to practices of self, both which, according to Downey (2010) become the physiological make-up of the self. Ideas, practices, and physiology are interacting and inter-informing elements of the individual that connect to notions of identity and, importantly for dance, that connect mind and body on a level playing field.

Embodied identities have been an important focus for scholarship on dance, sports, and other movement systems. Dances and dancing provide the medium and context to experiment with identity and gender roles (Skinner 2012, 2007; Ludtke 2012; Wieschiolek 2003). The dynamics created when socially and politically disparate ideas of bodies, movement, and aesthetics coexist in one field of play, or where one person's experimentation is another's enactment of tradition, is a rich domain for anthropological analysis.

Dance style complexes (Ness 1992) and dance events involve individuals in the embodiment of values, narratives, and histories, as well as emotions such as joy or revolt. In an effervescent moment of dance, or long after a dance is complete, the practice of the body impact on how the dancer feels about themselves and within their body. This also takes on a cultural dimension of identification (formally or in play), where *Racines* are involved in the embodiment of a Haitian tradition.

Individuals can experiment with identities, ways of being, and modes and senses of belonging through the embodiment of identities. It is also is a means by which to highlight or transgress or reinvent boundaries of social norms and cultural and national narratives (Dyck and Archetti et. al. 2003). Travelling dancers such as those Helena Wulff work with for her ethnographies *Ballet across Borders* (1998) and *Dancing at the Crossroads* (2007) transcended certain terms of identification as they crossed geographic borders, as they were met by other border crossers (incoming tourists), or were participants in an international network of dance(rs). Their senses of embodied identification expanded accordingly and can be described as transnational and cosmopolitan. Though occurring within specific regimes of ballet discipline, this embodiment allowed for play beyond a specific set of cultural or site specific norms, and the norms of ballet dance framing.

The concept of disposition relates to Peterson-Royce's (2002) belief that "the whole complex of features that people rely on to mark their identity comprises something [she has] called style" (157). However, style involves greater fluidity and mutability. Styles, or style complexes are terms supplanting 'tradition" which, rather than implying something conserved and unchanging, are defined by changes in the signs, symbols, values, and meanings of which they are comprised (157). Style, "composed of symbols, forms, and underlying value orientations," is the intermediary between expression and a way of being (disposition). Style complexes are a channel through which disposition finds expression, and a plausible expressive form is dance. The concepts "dance (cultural) style" or "dance style complex" define, or give a permeable definition of *Racines'* activities, and gives flexible identity to their dances, both which are traditions continuously being met by acts of improvisation and syncretism in new geographic and cultural contexts of practice.

Peterson-Royce writes of the "active choice about displaying particular styles" (2002:157) which occurs in my field of research. The troupe has a degree of control over the types of dances they do, and where and how to perform a particular identity (e.g. folklorique Haitian amongst some individuals, very *roots folklorique* amongst others). Performances may align with or completely transfigure static ideas of what is Haitian. Peterson-Royce draws the distinction between dance forms that are private and tribal-specific, and public pan-Indian forms. This distinction reflects the politics of performance in *Racines*. Their "active choice" is limited by pressure to respect rules governing public and private dance styles, and some members of the

Haitian social network do not agree that any Haitian *folklorique* dances are appropriate for social contexts or public display. Personal and public ideas of Haitian identity can be promoted in different contexts of dance (dances classes, community performances, award shows). For *Racines*, "active choice" requires strategic creativity with form and content, and being aware of the wide range of politics encircling *roots folklorique* dance (see also Reed 1998:512 on 'invented traditions').

Adam Kaul's *Turning the Tune* (2009) argues against the view of "ethnic" aesthetic practices as "traditional". He studied "a cosmopolitan group of musicians, playing a local style of traditional Irish music, to an audience that consists mostly of international tourists" and observed that underneath appearances of "traditional" practice is a "multilayered and ironic complexity" (3). This reflects instances of non-Western forms of dance, performance, and identity entering the global consciousness, where the dynamism of the dance forms is lost within celebrations of their as "traditional" aesthetic. Ironically, the context in which tradition is often performed renders it untraditional. Ingold and Hallam's (2007) writing on creativity and improvisation would argue that processes of making "ethnic" music are innovative, adaptive, and of the present. *Racines'* dance activities are syncretic and creative renditions of an idea of tradition, much like the performances of Kaul's (2009) Irish musicians.

Dance forms and performances are central to negotiating identity politics. For instance, Irish dance is embroiled in a charged history, having played a role in the battle over national, cultural, and religious (Protestant and Catholic) identification in Ireland (Wulff 2007). A variety of local Irish dances reveals heterogeneousness Irish identities. What this represents contradicts the proscribed homogenous National identity, one which even opposes or severely regulates dancing. Cosmopolitanism, welcomed or reluctant (Wulff 2007:126), also became an attribute of the Irish dancers' identities through international tours or the arrival of international audiences to Ireland.

Differences met through dance ignite the political dimension of movement systems. This has involved the "regulation" and/or "domestication" of dances (Reed 1998:512), for example in the case of the Sardana dances of Catalonia used as an ethnic symbol in their rebellion against the Spanish and Castilles (Ibid). The Hopi dances provide another example. Highly formalized private dances were created to preserve elements of tradition while commercial dances reflected the state-imposed pan-Native-American images (Peterson-Royce 2002). *Racines* dance complex

and dance events are politically potent, demanding not only space for *roots* culture within the rest of Haitian culture, but also recognition of the roots of Haitian history; a history stretching back to Dahomey, a nation that was enchained and then tore free.

Regulating dance content, places for dancing, and teaching dance necessarily politicizes both the practice and identities of the participants regardless of their political position (Reed 1998:512). This occurred with the Gaelic League Irish Dancing Commission's efforts to control Irish dance (Meyer 1995:31 in Reed 1998:512), the standardization of Sardana Dances (Brandes 1990 *in* Reed 1998:512), and the secularization, domestication, and regulation of Haitian ritual Vodou dances. Also, "invented traditions" were converted into "national" dances in the conflict between Kandyan dances of the Sinhala and *bharata natyam* dances of the Tamil (Reed 1991,1995). In whatever relations a dance complex may be embroiled, their spheres of interaction are necessarily political gestures.

Space

Spaces and places of dance, their "bounded spheres of interaction" (Cowan 1990), are critical to dance events. Place is considered location derived and space is movement-derived. Space is the "intersection of mobile elements" (de Certeau 1984), and Ness (2010) describes these intersections as "ways" (2010:82). Rudolf von Laban created the concept kinesphere, which connects to the concept "space". Kinesphere is a "self-contained movement universe, an environment or energy 'world' constituted by its movement possibilities, which are seen to be potentially infinite" (Laban 1974 *in* Ness 2010:81). Space and kinesphere are constituted by movements therefore can be defined according to them. The activities occurring in space is what create a dance event or context, but importantly is that context "about", "…what it is a venue *for*, what brings it *to life*: in human terms, what endows it with, not exactly 'place-hood', but with what might be called 'way-ness'" (Ness 2010:81). Ness also describes space as a "node", highlighting it as the point of overlap or intersection among moving entities.

The concepts of intersection (de Certeau 1984) and way-ness, as opposed to locational 'place' are useful for understanding *Racines* dance events. The place Centre Communitaire is indeed a very important location for the troupe's dance activities (see chapter 2). But the dancers' senses of self, belonging, and the life of their practice relies on the intersections brought about through movement systems, and these unfold in several specific of locales. This points to

the importance of relationships in the dance troupe, the interactions within a dance event, and those external to it to which the dance events respond. The intersections give birth to spaces, which are also the venues for building relationships and continuing the embodied practice.

Racines dance spaces persist in particular "ways", including senses of belonging, family, liberty, *roots,* and the many emotions evoked in dancing. The continuing "ways" of space can invoke embodied responses that "attribute to [dance] a kind of agency" (Ness 2010:79), or an "agentful identity" as defined by Basso (1996 *in* Ness 2010:79). Hearing the "*tuk-tuk waayoo, tuk, waayoo"* of the drums moves the dance instructor into three different rhythm, one each for feet, hips, and shoulders. This draws others into movement, whether swaying on the spot or performing exaggerated variations of the *congo* and *djumba*. The concepts of space and movement reflect the way *Racines'* activities unfold, which is between one another rather than dependant on place.

As this discussion shows, anthropological research on dance requires looking beyond aesthetics and form and closely into the lives of the dancers, and asking of their subjective, and corporeal experiences. Responsible anthropology on dance does take seriously the fact of embodied knowledge, but more over the personal and social process of embodied learning practices: the stories unfolding inside a gathering, and inside the muscles and joints of each dancing body. Critical research considers dance as a productive mode for creativity with identity, tradition, and senses of space and place. It is considers dancing as an affective practice that shapes senses of self and belonging, and one's physiology and neurology. Research encircling dance brings to light the social and political elements involved in dance events, and understands how spaces and places connect to immediate venues and also ideas homeland. Scholarship on dance prompts us to take stock of the many dimensions encircling dances and dancers. The following work aims fruitfully apply these theories, well as contribute new insights to the field of the anthropology of dance through the stories of *Racines.*

Methodology

My fieldwork involved participating in *Racines'* dance events, which were mostly bi-weekly dance classes and troupe performances. As my relationship with the troupe members developed, I was welcomed into the private spaces of their dance creation, in the *Centre Nord Montreal,* and in the backstage of shows. I was present at the majority of the troupes' events, many of which were collaborations between local and international Haitian artists, and I performed in the end-of-year student performance.

In addition to participating in and observing a variety of dance events, I conducted 12 formal interviews. However, the most interesting discussions emerged informally during our times in dance spaces. During class time, I spoke informally to both students and instructors about life and dance. They asked me questions as well. We seemed to see one another on the same mission: to unpack and play with roots folklorique culture. We spoke over tea, lunch, at Tim Hortons before troupe practice, in the courtyard of the Centre Haitiano-Canadian. As relationships got closer, we connected on social media and freely conversed about many issues.

The main research sites were the *Centre Communitaire,* the *North Montreal Center*, and performance venues where the troupe were invited to perform or attend, or those which they organized. These included: several outdoor stages within central and greater Montreal and in Toronto that were connected to larger festivals, two rented theatres, a church basement, and a Montreal metro station. These sites are a shift from the troupe's modest beginnings. New venues for performance indicate increasing acceptance of Roots culture, once viewed as 'dangerous', now increasingly understood as social, spiritual, joyful expressions of Haitian experience in Montreal.

The *Centre Communitaire*, located in the east end of Montreal, is the central site for *Racines'* student classes. These are the drum courses, dance practices, and rehearsals for the end-of-year recital. Although described as a Haitian community center, it is not used exclusively for Haitian activities, and not all those activities centered on Haitian culture are exclusively for Haitians. However, the centre's board of administration is predominantly of Haitian descent as are most of the program facilitators and participants.

This space is used for martial arts classes, children's extra-curricular activities, lectures, celebrations, and soirees. Occasionally these activities overlap with the dances of the dance

troupe. For instance in a celebratory lecture and dinner to commemorate International Woman's Day on March 8th, 2014, *Racines* performed a short choreography. However, apart from amicable relations between users of the space, or administrative negotiations between instructors and the center's board of directors, engagement between the independent collectivities is minimal.

The main activity room is a large rectangular, multi-purpose space. The white and blue checkered floor tiles stand out in photos of the troupe members dancing as children. Along one wall of the room are rows of lockers which sometimes are used to hang bags and clothing. Usually, though, they turn into hiding spaces for the children to play in while the adults are in class. In rooms that branch off from the main recreation space is a computer room mostly used for after-school care. In the men's bathroom is a closet storing material for the nascent Haitian Community archival project. Finally, there is a large kitchen and a hallway leading a back playground.

Immersion in the dance classes was corporeal, cultural, and social. I reconfigured my physicality, one previously dominated by the habits of both Standard and Latin Ballroom dance comportment and weight lifting. The classes taught me and the other mostly Haitian students how to dance and about the dance. Prefacing a semester, the main instructors Khimani and Lisa explained Folklorique dance, roots, and the reasons why they dance. Before learning a new dance style, we learned the history of the dance, semiotics of movements, and were introduced to the characters to embody and perform. We developed a kinesthetic and aural relationship with rhythm, taking time to hear deeply the guide of our movements.

Participating in and observing *Racines'* dance events, or as I prefer, sharing time with them was an embodied ethnographic process. My ethnographic experience moves to the same tones as Jonathan Skinner, who reflects that the process of dancing for anthropology was "one where reflexivity, knowledge and expression (voice) have all come from […] my physical immersion in the dance activities, the experiences of my body more so than the experiences of my mind" (2003:118).

The intersections of difference and dwelling productively or confrontationally within them are significant realities for *Racines,* and also played out in my position as a researcher. I began fieldwork after spending some time with Critical Race Theory literature, and was acutely aware of the implications of my position as a white female researcher in a diasporic Haitian context. It took me some time to feel at ease, even with the dance instructors' warm invitation

into their world, and I stepped slowly forward all too conscious of anthropology's shadow of the long and continuing legacy of colonialism. Our relationship developed with time, as I laid bare my uncertainties, ignorance, and willingness to learn, both as an anthropologist and as their dance student. The dance instructors and I developed close friendships, and a relationship of mutual gratitude – theirs, for my interest and dedication to the dance troupe; mine, for their trust in sharing of their selves, stories, and time. I also developed a relationship to Jonathan Skinner's work in this process because of his honest and sense-infused work on dance, and his reflexive observations about being an apprentice of an embodied practice, and eventually a member of a collectivity. He reveals what others never do in publications, or maybe only whisper, but which, in the contexts of sensorial activities like dancing, are much needed for social scientists of embodied activities. We are much more than mind, after all.

Skinner states that his method "has been to adopt and adapt traditional ethnographic practice, to fit it around my passionate engagement - 'passionate engrossment' with [my]. subject matter" (2010:118). In Amanda Coffey's book *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and Representations of Identity*, a work that discusses the implications the mutually affective relationship between fieldworkers and the field, she develops the concept of passionate engrossment and Gubrium and Holsteins'(1997) reflections on emotionality and inner experience in qualitative method (136). Coffey describes passionate engrossment "one of the central ways in which the emotionality and passion of the fieldwork are enacted" (Coffey 1999:136-137). Gubrium and Holstein write,

> The depths of experience pose a major challenge to qualitative method. For decades, many qualitative researchers have been pointedly concerned about the neglect of inner realms, arguing that theory and methodology do not adequately take account of deep emotions or what some call 'brute being'. (1997: 57)

I understand this concern, both conceptually and in an embodied way. The effects and affects of passionate engagement (Skinner 2012), or engrossment (Coffey 1999) infused my work with the dance, the people, and the scholarly literature. I recall well the many frustrated phone conversations with my father in Toronto, "I feel this. But I am not supposed to feel into my writing. But…I feel it. This work is feelings!", to which he patiently responded, "that stuff is

for your other writing, the articles, not for this thesis." Bracketing passion from theory stifled my writing and the development of this work, until I uncovered the voice to articulate the field from my body's perspective; from the heart, from the joy and adrenaline of a *Mayí* dance, as well as from my mind.

Rather than offering a cerebral critique of research's neglect of the deepest experiences, I simply invite them into this writing. I learned on the checkered tile floor, and moving on the drum rhythm, that our actions are most effective when we *become* rather than think. I have allowed this ethnography to become out of both theory and the "brute being" of my fieldwork, and of collective experiences in dance. My hope is for this to contribute to the growth of passionate engagement as safe and accepted, in both practice and theory. I think it will be a most useful methodological norm, particularly for those involved in embodied practices which, as Downey has so clearly shown, cognitively, neurologically, kinaesthetically undo and redo the researcher and field. My methodology in writing this ethnography – what I tell my participants is "our story" - is to honour the passionate engagements that gave me, and continue to give the dancers knowledge, allowing the "brute being" of our dance experiences, the movements and the sociality, to have a place on these pages and with you.

Chapter 2

Historical and Social Background - *We're not indifferent to the rhythms that have led to our independence.*

> *It's indicated when we do Ibo. It makes sense for us to have a flag that's…" Khimani paused, "We had to fight for our freedom. So growing up in that sense, it made everything about dance important because it was part of our history. And we say, and even Michelle, she always says the same thing. If you want to know the Haitian history you just look at the dance. Because it says everything. You have rebellious acts of war, you have sadness and prayer, you have…you know, like again in Ibo you want to break the chains and be free.*

Dance and Rhythm in Haiti

I biked to the north east of Montreal one late September afternoon to take in the second day of *Mwa Kreyòl* (*Mois du créole*) events. It was one of the last of the hot, sunny days of 2014; those days that pass quickly by as though being sucked into the eddy of autumn's early nightfall. The event, *Couleurs D'Haïti À Montréal*, was held at the centre Rediscovered Perle. I came particularly to meet the organizers of a Haitian Artisan Cooperative and to buy *vévé* t-shirt, the same as what the *Racines* percussionists often wore. These shirts are painted by an artist in Haiti whose work expresses the liberation of roots culture. The t-shirts are an intentional, active symbol of *roots* values and history. After weeks of correspondence with the co-op organizers, we were finally face to face. I arrived at the center which was, to my surprise, a desacralized church situated on the last road running parallel to the highway. The church was established as *The Rediscovered Perle* or *the Haitian-Canadian Centre* in 1997 and has since hosted many cultural and political activities. In a few months to come it would host the *Fete de Gédé.* I locked my bike to the wrought iron gate, entered the side door, and climbed a winding stairwell past several people on the way to the darkened and cool building.

Mwa kreyòl is a multidisciplinary event inspired by 'creole day' celebrated in Dominica on the last Friday of October. The event supports and celebrates Quebec Canadian Creole and its

development. The organization's literature states the objective to promote, "understanding, tolerance, brotherhood and friendship among peoples, particularly between all Creole, Caribbean to the Indian Ocean" (KEPKAA 2010). The event celebrates Creole of Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Ste. Lucia, L'ile de la Reunion, Les Seychelles, les Iles Rodrigues, Madagascar, France, Cuba, La Louisiane, l'Ile Maurice, La Guyane Francais through many art forms and activities including painting, sculpture, theater, literature, music, writing, dance, cuisine and fashion, all of which allow *les créolophones canadiens* to "rediscover a whole section of their identities through several cultural activities" (KEPKAA 2010).

Light streamed in the opened double doors at the front of the old church, illuminating the entry way and makeshift market. They had several tables layered with books from Haitian and Haitian Canadian authors and poets written in both French and in *Kreyòl*. The co-op was nearest to the door. Their table was covered with hand-crafted jewellery, hand-painted masks, woven straw bags and hats, and folded clothing painted carefully with different *vévés* and labeled with a home-printed tag explaining the symbolism. When I arrived at the kiosk they smiled, knowing immediately who I was.

Here I met Isaac, a political scientist, historian, and co-founder of the Haitian clothing cooperative. When I told him about my project, he eagerly began a story of Haitian belonging and 'Haitian-ness' that unraveled a meshwork of his own experiences and formal education. After 5 minutes of trying to follow his dense and rapid prologue to what would become a much longer speech, I interrupted to ask if I could record the conversation. With his consent we moved from the dark church, or the market place in its present transformation, to the sundrenched courtyard. Our conversation was disrupting the lecture that had just begun, and now resounded through the growing crowd that sat in the darkened nave of the church before several speakers. Isaac told me the presenters were here to discuss the crushing political climate in Haiti and the State's dealings with governments in major diaspora locations such as Montreal. This climate also effected immigration in Montreal and communities living there, particularly those with family back in Haiti. They also addressed the changes threatened by October elections. I had thought this event was simply a "cultural celebration" but it became clear that the activities of Creole month addressed many different issues and was a time to gather and mobilize around them.

We left the church and walked down the wide front steps to quiet space near the hedge and tall bronze statues. Potted palm trees, so young they looked more like palm fronds stuck into soil, stood proudly around the courtyard. They were like sentinels that paid homage to homelands, to memories of liberation, and to earth and plant life. But the intended sentinels were the six bronze statues of historical figures who contributed to the birth of Haiti, in different ways and with differing religious affiliations depending who you asked or read: Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Catherine Flon, Alexandre Pétion, Sanite Bélair and Henri Christophe.

Facing the road, the words "*Place de l'Unite"* grew in dark coloured grass. In the center of the courtyard an aqua coloured fountain was shooting three geysers into the air, and in front of it was a long table of food. A woman stood behind stacks of bakery-boxes and *baine-maries* of hot Haitian dishes. Without hurry she attended to her tasks and the steady wind fluttered and clapped the hanging edges of the table cloth like ocean whitecaps tossed in salted wind. Isaac stopped to greet her, and 3 more of his friends approached soon after. The crowd at this event seemed well acquainted. After light small talk, we moved nearer to the hedge and picked up our conversation.

Figure 2

Isaac and I stood in the shadow lines cast by three of the towering bronze Haitian historical heroes. They watched as he and I reflected on the history that was their lives' making. I noticed the name of the centre above the main entrance for the first time. I'd never seen the term Haitiano-Canadian used before.

Isaac: Haitiano-Canadien, It's French. It's that way when you combine the two words. Yes, so I'm all yours.

Elizabeth: Okay, what were you going to say about Haitian identity?

"To understand the complexities of Haitian identity", Isaac replied, "one needs to step back a few hundred years in history and see where they come from." And he proceeded to do so. His monologue flowed flawlessly, sharply articulating an abridged version of a complex story. Isaac had gone to school in Haiti for 15 years and it was clear that he learned the Haitian history

at least twice under the tutelage of historians. But it was clear by his delivery that he had taught this subject to others before me.

Isaac: "When I'm trying to explain to someone, the simplest way to start an understanding of the Haitian community is to see that, how overall Globalization, the first steps of Globalization, have enacted that human tragedy of ripping people off their homeland to dump, literally, and through horrendous process, to dump them into a totally remote foreign land."

The history of Haiti begins in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade when "millions of people were taken from basically anywhere on the coast or gulf of Guinea. The number of deaths that occurred in Africa as people were captured and transported through the middle passage, and in Saint Domingue, constitutes a genocide", Isaac said.

Isaac: "…these people were chattled and just brought over and some of them died at sea because they threw them off the boat. And these people have been brought to Haiti, then called Saint Domingue, and they were systematically kind of kept in a mixed kind of way so that they could not forge alliances. Once Haitians, the neo Haitians if you want […], when the Africans got to Haiti [in 1506] and they started working in the fields and they were formal slaves, they did the first steps of that revolution which was to create that language. Which was to communicate."

He spoke loudly over the traffic noises whizzing by, reminding us of our proximity to the highway, which shattered the illusion made by the sound of flowing water and palm fronds waving in our peripheral vision. "And that has led to one of the most rebellious languages created on earth. *Kreyòl*", he said. In Victor Hugo's 1826 novel, *Bug-Jargal,* he refers to the Haitian language as "*jargal"* or "jargon". This reflects the sentiments of the time. *Kreyòl* was perceived as French in a "degraded condition" (11), which reflected the broader perceptions of people of colour and their cultures. Jargon suggests "unintelligible talk; gabble; gibberish" (Bongie 2004: 11). Hugo's semi-fictional story illuminated prevailing and constraining colonial attitudes that sought to separate the Western 'civilized' from the enslaved[1]. This further separated free-people-of-colour from slaves and maroons and what *Racines* today calls *roots folklorique*. These distinctions and hierarchies exist today.

Kreyòl is spoken by approximately 95% of the Haitian population and thrives in Montreal. *Kreyòl* was formed, or inspired from Italian, Hebrew, Spanish, Portuguese, Arawak,

[1] French policy and philosophical positions gave human status to slaves. The Spanish, American, and British systems did not (Corbett 1991).

Taino, Macoris, French, Arabic, NaGo, Fon, and languages from Benin and Senegal. The French language is the most aurally and textually recognizable influence in *Kreyòl* because of long ties with colonizers from France, "the most ruthless [colonizers] as per every historian" (Isaac). However, based on the structure, vocabulary, and orthography of Haitian *Kreyòl*, we know it is 60% inspired from African languages (Isaac).

The colonial mentality coated the language and other objects of creolization, including rhythms and dances. All those things juxtaposing colonial culture were considered mutations of "civilized society" and became synonymous with the enslaved. This syncretic culture with its "rebellious origins" (Isaac) has persisted and continuous to persist in *roots folklorique* practices. Through the work of *Racines, roots folklorique* re-characterises its identity. Rather than a language of slavery, of sorcery, and mutation of "proper" Western custom, *roots* exists as a proud and productive culture, a beautiful and rich culture.

Kreyòl has always been challenged, even in Haiti, Isaac reminded me. The language and culture of a once enslaved people now stands for a relationship with a particular class, heritage, history, and identity. *Kreyòl* and *folklorique* evoke a painful past of slavery and stripping people of their culture and identity through corporal punishment and social sanctions. In self-defence, many people past and present resisted and suppressed *Kreyòl* identity and African ancestry. In Saint-Domingue, free people of colour rejected or denied identity with slaves, adopted Western dress and "proper" French speech, and themselves owned plantations and slaves.

Isaac continued with words that clipped passionately off his tongue. The creation of a syncretic communication system between people from different nations "established the conditions from which a collective revolution could ignite". Communication involved not only language, but also syncretic rhythms and dances. Drum rhythms were used as signals between tribes across distances. Dances and rhythms united slaves of diverse nationalities. Creating moments of solidarity and *l'union* further brought together practices, belief systems, and dances. This is apparent in the names of rhythms, such as *Nago, Dahomey, Petro, Congo, Djumba, Ibo* that refer to a diversity of origins in Africa.

Unification among slaves enabled mobilization and rebellions to erupt. The repercussions were ruthless, so as an alternative to fighting, some slaves would unite and flee to the mountains. This created the maroon populations, and a "maroon identity", those who are known today as *paysans*.

The maroons were typically former field-hands, the most oppressed group of slaves. The field-hands suffered the most torture and in general were treated worse than animals. In a class above the field-workers were domestic slaves whose lives were comparably better. These slave classes were divided in terms of vested interests and allegiances.

The whites of Saint-Dominque were comprised of two groups, the planters and the *petite blancs*. The planters were wealthy land owners, many of whom were in a tenuous relationship with the French state due to prohibitions on trade with partners outside of France. These planters were pro-slavery but sought independence from France (Corbett 1991). The *petite blancs* were not nearly as wealthy and powerful as the planters. They were in competition with the Free Persons of Colour vis-a-vis vocations and land ownership. The Free Persons of Colour were either former slaves who had bought or received freedom, or *mulattoes*, the children of white men and slave women. The Free Persons of Colour had more opportunities to accumulate wealth, and many owned plantations and slaves, though were only semi-citizens of France and subject to many limitations.

"Mulattos control 50% of the wealth of the country, 50% and more," Issac said, "So these people have a big influence. But they are directly issued from the settlers. And in a sense they've repeated many of the vicious cycles of control that were there. And then you have the Creoles like me," he concluded, bringing the conversation back to immediate subjective experience.

"The Creoles were people from within the cities who remained under the rule of France, or broke free. But they were more in tune with the Western type of life, who would easily learn the language, like the settler's language or whatever. So, these […] classes of Haitians to this day are in a position. Why? Because the Maroons are the genuine rebels which never accepted the rule of the foreigners and to this day are very doubtful of anybody coming from outside. Even from the cities in Haiti, and coming telling them what to do. So they will listen to you. They will be very cordial and very civil with you. But then they will not give in. And that, to this day, is creating a lot of problems and led to this saying in Haiti. In Haiti, one of the main proverbs, and I am a big fan of Haitian proverbs because I think they are the core element of the identity of Haitians. But one of the core Haitian proverbs would say Haiti is a slippery land. *Ayiti se terre glicer*. Meaning that this country, you cannot, like if the people of the country do not accept what you are bringing to them then can take it down any time. So nothing can adapt. And I'll give you an example. An historical example. When the Americans came in 1915, they spent 19 years in

Haiti. They spent 19 years in Haiti. They spent from 1915, occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934 for the first time. I say the first time, there is a reason for that. They colonized Haiti, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Nicaragua, all of them through the Banana Agreements that they were trying to make like big plantations of Banana throughout Latin America, especially in the Caribbean. You know what, to this day, look around in all these places. You'll see that all of them plays baseball except one country that doesn't play baseball, one that never learned English the way that the others have. It's Haiti. Because they came, we looked at them, we took note, and we're like "okay, it's not for us, we don't like it, thank you, goodbye.

"So, today, in the diaspora you have a reflection of all of these classes in Haiti […] when you look at it, you may come here and you see people. I see many classes that have convened here in Montreal in this event. I see many classes in there. I see people that in Haiti would be in a caste structure. We don't have caste officially, but there is still an inner segregation going. And I see these people standing there. And I don't know if they are necessarily reproducing these casts here. They may not be able to. But it's interesting to see that they are all concerned about Haiti enough to be all there right now. And that is what is fascinating to me."

Isaac expressed that as much as the revolution and Haitian *Kreyòl* "is a fundamental feature of Haitian identity", so is dance and music. "Mind you, it's so (I'm going to be very careful with these words) natural to them that they don't even, it's not even discussed in academia per say. To say that dance is a key feature, the reality is that they will react to the core rhythms that have been animating our society for so many centuries. So we're not indifferent to the rhythms that have been, that have led to our rebellion, that have led to our independence. I think our celebrations are always marked with dance.

"When you came with the topic of dance it was, I was amused by it in a sense because I was like, 'Well, I never thought of that.' I mean, like, it's true that we incorporate dance in almost every aspect of our lives to the point that we don't even think about it."

I was surprised, "Wow. I would have never considered it that way, Thank you! But, hey, quickly, what was going on with that guy [on the church's steps] with the protest sign?"

"I don't know. But you see, that's one thing with Haitians. There are 10 millions of us and that's 10 million personalities. And it's, it's challenging to coordinate 10 million personalities, characters, you know. "

About 'Roots'

While Khimani and I spoke, Sandy was quiet for some time, in thought, staring at the tree outside the foyer window. Gently she offered, "*Tu commences, qu'est-ce qui fait vivre l'arbre, c'est les racines, qu'est-ce qui te fait vivre côté danse, c'est les racines. Tu peux comparer avec un arbre qui est enraciné, avec un être humain, tu vois les racines dans la terre, tu vois… pour aller chercher la source qui est en dessous de la terre, pour les vitamines, tout ça, etc… C'est similaire. Nous autres, la danse qui est très vieux, très historique, et tu vas chercher ça pour que ça rentre dans ton système, tout ça, qui te permettre de danser, y'a des* flows*, la vie ça rentre… la musique rentre dans ton corps... et puis ça t'amène comme ça. C'est comme ça je vois*" (Field notes and field recording – May 15, 2015)

Figure 3

What is *roots*? What is *folklorique*? According to the dance troupe and drummers, *roots* means remembering and living a way of life, which involves philosophical and spiritual values as well as tangible customs. Dance and music are pillars of *roots* culture and memory, and *folklorique* dance and music are central ways of embodying this way of life. *Roots* is connection to history, through actions and beliefs. *Folklorique*, much like Vodou, is the expression of these origins, as well as the embodiment and sense of living them. *Folklorique* is the theatrical side of deeply spiritual beliefs, much like the *vévé* symbol painted on a t-shirt is an affective gesture to spirituality cloistered in everyday, public life.

After a dance on a Saturday in early spring, Khimani, Sandy (Khimani's sister and a long-time dance student), Mika, and Khimani's young son and I stood in the Centre Communitaire's entryway and discussed the meaning of these two terms. I wondered how they conceive of *roots* and *folkorique* in relation to their dance practice, and what kind of definition

that may lead to. Just as I had overlooked what was the embodied knowing of *roots* and *folklorique,* they too were caught off guard by this question. "*Non*, *hmm*, *ca pose la reflection,"* said Khimani, "We take it for granted because we just live it. But maybe there's no definition to it, uh?" She took the lead, but glanced at Mika and Sandy for their input. Sandy and Mika mused over the right words to give life to these fundamental components of their dance practice and ways of being.

Above the sound of her singing son, Khimani reflected her thoughts,

"To my understanding, and the way I live it, *roots* is anything that is grounded and real. *Parce que quand tu dit racines* is the core. You know when you are grounded [stomps her feet on the floor]. You're *enraciné*....ce va dire, ta on a...It could extend to wherever, and go wherever, but there is always this origins."

"Origins in Haiti, or in spirit?" I asked. Teo was singing louder and banging a beat on the door, and soon chastised by an abrupt "Teo, stop it!" from Sandy.

"It's in Africa! Because obviously they took human beings from Africa, *ils ont déracinés*, *ils ont été amenés à Haïti,* and it evolved from there. For them to not lose their identity they kept whatever they had vivid in Haiti. Some of the moves that we create with were created in Haiti on the island."

"But still influenced from your roots?'

"Yes. They always did a bridge between their origins, which is the *racines* part of things, and they adapted it to that."

I wondered if the resulting adaptation was what we know as *folklorique.* Is their dance complex, and the particular lineage in the dance troupe, the product of connecting with origins, with *racines*? Or is there a distinction I didn't understand between *roots* and *folklorique?*

Khimani attempted to answer this question, "Folklore is…", and she paused, looking towards Sandy and Mika, "*comment tu définis?*" They were silent, so Khimani continued. "*Folklorique c'est ton histoire. Quand tu parle de folklorique, c'est ton histoire. C'est l'histoire de notre peuple*. Whether it be invented, it still goes back to what was there and builds from there."

"So, *folklorique* is the folklore about the roots?"

"Yeah. This how we learned it. When you say *folklorique*, it was the representation of what was. And necessarily if you do a bridge with the Vodou part, we dance the theatre part of

things, not the real thing. [*Folklorique*] is more the theatrical. You see? So we've never done the real thing because when you go in the real thing, then you are doing the Vodou part is which is much deeper, and much more roots", she finally looked down at Teo who had been muttering to her for several minutes, "I'm sorry, I'm talking to Elizabeth. I don't know where my phone is." Khimani turned back to me, "No, it's a good question. I think anybody could expand it."

I probed deeper, "How do you experience roots through your connections? It doesn't matter if you cannot give a definition, or point to 'truth', I just wonder how do you live it? How you live it is what is important, because that's what's making a difference in your life or what shapes your life and what you do."

She looked at me in thought for several heart beats, a pause long enough to mobilize a line of thirty idle drummers into a fiery *Petro,* "Somebody that's centered is grounded, is rooted" Khimani said. Mika gave an "uh huh" in agreement. "You have you reconnect with yourself somewhere. You have to let those elements connect with you. It's whenever I explain, you need to let the music talk to you. C*'est tout les vibrations.* If you do not let the vibrations, they won't pass through you right. And you're crooked. *Si ça passe pas bien*, you are not going to perform well. So, *c'est ca*, *si tu sais pas la vibration de tambour*, *c'est important. Par example,* drums were a communication tool. At least in Haiti. Most likely it was the same in Africa. But if you did not understand the message well, you would interpret *le message incorrectement*, so what was said that you needed to do would be incorrectly done. It's the same canal with the human being. If you don't let it talk to you, if you just don't listen and you think you understand something but it's not right, you're not going to be centered and you're not going to be grounded. How I live *roots* is that. I listen to whatever message its giving me. So, if it's a message of *Yanvalou* I know that I need to live it [the rhythm, the body, the message], flow it differently than if it's a *Petro* or *Mayí*."

"That leads me to the question of developing a repertoire for those kind of drum references", I wondered, "so that when you hear the drum you have to know that this is how it is going to move your body. Therefore is that why it is important for children to learn dancing from a young age? Is it to connect with identity and those specific roots, tie to those rhythms, make reference to them, and keep you centered?"

"You can say it that way. The idea is to let the message live, not to keep it for yourself. So, yes, when they are young they understand. They are free spirited, free minded, so *la*

*simplicité de message de drum va passer mieux que quand te adult*e because, when you're *adulte* you have reality, you have bills to pay. When you're young you are not that disconnected. Children are free. *C'est beaucoup plus facile de leur fair comprehend le message*. It's not that you are misrouting them [leading them into Vodou practices: Vodou in the misunderstood sense]. It's innocent and pure, so you make it live through them and it continues that way", she grinned, "I'm not even making this up! It's really how I see things."

Mika laughed at Khimani, and I turned to him.

Elizabeth: So, it's all you.

We said goodbye to the women and Teo, and Mika and I walked to the Metro station. He began to reflect on his ideas of "tradition" and "authenticity", arguing as many scholars have that tradition is dynamic. Then he spoke about the perception of 'roots' as subversive. "*D'acc*. The first thing that comes to mind for me is the difference between folklore and *roots*. Folklore for me, the word is a little bit, I don't know how to say it, pejorative. It seems [to imply] something 'holy', something before it was like the way it is now. It is like the tourist day of the year, the show for the tourists to show all the people 'that's culture'. Like 'folklorique' dance everywhere in the word, it's seen as something of the past. It says, '200 years ago, we used to dance like this,' and you see all the costumes. This idea of folklore like a theatre. I don't know, maybe in France folklore is the whole dance of Louis XVI and everything", he made mocking gestures, "This is folklore, you know? They don't dance like that anymore, and hopefully for everyone's sake. In my comprehension this folklore is not bad, but it is *not* static in the time. And that's why when I think of *folklorique* Haitian, I cannot say it is folklore because it is still alive. For Haiti, the *folklorique* part is not over, it's not over, it's still there."

He explained that there are many people who do not know about or practice *folklorique,* however some people live with it every day. "There are still ceremonies every week in Haiti, in Montreal, wherever there are Haitian people. They are not doing a *folklorique* party, or *folklorique* shows, they are living it like a normal thing. A young person here in Montreal will go to a club to dance to techno songs, to Reggaeton, and everything like that. There are people every day, every week who, are doing the same things but with Vodou songs and rhythms, just like someone who goes to a club to dance. So for me it's not a theatre, it's something alive. And the roots as Khimani told you, it's like the base of everything, the base of the culture. So, if the culture is still alive, that means that the roots are still alive too. If someone uses the word

folklorique to mean an old practice, it is not very well adapted. But the word, it's not a bad word, but the intent behind it is important. Do they have an intent to see this part of culture as an old thing or as a living actual thing?

"So the Folklorique, the Vodou, is like a live culture. It's a culture that is alive. And the role of dance, the role of music is the center of this…During the slavery, the dance and the drumming everything was the only moment when the slaves can be able to express themselves. To be able to choose a little bit. And it was the only moment of creation, the only moment to be able to express themselves, the only moment to be themselves and this I think that this culture permits us to be able to stay who we are. And when we know who we are we cannot impose that are adapted to who we are. Remember at the beginning I was talking to you about the two parts, we can live in this system normally but there's a part of you that is underground. But this underground part is like our roots, your roots, and without roots it's difficult to grow, it's difficult to because we need to hide it in the everyday life. So this, if we don't do this, we don't have a base [similar to the base in a drum rhythm], we don't have roots, we can make money but it [doesn't go very far] and there's some people who understand that. That choose to invest their time into that. To be able to give the possibility to others. To benefit from it. To be able to be strong after our goals, and it's like a diving board."

The people Mika spoke of who push the "roots movement", are stigmatized and alienated from senses of belonging within a mainstream Haitian collectivity in the diaspora and in the homeland, and their claims to Haitian identity are resisted. Because of the hierarchy that defines relationships between 'categories' or collectivities of Haitians and which operate in an exclusionary way in the context of Montreal, the "base" identity Khimani referred to has often been held under the surface or relegated to basements. People adapted subtle code-switching strategies in addition to explicit, context dependent linguistic switches from Creole to French or religious switches from Christian to non-Christian affiliation.

Although the "roots" are rising above ground, into larger venues, participating as creative directors in collaborative events and out of province festivals, the dancers' ideology is still outside the mainstream, and the places they are allowed to freely exist are equally peripheral. The troupe is still unable to separate itself from the "underground" completely, in the perception of others and physically. They still meet challenges and resistance in gaining support from

Haitian-Canadians who reject the *folklorique* and *roots* culture, including the Haitian consulate of Montreal.

Les Racines

Racines was founded in Montreal in 1973 by Haitians who immigrated to Montreal in the 1960s. Today the group consists of 8 women who to different degrees[2], for a variety of reasons, dedicate their lives to performing and teaching *Folklorique* dance. The members of the troupe are invested in continuing a lineage of dances and rhythms given to them by their parents and elders. The troupe "tries hard to highlight all the resources of the Haitian culture. To do so, it uses songs, dances, given rhythms, and the literature of Haitian origin, African origin, and from other islands of the Caribbean" (*Racines* promotional literature).

Gathering to dance has been in the troupe members' lives since birth, and is way of life that they profit from richly. Explaining her relationship to dance and connecting to the percussion, Lisa said, "It's not like it happened at some point in my life. I feel like it's always been there. I was 2 years old and my mom was giving classes and I just upped and danced. I just started imitating her," which many of the children do today, "It was for fun. The following Saturday she said, 'okay, do you want to be part of it?' For me it's normal, it's part of who I am, having at least one time a week with Racines. It used to be once a week and then, obviously, after taking over I get to do 15 times a week," she laughed.

Figure 4

Dancing and sharing the dance with others is important and valuable to the dancers. But also, the continuity of the dances relies on the growth and transmission of the practice, and this depends on changes in perceptions of *roots folklorique* culture.

[2] The dancers' lives outside the studio are directed by their practice. For instance, one dance troupe member said, "I wear snow pants all winter. People look at me funny but I don't care. I can't afford clickety-clack knees"

Michelle, Lisa's mother, was a founding member of Racines among several of her elders. Although it is now a women-run group, *Racines* had many founding men including Georges Rodrigues, Joseph Augustine or Papi Joe, Karl Lévêque, who were Jesuit Priests. Lisa's mother arrived in Canada from Haiti when we was 15. According to Lisa, she began adapting to Quebec and North American life and was putting the culture aside. Michelle's elders became concerned, and as Lisa explained, said "hey, you guys are young. How come you're forgetting your language? How come you don't know these songs? How come you don't know these things? So they decided to just basically gather for fun and just talk about Haiti. Talk about the culture and on and on and that's how basically it got founded."

The name *Racines* refers to a sacred tree, the Mapou, which is like a Baobab. The roots of the tree signify cultural roots and ancestors, which they say trace back to Ginen. In our interview, Eve explained, "In Creole we have something that says, '*Nan Ginen nu sòti*,' which means 'we are from Guinea'. We come from Guinea'. Well that was one of the places. Obviously there are others where Haitians come from, but at that time is was one large place. And it's an expression"

Before *Racines* organized as a dance group, they gathered "for fun and to just talk about Haiti. Talk about the culture" (Lisa in conversation). Khimani explains that they would "discuss politics and everything related to Haiti[3]." Eventually the informal gatherings organized into two dance groups: the adult troupe, *Grand Racines*, and the kids' troupe, *Ti Racines*. Dancing continued around the gathering of families, but became an organized effort to share and practice this embodied knowledge, and transmit it intergenerationally. When the current generation of *Racines* took over, they opened a dance school to the public and have been teaching since 2012. The troupe takes great pride in being over 40 years in operation.

Michelle, Lisa's mother, remained the troupe director when the women took over the creative and performance side of the troupe. She is always in the background at troupe practices, and at performances. "She oversees everything. She overlooks. She's aware. But she let us make our own decisions", Lisa explained.

The troupe members' commitment to *folklorique* dance and roots culture is additional to fulltime jobs and family responsibilities. Dancing is a primary vocation but not financially profitable or sustaining. Today the troupe still holds its classes in the same center, and practice in

[3] The dance events remain a space for this kind of discussion. During a long repos, Khimani stood in front of Rony who, for a long time, spoke in creole fervently about the current Haitian administration and its social impact.

the basement of another[4]. However, over 40 years, *Racines* renown has risen in Montreal, Toronto, Haiti, and in New York City, Miami, and California. The troupe's sense of belonging is deepening along with the increasing freedom to integrate and represent through performance. This rhizomatic growth and the growing connections still meet social resistance and pragmatic challenges which ultimately limit their ability to fully move from the basement.

Sharing, talking, and the pursuit of liberty involves addressing things secular, spiritual, and mundane, discussing the problem of "Vodou", discussions of "colour" privilege, social stratification and hierarchies among different Haitians and Haitian-Canadians, and in what ways they may be able to continue meeting their goals in unequal social, cultural, and professional artistic climates, while at the same time transforming them.

Classes are culturally and socially profitable, but yield only minimal returns financially. Students pay $150 for a semester of classes, $20 extra if they intend to perform in the summer recital, and have a one-time $15 fee for a troupe T-shirt. The *Racines* school revenue collected in *Racines'* bank account supports towards the school and the troupes' professional pursuits. It covers the instructors' overhead costs, such as purchasing costumes, renting performances halls, and paying maestro *tanbouye* Rony and *tanbouye* Mika. Instructors do not receive salaries, nor do the accompanying percussionists. However, when the troupe is paid for a performance, they split the income between dancers and percussionists.

The cost of the *Racines'* dance classes is less than most professional dance instruction in Montreal, sometimes by nearly half. Their intent is to keep it affordable, accessible, but still be able to support the goals of the troupe and school. Luckily, the financial cost of running the school is relatively low. A longstanding agreement with the *Centre Communitaire* grants them free use of the recreation space. The troupe practice centre, owned by Michelle, is also given to them at no cost.

Indeed, a component of *Racines* is business, but profit exists in multiple forms. Business is a secondary beat underlying the base of rich cultural and social benefit which seems to excitedly take precedence over the economic product.

[4] The troupe members', The Girls' commitment to Folklorique dance and Roots culture is additional to fulltime work and full family lives. Dancing is a primary vocation but not financially profitably nor a means of making a living. The practice of gathering and dancing has been a part of their lives since birth, and a way of life which they profit from richly in other ways. The dancers hold value in the act of dancing and sharing it with others.

The Practice

Though *Racines* advertises themselves as *dance folklorique,* this by definition is inseparable from a "roots" tradition. The title of "folklorique" intended to differently frame their practice, making it more palatable, inoffensive, and enables it to enter into otherwise unavailable spaces. Specific dance forms and *tambour* rhythms such as *Gédé, Bonda, Ibo, Arenyen, and Yanvalou* indicate their *roots* "base". Using *folklorique* to describe the dances and dance culture is an attempt aims to override negative connotations of "roots", to reclaim the relationship between *folklorique,* roots, and Vodou, and to create a space for existence and expression.

Racines dance lineage is *roots folklorique*, expressing *roots* culture to varying degrees depending on the framing of an event, or the creative desire of the instructors. When referring to Haitian folklorique dance (without roots), it typically means a conservative, secularized, very theatrical version of the dances; ones that feels washed of its origins, rhythmic and cultural, and according to Khimani, "the kind that is very much on 4/4 time. Da - da –da –da," with little improvisation, formulaic. As Mika describes, folklore is attached to tradition. Tradition used here connotes authenticity and Ingold and Hallam's notion of an inert tradition, that which as a concept has been problematized, but which has also been used strategically in acts of preservation, such as with Sardana dances of Catalonia and Hopi dances (Reed 1998; Peterson-Royce 2002). Though *Racines'* version of the dances are described as theatrical, their *roots folklorique* is unashamedly connected to roots in Vodou. The Vodou in *roots folklorique* is apparent in the polyrhythmic drum base, its impassioned character, and its claim to and proclamation of the same political, stylistic, philosophic, and political territory as Vodou dances. This does not render *roots folklorique* a "ritual" or mystical dance form, and let us remember not to conflate the term Vodou, as I use it throughout this text, with the misinformed colonial term. The participants use the shorthand "folklorique" to refer to their dance style, connoting a roots connection. When discussing conservative "folklorique" dance, or when mentioning it in relation to roots, they've made notable distinction. Following their lead, throughout the text the terms *folklorique* and *roots folklorique* will be used interchangeably, unless otherwise indicated

Folklorique rhythms and dances and those in Vodou dancing differ in the rhythmic speed, type of stylistic and social formality, relationship of dancers to spectators, and the intentions of dancing and the dance context. Vodou dancing may be described as sacred,

"for sacred purposes," and *folklorique* dancing as for theatrical/expositional purposes. Individuals and institutions that challenge Roots culture fail to make a distinction between *folkorique* and Vodou dance events and dancing, and because of this conflation, direct their condemnation of a misconceived notion of Vodou towards *folklorique* dance practice. These valuations are themselves complex phenomena with roots in, not exhaustively, colonization, hierarchies of enslaved groups[5], revolution and the abolishment of slavery, and the identities and relations that arose during this historical period.

There are specific ways of distinguishing Vodou dance and *folklorique* dance, even though they share a cultural and rhythmic foundation – those I will focus on are the social, somatic, and stylistic.

Vodou dancing is not primarily an aesthetic performance but rather a personal and collective experience, and the collective may involve other living beings, ancestors, or spirits. Dances and rhythms "become Vodou" by, for instance, their use in particular ceremonies. Also, an individual may set a particular intention for their personal actions in dancing events and particular movements, therefore changing the experience and role of dance in a given moment. Rhythms for Vodou dance also vary from *folklorique* rhythms. Though in both dance forms, percussion facilitates connection between individuals and between individuals and the spiritual, rhythms for *folklorique* dance support a certain style of performance and aesthetic. During many dance sessions, after a fast, rhythmically complex and layered variation of a certain rhythm, instructor Khimani comments "he played that really roots. *Roots* roots." The more the rhythms resemble Vodou, the more *roots* they become.

My research participants, or collaborators, explain that they are "are dancing the theatrical side. It's more of a theatrical image of the real thing". Vodou, on the other hand, is not primarily an aesthetic performance, but a personal and collective[6] phenomenological encounter with the self, history, and the spiritual world.

Very generally, rhythms and dances (or dance bases) "become Vodou" by their use

[5] Different statuses were ascribed to different "types" of slaves who arrived in the Caribbean at various times, who came from a variety of regions in Africa, and who were thrown into a multitude of dynamic traditions undergoing the ceaseless process of syncretism. These conditions, without linear rationale, were ripe for the development of hierarchies, which resulted in lasting attitudes towards traditions associated with certain groups. I argue that, in part, the exceptionally negative attitudes and intentional forgetting stem from the desire to distance one's identity from torture and dehumanization which may be recalled by the traditions that persevered through the period of violent domination.

[6] The collective may be constituted by other living beings such as ancestors or spirits.

in, or for, particular ceremonies. Also, an individual may have a particular intention or feeling or their personal actions in a dance event or through particular movements, therefore changing the experience and role of dance in a given moment.

Both *folklorique* and Vodou dance and rhythms can facilitate connection between individuals, and between individuals, their bodies, and their internal worlds, and bridge humans with spiritual dimensions. However, rhythms for *folklorique* dance also support an expositional dance aesthetic, playing in speeds that allow synchronicity between dancers, and the refinement of dance gestures that captivate and also coherently tell narratives. Spiritual elements are possible but not necessary consequences. Lisa, one of my dance instructors, commented on ideas surround this, laughing,

> We explain that this is where the dance comes from, what it means, and that what we're doing here is dance. We're not going to fall on the floor. You're not going to go into trance right now, and I mean if you go into trance that's your own business as well. That's you, that's not me doing this. I cannot do this to you.

The phenomenological encounter with self and history is also part of *folklorique* dance and dancing, but connection with spirit is a personalized experience and not necessarily the primary objective of the *folklorique* dances, at least not for the *Racines* instructors.

In addition to reducing the myriad styles and meanings of (non-contemporary) Haitian dance to "traditional" and "Vodou" (Vodou in its misunderstood form), the *folklorique* dancers are stigmatized and condemned by many outside the *roots* and *folklorique* sphere. I came to understand the prevalence of this stigmatization during conversations with a number of Haitian individuals outside of the dance troupe. What sticks out most is my encounter with a friendly young Haitian taxi driver in early spring 2014. After sliding into the back seat, a brief greeting, and determining our route, we fell silent. I attuned to the young man's radio which filled the car with the roll of *Haitian Kreyòl*, a sound which had become familiar to my ears and moved through me like the rhythms of the drum. I asked him about the music and he happily opened a light and amicable conversation about Haiti and Haitian dance. This quality of exchange lasted until I told him about my

involvement with *folklorique* dance and *Racines.* This dragged his smile into a neutral expression. With a deeper, severe tone he insisted that the dances and people *fè mal* (do bad), and in the remaining 10 minutes we spent together his shaking head and oppositional retorts repelled any alternative view or understanding of *Racines.*

Though my experiences were punctuated and brief, certainly not long enough for me to impart lasting changes on deeply entrenched conceptions of *roots* practices, they gave a taste of the challenges faced by the dance troupe. The girls and the guys explained these dynamics, and I had witnessed how they come to life at the main centre for *Racines'* student classes and at their performances. But it wasn't until this taxi ride that I understood the impenetrability of the resistance that closes in on the practices of *Racines.*

Consequently, on account of the socio-political and artistic climate, *Racines* advertises themselves as *danse folklorique,* in the conservative sense. However, we know this by definition is inseparable from a *roots* tradition. The title of '*folklorique'*, or absence of *roots* differently frames their practice, making it more palatable, inoffensive, thus permitting the dancers entry to more social and performance spaces. Yet the specific dance forms and *tambour* rhythms such as *Gédé, Bonda, Ibo, Arenyen, and Yanvalou* indicate the troupe's *roots* "base". By using the term *folklorique* to give exposure to the dances and dance culture, they hope to override negative connotations of *roots*, reclaim and valorize the relationship between *folklorique, roots*, and Vodou, and give this heritage liberty to exist and be expressed.

Although the roots are rising above ground, into larger venues, participating as creative directors in collaborative events and out of province festivals, their ideology is still peripheral to the mainstream, and their practice sites remain the same. The troupe is still unable to separate completely from the underground. They are challenged to gain support from Haitian-Canadians (individuals, organizations, and political figures) who are in resistance to *roots folklorique* and roots culture. This limits the choice of practice and performance venues, and also impacts audience attendance. So long as the Haitian collectivities and mentalities remain divisive and severely exclusionary, *Racines'* ability to rise and expand will be challenged.

Lisa explained that *Racines'* approach to changing minds about *roots folklorique* no longer involves reacting defensively. Rather, the troupe intends to do the tricky dance of power reappropriation through representation. They aim to address the stigmatization of their practices and ways of life by expressing those very practices that are at question. To changes minds

requires presenting their culture, and the humans behind it, involving the tricky footwork of re-appropriating the power of a stigmatized practice using that practice itself.

The Events and the Spaces

The characteristics of dance events are layered. They vary across the contexts of their unfolding, and are a product of the relations and activities by which they are comprised. They may be structured or "formalized", occurring in specified times and places. Events may also be spontaneous and highly informal, when and wherever the body is and is able to move[7] and is inspired to move. Khimani told the story of dressing for work in front of her mirror, and being struck by an idea for a show which she, there and then, had to try out. Moments of spontaneous dance can happen in the lineup at an ice cream booth in Jacmel, Haiti. Impromptu dance can be brought to the public through organized events, such as *Racines'* dance presentation and workshop in a Montreal subway station. Spontaneous dance may also occur in a dance class, where formal instruction or choreography is paused for a moment of improvised movement, such as danced expressions of emotion, of teasing, or exaggerated expressions of how not to dance.

Dance classes rely on rhythms, and the adult classes are normally supported by 1 to 4 regular drummers. In some cases up to 8 percussionists and musicians have been present, and these were guests from the Haitian based *rara* musical ensemble. With more drummers the rhythm is amplified, layered, and complex. This augments the sense, or frequencies, given by the drums. According to my participatory experience and comments of students and instructors, with more drums the space significantly changes. It deepens and trembles with, depending who you ask, excitement, the dynamism of moving bodies and sonic frequencies, and with spirit.

The drummers intermittently chant and sing. Guests may pick up extra instruments that rest around the feet of the drummers. They give us sounds of the cowbell, *grak* (scraper), *kwachi* (a long, textured metal cylindrical tube filled with small rocks that is shaken or scraped), or even a simple rhythm from the small *boula* drum. Visitors don't usually sit idly and watch without at least once tapping foot, swaying a bit to the rhythm, nodding, or humming. The space of music,

[7] Within informal contexts of dance, formality or structure may still exist. This formality relates to movement and gesture governed by a dance discipline. However, there is liberty to play and improvise on the foundation of this dance discipline.

of vibrations, of spirit, and moving bodies that move narratives is captivating, and will bring people on the periphery into the beat and draw them closer the core of the action.

The Students

The majority of the students of *Racines* dances are of Haitian ancestry, with the exception of myself and one middle aged man. Students are invested in the dances to different degrees and for a variety of reasons. For some it is a new recreational activity. Some are continuing lifelong involvement with *Folklorique* dance. Many come to gather with close friends and family. Others are exploring a realm of Haitian heritage that may have been inaccessible, and in some instances forbidden due to stigma and misconceptions of the practice. Some students have never danced before, and some are revisiting forgotten knowledge.

Although *Racines'* activities explicitly engage *roots* culture, the students are not necessarily invested in dances and dance activities beyond personal interest. However, these classes support the troupe and their objectives in myriad ways. *Racines* is situated in a constellation of r*oots* movement activities, which is a phenomenon strengthened by the dances, and which reciprocally offers the dance complex new opportunities to grow.

In this text, and in the field, there is the distinction between student and instructor but it does not connote strict hierarchical relations. "The girls", as the women dance teachers call themselves, emphasize there are "no leaders or chiefs", though with their statuses as *folklorique* dance masters, they are held with esteem and respect by the students. Students rely on them to manage the use of time, and for cues on the feeling of a dance.

Space, place, and time, and the gathering of people and sound are essential parts to creating the dance events. And, importantly, the dancers have to act strategically to find places to perform, and to find time in their lives to practice, teach, and administrate the school. Dance performance and practice both create spaces of liberty and are a reprieve from constraints of dominant North American, and even Haitian, societal and ideological structures that discipline particular expressions.

Dances and Rhythms

Meaningful rhythms and dances, and reasons for dancing, form the *roots folklorique* dance and rhythm complex. The dances are entangled with spirituality, spirits and ancestors, cultural memory and remembering, senses of belonging. Notions of liberation, *libète*, wrap around dances and dance events, permeates *roots* culture, and fuels the future *Racines'* aspired towards.

The playful and profound spaces of *Racines'* dance instruction liberate our experiences to become knowledge of the body, and knowledge deeply in the body, in the laughing belly, and in tired muscles that keep on moving.

Folkorique dances, and their particular style in the *Racines' roots* lineage, involve embodying and emoting the feeling of characters and narratives. We may become a warrior (usually female), war itself, prayer, elements such as the ocean or air, animals, historical figures, or the *Lwa* (divinities) associated with the rhythms.

"Take your time" is a frequent admonition of the dance instructors to the students, and an essential skill for mastering the dances. Movements should not be rushed, but rather make full use of the length of the corresponding beat or rhythm sequence.

Dances may be a melange of abstract and literal imagery, feelings, and also invoke particular values. For example, danced gestures of breaking chains that tie crossed wrists and tightly bound feet are literal signs of moving from slavery to *libète*. The gestures too are affective, experienced in the dancer as a feeling of *libète.* They represent the contemporary project of liberation; movement for racial emancipation and also freedom for *roots.*

The following lists the dances and rhythms I became familiar with in my fieldwork.

Dance Types	
Petwo (Petro)	A rhythm and dance of war, specifically the warring of the slave uprising. It is a "fiercely defiant dance" (Daniel 2005:114) and rhythm with which the slaves of Saint Domingue achieved liberation. It is associated with the color blood red.
Nago	A rhythm and dance of war and associated with *Ogou* Jean Paul Nago, a spirit of power, fire, strength, and defense.
Ibo	The rhythm and dance of *libète* (liberation), and *kraze chenn yo* (breaking the chains). This dance is a particularly interesting form because it is both a component of a liberating practice but also is a potent and explicit

	narrative of liberation that, through its enactment, enhances the affectivity of *libète*. This aligns with notion of freedom as the practice of aspiring towards freedom. According to Daniel's (2005) research, Ibo dance "reinforces the reputation of defiant and courageous Ibo ancestors, now Haitian *lwas.*" (114)
Dahomey	A dance and rhythm of the women's warrior tribe, Dahomey. The intention is being at war, defending your rights, territory, and tribe. This is danced only by women.
Mayí	A warrior dance and rhythm parallel to Zépòl. Mayí is characterised by jumping and popping motions, and lifted, high kneed steps that Daniel (2005) describes as "foot slapping" (112). According to the troupe, it is an emancipation dance. The Girls typically transition from the introspective Yanvalou to the extroverted Mayí.
Zépòl	A warrior dance and rhythm parallel to Mayí. Zépòl, meaning shoulders, emphasises a continuous, rapid forward-backward shoulder movement. Compared to Mayí, Zépòl movements are rigid and controlled.
Zarenyen (*danse de l'araignee*)	The dance of the spider is danced in honour of the divinity *Gédé Zarenyen*, said to crawl and sting like a spider.
Djumba and Djapit	Djumba dance enacts the work life of the *paysans* and portrays sowing seeds and harvesting plants. Dancers interact theatrically with one another in a choreography, expressing sharing hard work. This dance is typically followed by the playful Djapit*,* a loose and playful dance portraying the *paysans* letting-loose after a workday.
Yanvalou	A spiritual and meditative dance and rhythm for prayer, introspection, and connecting with the spiritual realm. The name Yanvalou comes from the Fon language, and means "I beg of you" (Danielle 2005:111).
Mascarone	A modification of any rhythm that quickens the speed and enlivens the character of a dance.
Banda	A dance and rhythm associated with sexuality, womanhood, fertility, death, rebirth, and the divinity *Gédé*.
Paragol	A rhythm and dance of the ocean, water, prayer, introspection, and spirituality.
Woangol	Woangol is a rhythm and dance for the spirit(s) of the sea and air. According to Khimani, the movements are meant to take you to a different dimension. These movements resemble those of Parigol, with smooth, gliding arm gestures that resemble pushing through water or against the force of the wind.
Rara and Raboday	These dances and rhythms are today associated with Carnival, known and practiced as travelling performances by musicians and dancing spectators. Historically Rara and Raboday had a double meaning. On the one hand, they appeared as (and possible were the experience of) the slaves' celebration; on the other hand, a façade of celebration veiled the slaves' plans for insurrection. In Saint Domingue, some slaves often spent their one day of rest to travel from county to county to pass messages, and as Khimani elaborated, "Get ready at *telle heure, telle period.* They were having fun in front of the masters, but had a mission behind it all." (Khimani in conversation)

	The distinction between Rara and Raboday reflects the above mentioned distinction between *roots* and *folklorique.* Raboday is light, with elevated, hopping movements, and near verticality. The feeling associated with this dance is playful. Raboday is not as profound as Rara, according to The Girls. Rara is akin to *roots,* in affectively and aesthetically. Rara dances have deeper pliés, flatter feet, and a sense and appearance of being anchored to the ground. The dancers explain that they feel more centered and introspective when they dance on the Rara rhythm. This dance, The Girls say, comes more from the core, from within.
Congo	A dance and rhythm of the Congo Nationhood –a sensual dance and rhythm associated with flirtation, beauty, and love. Congo emphases "socialibility and congeniality, as well as fertility [...] and seduction" (Daniel 2005:113).
Affranchi	A dance that originated from imitation of European court dances by "freed creole [Africans]" of Saint Domingue (Daniel 2005:109), said to be the only dances this population as allowed to do publically. They can be described as European ballroom dances with African dance accents, or African dance knowledge "applied to European music and dance structure" (ibid). In some cases these dances are considered to mock the customs of the colonial rulers.

The Girls are differently knowledgeable about the histories and meanings of the dances. Khimani and Fabi explain that they are learning increasingly more about the dances as they dance. Historical and embodied meaning deepen as they grow and mature in their dance careers. They crave to fill knowledge gaps by researching amongst peers, elders, and other dancers in the *roots folklorique* Haitian dance network.

Over time, The Girls' relationships with certain dances have changed. While their understanding of a dance and its roots grows, how their body moves in the dance also transforms. Khimani says, "What I've learned in the process is I've become much more grounded with the dances and with who I am. Basically we evolved with dancing. When I was a kid I didn't dance *Yanvalou* the way I do it now. I never wanted to do it, and never felt it the way I do now. Because I didn't understand it."

Khimani reminded me that, "whatever you are doing, you have to understand it", and evoked the example of Banda:

> Remember when we did Banda and said it's connected to womanhood? If you're not balanced at that level you will feel uncomfortable dancing it. If you cannot assume your womanhood, if you haven't understood what that means yet, you'll feel uncomfortable doing Banda. When we were kids I hated it. But there was one partner of mine, she was 9 and we were the same age and we danced together for two years. She was good. She

could dance Banda whenever. The adults would comment on how good she was. I'd say, 'you're good, sure, but I'm not ready for that'. With the exception of your class, today, I would never lead a class of Banda for kids or adults. You've got three men in front of you playing…that's a lot to ask of your students if you don't know where they are coming from.

The dancers have a dynamic relationship with *roots folklorique* dance complex. Also, their relationships specific dance forms are personal and change over time. As we move through different rhythms we notice what "her dance" is, we feel our own dance, or we hear from the instructors "I think you found your dance!" We encounter what, at the time, we connect with most. The dancers' bodies, attitudes, and comfort levels change with dancing, and as Khimani would say, the more they learn to listen to the messages in the dance.

Chapter 3- Embodiment in Dance: *Connecting with the drums is how we emancipate ourselves*

Introduction

Racines' dance *folklorique* is an embodied practice involving kinesthetic learning, and transmitting techniques, affects, and sounds. It also involves the technical, emotional, and stylistic attuning to the drum – one of the voices in the Haitian *folklorique* dance conversation, considered the heartbeat of dance that evokes memories and invokes spirits. Embodied knowledge and automatisation (mimesis transformed to kinesthetic consciousness) (Downey 2010:S26) support the embodiment of, and play with, that which the rhythm suggests and communicates; the literal and sensual narratives in dance. These create conversations and ways of being (in the) body that are at once technical, creative, and productive. When dancing becomes an embodied skill, a practice of "flow" rather than reflection, it then gives way to embodying *roots*. It is a "way" that also takes Hahn's sense of the word: both a muscular and sensory acculturation, as well as a spatial-temporal "way", meaning:

> a manner, path, or practice of active *attendance* to particular sensory inputs. Embodiment of 'sensational knowledge' is 'the way' we consume experience to grow as individuals and as members of a community (Hahn 2007:171).

There is a wide variety of rhythms, senses, characters, and narratives to attend to and take in in the *roots folklorique* dance complex; much "sensational knowledge" that awaits the hands of the percussionist or the dancers' swoops and gesturers. This variety resembles the host of *Orixas* that Browning discusses (1995), or the Haitian divinities in Vodou (Ramsey 1997; Daniel 2005). The array of rhythmic identities inform kinesthetic memory, and also inform spectators about histories and contemporary circumstances through "realistic mimetic gestures [or] movement [styles] that [are] only abstractly representational", (Hahn 2007:479).

For some of the dancers, embodiment in dance is a spiritually meaningful skill of listening, or receiving. Khimani says,

> *Je suis danseuse. Je suis le canal qui fait passer le message. C'est aux autres d'avoir l'esprit ouvert et libre afin de recevoir et comprendre ce message.* (I'm a dancer. I'm the channel who passes the message. It is for others to have the open mind and to receive and understand this message).

The concept of being a channel accompanies flow, and can be considered part of the embodiment phenomena for the experienced dancer. The ability to open minds, their own and others, by dancing is key for *Racines;* opening minds to the dance culture by letting in dance. Embodiment and flow also affords moments to reposition oneself *vis-à-vis* the surrounding cultural-political situation and in relation to 'homeland', or Haiti.

Embodiment of rhythms takes a very real physiological change. To allow this practice inside of us relied on the reconfiguration of our bodies to accommodate deep *pliés*, serpentine undulations and torso bends, round or choppy shoulder accents. Embodiment and automatization also means soreness, exhaustion, on the way to progressive mastery. While we embody the narratives affectively (the feelings, the characters), our bodies must also move around to express embodied affective qualities. In addition, this rigorous process of embodying new dance movements reconfigures our relationships to self and those practicing with us. At the same time that there is an affective embodiment of the rhythms, there a real physiological and emotional embodiment and automatization that changes our bodies and corporeality.

Dancers experience varied subjective levels of connectivity in lessons, and muscle and emotional memory can connect dancers. Physical proximity and shared relationships to rhythms changes how we feel and move in the rhythms. For example, Whitney and I danced the Parigol together in the student recital. With sweat-drenched effort and sore muscles, our training spanned many weeks. Now when the rhythms flood our dance room, we synchronise with one another. We share knowing glances, smiles, and exchange soft words about our deep love of how Parigol *feels* to us, in us. We dance closer to one another, and with heightened proximity and the feeling of corporeal and phenomenological synchronization, the dance experience changes. We move through this dance differently, especially beside one another. Could it be our deep familiarity with the dance and with each other? Does our advanced embodied knowledge allow us to attune to one another in this way? Whatever the case, we locate ourselves differently with this rhythm and our bodies move not by thought, but by emotion and muscular memory, without a thought.

The closer I am to my instructor the more I attune to her body's movement and the feelings she dances, and this synchronisation seems to improve my ability to dance. It also enhances my experience dancing. Beside Khimani, Lisa, or Eve, my body is different. Nearer to their well-practised, energetic bodies, I move harder and with more strength. My bends are deeper and my knees are higher in every jump. I am drawn into and pick up their intensity and

dynamism. In these moments, what we are told to feel from the rhythm I feel surge through me, even for one beat, with a force that pales in comparison to times practising alone in my bedroom or from the back of the class. For the dancers who have practised together for a long time, these connections change the process and experience of embodiment, of the feeling of their bodies in the dance.

Sometimes, however, the proximity has the opposite effect, and dancing in front of a line of 30-40 year old male percussionists can be a cause of discomfort during the learning process, particularly when doing movements that may be perceived as sexual or sensual expression of the body, for example The Jocelyn (straight legged, bent over, moving backwards with a slight hip movement), or moves in the Congo dance which is, itself, a dance of flirtation and enticement. Some of the younger dancers, and myself I admit, have been intimidated in these situations, sometimes standing purposefully behind another student, so as not to be seen learning moves for the first time – first coming to articulate bodies in a certain style, or becoming familiarized with new techniques.

We can see the power in the embodiment and effect of dance as it is shared over time, in close relationships and close practicing with one another. Sharing time and space, participating in intersubjective corporeal and phenomenological experience, influences the embodied experience and phenomenology of the dance.

Joann Kealiinohomoku says, "affective culture is reflective *of* a culture, and also instrumentally affecting *to* the culture. It must be a *sine qua non* of culture change theory that change and affective culture are linked" (1979:48). *Folklorique* dance be discussed in these terms. *Folklorique* dance, as affective culture, is communicatory and instructional through "realistic mimetic gestures [or] movement style that is only abstractly representational," (Hahn 2007:47). It conveys, and seeks to evoke in the dancer and spectator, senses of the narratives, of history and present situation. At the same time the dances, as mentioned previously, intend to shape outsiders' understanding of their culture.

The embodied elements of dance events and the experience of embodiment in dances are the affective culture of *Racines'* dances, or the "cultural manifestations that implicitly and explicitly reflect the values of a given group of people through consciously devised means that arouse emotional responses and strongly reinforce group identity" (Kealiinohomoku 1979:48). This affective culture, a key in the sociality of *Racines* (see chapter 4), is comprised of the

rhythmic, sonic, stylistic, and creative tendencies of *Racines*, and relies on the continuity of tradition. Affect in performance is essential, and we might even say essential to its success. As Fabi says, "the audience needs to believe you, and believe that you believe in what you are doing." The embodiment of character is essential to this, and is internally and externally affective.

The dancers and percussionists experience embodiment as an immediate phenomenon, the immediate effervescent effects of vibrations, and the affordances of these are in many cases lasting effects or change. There is the movement of rhythmic vibrations through the body, which as several informants emphasized, are effective physically, emotionally, and spiritually. For Rony, "When you play drums something comes at you. Your soul, your body, your…everything becomes different." The student Leanne said, "Dancing brings me back to reality, to knowing that not everything is misery[8], and it's something that you can share. The relationship with the drum, it's sharing. You're sharing this music and I'm giving you the dance." Troupe member Thia had similar feelings, saying "Dancing allowed me not to fall into certain things that are wrong or negative, to stay connected to what's real." She, and troupe member Nadine, say that "dancing allows me to be me." And Khimani says to us, "I want you to learn the movements, I want to see the moves *dance*, dance them. But then I want to see *you* in it. Don't try to be me, not Lisa, not Eve. Let us feel you!" These feelings and physical effects brought through dance become familiar, follow the dancer, becoming part of their body's knowledge, and their way of walking with, and inside, themselves.

This implicates the embodiment of lasting knowledge. The dancers spend much time with the feelings and stories told by the dance, in dancing, and in the rhythms, taking them on and moving them through their bodies. This involves both knowing "where you come from" and remembering the wider history of the particular story you are dancing.

The vibrations created by the tambour are effective as specific sounds that prompt the body to move, but also effective as an invocation or evocation (depending who you ask), of the stories which move recipient of the rhythms to remembrance, thus moving the memories into the present. For instance, the *Petro* is one of several rhythms and dances of *la guerre* (war). And as Browning observes in relation to the Samba dances of Brazil, *folklorique* dance "narrates a story

[8] Many of the Haitian *rara* songs sing of misery, *la misère,* in celebratory tone.

of racial contact, conflict, and resistance, but not just mimetically across a span of musical time, but also syn-chronically, in the depth of a single measure." (1995:2)

Greg Downey complicates the idea of music perception in his (2002) article on listening to Capoeira, and he suggests that, just maybe, a performer "perceives music across the whole epidermal frontier and throughout the nerves, muscles, sinews, and flesh of their bodies…music makers may perceive rhythms, pitches, and melodies as much from muscle and joint placement, motion and tension, as from the sounds produced by their actions." (488). Khimani's instruction style agrees with Downey. We do not think about the movements she shows us, nor can we watch ourselves in a mirror. We are taught not to think about the rhythm. The instructors will often tell us to "*ferme les yeux,* just listen to the drum. Let the drum talk to you." Khimani explains,

> […]From letting it talk to you, everything's going to connect. You don't have to overanalyze. That's why I usually say stop thinking. If you listen to music you're not necessarily thinking. You cannot always think about what the words are. When you start listening to the words you are not listening to the music and listening to what the message is which is even deeper in the song.

The language we learn is the flick of a wrist cracking a *klak* on the drum skin, it is the three-part beat of the *Parigol* that rocks your body like waves under a paddleboat. The drum language is frequencies, stories, memories, maybe spirits too, which shakes the dance space into being. Khimani "[feels] every beat of the rhythm in [her] body and [she] cannot contain the energy", she has to dance it out. Habituating to the drum's guiding role, and learning to listen with the body, are imperative to the embodied learning of *Racines'* dances.

Rhythms of dance

I know that we are a people born of many cultures bound together by the glue of our African heritage. I know of the many battles we have fought. I know of the many injustices we have endured. But is that all we are? A sequence of events? We are more than that. There is something deep that draws us to flow together like the waves crashing against our shores. I don't have the words for it. I don't need words for it. It is in the rhythm of the drums of our roots. It is

traces in the vévé lines. It is shouted in the market place. It is tasted in sugarcane, mangoes, and kasav.

My identity is not my passport. My identity is filled with the love my mother put into every meal. My identity hangs on every word of the profound proverbs my father passed to me. My identity is deep in the roots of the mountains, in the rivers flowing down to the crystalline waters through which you can almost see Ginen anba dlo. My identity is steady in the roots of te pye zanmann. My identity is Ayisyen. It is not bound by the colors of the flag, but by the rhythms of my life.

This passage was given to me by one of my participants, PZulu, who regularly contributes to an online blog. This is an excerpt of a larger text that reflects on the tensions of being Haitian outside of Haiti. PZulu's words aptly represent the metaphorical use of drums and rhythm in discourses and reflections on living as Haitian and connecting to what many of my participants described as a deeply internal Haitian identity.

Drums are important functional, musically productive objects, and their rhythms are essential for creating beat, time, and the basic feeling of a dance. However, as PZulu's words suggest, drums are much more. In Haitian dance culture, the drum metaphorically and literally links people to history, to ancestors and spirits, to water, mountains, trees, and earth, and one human to another. The drum invites spirits and its rhythm brings bodies into movement of dance or non-dance; that which is choreographic, political, creative, revolutionary. It moves bodies through challenges, failures, and successes. For *Racines,* when the drum resounds through the body, the body responds in movement. Drum rhythms also stand for the way the bodies move, and a certain embodied character (e.g. *Yanvalou* refers to a rhythm, but also to a dance. When one '*Yanvalou's'* a movement, they are harnessing the characteristic of the rhythm and dance into a particular type of movement, dance or even non-dance, through space)

Sound and rhythm are the heart of dance. To *Racines* and in the larger roots movement, rhythm is considered the heart of the revolution, the heart of their culture. Where there is a *Racines* dance event there most often are drummers or the sound of percussion. Before meeting eyes with anyone, sharing words, or seeing bodies in motion, the senses first engage the sound of the *tanbou.* Countless times that I have sought out an event or practice, the location has usually been identifiable sonically. The first indications of the troupe's presence are voices,

reverberating punching beats, sliding "wee-ooo" sounds, or the cacophonous and chaotic sound of arranging and tuning the drums. These sounds inscribe and ascribe space in a way that today is familiar to my flesh and bones.

Entering the Centre Communitaire, I would be greeted by the sound of a tambour tuning up, the *tanbouye* (drummer) practicing rhythms, or playback from a stereo. Then I would see the percussionists in their regular spot at the far end of the room hovering around the drums. With relaxed diligence, they were tuning drums with wrenches or wooden mallets, setting up chairs, sometimes cutting avocado or eating another snack off the taut surface of the drum skin. There has been laughter, chatter, or even sombre conversation in a melange of *Kreyòl*, French, English, and an occasional Spanish word thrown in with theatrical flavour. Women may be seated with cellphones in hand, or walking around the room. Children are always present. Older ones pay close attention to the adults or play among one another while the younger ones dart back and forth across the room, sometimes in laughter, sometimes in tears.

Drummers

Drummers, or *tanbouyes* understand themselves as the ground of dance. They provide the floor of dance which is also perceived as a 3 dimensional space inviting and sustaining frequencies, movements, spirits, and stories. The drum calls them into the world and into the body. The drum calls bodies into space as well, meaning the drum will invite individuals to enter a corporeal, mental, or emotional experience of the rhythm. The degree to which an individual is open to the rhythm's calls, to feeling the rhythm, letting it speak to them, and then responding is a matter of will and experience. The greater an individual is kinaesthetically and cognitively familiar with the how and why of engaging the rhythm, the better they can connect with the rhythm and then dance (or play the drum).

One of the percussionists, Rony, explains:

> Spiritually, when we play drum, we're delivering something. I can say drumming for me is a thing that cannot compare to playing other instruments. It's different. So when you play drums something comes to get you. Your soul, your body, your…look? […]

> Everything comes different. Drumming is magic. That's all I can say…[and] you have to choose to *play* drums. That's the different thing between beating a drum or playing the drum. You can beat a drum. But playing drums is different…The drum is an instrument who is made by skins, animal skins. So if you hit the drum it's going to sound different than while you play it. So when you beat your drum somebody feels [read: gets the sense that] you beat something. Somebody sees you beating something. But when you play, somebody see you are playing it. That's the thing, they are different things and feelings. Me I don't say I beat the drum. I don't want to beat the drum. Because the drum lives in my heart…I play the drum.

Another percussionist, Mika, tapping his tea cup with a spoon to demonstrate, said, "You see how it reacts? You see the circles? It's like when you drop something in water and it makes circles like that. I think that is the role of music." He took my notebook and drew an example using the concept of waves and vibrations. The vibration creates a sound wave, and a change in vibration changes the characteristics of the wave as the water illustrated, "when you change the vibration the space between [the circles], the regularity, the irregularity, the water completely changes." Given that our bodies are largely made out of water, he rationalized, "our body reacts the same way to the vibration of the sound as water does." Continuing to explain the relationship of this to the drum, Mika underscored that the tools humans use to sense, understand, and create feeling in the head and the body. The vibration lets you feel the drum. The rhythms, the drums "generate vibrations that affect directly the body. And after a certain amount of time all the parts of your body will vibrate at the same frequency, at the same type as the drums". To begin with, he explains, the vibration passes through or is embodied, but afterwards the frequency of the body expands in reaction to the vibrations. Eventually,

> all [one's] cells will vibrate at a frequency. And when the body will vibrate at the same frequency as the drums, then the body will be at the equivalent frequency to be able to feel [what is conveyed by the drum]. It will be at the same channel, the same frequency to be able to start to learn something. And the rhythms are not made randomly. There is a science behind this. A traditional science. And we need to know that there is a science behind the creation of the rhythm. It's not like in the morning the men say, 'Oh, we will

do it like this'. No, it's very deep. But when the body is at the same frequency than the drum, the rhythm *Yanvalou* or *Petro* for example, and also the role of the *kasé,* has an effect. To be able to change the state and to receive some information. Our role is not to tell people what to think. I think we need to respect their intellect and give them the tools to experiment by themselves with this reality. So for me after some experiences I tried [conceive of] of conferences, theoretical approaches, but I think that we need to do it from an esoteric, a Vodou, a cultural way of understanding Vodou, a social way of understanding Vodou. But when we talk about Vodou, the thing behind the word [read: the practice and beliefs behind connotations] we need to understand it with the body. And the music is the only way to go in that direction because the Vodou is created with the music. Music and the Vodou, the same thing[9][…] So, for me, playing drums, doing music, it's to give the possibility to other people to experiment by themselves. 'Okay, today I have this feeling. I have this idea. I felt this way, this way.' Their body, their mind is open to receive information. And that's a way to go in, a way of learning. It's not like a teacher would say, 'Life is like that, life is like that'. It's the modest way of giving the human being the possibility to learn by himself. This is a way to open up the body to receive information.

And that's why, you know the trance phenomenon, from my understanding it's when the body becomes at the same level as the drums. The body and the drum is the same. It's at this moment that the mind can go away to let the body do its thing. And it's what we call…healing. The healing is to be able to let the body do its things. And when we have tensions, you have some things on our minds that are not good, we keep them with us during days, weeks, years and it will develop in malady, you will become sick, and the doctor will tell you 'okay, take that pills, or that things, or that things' but what happens is it's not, he wasn't able to throw away this tensions. You didn't have the possibility to express yourself, to clean. Cleansing, yeah. And what's good with the dance and the trance, when the people talk about the healing power of Vodou and traditional therapy, it's the key, the possibility for the body to rearrange his interior, his mind, his body, and throw away bad things. You know trance when the people would start…it's a

[9] Dance and Vodou is also inseparable. Many dance styles are used in Vodou ceremonies. The difference is in their application. In non-'ceremonial' contexts, the dances are not necessarily aimed at connecting to spirits although this is often an outcome. (see chapter 2).

> good way to clean your head. And that's why a person would say 'I don't remember'. It's because his mind was gone and the body was taking control. And the body knows what you need to do. For me the drums, it's to be able to protect and then teach. Protect a knowledge and you use it to help others.

Further, echoing Rony's position, Mika states that his role and goal is to be able to connect the human being with the invisible. The empirical and spiritual perspectives can conceptually coexist, and do for these drummers and also The Girls. However, what transcends the definition of rhythm's force is a mutual understanding of its path and impact. In Mika's words, the "action-reaction".

A reciprocal relationship exists between the dancing body and the percussing body, between the maker of rhythm and those who dance on that rhythm, and between the rhythms and the movements. These rhythms also make a clear base to dance on and articulate specific movements and narratives, therefore helping clearly communicate them to one another, to the self, and to spectators. Rhythm gives foundation to the dancing body and also inspires it, prompting recall of a repertoire of moves and the stories the dances convey. They form a malleable template with which to replicate or improvise with these bases. Rhythmic exchange is crucial in *Racines'* dance practice, and the occasional absence of drummers leaves a piercing void. Recorded music is a pale alternative, and it is tricky to find tracks that accurately replicate rhythm and emotion.

Dance practices on recorded music are useful for blocking, but are not ideal for creation or rehearsing character dramatization. Because the dances find their life and meaning heightened in drum-dancer reciprocation, in the experience of sharing (*pataje*) and talking (*pale*) with live rhythm and rhythm producers, only time to time will it work to rehearse one side of the conversation.

Just as dancers have a repertoire of rhythms and movements, the percussionists must also develop a repertoire of rhythms and dances. This facilitates clear and rich communication between dancers and drummers. It also supports rich dance instruction. A wide repertoire lets the drummers switch rhythms easily, for instance from *Petwo* to *Nago* to *Dahomey*, at the dancers' request.

Drummers must also be comfortable in manipulating the rhythms to accommodate learning, slowing them down or quickening them. Many times we have taken the rhythm down to ¾ or ½ time so that we could more easily learn difficult steps or sequences. This is more feasible during a Saturday class where the technique stays truer to the instructors' pedagogical approach of "taking time".

Drums

I paused my hand's rhythmic movements on the drum which, I thought, were much like the foot's patterns moving through a choreography. My hands rested flat against the drum skin, positioned to anticipate the 'bas' beat. Rony introduced a new set of lyrics to the Nago chant, the call of our call-and-response dialogue. These songs can be layered, comprised of many different strata of vocals. His deep, baritone voice reverberated through the room, but it also thrust through the drum's body and up through its skin and into my hands. It was not a steady, monotonous vibration, but vibrations that followed the song and changes in his voice. His song was in my hands, translated into the voice of the drum. It made me wonder just how the body responds to the voices and rhythms thrusting through it. Thinking with both Mika's empirical scientific rationale and Rony's spiritual explanation, I considered just what inspires and propels these rhythmic movements and vocals. Khimani emphasised paying close attention to the drum's different sounds and signals. These variations, which those of us in the tanbou course understand technically and kinaesthetically, correspond to how the body should move. The drum tells you when to begin, bellows for your down rhythm, suspends the 'and', and throws your body into accent and stylization. With Rony's song moving through my hands, spoken by the drum, I felt how the drum moves through your body. How it moves you. (Fieldnotes – November 18, 2014)

Yvonne Daniel's (1995) work on Cuban Rumba pays close attention to the same elements of a dance class that I have found to be important for *Racines.* She describes the surrounding sounds and gestures as having a "powerful rhythmic contagion" (1995:6); how the percussive frequencies in small practice halls and the largest performance venues penetrate the dance space and move cells, limbs, and spirits into the corporeal expression of rhythm.

Each of the drums used in practices and performances are distinct from one another, made of different materials, traced with different colours and designs, some tied with rich green or red silken fabrics. Each drum has a unique history that forms its character which is respected like a human person's life story. Some drums were brought from Haiti, others were bought in Canada or the United States, and they all have travelled many distances with the drummers. I have observed and been taught the subtle difference between each of their sounds, which are much like variations in chorus voices only noticeable when heard individually. Each has a distinct and valued personage which contribute unique resonances to the circle or line of rhythmic production.

Figure 5

Most drums are made of hardwood and animal skins, but some are partly synthetic. They may have a Kevlar drumhead fasted with metal attachments. I have not learned the significance of these differences in terms of ceremony and sound production. No matter their composition, all drums are subjects, understood as live presences. Each takes on a rhythmic role and rhythmic identity in a song. The roles have names and may also be given numbers corresponding to the centrality of each rhythm in a song. The head, *tete,* or *manman tanbou* is drum 1, the *segon tanbou* (second drum) is 2, and the smaller *boula* is 3. Each resound differently, giving depth/layer to the floor of dance.

Two families, or nation of drums which encompass the *manman, segon, and boula,* and are associated with different nations. Rada drums are the "African drums", or drums from the Rada nation (Daniel 2005:113). They are meant to play the Rada rhythms, those originating from the Dahomey territory that is now West Africa. Petro drums, or drums from the Petro nation, are meant to play the rhythms that were created or adapted in Saint Domingue. Though drummers

can play any rhythm on any drum, following the drums' designation is ideal, creating the right rhythm "flavour" for dancing.

During a tambour class, Rony calls us to "play mama" and this directive has several meanings; play a specific drum and play a specific beat. The verb "play" is critical. When asking Rony about the role of drums, he emphasized that "you have to choose to play drums." There is an important difference between beating and playing a drum and Rony "never beats the drum," he emphasized. He plays it.

Among percussionists there is certainly a variety of personal meanings for approaching the drum in play rather than with the force of beating. However, there is a collective understanding of this in the context of my research that I have learned from The Girls and The Guys (the drummers). The drum was once several living presences: tree, animal, and the work of the drum crafter. In drum form, modified tree flesh and animal skin, it becomes yet another presence; a synthesis of its past forms and also ancestral spirit, which is given a home in the materials and on the frequencies the materials produce. The intention behind one's engagement with the instrument will change how it sounds, how it is received, and how the body moves with it. Rony explains, "if you hit the drum it's going to sound different than if you play it. So when you beat your drum somebody feel you beat something. Somebody sees you beating something. But when you play somebody sees [you're playing it]…I don't want to beat the drum. Because the drum lives in my heart."

I understood the personhood of the drum and the depth of its importance only when I accidently disrespected one during a pre-dance class *tanbou* course. I sat down in an empty chair, the first I was drawn to. Drums and seats are never assigned. I was asked, however, to switch to a different drum for reasons that were not grave but which I never fully understood. In the spirit of dance and the joviality of the group I was propelled to swing my leg over the drum rather than walk around it. When I dropped into the new seat across from Rony, he stared at me with a wide, kind smile. He asked me never to do that again, a stern message that contrasted starkly with his relaxed posture and tone. I had "crossed" the drum, crossing over it and also vexing it. This action would have consequences on fertility and sexuality. The discussion and jokes about "blocking your *kuka*" carried through the entire hand *chauffement.* We rapidly rubbed our palms together, flapped and clapped loose hands, and rotated wrists in laughter and satirical theorization of the transgression's implications. This mistake, and the joke, were not left in that

day's drum circle but followed me into the next dance class. The experiences shared around the drum and in dance build bonds and stories on top of previous stories which form historical and familial foundations. These past and present stories are transmitted like the steps and sounds of *Racines'* dance. Experiences in dance and drumming events, and of dancing and drumming, create a dynamic continuity of friendship carried through week after week, and some lasting generations.

The rhythm, played and danced in the work of *Racines,* has been carving a larger space for the people and culture of Roots and *danse folklorique* in Montreal. Rhythms and dance also encourage movement toward the unification of diverse groups of the Haitian diaspora, and between individuals and history, beginning with confrontational or even conflictual dialogue, beginning with spoken or performed responses to misunderstandings of who they are and what they are doing. Making space for dances relies on acceptance and integration of the *folklorique* culture in the broader Haitian consciousness.

Shouting over the Drum – *Stop thinking!*

Dance instruction begins with *chauffage* (warm up). Khimani, or another instructor, calls "*ont commence!"* Students and instructors form a circle facing one another, and the drummers start to play. We stretch rhythmically, warming our muscles and attuning to the dancer-drum dialogue. We do simple movements that do not ask much attention to form nor complex coordination of body parts, but rather those that help us loosen the comportments and corporealities imposed by daily life. Khimani directs us with her body, counting to *une à huit*. After this, we move into a cardio element.

During the learning process there is a degree of tolerance for reflection. But after the introduction of a move, Khimani tells us to stop "*reflechi",* to stop thinking. We must think with the body, not with the head, listen to the rhythm, let it speak to us and move us. We must feel the movements and let our bodies remember the feeling of moving through and against space. If we think the moves into movement or think through the moves, we block the song and dance of the drum and of the body. This fundamental principle in *Racines'* dances is not unique but is shared in other practices of the body, rhythmic, aesthetic, sportive, and playing instruments. The bridge

between the cognitive and kinesthetic is not a dichotomy but a dialogue, and one expressed in a particular corporeal dialect. This is articulated nicely by Barbara Browning:

> Our frequent admonition – stop thinking and dance – isn't to say that the motion is unthinkable. It's to say that the body is capable of understanding more things at once than can be articulated in language. One has no choice but to *think with the body"* (1995:13).

To follow from this and use it to bolster Khimani's constant reminder, we cannot dance from a cognitive place, using the same synapses and processes in vocal or written articulation. From this place the brain and body struggle to hold and execute complex rhythms and movements simultaneously. However, when the body is allowed to embody the movements, to follow from a kinesthetic entrainment and memory, the body is liberated into dance. The most challenging part for most of the students is training themselves to work from kinesthetic memory, training into letting go to the rhythm, training into feeling.

The instructors aim for the student to "allow the drum…the rhythm to speak to you, to move you", Khimani often reminds us when we are concentrating too much, or "thinking". Once the dancer's body is familiar with, and accustomed movement, the dancer is triggered into movement by a particular percussive rhythm. Rhythms don't necessarily prompt reflection, but rather prompt kinesthetic memory. With this dancers dance according to a feeling pattern, rather than by a reflective force of the mind recalling the "supposed to" mechanical patterns of a dance. When the drums speak to us, we "dance on the drums, dance not *to* a rhythm, but *on* a rhythm."

Cindy often demonstrates what she calls the "true" or "full" movement, which is quite advanced. It may include a higher jump, deeper bends or *pliés,* wider strides, and additional or exaggerated gestures or stylizations. The students, and even Lisa, exchange confounded looks, uttering in jest "she is trying to kill us", "ummmmm….really?", "No." Khimani ends with a dramatic pause, waiting for the groups' reaction, walking towards us in laughter. She, and the other instructors, continue by demonstrating the move in its basic form. Then the basic form will be slowed down and parsed into body components. We learn or "block out" the feet, the legs, the hips, the arms in order first to embody the movement and rhythm and eventually move to its infusion with 'feeling' and 'character'.

The hips, are important in the dance styles. While learning the *Banda,* our instructors explained that the movements are not about sex, but, as Lisa said, are about "owning your sexuality, your womanhood, not giving it away, expressing it but being the one in control." As Browning also reflects, "it is women who so often are forced to compromise their ideals with the demands put upon their bodies. When we dance to call on *Iansa*, we set her in motion by calling on her as a principle of belief – feminism – even as we bring her transcendental power down to the site of our representation – the body" (1995:67-68). In *roots* dancing, sexuality or womanhood, and the "feminine" (the female counterpart in a system of gendered dances, energies, and divinities) are valorized.

Libète in Dance, *Libète* Danced

The concept of *libète* (liberty, or freedom) is a central concern for the dancers and musicians of *Racines,* and its actualisation is one of the larger aspirations of *Racines* and the *roots* revolution. Bringing literature on creativity, embodiment, and embodied knowledge and knowing into conversation with the *Ibo* dance of *libète,* I will discuss dance as a somatic and semiotic medium for freedom. An embodied experience. Dance may be part of a process linked to other objectives, and a form of expression, but it is also a self[10] contained embodied experience. *Folklorique* dance is way for these Haitians in Montreal to embody, feel and share *libète* and build on the idea of *libète.* Dance and the embodiment of rhythms gives life to liberty.

The Girls and The Guys agree on a general definition of *libète*. I was led to this definition through several conversations with my participants. Some of these began with a plummet into shocked silence. How could I not understand what *libète* meant to them? In other discussions my participants were patient and delivered impassioned monologues about "the ability to choose" and "freedom from poverty [economically, culturally]." For my participants, discussions of *libète* typically returned to being in the dance and rhythms, and having the social space to share dance and rhythms.

[10] I use the word 'self' to imply individual self and collective body of the dance troupe. The collective may be constituted by other living beings, ancestors or spirits

Ibo Dans – Breaking the Chains: Embodying *Libète*

The Girls and The Guys of *Racines,* dedicated to a project of *libète,* invest in practices which they "intend and believe will result in freedom" (Kelty 2011). The entire lineage of *Racines'* dances is involved in the project of *roots* expression and is connected to senses and narratives of liberation. However, *Ibo* is the most explicit narrative of the revolution and of breaking the chains.

Ibo is the dance and rhythm of liberation. It can be read as historically symbolic but also speaks of the conceptual boundedness that characterises the artistic, social, and cultural climate surrounding today's *roots* and *folklorique* culture. When *Ibo* is danced, it expresses and embodies movement towards *libète*, and is a sense of *libète* itself. This freedom is seen best in a movement where "chains are broken". Crossed arms tear apart and extend forcefully to their full length. The same actions occur in the legs and feet where they tear apart in a low jumping movement. The arm movements begin close to the body with wrists crossed over one another, tied together. The initial linear, rigid, tight form breaks into open, wide, unrestricted movements; movements that give the impression of spontaneous revolt, but that are rhythmic and "take their time",[11] which is only clear in the beauty of a seamlessly synchronised choreography.

Usually a sequence unfolds with low, grounded walking movements that feel restricted, subdued, and heavy. Weight is unevenly distributed between feet, giving an accent to one of the footsteps which synchronises with a *klak* or other accent on the drum. The steps are small and express bounded ankles. The dance moves into explosive, expansive gestures. The dance is dynamic, airborne, and involves synchronizing the head, arms, and legs with a rapid, punching rhythm. Though there is not a formulaic sequence for executing these movements, the dancers typically proceed from bound to unbound. However, the individual movements and their sequences can be choreographed to tell any story The Girls wish to convey, even movement back into chains, which would reflect the contemporary circumstances of post-liberation struggles in Haiti and across the Haitian diaspora.

[11] 'Take your time' is a frequent admonition of the dance instructors to their students, and an essential skill for mastering the dance. Movements should not be rushed, but rather make full use of the length of the corresponding beat or the rhythm sequence.

Thomas Csordas, speaking of *Somatic Modes of Attention* (1993) emphasises embodiment as analogous to text, like body is to book. Like Jackson's (1983) somatic concept of metaphor, we can explore the meaning of the body's experiences and expressions in addition to reading the external abstractions or phenomena the body points to. Following this line of logic, resisting the propensity to "reduce meaning to a sign" (Jackson 1983), the body's experiences have meaning that correspond to, but are independent of, the referents we ascribe to them. Dancing *Ibo* is not only an analogy or allegory for external, past or future freedom, but is the immediate sense of life and liberation in the body and in social space. Many Tuesday evenings while practising the transition from the tightly shackled hands to the explosive movement driven by the drum, tears rolled down dancers' cheeks. Steady hands entangled those of the weeping, and thrust them into the air in a gesture of support and unification. The cathartic power of dancing the *Ibo*, which I experienced both directly as a dancer, and learned about in conversation with dancers and drummers, speaks to the internal affect and transformation involved in these dances.

The *Ibo* dance, among others, gives the dancer an embodied experience of *libète* which is tossed into the dance space and thrust back and forth between dancing body and percussing drum. Sharing the dance form and practice sensorially transfers technique, affect, and memory. The transition carries forward passionate pride, self-expression, and perseverance; forces said to be continuous with their ancestors' expressions and acts of rebellion and *libète*. *Ibo* dance is the opportunity to bring past revolution to the present, and resignify it to address the contemporary social climate and internal state of being. Troupe member Khimani explains:

> It was more than just dancing. That's probably how we grew up with dance. You know, when we were practicing on Saturday or something like that, yes we would dance but also we would learn about Haitian history. They would also indicate to us, when we do *Ibo*, we remember we had to fight for our freedom. And even Michelle, she always says the same thing. If you want to know the Haitian history you just look at the dance. Because it says everything. You have rebellious acts of war, you have sadness and prayer, you have *Ibo* where you want to break the chains and be free. It's more than just dancing.

This aspiration within *roots* and *folklorique* collectivity is the continued striving to remember the sense and form of freedom, and to liberate the aesthetic and social through the expression of the very practices that are suppressed. *Racines* hopes to dissolve the connotations of *roots* culture and *danse folklorique* practice, which exclude them from the larger Haitian diaspora population. *Ibo* is a semiotic narrative of liberation and a somatic experience of liberty. At once it is an expression of a historical movement and an aspiration that has carried forward. The somatic experience of becoming unbound, of being propelled by the rhythm into airborne freedom, is for *Racines* the driving force to continue creating and asserting a place of individual and collective belonging.

Freedom is not only a goal but is also a practice. *Racines* continues with hard work, sweat, shortened breath, and calloused feet to create and complete many projects to meet their objectives and, with hope, even the external, illusive freedom. Striving for *libète* is fueled by hope arising from expressing acts of freedom in the body, in the collectivity, in gathering, in moments of succumbing to the rhythm. These are the tools for freedom and also the feeling of freedom. For *Racines,* dance is a space of *libète* and the quest toward it.

Chapter 4 – The Sharing and Taking our Time – Relationships, Spaces, and Performance

It was a pleasure meeting some of you in December. I appreciate all Haitians-Canadians that come to Haiti knowing that there is something to learn. The culture is rich and wide, yet underappreciated and misinformed. And in my field of dance, I see it as my obligation to pass on the roots of revolution through Haitian Folklore dance. (Correspondence from M. Lamisère to *Racines* – January 18th, 2015)

Introduction

This chapter explores sociality through the feeling and space of communitas found in *Racines'* acts of gathering to teach, learn, and dance. Edith Turner speaks about Communitas as "a group's pleasure in sharing common experiences with one's fellows" where, through experiences of joy and joyous liminality, in moments of change, you are "freed from the regular structures of life". Feeling and form of communitas is found in festivals, shared music performance, prayer or spirituality, but also in less idyllic situations such as rigorous exercise, and surviving natural disasters (Turner 2012). This spirit, the spirit of security and strength in union through pleasure or struggle, through a spectrum of emotional and physical experiences, along with the sense of the unaccommodated human-being, is apparent in the dance-events of the students and troupe, particularly in the time spent dancing together as well as the time spent together around dancing.

In the dance classes, student dance classes, we had the frequent call to *"prends votre temps",* to take our time. The reminder that "you have the time!" signals to us that, within a certain movement and beat count, our bodies have enough time to slowly and deliberately execute the movement. It reminds us not to rush through the gestures and steps, but to distribute fully extended movements steadily and evenly through a beat sequence. Behind this admonition is a link to concepts about the social realm, where it is valuable to take time to be together in dance and conversation. This contrasts with the busyness that we are meant to "let go" during class, but which is picked up on cell phones or while attending to children during *repos*, and which may meet our well-worn bodies when we leave the post-class stretching circle.

In Edith Turner's work with an indigenous community in northern Alaska, she was part of a Rogation (prayer for whales). The entire community stood in prayer for the winds to change to clear the ice-blocked strait, and allow the whales to swim the warming April currents (Turner 2012). Her participation inspired an expansion of her late husband's theories of Communitas. She experienced, *felt, sensed,* the unifying properties of the ceremony. It wove together a social fabric that directed a potent shared purpose to feed the community, and with the arrival of the whale, "no individual ownership of the whale meat" (Turner 2012:xii). The *Racines* dancers similarly describe both the songs and dances of their *folklorique* practice, and their relationship to other dancers, as "belonging to no one". The responsibility to carry-forward the lineage was given them, but belongs to everyone (in conversation with Eve). There are "no chiefs', and the dances do not belong to individuals but were given to the collectivity. The rhythms, dance forms, and dance classes embody and reflect communitas.

Taking the time to be with one another in this setting is marked by joy, effort, and inclusion. The sociality in communitas is felt in the act of dancing, but even more so in the time spent connecting between periods of dance – in the still but interpersonally dynamic moments between dancing steps. The enduring and creative practices of the folkorique troupe are politically charged, and while they are inclusionary, they also sharply differentiate them from other Haitian traditions. *Racines'* intent is to assert themselves, but also to change conflictual relationships among Haitians (diasporic and in the homeland; religious and secular) by showing that difference is not bad or wrong, nor do they "*fè move*". The Girls confront standing relations and call for new ones by connecting across differences with dance, making *Racines'* cultural-artistic-political presence also a political activity.

After completing the hour and a half of challenging work, physical and also theatrical, connections between students and instructors change. This occurs in part on an emotional level which intersects with the pragmatic. There is a sense of closeness that grows in discussions of challenging moves, what people plan to cook for dinner, how they did their hair, or where they left their cell phone.

Tuesday night lessons wrap up distinctly from Saturday morning lessons. Many people will linger 20 or 30 minutes, or simply just take their time changing and getting ready to leave. The percussionists may keep their drums out and spontaneously play any rhythm that catches them, opening the floor to dance improvisation (free style). Instructors or students with more

experience or confidence take this opportunity to let loose in improvisation. Onlookers cheer and laugh from a loose circle around the action. Also, children have more liberty to try playing on the drum. They stand beside the percussionists, or are propped on laps or chairs, and their imprecise strikes no longer interfere with the dance students' learning. Someone may set some food out on the back table, others may be kicking the soccer ball around the room, all the while conversation unfolds in multiple languages. Conversations range from small talk to discussions of upcoming events. The room becomes socially, sonically, and kinaesthetically cacophonous through the melange of vocals, rhythms, and moving bodies. Here in the social dance, the social rhythms, is the highly valued time where *pataje, pale,* and unification assume another form outside of formalized dancing bodies, but which connect the participants in context, meaning, and the aspired outcome.

Sharing and Taking our Time

In the middle of the recreation room a circle of women forms, warm faces and heaving chests face one another in the post class étirage. The steady and tranquil drum rhythm played by Mika, Rony, and with the help of two of the kids, resounds into our circle and through our bodies. Even our stretches are rhythmic and respond/speak back to the drums calls. "Ferme les yeux" Khimani directs us for the first time during a cool-down. I keep my eyes open for a moment and look up and outside of our circle. I see Sandy walk in. A headache kept her home from dancing, she tells me later, but she came to pick up Teo, freeing Khimani's afternoon to prepare for an evening performance. Still running in real-time, real-life mode, Sandy walks past an intimate moment of bonding. It is a slow paced, quieted time to realize and celebrate one another's efforts and the collective experience of the past 1.5 hours.

In the circle, we face one another with gratitude, and face ourselves with a mix of praise and critique. We sink into rest and relief at the conclusion of physical exertion. Interactions between us following the stretch show that working together brings a deepened sense of connection even if, when engulfed in flow, we don't communicate often during formal instruction. Our dynamic makes me think about Edith Turner's ideas of communitas and the joy of gathering. But I also think to the acts of remembering and memories that fill the unifying time. We worked very hard on Nago, the war dance, and on entering the character and energy of the

"fight for your country, the fight for your cause", Khimani made clear. That historical fight for liberty was a catalyst for unification. It once brought together a population of diverse individuals from 21 different nations, having likeness in their enslavement and desire for emancipation. Nago is said to have bonded and mobilized disparate groups, connected by the collective vision of breaking the chains (kraze chenn yo). My mind wanders to the course of Haitian socio-political history. Whatever happened to that bonding (though obviously not unanimous)? How is that history of solidarity been forgotten? Why do these individuals remember, and want to?

Much occurs in the space of dance, around the dance, cutting through the dance, including these thoughts and conversations on similar topics. Sandy steps across the room in her shoes, between the line of sock-clad drummers and the circle of bare footed dancers, to stand with Lisa and her newborn baby. At their left one of the teenagers is beside a crying Teo, hoping a toy will stop a breathless, wailing protest against a pending afternoon with his tante. Children play on Rony's drum while he provides our rhythm. Surrounding the tranquil circle of 7 women focused on simultaneously flowing through motions in time with the beat, is the chaos of everyday life.

Dance, life, and family are entangled in this moment and in these dance classes, conceptually and in the culture of this collectivity. Though dance events are sacred and special times for this collectivity, they do not occur in isolation from reality nor are they meant to. What dance cultivates and teaches is meant to filter into and infuse everyday life, everyday movements, everyday thoughts, and every step. Dance is for liberty, can bring them the liberty to choose, and the choice is often to bring in liberty through dance. (Fieldnotes January 24, 2015)

Our time together

15 drums this evening. There were other musicians and vocalists who chanted. The energy of the room amplified beyond what I ever before experienced in a dance context here or elsewhere. Emotions behind laughter and tears differently infused and enlivened movements. The girls remarked that tonight was to one of the most powerful nights spiritually, most active dances performatively. What energy! But this doesn't compare to the experience of 30+ drummers you might encounter elsewhere. Mika would explain this according to frequencies, which is

consistent with Rony's emphasis on the spiritual and ancestral invitation. (Fieldnotes November 10th, 2014).

After an evening of *Nago* rhythms and song in the drum circle, the instructors' energy is heightened. Khimani says she has to "build up a different energy for these classes". The drum facilitates this. She gestured with a hand raised above her head in a shaking motion, "after the drums my energy is like this, up here" and this sets the tone for the dance class to follow. Many times we've opened informal conversation about energy. One of the instructors expressed, "I give so much of myself. Today I asked the guys to carry some of this energy". This meaning had signification on many levels, which were conveyed only with knowing glances, that the energy upheld, shared, emanating from the dialogue between body and drum, is also extra-physical. I was reminded of Edith Turner's comments, and felt connected to her experience as much as the one at hand: "The communitas elements I experienced were numerous. This kind of power had nothing to do with the other kind of power, that of the oil industry, for example" (xii). In these moments of dance class, the power of sharing and connection feels to transcend the outside forces that weigh in on their practices and individual lives. In addition to the ephemeral sense of communitas, a buzzing internal radiating sense remains that fills the muscles, and is carried with the dancers outside the dance space. The connections made in the dance space enable this. Sharing is an integral part of the dance; everyone in the room participates in creating the spirit of the event. As Downey beautifully expressed, "Without participation, a statement like 'the rhythms enters your blood' may seem to be a metaphoric hyperbole and easily disregarded. Through a phenomenological reduction, however, what initially appears *cliché* reveals itself as an eloquent sharing of experience" (2002:505)

Chatting, laughter, and bonding are for *Racines* inseparable components of their practice of dance. They are not only a consequence of gathering but a reason for gathering in dance activities and in dancing. Typical is the social time at the beginning of each class where people are happily absorbed in the exchange of embraces and conversation. Deep, rich laughter and joy fills the room, the drum circle, the dance rows, and the *repos* time. The dance instructors and students define the distinct quality of these exchanges as "like family". Diversions are enjoyed and contribute to interpersonal connections that bind the collectivity together in dance. Strengthened bonds contribute to the group morale and encourage collective choreography.

Dance classes are professional, culturally informative and supportive, and at the same time loose, inclusive, and collaborative. For example, while Khimani, Eve, or Lisa begin the dance class with a rhythm and in mind, as well as an objective for the semester, these are subject to inspiration. On many occasions we have, impromptu, collectively refined the details of move stylization, suggested adjustments to a choreographic sequence, or requested to focus our practice on a particularly challenging component of a series or singular movement. We never stray very far from the class's agenda, though flexibility leaves potential for inspiration and creativity to lay any path for a given course.

Entering a lesson is entering an intimate and socially open environment. Students are always received with warmth, joyfulness, a sense of anticipation. New students are immediately welcomed and invited into the *chauffement* circle before concerns about registration or payments are discussed. This level of intimacy and casualness is the preferred climate for them to teach in and facilitates the instruction.

Relaxed dynamics and an atmosphere bound first and foremost by sharing, alters the potential state of being in space and in the body. As a result the body can better relax, loosen, become supple, and allow the student to enter a state of corporeal, emotional, or spiritual receptivity that in everyday life may not be accessible or acceptable. This cause and effect relationship is not a calculated effort, but a consequence of the quality of familiarity and family that first characterized *Racines'* gatherings and has been continuous. This space of sociality is what the troupe seeks to cultivate, and loves to give others the opportunity to experience.

A class is shaped by each person's connection and movement through learning and performing a dance, and also alters the wider experience of the space, and of the dance. Many times Khimani's and Eva's loud comments have specifically objectified these, screaming over the drum "why are you dancing so small today?!", "what is wrong?" This is one way that an individual's experience links to the collective experience. The instructors engage each student with individual feedback to correct and encourage them through their challenges, and consequently individual challenges do not remain private.

The exchanges occurring throughout a course are also intergenerational. The children are frequent, signifying and significant presences in a class. Even though they do not formally participate in the adult's activities, observation and playful mimicry of our actions involves them in the practice in a meaningful way. Embedding the children in the practice is another form of

intergenerational transmission. Khimani's 4 year old son brings pause to a lesson when we applaud his successful execution of a dance step, if he plays the drum right on beat, or spills something across the floor. These pauses do not disturb, although Khimani comments that she would like a break from the kids every so often. However, when they are present, instruction carries on fairly uninhibited and intergenerational socialization contributes to the feeling of family.

Rhythmic Elements - Pause and Silence

The sound of the rhythm, the movement of bodies, and the vocals of beat-counting, or cheers (*An nou va*, let's go; or *Mieux,* better) transform a room into a dance space, a site of a dance event, and give life to dances forms and activities. Sound waves and firing muscles, propelled by personal narratives and broader histories, are important to creating the dance events and dances themselves. However, within the dances and dance events silence and stillness are common, and as important as the sound and propulsion.

Rest during a practice is physically restorative, and fosters bonds between people through talking and sharing, which contributes to the solidarity felt as communitas, extending or bound to the context. Breaks are crucial parts of dance events, performatively and pragmatically, and come about in a variety of ways.

The moments of pause provide another example of *Racines'* dance classes are meaningful and affective beyond the kinesthetic and cognitive embodiment of movement sequences, as well as an excellent example of how connection is created in times of dance instruction. In addition to sound and action, pause and silence are important in dance events and within dance movements themselves. Several times I entered the *Centre Communitaire* to stillness and low voices, as Khimani and several students sat on two steps in front of the small stage blocked by a folding partition. I wondered if something was wrong.

The official break time about half way through a dance lesson is *repos,* and often an anticipated directive: "*Repos! Cinq minutes!"* We get to break from structured choreography, free-style some moves, sit, reflect, *pale* (talk), and *pataje* (share). Students may express collective frustrations about the challenges of a movement or discuss personal issues. While the instructional component of the dance class is semi-formalized, *repos* is unstructured time. The order instilled through dance instruction loosens, the staggered rows of students quickly dissolve,

bodies scatter and gender divisions are permeated. Here instructors join the percussionists, students walk to the bathroom, sit on the stairs or on chairs stacked one or two high. Percussionists will run to the corner *fruiterie*, returning with water and food to share. Other times they will take this *repos* to break lower body idleness with jumping jacks or burpees. Greetings missed at the start of class will make the rounds. The pause is not still, but is richly social, productive, and valuable. Individuals can talk, laugh, or just quietly be together.

In both the contexts of dance events and choreographies, the inversion of sound and momentum play a role in sharing among people, and between a dancer and the *tanbou.* As the inverse of action, a stop or pause works as an accent. Much like a point of negative space in an image, even apparent emptiness and absence can take on presence and significance. Choreographically, stops or breaks in movements give the impression of applied force, or can give an eruption of strength to the next engaged beat. Pauses give opportunity for a rhythm or personage to shift, to transform. The *tanbou* signals for and makes silence during a dance, typically through the *klak*. Mika explained that when the *klak* is played it is followed by the suspension of the next sound (the beat is silenced). *Klak* is a single and forceful strike just off-center of the drum skin. A single *klak* may seem insignificant and likely to drown out among the numerous percussive rhythms overlapping one another, even if only played by one drummer. However, a single *klak* is meant to sound above all other beats and signal them to silence. The suspension of the beat gives the rhythm the chance to be modified, or exchanged for a different one, and extends this opportunity to the dancing body as well. Though I discuss *klak* independently, it is not meant as a rhythmic isolate but is usually part of a musical sequence called *kasé. Kasé* is the modification of the beat, much like a musical bridge. At its conclusion the percussionists may return to the original rhythm or bring in a new one.

The *klak* and *kasé* align with particular dance movements and are also challenges to the dancer. The single *klak* should occur with forceful movements ending in abrupt stops, such as the elbow thrust in the *Petwo* or *Nago* rhythms. This makes the impression that the body is producing the halting noise and also dramatizes the halt. The *kasé* challenges the dancer by changing the rhythmic sequences within the same time signature, and the sequences are often irregular. The dancer's challenge is to stay on beat throughout the *kasé,* maintaining steadily timed dance movements or using the irregularity to switch moves or segue into a different dance

style. Breaks in sound and breaks in rhythm, much like a break within the class, create a generative, creative space that is shared amongst bodies, and between bodies and drums.

Dance class is in itself a restorative break from everyday life and the rest of the world. The structure and discipline of pedagogy and educative contexts seems paradoxical to communitas. In dance classes, concerns of daily life, and struggles with systemic problems, are replaced by the freshness of tight consociation with our *Racines* peers and connection with the discipline of kinesthetic intelligence and corporeality. Edith Turner's flexible and broadened understanding of communitas speaks to the "sensual, feeling place" in dance. We forgo everyday structure for the structure of the group which generates the feeling place of dance practice.

Social bonds resulting in friendship and love impact the connectivity experienced in a dance lesson. The environment cultivated by the instructors encourages and supports this intimacy, which consequently supports learning and dancing. After all, when we dance we dance together. Dance classes represent collectivities invested in and working towards shared ends, whether a unified successful execution of a choreography or challenging movements, embodying and expressing a political message through rhythm and movement, changing a consciousness and stigmatization about particular cultures and their embodied practices, the reparation of cavernous intra-cultural rifts, or the liberty to choose. Spaces of gathering, talking, sharing, are found in the movement and rhythm in dance spaces.

Troupe Dance Events

Dancing, creating, and organizing administration require time consuming activities. Meeting challenges together, muscular, interpersonal, and administrative, builds and strengthens relationships among the women members of *Racines*. Full and energetic presence in late evening biweekly practices requires discipline and determination, which the troupe's support makes easier. The members encourage and rely on one another, understanding that the troupe's potential supersedes that of individuals. Importantly, they also know the troupe is about more than the collective, but about past and future generations. The troupe members' relationships are sustained in part because of the hard work of creativity and performing, and the time spent together in conversation, sharing food, travelling, laughing, and arguing to resolution. In this friendship is promise for the future of *danse folklorique*, which is also a promise to the past.

The troupe is not free from moments of internal discord. Through corporeal and verbal dialogue they negotiate the realities of tension in co-creativity, while and in order to negotiate the conflictual relationship with other Haitian collectivities in Montreal. Performance debriefings often involve gauging the reception of their Haitian audiences. Were they cold? Were they distant? Were they warm? They assess their achievements and assess how to work together to better reach their goals.

Jonathan Blacking states, "creativity in dance is the rule rather than the exception" (1999:70), and this happens also outside the dance floor. As a necessity, the troupe must create strategies to overcome the barriers to performing, to sharing, and to growing, which are temporal, financial, and to a great degree racial as a product of tense intra-Haitian sociality. The strategies are for more than the maintenance of a tradition. In making their practice public, in having success, reaching out to people, they are forging a new place for *roots folkorique* culture in Montreal, and one that is "up-to-date" (Browning 1995:114), unprecedented, and revolutionary.

The sociality in, and implicated by *Racines* demonstrates how "social identities are 'signaled, formed, and negotiated' through bodily movement" (Desmond 1993 *in* Reed 1998:505), where movement is a dynamic social text that creates and signals "group affiliation and difference" (Reed 1998:505). They must navigate strategically through the varied relationships others form with the troupe. There are diverse conceptions of how, and what *roots folklorique* dances signify and the girls must think carefully about where they perform, the content of their shows, and how much *roots* can be exposed based on the venue and anticipated audience. In framing performances they also consider and how, and to what extent, they want to educate the public on the realities of *roots* dance culture.

The *Fête Gédé* is a good example of the event framing and performativity based on the relationality to the audience. The demographic of this event, people connected to *roots*, determined a different license to perform; one that is loose and does not censor the really "*roots* roots" of the dance, where the choreography is freer, and its connection to other elements of practice such as Vodou beliefs are clear. The *Fête Gédé is* a *folklorique* or Vodou event associated with the month of November, which we celebrated on November 17th in the basement of the Centre *Haitiano-Canadienne*.

This *Fête* is important for both honouring *Gédé,* who are a family of spirits or *Loa* who represent death and fertility, but also bringing their presence into spaces and bodies. Rony and Khimani explained that it is a celebration of things obscene; death and sex, and the senses or energies that attach to both. The event was the culmination of raw emotions, and a rhythmical kinesthetic catharsis. The Girls commented on the "feeling" of November in nearly every class that month, and this night seemed to bring us to the root. This event was a chance to feel November at its deepest, and let it out.

The setting was intimate. We gathered closely near the stage at the end of the long room, a small altar and slightly elevated stage making a permeable boundary between the audience and musicians. We were so near that we could see the sweat dripping down the performers' foreheads. It was a frigidly cold night and the basement was poorly heated but with nearly 90 bodies pushed together, it boiled, it was like fire. Being pushed closely toward the stage and the semi-circle of drums, the rhythm was felt pounding through my skin as strongly as it hit my ears. The crowd began to clear around a door to the backstage. The Girls entered and the *Zarenyen* (spider) beat crawled through the dancers' limbs, which transitioned to *Banda*. The Girls danced a choreography not made for the proscenium theatres of more formal performances. Instead, they played on the audience floor. It was a choreography where rhythmically circling hips and deeply bent, wide legs spilled into the crowd, improvising dances around bodies, or signalling out one onlooker to share an intimate moment that transgressed the spectator-performance boundaries in a subversive and suggestive way.

Near the end, a "*wining* and grinding" competition made its way to the stage and everyone laughed and hooted. The audience responded to the explicit pelvic movements but also to the drummer's chant and taunts. A friend said, "He is saying just the most ridiculously offensive things", mostly words for penises and vaginas strung together with particular pronouns and verbs. After the event, at 3 am, the sexual-spiritual senses faded into fatigue, with only traces of *Gédé* lingering or exhibited in passing jokes or stage props as the night was packed into the car.

The dance event *Fête Gédé,* and the dances within it, wouldn't have been possible just anywhere. *Racines'* affiliation with the diverse Haitian population, and Montreal's non-Haitian communities, swings on a pendulum between Saviglian's (Reed 1998:515) two primary effects of exoticization: the empowered, self-authored exotic, and the co-optation of a externally

scripted exoticism. For instance, *Racines'* identity was celebrated amongst a diversity of other Haitian artists at the collaborative spectacle*, Haiti en Feu*, a critical and political event celebrating the diaspora. *Racines'* message called to attention that, "we are part of your roots, cellular, ancestral, spiritual, terrestrial, familial." The troupe was empowered by feedback from an audience predominately of colour and Haitian, and from a majority Haitian artistic collectivity, both of whom recognized and supported their distinction as *roots*.

On the other hand, the troupe's signification was "[reified] as a 'tasteful' exotic" (Savigliano in Reed 1998:515), when Racines was invited by the North Montreal municipality to represent the *quartier's* Haitian community through dance at the municipal festival. Here, they performed in a lineup that included artists representing many nationalities. As part of a city-organized performance, both organizers and audience expected an uncritical image of diversity, which was similar to expectations of the troupe when performing for Montreal's *Weekends du Monde.*

Instances where *Racines* represent the Haitian community as a seamless assimilation into North American society mutes historical context of their presence, the reality of the relationship Haiti and Haitians have to Montreal, and in Montreal. This reality is not simply a colorful dress whipping in a sharp jump and turn, and does not always flirt and flick like the twisting hip motions of the Congo dance. Rather, it also and often speaks through the resistance and roaring protest in the *klaks* of *Ibo* chains breaking, or the iron hot arrow fired by a *Petro* dancer. Despite the varying reception to their representation, and also because of it, the girls persist in a unique style which writes and claims itself, much like the claims made in the *Banda* dance.

The relationships and relationality enmeshed in the lives of the girls and the troupe, their performances, their public presence, their creative strategies for survival, traces back to the basement of the community center, and into the hearts and heads of each of the dancers.

> *At one point we didn't have any other places to go so for a few years the group sometimes danced in somebody's basement, sometimes in somebody's kitchen, creating new dances. We were only two, sometimes three, but still. We wanted it so badly that we continued.* (Lisa in conversation)

The first time I visited the *Centre Nord Montreal* to observe the Troupe's Friday evening practice was July afternoon. I arrived to two sets of locked glass doors, but knew they were inside. The lights were on and familiar shoes lay on the floor, and muffled drum rhythms seeped through the door. My knocking drowned out in percussive sonics. I followed the sound into the back alley where it amplified. The drummers played loudly on the other side of a large industrial door. I rapped on the door during the silence between percussive beats, and finally Lisa's mother let me in. I walked into the basement of the building to enter the world of *Racines en practice*, *Racines* in creation, the world behind *Racines* on stage.

The troupe's practices are held twice a week, and are a melange of formal and causal activities. The troupe members are expected to attend each practice, announce absences, and let one another know if life challenges interfere with their membership. The Girls are invested in one another's well-being, but also the objectives of the troupe itself. Practicing, developing choreographies, and conceiving future projects rely on each person's involvement and input. Commitment to the dance troupe means commitment to each other. It involves opening to disciplined training as well as to one another's` needs.

By 7pm the dancers and drummers start to arrive. They sit around a large table on the first floor, sharing food, laugher, and stories, recounting their days, discussing the future, and going over past projects. All the while the children are fed and settle into games or homework. The adults rest and talk until most everyone has arrived. By 7:30 or so, or when the drummers have arrived, they find their way to the basement.

In the Basement

The basement is a small, open space with several surrounding rooms used as offices. When The Girls first arrive, it is usually packed with tables from the centre`s daytime programming, which they have to fold and lean against the wall. There is a small kitchen, several bathrooms, and a closet holding many of the troupe`s costumes and props.

While the girls set up in the basement, they keep their cells phones plugged into the wall or close at hand. Sequences of dances or the product of an evening's choreographic creation are videotaped and used to study and refine the dance later on, to jog their memories in the next rehearsal, or to share on the troupe's Facebook page.

Soon the sound of drum tuning will infuse the space, or in cases where percussionists are not present, it is the sound of shuffling through iTunes playlist to feel for the "right" rhythm. The dancers form a circle and begin *chauffement,* typically led by Khimani or Thia. The dancers joke about their styles, mostly in anticipation of the particular challenges each woman makes the group endure. Each woman has distinct approaches to the body and to movements. Khimani eases into the challenges whereas Thia dives right into the deep, forceful movements and keeps them going despite the girls' looks of fatigue or strain.

The c*hauffement* leader instructs the others by counting the beats, speaking key directives such as, "*lentement*", "*en haute*", "*la tête et le cou*", "*l'autre jambs*". They may correct someone's position or timing. The other women may talk and laugh, interjecting comments on the leadership or responding to corrections. This exercise is also fun and a time for lightheartedness. One of the dancers is known to forget how far they've counted, and the girls will playfully mock the impending mistake. Each person's idiosyncrasies are well known and will cause the girls and the guys to erupt in laugher. Though their practices can be characterized as joyful, this is not always the case.

Figure 6

I took a seat in the corner of the basement practice room, on the worn green velour rocking chair beside with the children. I watched the synchronized chaos of a collaborative rehearsal. The artists were together in the room and conversing, connected through the shared floor of rhythm, yet focused on their individual components of the performance. Three woman vocalists were singing harmonies in the corner. The guys sat with the line of drums watching one another for cues, some playing the beat and others blowing into long bamboo rods. In the center of the room, unfolding in front of the musicians, the girls in laughter and irritation attempted over and over to weave the Maypole ribbons correctly. Khimani screamed step and gesture

corrections over the thumping percussion, and out of breath, instructed the percussionists. It is the day before the performance and they are still changing the choreography. Nothing is final until it is performed. After a few attempts they stopped moving, and the rhythm petered out slowly. It was time for the girls to discuss these missteps. Meanwhile, some musicians sat talking patiently, and others needed a break. Zach yelled in frustration, "Is it *obligitorie* to do the *Mayí*? No! So no *Mayí*! I go for a cigarette!"

Performance

In interview with Fabia, she explained the importance of connecting with the audience, and what moves and choreographies represent*:*

> *They are what we want to show the people and this is what we want them to feel. And by doing moves we want people to feel then we're not just dancing alone, we are dancing for them to understand what is going on. And at the end of the day when someone leaves this show, they've been like, "I understood! I wanted to cry" and this is what we want I guess from people. So you want them to feel the reaction of what we're dancing. And this is why I find it's always important to also focus on your facial expression, your image, what you're trying to portray, because it has to reach that person that's sitting all the way back" (Fabi in interview, June 2014)*

The discussion of performance refers to both the concept of performativity and performing shows. Performing the theatrical, aesthetic in shows, *spectacles*, is the performance of identity and processes of identification. This is so whether dancers are exhibiting history or style and art form. Performing is also an assertion of individual and collective presences.

The ability of dance performances to assert cultural and aesthetic presence widens the renown of the *Racines* troupe and of *danse folklorique.* By bringing the theatrical component of dance culture into the public sphere, performances are another element in sharing (*pataje*). Also performing is an attempt to change perceptions of *roots* culture and cultural identity, and show that dancing, and watching the dances, does not "*fè mal"*. But it doesn't stop there. The dancers want to prove that their dances and culture do quite the opposite. This is where creativity and

transmission of culture coalesce. *Racines'* performances, are indeed "a dialectic of 'flow', that is, spontaneous movement in which action and awareness are one, and 'reflexivity', in which the central meanings, values and goals of a culture are seen 'in action', as they shape and explain behavior" (Appel and Schechner 1991:1). Being creative in performance framing is a way for the dancers to assert their space on stage and transform the boundaries around performance. This happens through the performativity of *roots,* which both relies on and creates the feeling of a boundless body[12] liberated by a dance discipline.

Performance contexts vary widely for the troupe and have changed over time. When they were a young troupe, just transitioning into '*Grand Racines*', they had to apply for spots to perform in events. Reflecting on this time of their career, Lisa said, "We wanted our peers to recognise what we were doing. So we did different shows, talent shows. Hip hop shows. We added our touch to it". Once when the elders of the dancers were *Grande Racines* they would create and produce their own shows. But when the girls were given responsibility for troupe, Lisa said,

> We were coming up to 16 and early 20s. We didn't have the resources to produce a show. We didn't know what to do. So we would just create these little dances and just be invited a little bit everywhere. Which was good, but at some point it became a disadvantage in a sense. If we were asked to do half an hour we were not used to doing that.

The troupe's efforts for exposure began drawing invitations to perform, which were usually paid contracts but also volunteer shows. As time passed, the troupe was asked to take larger, central, roles in a performance, surpassing the 5 minute choreographies. Accordingly, their creativity and practice had to expand to meet these demands. Lisa explained, "We were used to doing five minutes, a five minute dance here and there. And so within the last 2 to three years we've had to work on making longer shows."

Khimani, Lisa, Maria each spoke of the troupe's improvement in creating bigger, and more complex performances. Their reflections have been reinforced by praise from audience members and positive critical reviews in personal communication with prominent Afro-

[12] Body – meaning body-subject

Caribbean-Canadian dancers and choreographers in Montreal. "'You're finally there!'", said Khimani, repeating the words of a lifelong dance role model, "I never thought she was paying attention, but she was watching us grow and evolve this entire time."

Lisa commented on the consequences of the troupe's growing renown. They have to be selective about which invitations they accept. The Girls are also conceiving of creating their own large performances. However limited time, resources, and experience have impeded their abilities to successfully and independently prepare and perform a *spectacle*. The conception and preparation of a performance is demanding on time, finances, and relies on certain marketing and organizational aptitudes. The girls are challenged by their full-time jobs and families to dedicate the time, or hone the skills, to actualize these performances in a way that matches their vision.

The events that *Racines* have been invited to are not usually organized by Haitian collectivities. They have participated in collaborative multi-cultural events such as *Weekends du Monde*, or represented the Haitian population in the city's neighbourhood celebrations. Large, corporate and governmentally sponsored Haitian cultural events, such as *Haiti en Feu*, are not organized by *roots* collectivities. Two exceptions over the course of two years of participation were events organized by members of *Haiti Soley,* though these lacked external sponsorship.

Events organized by central Haitian affiliations in Montreal, even those run by the *Centre Communitaire*, do not usually include *Racines.* These same affiliations are not always supportive of *Racines'* own professional and educational ventures (professional shows, and efforts to education). For instance, the CC administration exercises passive and active resistance to *Folklorique* tradition. They do not include *Racines* in many Haitian events held at the centre. Also, they restrict the reach of Racines' work. Over the course of my 2 years of participation with the troupe, we have seen the posters for events involving *Racines* and *Haiti Soley*, those initially approved by the centre's administration, disappear in several days from the centre's community bulletin board. Khimani and Lisa told stories of costumes and recordings of roots music disappearing from their *Centre Communitaire* storage space.

Despite these challenges, the troupe maintains hope. Their hope is to share, and that people will become more open to acknowledging and allowing their presence, by demonstrating/exhibiting their traditions.

Before the *Spectacle*

Days leading up to a performance are replete with obligations which the girls need somehow to complete amidst already very busy lives. During performance season, which runs spring to fall, The Girls commented on the busyness of logistical organization, long and late rehearsals, and how tired they are. There is a great deal of preparation, including organizing transportation for rehearsals and between studios and performance venues, sewing or purchasing costumes, arranging child care, coordination with event organizers, and arriving early to the *spectacle* venue to prepare. Although they "live for this", it is their "life", they say they also look forward to a break.

Performing and preparing to perform is stressful, exhausting, and even "crazy", Eve said. But when on stage and amid a dance, immersed in the repetitive/smooth or abruptly *klaking* percussion, the dancers are submerged in a world of their own passion; a world that is apart from the chaos of mundane life. Performing is undoubtedly a physical exertion, but the thrill and "flow" in dancing suspends the body and mind elsewhere, and momentarily eliminates stress. What exists in the "flow" are their bodies moving out of time, on top of and surrounded by a rhythm and a story. These moves become the story, stories brought into and through the body. However, this moment comes about only after much hard work.

The troupe members squeeze performance obligations in between full-time work, motherhood, familial obligations, and instructing dance classes. On several occasions following two Saturday morning dance classes, the instructors changed clothes and freshened up in the community center bathroom while waiting for family or friends to pick up their children, relieving them for afternoon dress rehearsal and an evening dance performance. Performance days can be 18-20 hours long.

The performance day is spent mostly backstage, which abounds with children, stage hands, troupe members and family, and other performers. I recall entering the backstage where the baritone of men's Creole conversation resounded out the large steal door into the stairwell. Opening the door, the treble and sopranos of the women and children spill out, nerves sweating through clothing.

The hours of preparation before a performance seem to concentrate the busyness of all the prior days, and buzz with a variety of people outside of the immediate troupe members. This included Michelle, extended family members, children, parents, other event participants, and stage hands. On several occasions I joined *Racines* backstage to assist in performance

preparation a Haitian cultural festival in Toronto, and several around Montreal. For many performances *Racines* is accompanied by the percussionists, The Guys, as well as the members in *Haiti Soley*. The two troupes mingled and prepared for the show together. Familial sensibility and intergenerationality encapsulates the laughter, chatting, arguments, and introspective rituals prior to and after performing.

Behind the stage takes various forms that are determined by the venue, and the size and budget of the event. The backstage of proscenium theatres is different from backstage-trailers adjacent to outdoor stages, or the multi-sited venues where backstage buildings are far from the stage. Several times, we've draped the costumes on fences behind outdoor stages, and the dancers costumed-switched in plain sight. The dancers do not usually select the performance venue, nor are they always familiar with them. They must be ready to improvise; practices and rituals in performance preparation must be adaptable to different performance spaces and programs. An event's social climates and politics, involving organizational hosts and other artists, are also unpredictable variables. Rivalry, comradery, tension, or celebratory collaboration are only few of the potentials.

The troupe uses the backstage, diverse places of pre-performance preparation, for a variety of tasks. If space permits, the troupe does a final blocking of the choreography, then an "Italian Rehearsal" to live percussion or to a music track (another term for dress rehearsal where the performers run through the entire show without stopping to correct mistakes). In the backstage they talk, eat, take pictures, and post updates to their individual social media accounts as well as the *Racines* webpages. Nearing the show-time, sound decreases but the buzz of performance spirit augments. They come together in a moment of reflection, hoping to "bring the right feeling": emphasising doing well not only stylistically, but affectively.

Getting into character

Selecting and arranging costumes is a central concern before a performance. All the costumes are kept in a large black duffle bag on wheels, which is at every performance. The costume bag is packed with nearly every garment and accessory they have ever used, and makes a heavy haul from the *Centre Nord*, to a vehicle, then to the backstage. The costumes are created from mix and matching pants, shirts, scarves, waist sashes, and skirts in many primary colours,

and are used in different combinations for different dances. There is also a bag of jewellery which they use occasionally, but not often. Lisa commented backstage, when the girls were dressing for a *Yanvalou* dance and one of them left on their earrings, "You cannot wear jewellery with *Yanvalou.* Slaves don't wear jewellery". Nor would it work to do a prayer dance without the long white silk skirts, or the *Djumba* dance without the multi-coloured, frilled outfits that are stored in separate garment bags.

The Girls lay out the costumes or hang them on racks. Sometimes a set of costumes is labelled for a particular dancer, but other times the women make verbal agreements about the outfits and outfit changes. "You like the yellow one, right, Thia?" "Yeah, the yellow one is mine". This makes costume changes smoother. When backstage is a makeshift space, such as literally behind the stage in an open area that spills onto the street, organization is more haphazard and relies on improvisation. The Girls, often accompanied by Michelle, help each other dress, especially during the rush of costume change. They skilfully and speedily tie scarves in one another's hair, tuck any visible parts of their black leotards underneath the costume, tilt waist sashes to the right angle, and smooth the fabric folds.

Figure 7

The back-stage spaces I was privileged to enter, though filled with quiet or chaotic movement, were places of waiting as much as of action. Sound checks and run-throughs are typically several hours before show-time. Since it is not feasible or favourable to leave and return, they wait, relax, and prepare. The waiting is opened by a period of mad hustle and bustle, cramming everybody and all the belongings usually into a tight places. Once settled, this pre-performance time builds into a calm but edgy atmosphere, as dancers and drummers enter the "zone." Rituals, which may appear as routine tasks, such as laying out costumes, doing makeup, Khimani says gives some order and ease to the anxiousness that still arises before performing. Steaming the creases out of the silk *Yanvalou* skirts is calming, Khimani feels, and a task that

she, Thia, Kate, and Lisa enjoy doing. Remaining composed and braced with control to slide into character and narrative before a performance is a learned skill, and one the girls have developed over many years and many chances to perform.

The heat of the stage

The notions of "on stage" and "performing" need elaboration, and a historical context. For the Racines collectivity, performing publically as a political and cultural statement is a more recent phenomenon, though has been a potential and actualized function of Folklorique dance in the past in Haiti and elsewhere. Initially for *Racines*, dancing was one element among many when they got together, a way to unite people and pass down their traditions. It was part of cultural continuity, reflecting on culture in the diaspora, and a way to shape identity both in the private sphere and within an intimate setting of people.

Folklorique dances have gone from being suppressed and hidden, to assuming a variety of performance forms. However they are performed, *folklorique* dance styles remain enmeshed in the politically charged conceptions of their style and aesthetics.

The Haitian independence of 1803 gave new territory to expressive practices. Artists and dancers had comparatively greater liberty with dance form and the publicity of the dances. No longer under colonial rule, the newly independent nation could openly honour their ancestors and traditions. Colonial dances and traditional dances that were syncretized with colonial forms were, and continue to be more prestigious and esteemed in professional dance networks, and Haitian networks. These include European based dance companies; artistic funding agencies; audiences who are uncertain about *roots;* some students and dancers of the renowned Viviane Gauthier school of Haitian dance, a benchmark for ballet-based *folklorique* dance; the Haitian government, in Montreal and in Haiti.

Racines' dance typically perform on proscenium or thrust stages. However, their performances often transgress the stages' boundaries between audience and spectator. The rigidity of the proscenium form is always shaken, pushed at, or taken down altogether. Re-framing and restructuring space is how the dances and rhythms come alive the way the troupe know them to, when they find unrestrained dynamism away from the confines of the elevated stage area.

There may be vocal, rhythmic, or kinesthetic spill over, dissolving the typical boundaries which separate the extra-human, ephemeral world of ancestral memories created by the dancers from the mundane world they face in the audience. With portable instruments, including a large bamboo woodwind instrument called *banbou* or *vaksin*, metal horns or *konets,* large drums strapped to the shoulders or small handheld drums, dancers and drummers will enter the audience to incite collective dancing with *rara* rhythms. This dissolution invites the worlds into one another, bringing the audience into the story while simultaneously depositing the spirit of the stories into the world of the audience, which is part of sharing. The dance and rhythms cannot be contained on stage, and shouldn't be according to the dance troupe. A performance by *Racines* and company is not only for passive, distanced consumption. It is for engagement, for uniting, which reflects their project's message.

Flexible boundaries result in their permeation, including exchanges across the two corpuses that constitute *folklorique* performance and its political performative quality. *Racines'* work even highlights the illusion of division/separation, which is imperative to their objective of sharing. The discipline and formality unique to *Racines' folklorique* dances, and to Vodou dances, includes the normative of inviting bystanders into dance. It is expected and hoped for that the audience will sing, call, and hoot, and try out a dance themselves; a form of response in what is perceived as a communicatory event. But this relies on the bystanders having a similar rhythmic and kinesthetic and movement knowledge. The normalization of proscenium and thrust performance forms, and the decrease in shared knowledge, are major reasons why the troupe operate differently today, but are also phenomena they work to address.

The sounds and movement in the audience are commonplace in *folklorique* dance, but are out of place when *folklorique moves* to other contexts. The normatives of *folklorique* dance consumption contrasts to the ballet. For example, several *Racines* dancers and percussionists participated in the ballet *Dracula* directed by a Haitian ballet instructor. Half the dancing cast were ballet dancers, and the other *folklorique* performers. There was a striking juxtaposition between the performers in the show, and the two disciplines being performed. With *roots* dance*,* loud hoots, cheering, and clapping may rise from the audience mid-tableau after a smooth completion of a complicated *Yanvalou* sequence, or the entire audience may roar, hoot, and whistle at the end of a *tableau,* cheering the dancers who stand locked in pose with heaving chests. In the context of the ballet, the ambiance was sombre and constrained. The dark *Dracula*

story performed on Halloween night was not the only reason for this atmosphere, but the space of a ballet had particular etiquette which stilled and silenced the audience; several of whom I sat with were accustomed to the *folklorique* dance spaces.

The social rhythms of *roots* dancing are important historically and currently to *Racines'* identity and practices. Relationships are fundamental in troupe practices, and a large part of the character of student dance classes. Active socialization, or social dynamics, are hoped for in performances and are a defining feature, where communication on many levels guide and give life to the dance movements. Dancers and spectators make connection with one another, as well as with individuals and spirits, memories, ancestors, history. Social rhythms unfold in all occurrences of *Racines'* dance events, and are what creates the dance space.

The sociality of dance spaces, and the associated embodied practices, prompts emotional, psychological, and physiological changes. This was most noticeable with Whitney, whose transformation Khimani spoke of during one of our customary post-Saturday class conversations in the foyer of the *Centre Communitaire.* Whitney, who joined the class at nearly the same time as I did (in 2013), stepped cautiously into *roots folkorique* dancing and its social space. She grew up in an Adventist family who vehemently opposed Haitian *roots* culture. When Whitney began, she was torn between opposing truths about *roots,* and that conflict appeared in her dancing body. Khimani witnessed Whitney's transformation move over two years from constrained to relaxed, "and she no longer dances in a calculated way. It's obvious now that she feels the dance, and she loves it. She is doing it because she loves it. You can see it inside of her." When The Girls first saw Whitney dance, they commented to one another, "Do you see this? This girl can dance. She just doesn't know it yet."

Racines' class supported Whitney's exploration of *roots*, and helped her dissolve the misconceptions and very real fears that were handed down to her. According to The Girls, she "assumed herself and her roots".

Khimani emphasised that to fully dance *root*s *folklorique,* you have to understand and be comfortable with *roots* – whether or not the Haitian roots are your own. Part of "assuming yourself" in Whitney's case was relearning the meaning of *roots* and its sensations and sounds, and letting them spend time in and converse with her body. Dancing with the troupe humanized *roots*, giving Whitney the opportunity to differently conceive of the culture and dance.

Sharing the dance is making differences. Whitney's story illustrates the social and corporeal consequences of the *roots/*anti-*roots* conflict, and the transformative potential of sharing spaces and moments of dancing. *Communitas* certainly can dissolve abstract social structures in one effervescent moment. But it can also reconfigure the deeply-seated beliefs that dancers carry in and outside of dance spaces. While *communitas* creates a force of like-minded motion, it also can move minds into likeness. As the force of *Racines* grows with their work, they become prepared to confront bigger challenges, which in turn highlights even greater points of differentiation.

Conclusion

It is as though our movement to the music scripts a performance space tacitly shared and composed by both the dancers and the audience. The performance text and space […] folds in on itself and collapses as soon as we stop moving in a Ceroc way. Our dance world is made and unmade by our motions (Skinner 2003:122)

Sharing time, effort, the synchronisation of bodies, thoughts on movements, dance, politics, laughter, silence comprise dance-events. But so too is the relationality implicated by the dancer's personal and phenomenological encounters with self, other dancers, and the dance. We can understand that *Racines'* dance-events are both highly personalized and highly social; as in Lindsay's (2011) work, here the deeply internal and highly interactive interweave and respond to one another.

Folklorique teaches us to dance with the rhythms, and with ourselves. It teaches our muscles to respond like ocean waves to a 3/4 beat, or to be grounded and plié-d during the shoulder popping *vitesse* of the *Mayí/Zepòl.* But it also instills in our kinaesthetic memory the call to dance, and to dance together. During repos one Saturday in January, Sandy told me about her recent trip to Haiti. She had gone because her Grandmother nagged her on the phone, "Am I going to see you before I die? Am I going to see you before I die?' Her uncle brought her to visit. On Sandy's last day she noticed a dance studio across from her uncle's workplace for the first time. Immediately she went inside to watch. She told me how surprised her uncle was at her passion, "You really like dance!" "Yes of course!" She replied. "Then I told him to send me videos".

Susan Reed reminds us that in the history of studying dance, it has been taken as, "an expression and practice of relations of power and protest, resistance and complicity" which has been taken under an increasingly intersectional lens (1998:505). The sociality and difference-making in *Racines* implicates them in relations of power, and in a political project. For this troupe, among sharing, talking, and laughing, their dance heritage is a practice of transforming how *roots* dancing is perceived. It is a way of transforming senses of corporeality. And for most of the dancers in the *Racines* troupe and dance school, the perceptions and senses are embedded

in a long and tangled history of colonial and inter-Haitian dominance, suppression, and persecution.

The work that takes place in dancing, and around the dance, is a productive response to this history and the historical dynamics that persist today systemically and interpersonally. They are also strategies to operate within the legacies of colonialism. While the dance practice is addressing these struggles, dance events are at the same the bounded space apart from those challenges. Within the safety of the dance space, and on the drum, grows the tightest point of ideological unification among the dancers, which is the aspiration and demand for liberty, to be able to choose.

In the midst of the *Ibo* dance is a kinaesthetic sense of freedom, and a body inundated by memories of becoming free. The memories of liberation are embodied, affectively, neurologically. Dancers leave invigorated, empowered in multiple senses, to continue demanding a life where the ability to choose is not only folklore.

I would like to close with the words of my dance instructor, Lisa:

"Most of us haven't been brought up into really knowing of what Vodou is. Growing up, we looked for it because we wanted to know, "so what is so evil about this?" Or, "what is not evil about it?" actually. Why are we always confronted? Why do we always have to explain ourselves all the time, or why do we have to defend ourselves? And then we realised that the more we are defensive the less it works. So you need to educate people and, so that's what we're trying to do. And by not trying so much to separate ourselves from Vodou and roots, that's how we educate people. We explain to them that this is where it comes from, this is what it is, this is what it means, and what we're doing here is dance. We're not going to fall on the floor, you're not going to go into trance right now! I mean if you go into trance that's your own business as well. That's you, that's not me doing this. I cannot do this to you. The problem is [Haitians] have been told the dances are bad and we believe it. What we do is takes people one step away from this. Hopefully the next generation will go a little bit further and a little bit further just for people to learn that there's good things, Haitians do have a culture"

Figure 8

Postscript

In one of my last research interviews with Khimani, I brought up a question that had persisted since the beginning my research. It calls back the first quote of this thesis, Lisa's hope on page 6 that someone else will proudly take over *Racines* and "carry it for another 40 years, and on and on". I commented to Khimani that the troupe and dance classes today do not look the same as the past generation. "How do you envision the future?" I asked Khimani, "when the girls aren't teaching their children? When there isn't a concrete group of children or young adults who are certain to carry this on? Who you know you'll be handing this down to?"

She was silent for a few moments, only letting out a long breathe and holding my gaze in hers. But after 2 years of friendship, I could see what she held in her eyes. "I don't know. I don't…I try not to think about it. I think, if I worried about it I would probably stop dancing." And we both knew that she can't stop, she won't, for her sake and the sake of *roots.*

The future of *Racines* is uncertain. With a diverse student base and the troupe members' 2nd generation children who are not in the same way interested in their parent's culture, *Racines'* path does not look as straight forward as in 1973. The dancers will have to pull out their greatest

strengths, that dynamic strategic creativity, to continue carrying forward *Racines' roots* dance complex, and the dance spaces that give life to *roots* memories and culture.

Figure 9

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