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## Transcribing The American Ideal

Leslie Ann Morales  
*Bard College*

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# **Transcribing The American Ideal**

Choreography as a political  
manuscript

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of the Arts  
of Bard College

by  
Leslie Ann Morales

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2022

*This project is dedicated to my mother and father.*

*By virtue of their sacrifices and love,*

*I have the privilege to pursue an education in the arts and sciences.*

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## **Artist Statement**

My work is an expression of worldly functions, conditions, and existence. From the first time a baby laughs to the roots of political systems, I want to challenge the division one sees in the world in hopes that they realize it is connected in more ways than one. I wish to dive into the familiar—providing images, whether shocking or daunting, to uncover answers of the unfamiliar. My dance is personal. It is the scrapbook of my improvisatory explorations, training in various forms, and life experiences, whether joyful or traumatic. The construction of my work aims to establish performormative freedom and choice while keeping the integrity of the piece's narrative and style. This challenges the performer to live through an experience as opposed to simply existing on stage. As a choreographer, I wish to evoke emotion in the performers (dancers and musicians alike) more so than the audience. It is they who experience the longest stretch of the dance. They are the witnesses to every draft until it is finalized. This mode of collaboration is what I seek to achieve in my work. It shows that dance is a form of many moving parts. This is similar to human existence, an existence that is not exclusive to movement. For this reason, I wish to demonstrate that dance is a manuscript of the political—one whose goal is to navigate a system that allows human bodies to exist in a space. Furthermore, a goal that seeks to transform this existence into one that allows for equality and justice for all.

**Leslie Ann Morales**

## Introduction

In this thesis, my goal is to take the reader through my choreographic process. Where a singular topic regarding medical ethics emerged itself into works about liberty, war, capitalism, and coffee. In the midst of choreographing *Parthenon* and *The Crash*, I researched topics that inspired the works and emerged later on while choreographing. Upon completion of the pieces, I attempted to express relics of the works and process in the form of poetry. Many of the styles in these poems, particularly “Morning Calls” and “Invaders” are inspired from the poet, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, in her works *Lucky fish*, *Oceanic*, and at the drive in volcano. Below is an excerpt “Invitation” by Aimee Nezhukumatathil.

### Invitation

by Aimee Nezhukumatathil

Come in, come in. The water’s fine! You can’t get lost  
 here. Even if you want to hide behind a clutch  
     of spiny oysters — I’ll find you. If you ever leave me  
     at night, by boat, you’ll see the arrangement  
 of red-gold sun stars in a sea of milk. And though  
 it’s tempting to visit them — stay. I’ve been trained  
     to gaze up all my life, no matter the rumble  
     on earth, but I learned it’s okay to glance down  
 into the sea. So many lessons bubble up if you know

where to look. Clouds of plankton churning  
in open whale mouths might send you east  
and chewy urchins will slide you west. Squid know

Aimee Nezhukumatathil's work was one of my first exposures to poetry as it often steers away from traditional forms. In the poem, "Invitation" Aimee Nezhukumatathil utilizes pronouns in a way that is arbitrary. The line "in open whale mouths might send you east", the subject "you" is not fully identified. I decided to embrace this in my own writing by using subjects where it is not explicit. For instance, in the poem "political manuscripts", the utilization of the word "it" is not a depiction of a worldly view but rather looks at my own process of choreographing. My intention for using "it" is to establish power as a creator of my own work. It is commanding and therefore important to consider. It is the principle I used in the creation of my pieces. A manuscript established from careful research where every movement is calculated. The choices are not established because of aesthetics or empty transitions. It is a journey where often the smallest steps are the most important choices. In addition, Aimee Nezhukumatathil's manipulation of space on the page adds an additional dimension to her poems. The poem "Invaders" was inspired from her utilization of white space. White space provides "directions" for readers to read the poetry at an intended pace. Where space for me on a page should reflect a pause that then emphasizes the language.



## **Political Manuscripts**

Choreography begins from a place of nothingness.

It is the characterisation of human existence.

It is the movement of stillness and action.

It is a political manuscript.

Space and Time.

Reflecting the entanglements of people, objects, and systems.

It encompasses multiple layers.

It cannot be simplified.

Those principles took me to establishing a topic for my work. As the word is ever changing, art is no different for me. As someone with an interest in pursuing medicine in the future, I began my exploration into medical ethics. Initially medical ethics was the sole topic I was interested in. As someone who wishes to pursue a career in health care, I felt that it is important to educate myself on both the good and the bad of the healthcare system. I was interested in topics of medical experimentation and physician patient interactions. As a woman who is Puerto Rican, I was yearning to learn more about birth control studies that targeted Puerto Rican women as it is rarely spoken about. This brought up many questions for me as to the cause of this unfortunate study. Diving deeper into a rabbit hole I realized that in order to fully explore this idea, I must reveal what has preceded it and what's to come. This is the beauty of an art form that is, but not always done in an inaudible fashion. This movement based forms gives opportunity for the explorations of many ideas. This exploration of medical ethics then landed itself onto constantly

grappling with the task of transcribing or defining the American Ideal. The American Ideal is hard to define. Although vague in nature, it is something that folks subconsciously understand and work towards daily. It is something rooted in hard work, wealth, and whiteness. That being said, the project was no longer about medical ethics but about reflecting how I define the American Ideal.

### **Multiply Minds**

I felt that it is important to educate myself

Medical Ethics

To pursue a career in health care

To educate myself on both the good and the bad of the healthcare system.

Medical experimentation and physician patient interactions.

Puerto Rican Women

Yearning to learn what isn't spoken about.

Diving deeper into rabbit holes.

What has preceded it and what's to come.

The beauty of dance.

A movement based form for exploration.

Medical ethics landed itself onto the American Ideal.

The American Ideal is hard to define.

Vague in nature but universally understood.

Hard work, wealth, and whiteness.

I created a tree diagram to best describe my thought process in formulating this thesis. It is not a thesis that dives deep into one idea but rather argues how dance enables choreographers to express multiple ideas. When looking at the diagram, it is important to note that *Parthenon* is based on American Ideals and proceeding subtopics before coffee, while *The Crash* focuses on coffee with small intersections with topics used in *Parthenon*.

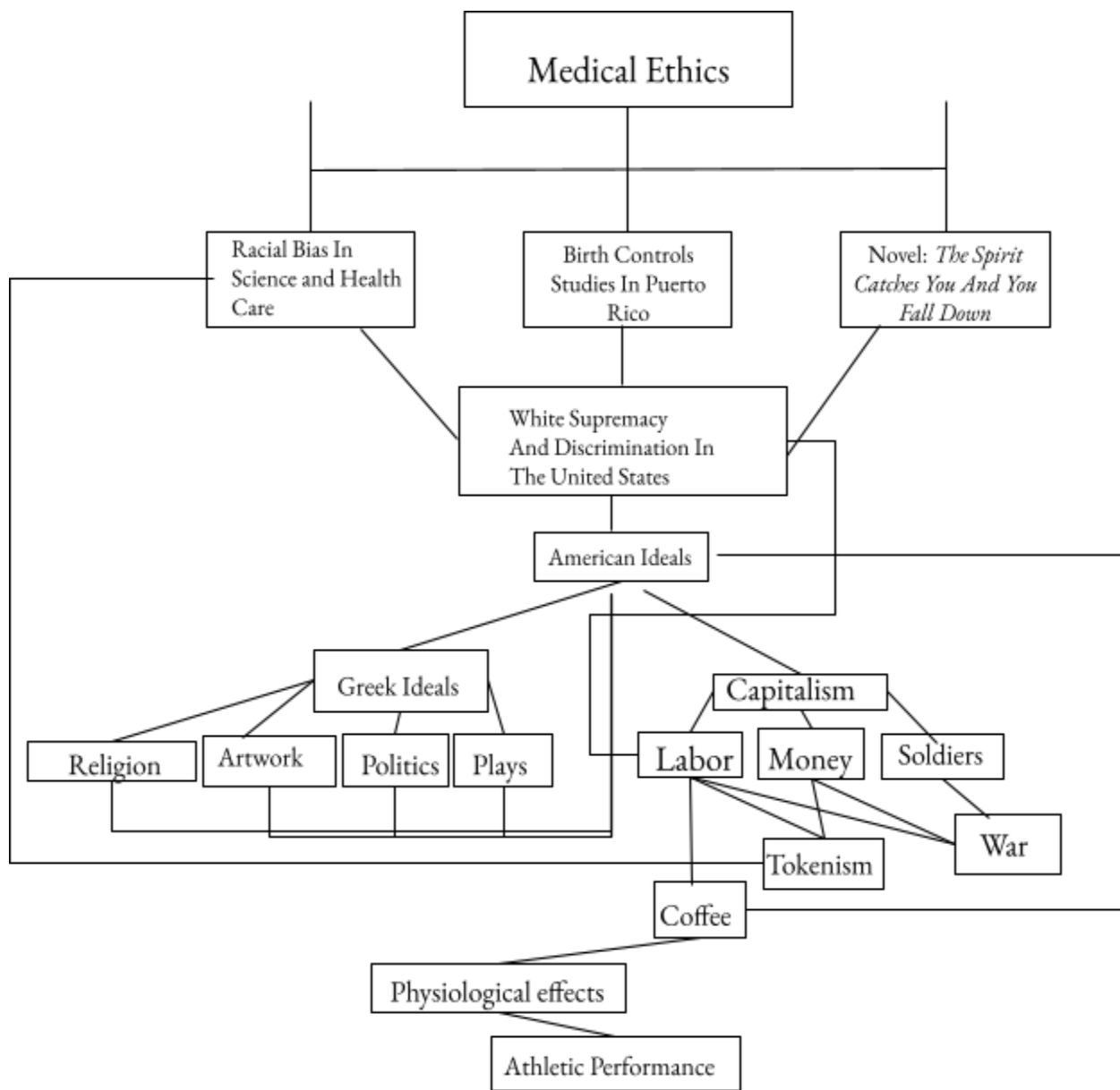


Fig. 1. Tree diagram reflecting topics utilized in choreographic works and direction of research.

**Choreographer**

Stepping into a blank space with a blank mind.

What is the story I want to tell?

Is it the glorification of the riches?

Is it the glorification of the poor?

Is it the validation of the subordinates?

Is it the validation of the uniform?

Is it the normalization of self destruction?

Is it the normalization of treating the back with an elixir of life?

The story can be filled with

Coins around a white box

Pennies in black cups

## **The Myth of Heritage**

Here is a collection of poems that was inspired by my piece “Parthenon” which was performed in the show “The Myth of Heritage”. In the beginning stages of this thesis, I wrote a research paper on topics that inspired this work. These topics included but were not limited to ancient Greece and medical ethics. The poems; “Parthenon”, “Token”, “Pendulum”, “Greek Ideals”, “Medea”, “Polis”, “Controlling Birth” and “Spirit” were made through a direct extraction of this research. The remaining works; “Exceptional”, “The Box”, “Chosen One”, “Athena”, “Autopilot”, “Invaders”, and “Look at me”, were written during and after the choreographic process. These poems reflect a number of perspectives. Perspectives of the choreographer, performer, audience and researcher. This collection of poems is an extension of the performance work. I would consider it supplementary to the performance work for those who are curious to learn more about the symbolism of the piece.

## Parthenon

An overwhelming dose of symbolism

The audience reflects.

A red suit, coins, and a white box

What does it mean to be American?

What is expected to be an American?

Classic immigrant traveling to the land of the

free

Success, liberty, and self attained wealth.



**Exceptional**

Liberty, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness \$

Land of the free \$

Equal opportunity \$

Land of the prosperous \$

One nation under god \$

Justice for all \$

Let freedom ring \$

In God is our trust \$

Open Arms \$

Home of the brave \$

Cha-Ching

**Token**

The chosen ones shine in the eyes of the watchers.

The chosen ones are put on a pedestal.

Becoming tokens in a game of tokenism.

Role models for the underprivileged.

Pawns of validation for the seekers.

They constantly fight to fit into the box of the Americas.

it is impossible...

Succeed at the impossible.

That is the job of a token.



## **The Box**

Why is the box there? They might know the reason.

The inside is very familiar.

An instruction manual.

They read the directions, but it's impossible to figure out.

They handle the box with grace,

but it follows them everywhere.

Until the puzzle is solved,

the builder watches.

The box is small and steep,

it's miscible in color.

They figure out the first instruction.

An applause echoes in the distance.

## **Pendulum**

European christianity

Biblical orientation of a human's life.

Standards of behavior and lifestyle.

Can it be obtained by the masses?

Does failure equal punishment?

In the Bible, it states that “[h]e who gathers crops in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son (Proverbs 10:5).

This standard swings on a pendulum of inequality.

The powerful engineering the rule of law.

How are rights delegated to the people?

God loves all of the creations equally,

divided on individual birthrights.

Do statues display virtue?

Do statues display wealth?

**Chosen One**

god sent the man a savior  
born from the virgin mother  
they had the answer insight  
oh how the riches are gorgeous  
soft gold and shiny  
it's a diversion  
thou shall not make unto thee any  
graven image  
forget the rest



The American ideal in some ways closely resembles Greek ideals that originate from ancient Greece. The Parthenon Acropolis is a structure in Athens known for its advances in architecture and its strong role in religious life. It was built in 5 century B.C. in dedication to the goddess Athena. It is believed that gold and other riches were stored inside this structure. For ancient Greeks, much of their art and architecture depicted Greek ideals. The Parthenon is made up of large pillars which provide balance and stability to the structure. Balance symbolizes a Greek ideal that was often a model for everyday life in Ancient Greece.

**Athena***- Haiku*

Ideal tall model

An ivory, statue built

behind the pillars

The Greek ideal is an ideology that controls life in Greek society. It encompasses how someone should behave and what someone should strive to become. Relative to the Parthenon, balance pertains to its members of society: keeping composure void of actions that are passion-driven. In addition, Greek statues of figures can reflect standards that are nearly unattainable. Discobolus, a statue featuring a nude male disc thrower, was built around 460–450 BC. As it was natural in ancient Greece for athletes to compete while nude, this reflects the importance of body image as the figure is lean in stature. Greek men were also viewed as the Greek ideal. This meant that anyone else i.e. non-Greeks and nonmales was viewed as inferior. As a result, in order to better their status, nonmales fulfilled their roles to the best of their abilities while non-Greeks learned the Greek language and customs. In American society today, those that are considered different must adapt similarly whether it be by being fluent in English, pursuing higher education, or simply working hard.

In addition, in the United States, those that demonstrate the desire to rest are deemed as lazy. This is no different than the desire to be a stable and balanced citizen in ancient Greece. Emotions that show a need for something other than the task at hand, are undesired.

**Greek Ideals**

Born in ancient Greece.

The Parthenon Acropolis,

advanced in architecture

Religious gold and riches

Large pillars

Balancing a model for everyday life.

Don't be passion driven

Don't be like Medea

Be discobolus

Different beings must adapt to their environment.

Be desired not lazy

## **Auto-pilot**

Soldier!

Never Listen

A Piano

Warm Pianos roughly command a Cold, cold Soldier

Music like stormy Pianos

Never Listen to a Soldier

Never command a Piano

Pianos like Soldier's

Never Salute a Soldier

Autopilot, Autopilot, and Autopilot



In the Greek play Medea, Medea's desire for revenge against her husband Jason for marrying another is shamed throughout the play. Medea goes through great lengths to attain revenge by murdering Jason's new wife and their children. However, even before this, Jason is never once viewed as the villain. He gains the audience's empathy from the beginning, explaining his reasoning for remarrying which was to provide stability for Medea and her children. He is shown to have acted in a way that is not passion-driven but rather logical. This is important because Greek plays often reflect the realities of ancient Greek society.

### **Medea**

She loved him

He broke their vows and married another

She wanted to prove her worth

She killed for him

They're terrified of her

Why must she be passion-driven

Society said he's logical

Choose stability over love

Magnetized by status

They empathize with him

Institutions also play a huge role in maintaining Greek ideals in America. These are systems that contain a structure in which individuals act according to their laws and expectations. For instance, in ancient Greece, the polis was a common system of government that was used. In theory, the polis is arguably one of the most similar forms of government to democracy to other forms of government that preceded it during the Roman empire. The polis was described as a council where members of Greek society gathered and made decisions regarding their governance. The idea of the polis was very progressive in a time of monarchs, however, the polis excluded nonmales and non greeks. As previously discussed, the play Medea paints Medea in a bad light. As Greek plays were often written by males for a majority male audience, males often held social power.

### **Polis**

Institutions are the maintenance of Greek ideals.

Act in accordance with the law

Was it democracy?

It is the absence of monarchs.

For the people

The polis was for the people

The polis was for the greeks

The polis was for the men



So how do dominant groups in the United States behave as a result of these phenomena? As previously mentioned, biblical stories are often placed on a pendulum swinging between what is right and wrong. Stepping back to the United States in the 1950s, many white wealthy scientists used their power and privilege to make “meaningful” discoveries at the expense of those who are not in a position of power. For instance, in the 1950s birth control trials commenced in Puerto Rico. “... [L]ittle was known about the drug’s effects when Rock and biologist Gregory Pincus – with the backing of birth control advocate Margaret Sanger and philanthropist Katherine McCormick -- decided to launch the human trials” (Vargas). On August 2, 1959, Pincus wrote in an article that appeared in *The Washington Post* stating that “The control of the population explosion now upon us by the limitations of births is particularly demanding in countries where the birth-rate pressure curtails already limited economic development.” It is widely believed that these trials were rooted in the belief of eugenics and that population size is correlated to poverty and economic disaster. In political ads, Puerto Ricans were often encouraged to keep families small in order to stay out of poverty. This in turn made birth control studies very attractive.

### **Controlling Birth**

United States in the 1950s

White powerful scientists

Making powerful discoveries

No idea how the drug works?

A pill into the mouths of black and brown women.

Small families

Poverty control

A eugenics scheme

No idea how the drug works?

Lena asks Mami “was it safe”

Mami said yes

Shielding Lena from the monsters who are responsible for

Three tombstones build ahead of schedule

These birth control studies were extremely unethical and under regulated. Three women died as the result of these trials and many dropped out due to the increasing side effects of the high doses of hormones. The scientists in power were able to do these experiments with the support of ideologies rooted in eugenics and the institutions that allotted them funding, space, and approval for these trials. As far as American Ideals is concerned, knowledge of the sciences is admired. The attainment of knowledge calls upon power since it is rooted in contributing to the nation's development. Science has never been problematic nor will it ever be, however, those

who use their knowledge to abuse and have a one-sided scientific view have reinstated that those who do not fit into the American ideal have failed.

### Invaders

No one asked them to step into Our lives but they did anyway  
before We meet them We trusted their kind We thought everything their kind did  
was correct  
We thought they wanted to show Us the right way to help Us to be  
Our shield from all sorrows but We lost them the moment  
They laughed at Us and penetrated  
Our biggest insecurities  
now every time We look in the mirror We think  
about  
everything they taught Us...? No  
We only think about the actions they were supposed to teach  
Us instead they looked to their roots and  
disturb our peace

We were paralyzed from the shock because it had to be an illusion  
a nightmare but they let the thorns  
slip out  
of their mouth  
a second time

After

Quietness no longer remained  
And all there was left  
Is  
A  
Monster  
In  
Us  
No longer poised  
We became Our own knights  
To fight the Invaders

The novel, *The Spirit Catches You And You Fall Down*, by Anne Fadiman is a true story that explores the life of Lia Lee who is a Hmong child with epilepsy. It showcases a tragic story caused by a physician who arguably has a one-sided scientific view. The Hmong people whose origins lie in Southeast Asia and China have a long history of fighting against assimilation as they do not have their own country. Part of the way the Hmong view medicine is both holistic and spiritual. This is very different from medical practices in the United States that are based on prescription drugs and new technologies. Lia Lee's parents viewed her epilepsy as her spirit leaving her body and treated her via spiritual rituals. Lia's parents clashed with doctors in regard to Lia's medication. This ultimately caused her condition to worsen to the point where Lia entered a state of coma vigil. The issue at hand is the way in which the physician approached the family. It was the absence of attempting to understand where the family is coming from rather than the thoughts of the physician which was the family simply neglected Lia Lee.

## Spirit

A tale of the Hmong child Lia Lee

Her epilepsy is a tragedy, but a lesson

Hmong people are fighters,

against assimilation and a place to call home

Spiritual healing.

Doctors do not like that.

Doctors repeat...take the medicine....take the medicine

Parents repeat....spirit has fallen...spirit has fallen

Doctors repeat...take the medicine....take the medicine

Lia lee's coma virgil state

Where is the compassion

**Look at me**

The eyes rise like a sword

Swords swiftly command

Do the eyes grow

Two eyes meet

Only one burns

Are u looking

When the rope falls like a rope



## **Roots of the Future**

Here is a collection of poems that was inspired by my piece “The Crash” which was performed in the show “Roots of the Future”. This collection of poems is a continuation of the ideas explored in the piece Parthenon with an additional exploration into the topics of war and coffee. The poems; “Morning Calls” and “Cafe” were written before the start of the choreographic process. The remaining works; “The Crash”, “Steam”, “Little Soldiers”, “Surplus”, “La Espalda”, and “Doses” were written during and after the choreographic process. These poems reflect ideas that inspired the images of this work. Like the previous collection, this collection of poems is supplementary to the performance work for those who are curious to learn more about the symbolism of the piece.

## **The Crash**

The mid-night zombies, fallen to their endless writings.

Scoop Scoop Scoop Scoop Scoop Scoop

Oh how their addiction taste so good

When did this begin

It's terrifying really

How well they chase currency with no avail to what's happening.

On the backs of the producers of the magic bean

It's a song and dance at the jazz club

Look beyond the club

The dying breaths of the war

The dying breaths of the war

It's a song and dance at the jazz club

The dying breaths of the war

The dying breaths of the war





### **Morning Calls**

Methodical exciting hot stuff.

Opposing allures enchant.

Respected sugars yield.

Natural cravings unleashed.

Icy and smokey beverages.

Name the perfect siesta.

Glamorous beans halt.

Cool chains constrain.

As molecules merge.

Lingering shakes.

Lucid thoughts penetrate.

Spoils go to waste.

**Cafe**

*- Haiku*

Political lar

Steamy aroma of sex

Native gentlemen

S

T

E

A

M

A2a receptor did not stop thinking about the caffeine. It was filled with anxiety and antagonism. Well, it could always recall the bean. That morning, A2a receptor was shocked C and shaken to a state of awakeness. It calms itself with anachronism. A2a receptor did A not cease to think about caffeine. At sunset, it noticed that the caffeine was mean. It F tried to rely on a prism. But it could not forget the bean. So the brain tried to distract F distract it with a machine. Said it was time to start thinking about zizz. A2a the E the receptor would not stop thinking about the caffeine. A2a receptor decided I to do something daily. The caffeine was like a 400mg dose of self-sacrifice. N It said that's safe. It could never forget the bean. A2a receptor dived in..... E like an ice bucket. Its mind turned into electric sparks. A2a receptor could not stop chasing the stimulation. It could not forget the bean

## Little Soldiers

Historical laborers are activated.

Unwritten laws awaken.

Medieval wounds are open.

All souls pixelate.

Nuclear footprints spotted.



**Surplus**

Macros are plentiful

Bodybuilding is a journey of the void

A continuon of the way you pump run and lift

Inserting itself in mind

Day and night

Always dreaming about this plentiful trill.

## La Espalda

Let's compare you to a pillar

A statue, muscular and strong

You bare of burden of the tower

They don't know

It is you that lets it stand

Through winds bring you into a  
loop of chaos

Where weaknesses unveil.

Unravel quietly like a warm back.

The backs are alive commands.

Dawn falls like a lively back.

a lively moon.

I dislike the backs blended bulk, caffeine and strength.

Thinking of the wideness engulfs the hours.

It flies away with a lifelong heart,

Let me count the ways.



## Doses

in spirit of performance  
 athletes do not  
 alter doses peripheral  
 senses to movement be  
 vigilant with only 5–13 mg/kg  
 Of Caffeine  
 Embrace the active awareness  
 Before Improve After Improve  
 cognitive processes during and after exercise  
 Do high doses make you nervous?  
 Disturbed sleeping in some subjects be  
 vigilant with only 5–13 mg/kg  
 Side effects are few  
 but the very lack of research decidedly doses  
 cool cognitive processes! rather 5-13mg  
 doses! No its 200mg before and after  
 It an an ergogenic effect, does it change  
 your mood? How is your heart rate  
 Define by the very lack of research  
 you see a leap ! leap  
 I'm just in that kind of mood! leap  
 leap leap leap leap  
 leap leap

## Conclusion

Dance as a movement based art form has many possibilities. I gave myself the task of defining movement. Whether it is calculated movements or an improvisation, the manuscript I developed is an expression of what I am witnessing or have witnessed. I try to manipulate space the same way human beings navigate their lives. How can I make something work? What makes sense? What do I want to say? What are the moving parts? Choreographers are given the responsibility to dictate what they want to show to the audience. For me, this thesis has been an exploration of making a piece that goes beyond the stage. A piece powerful enough that it makes the audience pause and look at their place in society. Where do they fit in the piece? Are they the cause or are they the effect? Even as a performer in my works, I'm constantly going through these explorations. My experience on stage evolves with each passing performance. I think about the meaning of my choreographic choices. I ask myself, why did I make this choice? Every prop, whether that be the box, coins, cups, or pennies, has a deeper meaning that sometimes goes beyond my initial expectations. I would describe it as designing pieces of a puzzle. I am aware of the colors, shapes, and designs on the puzzle piece, but when it comes together a bigger image unfolds.



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## Addendum

The piece, *The Crash*, encompassed 7 dancers and 3 accompanied musicians (pianist, violinist, and percussionist). Due to an uprising in covid-19 cases, 1 dancer became out of commission during tech week and another after opening night. As a result, minor adjustments were made in the work in order to keep the integrity of the images presented. Specifically, 1 dancer was taught the role of CPR where proceeding moments of unison. The absence of the two performers did change the “geometry” of the piece. The work was designed to showcase symmetry. In particular, a pathway was given to the dancers who were given the instruction to walk like “zombies” at the beginning of the work. This pathway was done with the intention of having a reflection plane. This reflection plane in their pathway was disturbed when one of those dancers was unable to continue due to covid. The “zombie” image was still presented but with the absence of uniformity. This uniformity and careful pathway sketch were supposed to connect the two dancers and demonstrate that this “zombie” phenomenon does not happen to one person. The “zombie” phenomenon is described in the poem “The Crash” where the crash refers to the later effects of caffeine consumption. Another change to the piece was the shift from a quartet in the “jazz” section to a duet. Although this section was inherently unaffected in my view, the CPR section proceeding was affection. The kneeling position of the two dancers emulates a soldier's kneeling with a form of arms in hand. I believe that four dancers in this position provide a clearer image of a larger group of people (soldiers) than two dancers. Despite this, moments of unison in this piece provided grace in making tweaks last minute. More information on this can be found in the poem “little soldiers”

There are several questions that were asked about the works *Parthenon* and *The Crash* that I will address here.

How was the timing of *Parthenon* constructed?

Since this is a solo piece, I took advantage of determining how I want to control the time at the moment. The piece was originally a “score” of some sort in which I ultimately made executive decisions on how long things would take. This inevitably changed the length of time for the piece each time it was performed. My ultimate goal was to have an authentic experience in my work. This idea originated as a counter to the fast pace lifestyle that I often experience in college. In this piece, I truly wanted to enjoy the movement where the construction of time gives me flexibility in making choices.

Why use a box, coins, and a red suit?

My intention in using these elements was to create a basis on which the viewer can access and draw their own conclusions. The simplicity of these props allows for them to have multiple meanings. The first image of the piece resembles that of the statue of liberty and becomes stagnant for about one minute. Having these three elements so close to each other at the start of the piece creates a conversation between them. Their presence asks the question, What does it mean to be an American? For more information, their metaphorical meaning is discussed in the set of poems under the Myth of Heritage.

How was the music score constructed?

The piece is accompanied by a solo pianist. The score for the piece was created after the completion of the choreography. Since the timing of the piece is different in each performance the dancer and musician are in a constant state of call and response. Samuel Mutter is the composer and pianist for this work and was given a set of adjectives by myself. For instance, in the creation of the inside work that was performed at the start of the work, I gave Sam a list of words such as apocalyptic, lonely, and spooky.

What was the purpose of the gold mylar that fell from above?

This was originally supposed to be coins, but due to the safety of myself and the audience, mylar is much more delicate. The warm lighting that was utilized at that moment does a great job of reflecting the shine in the gold mylar. My gaze at the end of the piece is upward and therefore the mylar provides more dimension to my gaze. It is a symbol of hope and what lies ahead in the future. The continuation of my breathing even after the mylar is no longer visible demonstrates that this moment is not the end.

How did I choreograph this solo?

My work is often created outside the studio where my brain visualizes images that I wish to convey. The images in this work were inspired by many statues such as the Statue of liberty, Jesus, Mary (mother of Jesus), discobolus, and the American eagle. Many moments in the work contained “angular” and “sharp” moments with salutes. This is my interpretation of figures whose work entails obedience to authority such as soldiers.

How did *Parthenon* become *The Crash*?

I was having a short conversation about the popularization of coffee during the industrial revolution. Coffee is a drink that is present in the morning routines of many and I thought it will be a good bridge of understanding for the audience. In *The Crash*, my goal was to investigate the same ideas I explored in *Parthenon* with a more narrow lens on coffee. For more information on how these topics intercept, please take a look at my tree diagram on page 6.

Why all those gym references?

Caffeine consumption is heightened in the gym community. Studies have shown that 200mg of caffeine a day is beneficial for athletic performance (Spriet). This area of research is highly underdeveloped. For the research that is present, companies present athletes with supplements with a specific caffeine dose. These supplements, notably known as pre-workout, are popular among gym communities. These supplements provide short-term energy for gym performance. This is also popular among bodybuilders who often need to achieve results in a short period of time. These products are highly unregulated but go unnoticed in a culture of achieving an aesthetic. For me, my work in many ways reflects my life experiences. This year my exposure to the gym has grown and for that reason, my understanding of the culture has heightened. *The Crash* is an attempt to display strength and musculature while also challenging the way people interpret what is strength and what are weaknesses. For more information, please take a look at the poem "Doses".

Why place pennies in coffee cups?

Just as everything costs money, so does coffee. The fallen bodies at the end of the work with pennies being poured on them have parallels with the box and coins presented in *Parthenon*. These parallels lie in how human suffering in many ways is caused by money all over the world.