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CANON
The Cinematic Story Ballet (Cineballet):
&
How I Learned to Create Cognitive Characters from William Shakespeare

THESIS

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in Dance

by

Jehbreal Muhammad Jackson

Thesis Committee:
Professor Alan Terricciano, Chair
Professor Jennifer Fisher
Professor Julia Reinhard Lupton

2020

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DEDICATION

To

my parents, family, friends, ancestors
and everyone who has been and will be healed by art.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

CANON

The Cinematic Story Ballet (Cineballet):

&

How I Learned to Choreograph Cognition from William Shakespeare

by

Jehbreal Muhammad Jackson

Master of Fine Arts in Dance

University of California, Irvine, 2020

Professor Alan Terricciano, Chair

As a young artist interested in many art forms, I yearned for a way to focus my attention on them all or focus them all into one singular vision. This total artwork was given form through various artistic encounters with the works of William Forsythe, George Balanchine, Stanley Kubrick and Johann Sebastian Bach, but was solidified upon discovering the plays of William Shakespeare. After falling in love with the plays of Shakespeare during a particularly tumultuous time in my life, I began to research his creative craftmanship. During my research I simultaneously encountered the beginnings of a pursuit of scholarship regarding Shakespeare and cognition, while also using my discoveries to develop an artistic practice of my own.

Shakespeare's pervasive reach has many sources, but one of his primary gifts and innovations is in his creation of "cognitive characters" as detailed by the scholarship of Harold Bloom and the performance practices of John Barton. While researching cognition, I came to understand more clearly what Bloom and Barton meant by their

claims of cognitive characters, but also discovered a paradigm shift in theoretical notions of cognition that have yet to reach the public consciousness. This paradigm shift proves the popular understanding of a separation of mind and body, initiated and disseminated by René Descartes, to be false and proposes that the body is a “thinking” entity itself through empirical evidence. The thinking body and how it initiates cognition has become my foundation for working towards creating cognitive characters, as Shakespeare did, in my cineballet CANON.

Cineballet, a story ballet written and choreographed specifically for film, is a new subgenre of screen dance that was created as a result of and a response to great trauma and adversity. It is my goal through this research to create works of art that speak to our current time as well as future generations to help people to live more enriched and healthy lives as the plays of Shakespeare have for me and countless others.

INTRODUCTION

Though artistic creation has been a lifelong pursuit of mine, it is only within the last 5-10 years that I have come to perceive my artistic voice and mission. As an artist interested in many forms of art it was very difficult for me to find a particular form that would satisfy all of my ambitions as an artist. Choosing dance as a focus of study had much more to do with what I see as a prenatal attachment to movement. My mother is also a dancer, and so was her father (my grandfather who danced with Bill “Bojangles” Robinson on Broadway in the show “Growin’ Pains” as a child). My mother played music for me and danced with me in the womb. Had it not been for experiencing the joy of movement before birth I believe that I would’ve wanted to compose music, but I think dancing with my mother before I could walk or talk sealed the deal.

As I got older, I found a piece of myself in many art forms – as a singer, actor, visual artist and writer. None ever carried the sensation of complete fulfillment for me. Various artists were also deeply influential for me, but only a handful truly shaped me, and even fewer do I consider artistic mentors. William Forsythe’s movement vocabulary and interdisciplinary work from pieces like *Quintett* and *Decreation* helped encourage me to merge all of my artistic interest into a single *Gesamstkunstwerk* (total artwork). George Balanchine introduced me to formalism through the expressive power of the rigorously composed body *en pointe*. The first few moments of watching Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey* beckoned me to a feeling of home that I hadn’t felt in art before. This encounter would also present film as the container in which I would dump all of my seemingly disparate artistic passions and ideas into a singular vision. Johann Sebastian Bach was the first composer to floor me with nearly every work he’s ever created, using the intricacies of counterpoint, as not only a vehicle for working out artistic ideas, but, to me, as a means to helping humans to reconcile with their souls. The most

influential of them all on me, however, is William Shakespeare. Engaging with Shakespeare would prove to be the launching pad for developing my artistic voice.

I began to read and research Shakespeare insatiably after watching Orson Welles' film on Henry the IV and V, *Chimes at Midnight.* Though I believe that the marriage of Shakespeare's text to stunning cinematic images (having at this point fallen in love with film) had much to do with my intense reaction to the Bard (as I had seen a number of Shakespeare's plays at that time which all eluded me), it was the extraordinary cast's delivery of the text that planted life changing seeds in my imagination and moved me to learn more. I began to read, re-read, and research Shakespeare for the artistic fuel and substance that I had been searching for all of my life. Like the home I felt while watching *2001*, I saw a kinship between his artistic world and a world that I was seeking to create with my work. I began to wonder how I could possibly create this world that I could begin to perceive within myself by using his writing as a guide.

In January of 2016, after graduating from The Juilliard School and a brief performing career as a dancer with the Dance Theater of Harlem, I returned to the United States from an abusive relationship in Berlin, Germany. I had taken the risk of moving there to find work as a dancer in hopes of it leading to an easy choreographic transition. I found work with the ballet company Ballet am Rhein and with the Salzburg Music Festival, but then had to leave Europe before I began either. I returned to Ft. Worth, Texas with nothing. At this point I wondered what my next steps were, and if I were to leave dance altogether to begin a new path. I decided to try making small dance solos to use for a choreographic portfolio in hopes of taking one last stab at a career in dance and choreography. The initial idea was to have the solos professionally recorded as a record of my choreographic work. However, an interesting "coincidence" occurred. My mother remarried the summer before and was showing me the wedding video. While watching the video I took note of the skill of the videographer. I became overwhelmed with the serendipitous prospects of making a dance film with a person who I would discover had

been wanting to make one as well for some time. The solo that would become my first short film, *I Will Follow You Too,* had the bare bones of the choreography, music, and thematic material already in place. Integrating the camera and filling out the story was as organic as if it were always supposed to be done in this way. It was during this time that the idea of the cinematic story ballet or “cineballet” was born. It would be a new subcategory of screen dance where the libretto of the full length (feature length) ballet would be created with an original story, physical choreography, and camera choreography in mind. I had found the vessel with which I would strive to learn from the artistic craft of William Shakespeare while creating a space in which healing could occur from my traumas; allowing others to heal by extension. It was, of course, an intimidating thought to me at first. However, once I began to encounter certain ideas from particular experts on Shakespeare and seeing the need for a new form and new stories for ballets to inhabit, my far-fetched ambitions somehow seemed more attainable and urgent.

Over the next few chapters I will map the journey through my research for and creation of my first feature length cineballet *CANON.* In the first chapter I will talk about two very influential Shakespearean and theatrical practice scholars John Barton and Harold Bloom. I’ll describe their influence on my understanding of the inner workings of Shakespeare’s plays (particularly as it relates to Shakespeare’s gift of writing “cognitive characters”) and how they, in many ways, shaped my artistic research for my own work. Within this chapter will also include a discussion on René Descartes as the source for modern Western notions of cognition. The subsequent chapters will present my discoveries on how Shakespeare’s characters are in fact cognitive and how he manages to create the effect through literary means. I will follow with an account of how I applied these discoveries to my creation of *CANON*. I will conclude with a reflection on the process throughout the production, and a gauge of success in relation to my goals.

Chapter 1

Barton and Bloom on Cognitive Characters

Though I have encountered a number of scholars and directors of Shakespeare that formally analyze his plays, I was most informed by the theoretical models proposed by Harold Bloom and John Barton. In this chapter I will focus on these pillars of my early Shakespearean studies that did much to educate me on the inner workings of his plays in theory and in practice. I will adapt ideas of “naturalism” and “heightened language” from Barton and the notion of the “cognitive character” from both Barton and Bloom and include them in my own creative practice. This chapter will investigate what these terms mean in the world and in the minds of these two scholars.

In order to properly assess the concept of cognitive characters as mentioned above, however, I have to address the traditional thought regarding cognition, as it is in conflict with not only how I related to Shakespeare and Elizabethan notions of consciousness, but also what I came to discover are the current empirical models of cognitive thought.

The western conflict of cognition begins with René Descartes, a French philosopher, mathematician, and scientist whose writings helped launch the Enlightenment. In his lifetime scientists were heavily persecuted during the Protestant Reformation if their findings or philosophies contradicted or challenged biblical teachings in any way. In order to protect himself from such persecution he placed the study of the mind in a realm of things that were essentially unable to be fully studied, though he felt it could be studied partially through philosophy. He argued that there was a separation of the mind and body, with the body inferior to the mind as merely a puppet for the mind to operate through. This led to cognitive theories like the Cartesian Theater and the Homunculus (a being or presence that resides in the mind which receives images of the world through the unintelligent eye/body, while it (the Homunculus) watches the

images and makes sense of them). Since today's technology and empirical methods of cognitive study didn't exist until centuries after the Enlightenment period, Descartes' philosophy of cognition went undisputed in major scientific circles until fairly recently (within the last 30 years) when biologists, neuroscientists, and cognitive scientists were able to study the activity of the brain more precisely. There were early direct & indirect detractors to Cartesian thought (including psychiatrist Theodore Lipps, biologist Jakob Johann von Uexküll, philosopher Martin Heidegger, and artist/dance critic John Martin) that made claims about cognition being a fully embodied phenomenon. These alternative ideas anticipate the wave of embodied cognition theories stemming from the technological advancements of contemporary cognitive study. At the time, their claims seemed inconsequential because of the same lack of ability to prove the inner workings of the mind.

My initial understanding of cognition was based upon this well-established Cartesian mind-body dualism. His concept made the research for this investigation not only daunting, but also confounded the investigative process as well, because there is no empirical evidence to prove the Cartesian model to be true. The Cartesian model also proves to be counter intuitive, especially for the practice of dance where "muscle memory" is not only commonly accepted it is essential for the success of the practice. Separating the mind and body placed a separation between myself and the understanding of the textual construction of Shakespeare's characters, while also making my attempts to diffuse the principals of his writing into my own work impossible. The difficulty in analyzing Shakespeare's plays in this way would make sense as Shakespeare was writing before the Enlightenment period when the Cartesian model was formed and adopted.

It wasn't until I was made aware of the theories of embodied cognition (which includes the subcategories of enactive, extended, embedded, distributed, and situated cognition) and, more specifically, the molecular theories of autopoiesis and structural coupling by biologist

turned philosopher Humberto Maturana, that I reached a new perspective on the issue. Professor of Design and Theory, Carolyn Hummels, and Industrial Design Researcher, Jelle Van Dijk, state the basic premise of embodied cognition theory in "Seven Principles to Design for Embodied Sense Making": "From an embodied cognition perspective, cognition is seen as an emergent property of interactions between brain, body and the physical and social environment" (Hummels and van Dijk 2). The emergence of what we have come to know as cognition (and the interactions of brain, body, and environment) occurs on the molecular level and finds many reiterations in supra-molecular domains. Maturana explains that living beings are systems that are "composite entities" and have a "dual existence". The fundamental events that make a being a living being operate outside of any central control system, like the brain, and only truly occur at the molecular level. In his theory of autopoiesis, molecules continuously create other molecules that perform the same actions as those that created them in a closed unit of recursive action, while being open to the introduction of new molecules from the environment. The human body, for example, becomes a "singularity that operates as a simple unity in the domain which [it arises as a totality], and at the same time [exists] as [a composite entity] in the domain of the operation of [its] components" (Maturana 12). In other words, the body is not simply a puppet for the brain, but a "thinking" entity itself. It is self-creating and self-regenerating while being in dialogue with the environment that it exists within. On the neuronal level, the body contains the other half of the original package of neurons that are equally divided before the fetus is formed half making the brain and spine and the other half the rest of the body as explained by Professor of art and computing Simon Penny in his book *Making Sense: Cognition, Computing, Art, and Embodiment* (63). There is no true separation between the brain and the body as they are integrated neuronally. Professor of Psychobiology, Vittorio Gallese and cognitive linguist and philosopher George Lakoff state in their essay, "The Brain's Concepts: The Role of the Sensory-Motor System in Conceptual Knowledge" that the parts of the brain related to doing are inextricably linked to the parts that imagine doing. These regions

of the brain share the same neural substrate (Gallese and Lakoff 9). Lakoff also partners with fellow cognitive linguist Mark Johnson to describe the way that our conceptual systems are in fact metaphorical and rooted in sensory motor experience. In their book *Metaphors We Live By,* they chart the many ways that our physical relationship to the world determines the way we think and speak about it, which in turn affects how we perceive and act. Cognitive scientist and professor Edwin Hutchins claims that our environment is also integral to the act of cognition as we are constantly engaging with and cognizing on our external influences through our body in his essay "Enaction, Imagination, and Insight" (436). The body and its habitat therefore become "structurally coupled" and co-evolve with each other (Maturana 17). Modern theories of embodied cognition, ironically enough, resonate with Elizabethan (pre-Cartesian) notions of consciousness.

As I consider Harold Bloom's conception of cognitive characters, I wonder how he may relate to such evidence. In his controversial book *Shakespeare: Invention of the Human,* Harold Bloom writes analyses of each of Shakespeare's plays as an illustration of the ways in which Shakespeare "invents" the way that subsequent writers, readers and play goers have come to relate to cognitive characters and even the concept of personality as we know it. While reading Bloom I was not only struck by the audacity of the title of the book, but also by much of what he had to say regarding Shakespeare's ubiquity. He attributes much of the Bard's pervasive impact to his gift of devising, with words, cognitive characters that could exist outside of his plays:

> In Shakespeare, characters develop rather than unfold, and they develop because they reconceive themselves. Sometimes this comes about because they "overhear" themselves talking whether to themselves or to others. Self-overhearing is their royal road to individuation, and no other writer, before or since Shakespeare, has accomplished so well the virtual miracle of creating utterly different yet self-consistent voices for his more than one hundred major characters and many hundreds of highly distinctive minor personages. (Bloom xvii)

Furthermore, consider Bloom's statements regarding Shakespeare's magnum opus *Hamlet* in an interview with Charlie Rose:

> He has the incredible gift of consciousness. He is more conscious, without being self-conscious in our terminology, of his own consciousness and of the problems of consciousness than anyone else in the entire history of literature or in life setting Shakespeare aside. (charlierose.com 9:08-9:25)

> He is the only literary character in all of literature who seems to have an authorial consciousness all his own. (charlierose.com 13:01-13:08)

In spite of their grand, and admittedly subjective, claims these statements resonate deeply with my experience of reading and watching Shakespeare's plays. These observations also align with my own goals as a maker of cineballets that ambitiously strive for the kind of artistic power and humanity that Shakespeare's plays have. Over time my focus has come to center even more around how to craft original complex "cognitive" characters, plots, and visual metaphor that I had not seen in traditional story ballets while, at the same time, avoiding mere adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. How could I accomplish through movement, music and the moving image what Shakespeare did with language?

Before going too far with exploring this ambitious goal I wish to address more immediate and practical questions regarding our collective understanding of cognition. What might Bloom, Barton and other Shakespeare experts be responding to when they talk about "cognitive", or "conscious" characters in reference to the Bard? Is the cognitive character what makes his writing so ubiquitous, resonant, and timeless? In addition, as I reflect on my personal response to Shakespeare's artistry, what was it exactly that hooked me? Having a feeling of deep identification with the poetic humanity of the characters, particularly in their extreme emotions (through which the language of the characters become the most distinctive), it became very important for me to focus on this concept of generating cognition with artistic materials and

means like Shakespeare was able to do. I accept Bloom's conclusions about Shakespeare's creation of cognitive characters. Therefore, I decided to look further into Bloom's and Barton's ideas of cognition in order to better understand the path to possibly translating Shakespeare's artistic principles to other artistic materials and media.

While analyzing Bloom's text in relation to cognition I noticed that he avoids saying outright if his philosophy of cognition is Cartesian. I found that his descriptions of cognitive activity are self-contradictory as they relate to the empirical paradigms of cognition and Cartesian dualism, because his thoughts seem to align with both at different points in his essays. I conclude that Bloom (in general) sees Shakespeare as having created a mode of thinking about character as an evolving consciousness that develops via interaction with the world. More importantly their consciousness also evolves through their interaction with themselves as Bloom points out. Bloom opens his tome of analyses with an address to the reader. "Literary character before Shakespeare is relatively unchanging; women and men are represented as aging and dying, but not as changing because their relationship to themselves, rather than to the gods or God, has changed" (Bloom xvii). Later in his chapter on "Shakespeare's Universalism" he asserts:

> The idea of Western character, of the self as moral agent, has many sources: Homer and Plato, Aristotle and Sophocles, the Bible and St. Augustine, Dante and Kant, and all you might care to add. Personality, in our sense, is a Shakespearean invention, and is not only Shakespeare's greatest originality but also the authentic cause of his perpetual pervasiveness (Bloom 4).

He adds:

> Shakespeare's uncanny power in the rendering of personality is perhaps beyond explanation. Why do his personages seem so "real" to us, and how could he contrive that illusion so persuasively? Historical (and historicized) considerations have not aided us as much in the answering of such questions. Ideals, both societal, and individual, were perhaps more prevalent in Shakespeare's world than they appear to be in ours. Leeds Barroll notes that Renaissance ideals, whether Christian or philosophical or occult, tended to emphasize our need to join something personal that yet was larger than ourselves, God or a spirit. A certain strain or anxiety ensued, and Shakespeare

> became the greatest master at exploiting the void between persons and the personal ideal (Bloom 7).

After detailing his observations on Shakespeare's singular contribution of personality to the literary canon, and posing it as the reason for his perpetual pervasiveness, Bloom comes to a hypothesis on the source for Shakespeare's unrivaled capacity for cognitive character creation with a single word, vitalism. He recounts:

> Chesterson and Anthony Burgess both stressed Shakespeare's vitality; I would go a touch farther and call Shakespeare a vitalist, like his own Falstaff. Vitalism, which William Hazlitt called "gusto", may be the ultimate clue to Shakespeare's preternatural ability to endow his personages with personalities and with utterly individuated styles of speaking (Bloom 8).

Vitalism has a complex history that stems from a long debate within the empirical sciences between "Mechanists" who believed that a physical and quantifiable explanation was possible for all aspects of living creatures, and "Vitalists" who believed that the reason for animation was not physical, but spiritual, and could very well be unknowable. Philosopher William Betchel and physicist Robert C. Richardson chart the major points and sources of Vitalist theories:

> Vitalists hold that living organisms are fundamentally different from non-living entities because they contain some non-physical element or are governed by different principles than are inanimate things. In its simplest form, vitalism holds that living entities contain some fluid, or a distinctive "spirit". In more sophisticated forms, the vital spirit becomes a substance infusing bodies and giving life to them; or vitalism becomes the view that there is a distinctive organization among living things. Vitalist positions can be traced back to antiquity. Aristotle's explanations of biological phenomena are sometimes thought of as vitalistic, though this [correlation] is problematic. In the third century BC, the Greek anatomist Galen held that vital spirits are necessary for life. Vitalism is best understood, however, in the context of the emergence of modern science during the 16th and 17th centuries. Mechanistic explanations of natural phenomena were extended to biological systems by Descartes and his successors. Descartes maintained that animals, and the human body, are "automata", mechanical devices differing from artificial devices only in their degree of complexity. Vitalism developed as a contrast to this mechanistic view. Over the next three centuries, numerous figures opposed the extension of

> Cartesian mechanism to biology, arguing that matter could not explain, movement, perception, development or life (Betchel and Richardson rep.routlege.com).

During its evolution over the centuries the definition of vitalism was adapted to each successive era of scientific discovery. The explanations became increasingly rooted in empiricism as the technology of each era facilitated more sophisticated study. Inevitably, the limits of technology would put a stop to what could be discovered and then vitalism would be reintroduced as an explanation to fill in the gap; since they could not know it then, it couldn't be known. Vitalism has since fallen out of favor due to its reliance on "unknowable" or "unexplainable" variables. As noted in Betchel and Richardson vitalism is at odds with Cartesian ideals. However, much current thinking on the subject (thinking that derives from Descartes) separating an unknowable mind from a knowable body, is at once resistant to vitalism while also embracing the vitalists' premise of unknowable variables.

Bloom attributes a "vitalist unknowable source" to Shakespeare which Bloom sees as responsible for Shakespeare's genius. The concept of "genius" in colloquial modern-day ideals, is inherently a vitalist concept, because it attributes an exceptional skill or quality of existence to an unknowable source (cognitive or otherwise). Though the genius of Shakespeare's unique way of choosing words and crafting his poetry is difficult to pin down, I will argue that the empirical evidence of the text itself provides the information needed to understand why his characters are so "real", enabling his ubiquitous reach.

In his defense Bloom speaks of inevitably running into paradoxes when speaking about Shakespeare (Bloom 12). Wars with the self, luckily for Bloom, are a key to Shakespeare's work in general, and are emblematic of his most iconic characters. He speaks about warring with the self in relation to Hamlet's cognition:

> Hamlet perpetually arguing with himself, does not seem to owe his overwhelming reality to a confounding of personal and ideal knowledge. Rather, Shakespeare gives us a Hamlet who is an agent, rather than an effect, of clashing realizations (Bloom 7).

The use of opposition to reveal or suppress Bloom's "agency" is pervasive on every level of Shakespeare's oeuvre. We can identify antithetical forces and its effect on the characters' cognitive function in the feuding families of *Romeo & Juliet,* in the conflict of who to believe in *Othello*, and within characters feuding with themselves on simple and life changing choices in all of his plays. We may feel these forces within ourselves while reading or watching his plays via the rapid shifts from prose to verse, and the way Shakespeare sets "the word itself against the word" (*Richard II* 5.5.13-14) within the individual sentences of his Sonnets (activating our own cognitive agency). Though Bloom's arguments about cognitive characters are, to me, muddy and ambiguous assertions for how Shakespeare created individual humans, they have interesting implications. He eventually, and consistently, returns to a more embodied definition for character:

> Though professional resenters insist that the aesthetic stance is itself an ideology, I scarcely agree, and I bring nothing but the aesthetic (in Walter Pater's and Oscar Wilde's language) to Shakespeare in this book. Or rather he brings it to me, since Shakespeare educated Pater, Wilde and the rest of us in the aesthetic, which as Pater observed, is an affair of perceptions and sensations. Shakespeare teaches us how and what to perceive, and he also instructs us how and what to sense and then to experience as sensation (Bloom 9).

> "Character" means both a letter of the alphabet, and also ethos, a person's habitual way of life. Literary and dramatic character is an imitation of human character, or so we once thought, on the premise that words were as much like people as they were like things. Words of course refer to other words, but their impact upon us emanates, as Martin Price says, from the empiric realm where we live and where we attribute meanings to our ideas of persons (Bloom 16).

I interpret these statements, through the lens of embodied cognition, to mean that we only know, use, and coin words because of the sensual experiences that we have, as explained by

Johnson and Lakoff in *Metaphor We Live By*. The experiences generate concepts which form the words and not the other way around. When concepts become too vast for us to grasp easily or fully, we utilize or create metaphors in an effort to understand a concept in terms of another more tangible experience (literally and figuratively). As we are not alone in this world we desire and need to communicate these vast experiences to other individuals. As each person has a unique relationship to the world, the way people use words becomes idiosyncratic and that idiosyncrasy can then come to "characterize" or become "characteristic" of a person. A person's speech pattern can then be analyzed to describe the person who is speaking them. Our habitual accumulation of experience within the "empiric realm" of daily life which includes ourselves and the world generates a circle of embodied cognition. I've come to discover that Bloom evaluates character in ways that point directly to the paradigm of embodied experience as the path toward cognition and leans away from the Cartesian mind-body separation even though it is very difficult for anyone to avoid that way of thinking altogether.

John Barton, who is both a scholar and considered one of the greatest Shakespearean directors of his time, also speaks of Shakespeare inventing character, at once inheriting and revolutionizing the Elizabethan play fashions of the time, "I also believe that Shakespeare both accepted his own theatrical tradition and yet transformed it. In a sense I think that he is the unconscious inventor of both characterization in depth and naturalistic speech" (Barton 13). He uses Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* as a foil to Shakespeare:

> I will, with engines never exercised,
>
> Conquer, sack, and utterly consume
>
> your cities and your golden palaces;
>
> And, with the flames that beat against the clouds,
>
> Incense the Heavens, and make the stars to melt,

As if they were the tears of Mahomet,

For hot consumption of his country's pride;

And, till by vision or by speech I hear

Immortal Jove say "Cease, my Tamburlaine,

I will persist, a terror to the world,

Making the meteors (that, like armèd men,

Are seen to march upon the towers of Heaven),

Run tilting round about the firmament,

And break their burning lances in the air,

For honour of my wonderous victories" (4.3.117-131).

Here he demonstrates how there is "High language, but there isn't much character or complexity" (Barton 14). We as readers or listeners can enjoy the extravagance of the situation through the extravagant language. We aren't however, allowed into the character's interior world. The words themselves do not grapple with what this character is experiencing as a human. Barton uses an example from Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* as another contrast to Shakespeare's innovations:

What outcries pluck me from my naked bed,

And chill my throbbing heart with trembling fear,

Which never danger yet could daunt before?

Who calls Hieronimo? speak; hear I am!

I did not slumber; therefore 'twas no dream.

No, no; it was some woman cried for help.

And here within this garden did she cry,

And in this garden must I rescue her.

But stay! what murderous spectacle is this?

A man hang'd up, and all the murderers gone!

And in the bower, to lay the guilt on me!

This place was made for pleasure not for death.

(He cuts him down.)

Those garments that he wears I oft have seen,-

Alas! it is Horatio, my sweet son!

O, no; but he that whilome was my son!

O, was it thou that call'dst me from my bed?

O, speak, if any spark of life remain!

I am thy father. Who hath slain my son? (2.5.1-18)

This passage in Barton's view is "paired down to the bare bones in actual text" (Barton 14). Barton's statement has an air of modernist philosophy and relates to Modern dance choreographer Martha Graham's work that goes to grief (as an example) for the root of its movement language for her iconic work *Lamentations* and lives there for the duration of the dance**.** Barton elaborates on Kyd:

> As you can see, character here is two dimensional and rich language can get monotonous. And these are examples of famous texts. Yet in Shakespeare our traditions, both the modern and the Elizabethan, come together. I believe our tradition actually derives from him. In a sense Shakespeare himself invented it, with his teeming gift for characterization and his frequent use of naturalistic language, though of course he didn't know he was doing so at the time (Barton 15).

“Heightened speeches” are speeches that are intentionally constructed in a manner that is more stylized than natural daily speech. This stylization often contains “images and metaphors and similes or rich surprising language,” coined phrases, and unusual words: features generally associated with poetry (Barton 17). “Naturalistic speeches” refer to “The acting style and text that is the norm in the theater and television today in which a performer attempts to make representation as natural, normal and lifelike as possible” (Barton 11). The antithetical cognitive shifting from heightened speech to naturalistic speech, and vice versa, to illuminate the shifts of emotional and psychological states of his characters is one if the crucial techniques used by Shakespeare that separates him from Kyd and Marlowe. These shifts often occur to demonstrate and articulate the interior worlds of the characters, often in response to their ever-changing exterior situations. Over the course of Shakespeare’s career, the use of verse and prose becomes more varied, relying less on the use of verse for an entire play (as he did in his early plays since it was the standard practice of the time) and interweaving the forms in increasingly specific and complex contexts. This variance of verse and prose as well as varying the rhythms of the verse itself gives Shakespeare a nearly infinite range towards individuating the voices of his characters.

These shifts in language are often intimidating to present-day actors. Barton and actress Lisa Harrow encourage actors to see the heightened speech as a means to learn more about the character by finding out what the images mean to the character and why they “need” those words (Barton 15). This encouragement is an effort to help the actor feel less intimidated by the unusual language, but also shows how the mind of the character operates in the world by using their speech to search and orient their thoughts. Harrow recalls an acting note she received from Barton: “the emotion in Shakespeare has to be bigger in order to actually create those words” (Barton 15). This distinction in speaking styles was pivotal in my research and creative

experimentation for character development. My first adoption of Shakespearean craft into my work was this dichotomy of naturalism and heightened speech, which I developed by making a parallel to natural pedestrian movement and heightened ballet vocabulary to show a change in emotional and intellectual intensity. Though I wouldn't be the first in the history of ballet to play with this idea (Marie Sallé, Jean-Georges Noverre, and John Weaver all wanted to incorporate more naturalistic and relatable movements into ballet with Noverre as the most overtly Shakespearean), it is my goal to take the cognitive reach of the characters further by examining the characters' specific and distinctive embodied relationships in movement and in Shakespeare's plays.

I believe, if he were asked, that Barton would agree wholeheartedly with the theories and findings of embodied cognitivists. He fears being overly theoretical by only talking about the occurrences in the plays of the Bard without ever experiencing them in real time. He ends his chapter on "Merging the Two Traditions" (Shakespeare's Elizabethan and the modern-day acting styles) with an aversion to conceptual jargon and traps without embodying the text and experiencing the action of the play, pointing to an embodied perception of cognition:

> We have to start with the way we are and the way we think. But look, I think we've all been falling into a trap in this discussion and I have been the worst offender. We have been generalizing about acting and using a lot of abstract terms, "intentions", "tradition", "naturalistic", "real". Such words can be helpful if we use them as tools, but they will undo us if we elevate them to a philosophy … (Barton 23-24).

Barton sums up his discussion by making sure that abstract concepts don't dominate the theatrical experience, but rather the experience for the actors and audiences alike is the dominant force and goal.

Chapter 2

Cognition in Shakespeare's Characters

Where can one find the evidence of embodied cognition and cognitive characters in the craft of Shakespeare's writing? The principal "roads to individuation" (Bloom xvii) in Shakespeare's texts that display the clearest identifiers of cognitive activity are his set speeches (i.e. monologues and more specifically soliloquys). In these speeches the language of the characters exhibits a number of embodied cognition markers. The speeches demonstrate various sub-categories of embodied cognition like extended cognition, which offloads, processes, and develops thought through an external action like using a diary. Philosopher Kevin Ryan and music psychologist Andrea Schiavio note that writing in a diary serves not only to offload cognitive thought, but also to organize it in their essay, "Extended Musicking, Extended Mind, Extended Agency" (3). Over time the thoughts are processed, organized, and developed through the action of writing and searching for the right words. Differing from another method of recording for memory, taking notes for example, the person journaling is actively working through situations to find themselves in a different place, emotionally or psychologically, than where they began. The act of finding the words to express the ineffable shackles the fleeting thoughts long enough to anchor them through the process of physically writing them. If someone were to read a full diary, a progression of cognitive function would be visible.

The speeches also illustrate distributed cognition at work. Distributed cognition occurs when a collective group undertakes a goal that is impossible for any individual to do alone, like sailing a ship (Hutchins 426). The cognitive load is distributed throughout the crew of the ship. The act of producing a play works in the same way and is only truly complete when an audience is present. When characters, like Hamlet mentioned earlier, disengage from the action of their respective plays and directly address the audience in soliloquys, the audience is used as a sounding board for the characters' ideas and are thus included in the cognitive process of the

characters. Accompanying Hamlet on his theoretical journey, the audience experiences his mental and emotional shifts while standing in as the silent inner “self” of Hamlet to which he speaks in an effort to stabilize his reeling thoughts. Cognitive scientist John Sutton points out that words themselves are more than communication or translating thoughts. They can help “stabilize cognitive flow just enough to help us reorient it” (Sutton 774). In Hamlet’s illustrious and illustrative “To be or not to be speech” we can see how both distributed and extended cognition use the listener to aid Hamlet in his emotional and intellectual journey:

To be, or not to be: That is the question:

Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,

And by opposing end them? (3.1.57-61)

To begin the soliloquy, Hamlet engages the audience by posing a question that most, if not every person, have asked “to exist or not to exist?” or even “why do we exist?”. In this moment of the play he is alone and speaking to himself in order to find an answer to his question. The audience is a privileged extension to his rationalizing of his dilemma as he distributes his thoughts to the viewers. He mulls over the very relatable troubles that a person usually faces over the tenure of their existence:

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time

The oppressors wrong, the proud man’s contumely,

The pangs of despised love, the laws delay,

the insolence of office and the spurns

That patient merit that the unworthy takes

When he himself might his quietus make

With a bear bodkin? (3.1.71-75)

As Hamlet continues questioning, the images and metaphors become more specific while what they come to symbolize become more grand and larger than life:

who would fardels bear,

To grunt and sweat under a weary life.

But that the dread of something after death,

The undiscover'd country from whose bourn

no traveler returns puzzles the will

And makes us rather bear the ills we have

Than fly to others that we know not of?

Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all;

And thus the native hue of resolution

Is sicklied o'er with pale cast of thought,

And enterprises of great pith and moment,

With this regard their currents turn awry

And lose the name of action. (3.1.77-89)

Fueled by the collective imaginative power of the audience, Hamlet's reach to make the ineffable tangible renders him nearly catatonic as his rushing thoughts come to "lose the name of action". He has been pondering his existence, all the while threatening to end it himself. However, the reach of his thoughts come short and he is left without a firm decision to kill himself or to fully live, at least at this point in the play. Barton, when coaching actress Jane Lapotaire in this speech for their recap dvd of the workshop series *Playing Shakespeare*, mentions the optimal balance of interiority (talking to yourself) and exteriority (engaging the audience) as imperative to maximize the effect of the speech's delivery. The soliloquy's purpose is to clarify the perceptions of the speaker (regardless of how sound or toxic the thoughts may be) for the audience and for the character speaking; enabling the character to develop and change cognitively over time as the person continues to speak, reflect and act in the world.

When readers and audiences note Shakespeare's creation of cognitive characters, they may be recognizing his exceptional skill at creating characters who describe their embodied experiences in and to the world so effectively. We relate to these characters, because we are empathetically linking our own embodied experiences with them. They utter ideas that are identifiable and rooted in sensorimotor experience. The "being" premise of the "To Be or Not to Be" speech calls into question not only our physical presence in the world, but also our awareness of our engagement with it. How do we affect the world, and how does it affect us? Opening the series of metaphor with the "life is war" correlation, Hamlet places the body at the center of the conversation. In spite of (or possibly because of) the conceptual nature of "nobility" and good "fortune" as common goals for any ambitious soldier, Hamlet grounds these concepts by placing a singular body amidst an onslaught of "slings and arrows" that would darken the sky and rain down on the body like the "sea of troubles" that the soldier could choose to "take arms" against. He takes the lived, physical effort of the reality of war and not the glamorized concept of

it to make a parallel to perspectives on life. We can view the arrival of a soldier after he has won the battle glamorously, but how would we view this victory as the soldier whose body was beaten, scarred, and traumatized? If we take life's struggles day by day as we "grunt" and "sweat" and "suffer", is it really worth living? If we are to bear the continuous, lashing "whips" of time, would we care about nobility? The "fortune" for this solider is "outrageous" so his implication is that, maybe, when we truly LIVE life as an embodied experience and not as a concept then we see that no one would choose to bear it. He casts a general pessimistic view which his initial choice of the overwhelming imagery and physical objects suggests. Later we see an incredibly small object and action used to describe even bigger concepts. In Shakespeare's dialect of early modern English, the word "coward" sounds like "cord" (Crystal 126) which gives a play on words that we don't hear as modern audiences. So, when Hamlet says "Thus conscience doth make COWARD/CORDS of us all; and thus the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," he gives us the intimate action of the twisting of ropes with one thread being the concept of "resolution", and the other being the "pale cast of thought". With this binding and winding image, Hamlet returns to and seals in perpetuity his dilemma of whether to live or not by folding, repeatedly, one path over the other. He takes the churning action of this winding cord into the infinite by shifting to the image of water "currents TURNING awry". One may see the concepts of the ambitious "enterprises of great pith and moment" being swept away down an ever winding, and never-ending stream into an eternity of lost action. Hamlet gives us a tremendous range of physical experiences to ground us firmly in his physical and emotional dilemma. As our conceptual systems are metaphorical in nature, these metaphorically packed speeches do what all metaphors are meant to do. Metaphors not only allow the audience to get a firmer "grasp" on elusive concepts via embodied experience, but to outline the world view and encourage actions of both the character's onstage and the audience members alike (Johnson and Lakoff 145). Shakespeare's mastery is in his gift to differentiate the language of each character and select the words that are specific to each

person's own "Umwelt" (i.e. the individual's unique relationship to their own environment) (Von Üexull 6). The poetic leap occurs in his choices of the metaphoric images that he uses to funnel and filter their singular physicalized experiences. Through these poetic choices you can learn not only what is important to the characters, but also what is important about them.

As an example, I will compare two characters from two major plays that have nearly identical situations, but display very different perspectives about them. I was first interested in comparing these plays when I read an introduction by Shakespearean scholar Stanley Wells to *King Lear.* Wells cites scholar M. Mueller saying that the play *As You Like It* is "anti-Lear" (Wells 15). In comparing Duke Senior from *As You Like It* and the eponymous king from *King Lear* I was able to observe cognitive function and individuation at play. Both men are exiled from their kingdoms by family members, both are single fathers who have daughters, and both are subjected to the extreme conditions of nature (on which they both comment) as a result of their exile. Both of the speeches from King Lear and Duke Senior differ from the passages of Kyd and Marlowe in the way that they do more than describe the thoughts or actions occurring, they *are* the thoughts and actions themselves occurring in real time. The characters are enacting and processing the actions and conditions of nature surrounding them which Shakespeare uses as metaphor to replicate the character's emotional states, thus showing not only how they deal with the difficulty of nature but also how they deal with their human nature. I will begin with *King Lear*.

Throughout the play, Shakespeare uses the concept of the "curse" as a speech form through which he generates Lear's character. Lear's language is toxically grand and unrestricted. It is also a type of language that is deemed 'performative' by philosopher JL Austin in his *How to Do Things with Words*. Austin gives outlines for his definition of performative words and phrases:

> A. they do not “describe” or “report” or constate anything at all, are not “true or false”; and
>
> B. the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as saying something. This is far from being as paradoxical as it may sound or as I have meanly been trying to make it sound: indeed, the examples now to be given will be disappointing.
>
> Examples :
>
> (E. a) “I do (sc. take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife)”- as uttered in the course of the marriage ceremony.
>
> (E. b) “I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth”- as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem.
>
> (E. c) “I give and bequeath my watch to my brother”- as occurring in a will.
>
> (E. d) “I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow.”
>
> In these examples it seems clear that to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to describe my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it (Austin 5-6).

Lear, as a king, is accustomed to having this kind of authoritative power with his language. It would be a logical extension that, with an inflated ego, this language would extend beyond the jurisdiction of the court. Additionally, he is an abusive king who is constantly performing when he speaks to the members of his court and family; specifically using performatives to be more than representative of his thoughts, but to be the concepts themselves. His utterances are grandiose with immense emotional implications and ramifications. His excessive, unrepentant, language is consistently violent, onomatopoeic, and percussive. It jars and juts against the typically even, duple metered, blank verse structure of Elizabethan playwriting in a multitude of contrapuntal strong stresses. His use of counterpoint against the iambic beat affects not only the aggressive nature of the speech, but also highlights the words that are most important to expressing his state of mind. Here is Lear’s famous speech from Act 2 Scene 3, delivered from a heath during a terrible storm. The dash (-) represents the strong stresses and the caret (^) represents the light.

_ _ | ^ _ | ^ _ | _ _|

“Blow winds and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow!

^ _ |^ _ | ^ _ |^ _ |^ _|

You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout

^ _| ^ _| ^ _ | ^ _ | ^ _|

Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!

^ _| ^ ^ | _ _|^ _ | ^ _|

You sulph’rous and thought-executing fires,

_ _| ^ ^| _ _| ^ _| ^ _|

Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts.

_ _| _ _| ^ _| _ _| ^ _ | ^

Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,

_ _| ^ _ | ^ _ (^^|^ ^ _|

Strike flat the thick rotundity o’ the world,

_ _| ^ _| ^ _| ^ _| ^ _|

Crack nature’s moulds, all germens spill at once

^ _| ^ _| ^ _| ^ _ | ^ _|

That make ingrateful man!” (2.3.1-9)

We are punched with his words as Lear commands the great storm to sever the planet using a number of images that indicate splitting and bursting at the seams, like "spout," "oak-cleaving thunderbolts," "crack nature's moulds," and "all germens spill". This severing is what has happened to his relationship with his daughters and may well be what has happened to his relationship with himself as noted by his daughters earlier in the play saying that "…he hath ever but slenderly known himself" (1.1.300-301). Reiterating Sutton, words can help "stabilize cognitive flow just enough to help us reorient it" (Sutton 774). Lear seems to be paradoxically stabilizing his unraveling world by taking a false authority and commanding nature's chaotic forces to destabilize things further. He coins the multiple images used in his speech by pulling from past lived sensorimotor experiences, and in this case he's also using a storm that's happening in "real time" as an externalized realization of the emotional tempest within his body. This scene is a desperate attempt to assert control over his uncontrollable descent into madness. Austin makes a note on the inner and outer worlds of the speaker manifested through their language, and the importance of context and the sincerity of the speaker in relation to performatives:

> But we are apt to have a feeling that their being serious consists in their being uttered as (merely) the outward and visible sign, for convenience or other record or for information, of an inward and spiritual act: from which it is but a short step to go on to believe or to assume without realizing that for many purposes the outward utterance is a description, true or false, of the occurrence of the inward performance (Austin 9).

On another interesting note Austin incorporates the practice and enacting of law to rely on the power of performatives as action to further emphasize the power of language:

> It is worthy of note that, as I am told, in the American law of evidence, a report of what someone else said is admitted as evidence if what he said is an utterance of our performative kind: because this is regarded as a report not so much of something he said, as which it would be hear-say and not admissible as evidence, but rather as something he did, an action of his (Austin 13).

The “anti-Lear” perspective of Duke Senior from *As You Like It* in Act 2 Scene 1, however, couldn’t be more removed from the toxic inner world of Lear as he sagaciously encourages those around him to see how their collective exile has in fact been a benefit to them.

_   ^| _   ^| ^   _| ^   ^| _ ^

“Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,

^   _| ^   _| ^   _| ^   _| ^   _|

Hath not old custom made this life more sweet

^   _| ^   _| ^   _| ^   _| ^   _|

Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods

^   _| ^ _|^ _| ^ _| ^   _|

More free from peril than the envious court?

^ _| ^ _| ^   _| ^ _ |^ _ | ^

Here feel we not the penalty of Adam,

^ _| ^   _| ^   _| ^ _|^ _|

The seasons’ difference, as the icy fang

^ _| ^   _| ^   _| ^ _| ^   _|

and churlish chiding of the winter’s wind,

^   _| ^ _| ^   _ | ^ _ | ^ _ |^

Which, when it bites and blows upon my body,

^ _| ^ _| ^ _| ^ _| ^ _|

E'en till I shrink with cold, I smile and say,

^ _|^ _| ^ _| ^ _| ^ _|

'This is no flattery: these are counselors

^ _| ^ _| ^ _| ^ _| ^ _|

that feelingly persuade me what I am.

_ ^| ^ _|^ _| ^ _| ^ _|

Sweet are the uses of adversity,

^ _| ^ _| _ ^| ^ _|^ _|

Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,

^ _| ^ _| ^ _| ^ _| ^ _|

Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;

^ _| ^ _| ^ _| ^ _|^ _|

And this our life exempt from public haunt

_ _| ^ _ | _ ^| ^ _| ^ _|

Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,

_ ^| ^ _| ^ _| ^ _ | ^ _

Sermons in stones and good in every thing.

^ _| ^ _| ^ _| ^ _| ^ _|

I would not change it. (2.1.1-17)

In this example the Duke "sat like patience on a monument, smiling at grief" (2.4.113-114) to quote Viola from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, another character of great eloquence. The Duke takes authority as well, but with a more balanced and optimistic point of view. Duke Senior begins by immediately uniting the group calling them "co-mates and brothers," quite different from Lear's stance of severance and destruction. He goes on to balance stresses on things that "bite" and "blow" against his body and which are "ugly" and "venomous" with the "sweet" uses of adversity and a general perspective that finds the "good in every thing", even the things that are bad.

This kind of writing performative language for characters was discovered to be a necessity for Shakespeare as the custom of Elizabethan playwriting and performance were very different than that of a professional acting company today. To begin (as there weren't directors as we know them today), the authors of the plays would usually instruct the actors. Using Hamlet's advice to his players actor Mike Gwilym of the Royal Shakespeare Company states, "Because he [Hamlet] actually wrote the speech that the players were going to insert into their performance it was assumed he had the right to direct it as well" (Barton 12). There are records of Elizabethan stage managers that show the possibility of an Elizabethan theater to perform around 40 plays in a single year, with only a few days to mount them as opposed to the possible 10 weeks a modern theater may have to rehearse a single play (Barton 13). They also used cue sheets (much like present day sides) where the actor would only get their lines and the lines that cued their entrance (Barton 13). This, interestingly enough, more closely mimics how reactions may occur in daily life; as you get a sense of who your character is but not the entire play (Barton 13). In this way an actor has to live the experience of the character and react freshly to the lines they hear as things unfold in the moment they occur in performance. Since there was little to no time to rehearse the plays, Shakespeare had to direct his actors with their character's language (dictating blocking, motivation and all other forms of direction that are now

placed in parenthetical stage directions or given orally by a separate director in a rehearsal). Stage directions as we know them today are minimal in his plays, so Shakespeare needed performative language and embodied language to be the action he wanted the characters to perform and experience in order for them to know what to do onstage.

Chapter 3

Shakespeare, Embodied Cognitive Theory, and Dance

How do these findings specifically relate to dance and choreography? How do they relate to my creative practice? My initial goal was to mirror Shakespeare's use of naturalistic/heightened speech with pedestrian/balletic movement and handheld (cinema verité)/highly composed cinematic images to generate character specificity and to differentiate psychological and emotional states for my original characters. I see naturalism (colloquial speech, pedestrian gesture, and cinema verité) as an entry way for the audience to relate to the characters and follow the plot points of the story. Conversely, "poetry" (heightened language, balletic vocabulary, and the composed cinematic image) would signify and hopefully conjure heightened states of emotion and metaphor. This correlation is admittedly reductive and doesn't account for the "poetic" potential of the naturalistic gesture, for example, but to begin my research, I felt this simplification was necessary. In "The Wisdom of Your Feet", English professor Florence Hazrat states that dance in Shakespeare's plays occur at marked periods of time when heightened speech is occurring:

> The convergence of a different kind of movement and a different kind of speech confers specialness upon the situations in question. When language passes into poetry and movement into dance, spectators are called upon to attend closely to the turns of both words and bodies. Cognition (i.e. thought) in the theater is happening through verbal and non-verbal means, uniquely in full terms of multimedia sense perception. Shakespeare activates heightened linguistic and somatic structures that mutually reinforce each other, help anchor and explore thought and feeling (218).

One of the most famous examples where the language and the movement heighten simultaneously occurs during the Capulet ball in Act 1 Scene 5 of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet.* As Juliet dances with a knight, Romeo's inner poet is ignited by the flame of seeing Juliet for the first time. Though this earlier play of Shakespeare has a more standard rhyming style in

general, Romeo departs from his angsty and heartbroken poetics from earlier in the play in response to his former love Rosalind. He instead begins to speak in a lighter poetic style, using language pulled from Shakespeare's Sonnet 27.

ROMEO [*to a Servingman*]

What lady's that which doth enrich the hand

Of yonder knight?

SERVINGMAN I know not, sir.

ROMEO

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright.

It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night

As a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear;

Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear.

So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows

As yonder lady o'er her fellow shows.

The measure, done I'll watch her place of stand

And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.

Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight,

For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night. (1.5.41-52)

Shakespeare packs this section with romantic rhyming couplets and puts images from the final quatrain of “Sonnet 27” directly into the mouth of Romeo. In the sonnet the speaker says:

> Save than my soul’s imaginary sight
>
> Presents thy shadow to my sightless view
>
> Which like a jewel (hung in ghastly night)
>
> Makes black night beauteous and her old face new. (lines 9-12)

Romeo’s language is initiated by the movement of Juliet and her beauty on the dance floor. This primes Romeo for the main event at the ball when he co-creates a new sonnet with Juliet upon first meeting.

ROMEO

> If I profane with my unworthiest hand
>
> This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:
>
> My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
>
> To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

JULIET

> Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
>
> Which mannerly devotion shows in this,

For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,

And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

ROMEO

Have not saints lips and holy palmers too?

JULIET

Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

ROMEO

O then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do-

They pray; grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

JULIET

Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

ROMEO

Then move not while my prayer's effect I take.

[Kisses her.]

Thus from my lips by thine my sin is purged.

JULIET

Then have my lips the sin that they have took.

ROMEO

Sin from my lips? O trespass sweetly urged!

Give me my sin again. [*Kisses her*.]

JULIET

You kiss by th' book. (1.5.92-109)

The structure of this co-composed sonnet simultaneously brings the consciousness and the bodies of these characters into alignment through their language that focuses on their body parts while directing their physical movements, the metaphorical concepts they ad lib and share, and through their increasingly entangled textual convergences. They each begin with a full quatrain, then trade individual lines of the third quatrain and final rhyming couplet. They begin another sonnet with an increased intimacy and urgency signaled by their physical proximity (detailed by their conversational stage directions), the punctuation of the lines and the sharing of the last line before being interrupted by Juliet's Nurse. Perhaps, had they been allowed to continue they may have begun to unite completely by eventually alternating words! The failure to fully complete the connection represents, sadly, a microcosm of what will happen to them later in the play.

This moment between the young lovers has been staged in many ways and can be problematic at times for directors. René Weiss notes in the footnotes of the *Arden Shakespeare's Third Edition of Romeo & Juliet* that "staging the lovers' first encounter with the intense intimacy of its rhetoric in the thick of a dance, poses a major problem of choreography" (173). Many productions find the budding lovers in a private sector of the ballroom while others have the lovers creating the sonnet as they dance together. The latter of these options more readily supports Hazrat's argument (and possibly Shakespeare's desires for their first encounter). The movement and proximity of the bodies of the couple dancing together presents a multimodal experience for both the couple in the dance and the audience watching.

In addition, Evelyn Tribble in her *Cognition in the Globe: Attention and Memory in Shakespeare's Theater,* argues that Shakespeare's language indicates bodily movement and

calls it a “gesture potentiated language” and that his rhetoric is “activated by [and I would add conceived from] movement, realizing the potential of dance to encourage cognition…”(105). The assertions of both Hazrat and Tribble are confirmed by Gallese and Lakoff. They argue that language is “multimodal” stating that when a person watches another person perform an action, the same part of the multimodal brain is fired in both participant and observer (Gallese and Lakoff 3-4). This reflection occurs through neurons called mirror neurons: “Mirror neurons are individual neurons that are activated both during the execution of purposeful, goal-related hand actions, such as grasping, holding, or manipulating objects, and during the observation of similar actions performed by another individual” (Gallese and Lakoff 8). Even if a participant reaches behind a curtain to grasp an object, the observer can still infer the “grasping” that is invisible to them (Gallese and Lakoff 2-3). This inference also applies to the act of reading. In *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance,* Susan Leigh Foster argues:

> Any notion of choreography contains, embodied within it, a kinesthesis, a designated way of experiencing physicality and movement that, in turn, summons other bodies into a specific way of feeling towards it. To “choreograph empathy” thus entails the construction and cultivation of a specific physicality whose kinesthetic experience guides our perception of and connection to what another is feeling (2).

She continues to make a surmise about the many dimensions that choreography has on daily life and character stating, “‘choreography’ can productively be conceptualized as a theorization of identity – corporeal, individual, and social” (4). With this neuronal and choreographic process in mind as we look at Shakespeare’s play texts, one can view his linguistic choices as a type of choreographic notation of and for character. Employing and exploiting this multimodal integration of mind and body Shakespeare describes, documents, and develops the inner movement of his characters’ integrated psychomotor/emotional territory while also composing the subsequent choreographic material of the body, its emotions, and its environment. This use

of language creates the cognition of the characters and stimulates the cognitive function within actors, readers, and audiences via the artistic container of language.

A soaring example of this mastery of integration is Othello’s speech in Act 5 Scene 2 where Othello wars with himself about whether or not to murder his beloved Desdemona. During his deliberation he is influenced by his immediate environment (a candle by Desdemona’s bedside) to conjure metaphoric images of life and death:

OTHELLO

> It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,--
>
> Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!--
>
> It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood;
>
> Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,
>
> And smooth as monumental alabaster.
>
> Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.
>
> Put out the light, and then put out the light:
>
> If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
>
> I can again thy former light restore,
>
> Should I repent me: but once put out thy light,
>
> Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,
>
> I know not where is that Promethean heat
>
> That can thy light relume. When I have pluck'd the rose,
>
> I cannot give it vital growth again.
>
> It must needs wither: I'll smell it on the tree.
>
> *Kissing her*

Ah balmy breath, that dost almost persuade

Justice to break her sword! One more, one more.

Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,

And love thee after. One more, and this the last:

So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,

But they are cruel tears: this sorrow's heavenly;

It strikes where it doth love. She wakes. (5.2.1-22)

Within this sequence, Othello's physical movements are also choreographed by the movement cues within his language. His immediate surroundings engage his senses and influence his emotional trajectory. Othello's environment of the intimate bedroom assists him in rationalizing his turmoil in an attempt to stabilize it. As the audience sees or imagines (while reading) the candle he refers to, for example, we are anchored to the metaphor he conjures about light and life. We empathize more readily with his movement through the darkened space of the room as a reflection of his obscured and confused inner suffering that is further enriched with his sense of taste and smell of Desdemona's "balmy breath". Once read by a reader or performed by an actor, the character's territory is distributed experientially to the observer via mirror neurons which invite the audience on an empathetic journey through the narrative.

These findings inspired me to focus specifically on my characters' unique physical relationships to the world. I wish to explore how these physical experiences generate psychological concepts and character individuation, and to trigger the integration of these neuronal processes in the multimodal brains of viewers and performers in an effort to choreograph cognitive characters and empathetic experiences. Through this creative process I will generate characters that are designed to transfer their experiences to performers (by enacting the characters' specific physical and musical palettes) and to the audiences who view

them. Dance philosopher, Sondra Fraleigh, in her book *Dance and the Lived Body* suggests how influential dance can be on a spectator, "We create ourselves in our dance and experience ourselves in the dance of others" (51). Hazrat continues this train of thought while focusing on experience via mirror neurons:

> Mirror neurons are, then, at the junction of culture and biology as well as of an interpersonal connection: the relationship between the doer and onlooker is not merely "monkey see, monkey do" but triggers complex translations of mind reading that draw on higher functions. The direction of imitation is not unilateral from the perceived to the perceiver, but reverses itself when the perceiver gauges the thought behind the action. As discussed by [Beatriz] Calvo-Merino, research has shown that the brain does not possess mirror neurons for any and every kind of motor act. Rather, that act needs to involve some kind of intentionality and motivation that requires goal-directed planning, just like dancing. Estimating its mind and emotion, we adjust our own responses accordingly, synchronizing our behavior and emotions to what we think it is thinking, an activity of guessing the future through the past and the present. Predicting based on a mirror neuronal process, creates strong bonding and identification with who and what are being watched. Dance is thought made visible, translated into a shape that the spectator can experience, making movement intrinsic to cognition. (229-230)

Shakespeare seems to have known the power of embodiment, embodied language, dance, and choreography to speak to all aspects of our lives. From the mundane minutia of turning a doorknob, to the infinite weaving of the esoteric question of "to be or not to be", Shakespeare shaped experience through his language in a way for conscious bodies to inhabit (quite literally like a costume) and experience every detail of a character's life. Illuminating how all humans can experience, coin language, live, learn, and repeat through the constant recursion of the circle of embodied cognition.

Chapter 4

CANON

I would like to begin the analysis of my work by drawing a parallel to the ballets of Marius Petipa. The long-standing classical narrative ballet tradition, most exemplified in Petipa's ballets, is a major institution on which the bulk of western dance forms are founded or are in opposition to. Much like Marlowe, his work is well respected and infuses a sense of grandeur in his creations. Rich or complex characters are not the priority of either Petipa or Marlow as much as the spectacle of the forms within their respective mediums which they elevate to a sublime level of undisputed beauty. Dance historian Susan Au, describes the values of classical ballet in the chapter "Imperial Russian Ballet" of her book *Ballet & Modern Dance*:

> The term "classical ballet", which is most often associated with ballets such as *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake*, indicates a concept of choreography that stresses formal values such as clarity, harmony, symmetry and order. The academic ballet technique is paramount, and its rules are rarely transgressed. Although classical ballets are not entirely devoid of emotional content, this aspect usually takes second place. At its best, Petipa's choreography is notable for its high degree of inventiveness and variety; he made the emphasis upon form into a positive attribute, capable of capturing and holding an audience's interest (62).

In Petipa's classic ballets there is a Cartesian separation of mind and body through the division of pure dance and mime. Au describes this in Petipa's iconic *The Sleeping Beauty*, "In the ballet, it [the plot of story *The Sleeping Beauty*] became the pretext for some of Petipa's finest choreography, dances that exalt the academic ballet technique. The ballet alternates mime scenes, dances expressive of emotion, and dances that celebrate dancing for the sake of dancing" (Au 64).

To depart from this tradition established by Petipa and taken further into formalism by George Balanchine, I plan to use a more Shakespearean model of composition for my cineballets which includes both the heightened movement language and formal values of the

classical and neo-classical ballet tradition with storytelling. I strive to integrate the storytelling into the choreography itself with an emphasis on the character's embodied experience through the movement to signal cognitive development. With this in mind, I have taken the principles of Shakespeare's use of verse, meter, metaphor, and perspective as well as a clearer understanding of cognition and applied it to my use of music, the cinematic camera and choreography in hopes of creating "cognitive" characters in a story ballet designed for the big screen.

The artistic culmination of my research finds its home in my cineballet, *CANON,* which I wrote by combining the experiences of my sister, my best friend Gabrielle Salvatto (who co-stars in the film), and myself. Its narrative structure is based on Conlon Nancarrow's musical composition "Canon A for Ursula: 5/7" that serves as the music for the penultimate *Grande Pas De Deux* of the principal lovers. *CANON* follows the tragic love story of 5/8 and 7/8. 5/8, a character named after the time signature of the bass line in "Canon A", is a troubled African American male who meets the love of his life named 7/8, an African American woman named after the time signature of the treble line, at the Grace Hill Rehabilitation Center for the Hurt and Lonely. They fall in love in rehab while learning various exercises and games to heal and cope with life. However, after completing the program and moving in together, the games begin to consume the lovers and reveal their unspeakable secret.

While writing the film, it was imperative for me to make the characters and their experiences as relatable as possible while differentiating their embodied relationships to the world in an effort to construct a transformative cognitive experience for both the performers and the audience. For the silent "dialogue" and character actions/reactions, I used the speech patterns/physicality of people I knew (including Salvatto) and the way they spoke and interacted with the world as a litmus test for naturalism and individuation. As Shakespeare's construction of cognitive characters and their metaphorical conceptual systems is linguistic, I had to find a

way to embody and visualize the metaphor I experienced and conjured from my personal experiences to construct cognitive characters of my own, physically and visually. For example, my physical memory of some relationships as opposed to others could be embodied and characterized with an open body, free flowing effort states, and stable support structures, while others would be characterized as a constricted body, bound in flow, and unstable in its support structures. These physical experiences lead to the dominant metaphors employed in the film which include bound physicality and blindness. In the film I explore bound physicality through the dance choreography, the game “The Bound Leading the Blind”, the tying of one body to another, and the silent film iris (the classic circle that opens and closes around the subject of focus in silent films) which becomes a confining barrier imprisoning the dancers. I explore blindness through the games “Gift Box”, “The Bound Leading the Blind”, and the use/removal of color from the film. Common colloquial metaphors like “love is blind” became a creative tool for me to explore the physical possibilities of a metaphor being returned to its physical origins.

On a small scale, for instance, I took the common relationship metaphors “walking a tight rope”, “jumping through hoops”, and a “minefield” (under the broader “love is war” metaphor) to construct the game “The Bound Leading the Blind”. In my experiences of relationships as a young person I often felt that my partner and I were on the same journey but were both ill equipped to complete the journey on our own. We needed to complete each other with qualities that the other person lacked. So, for this game I had one person, who was blind folded, be the legs of their partner, who was unable to move due to being bound tightly in a sheet. The bound person would be the eyes of the blind person and lead them through a metaphorical relationship by guiding them over a tight rope laid on the ground, through three hula hoops, and through a mine field of black and white boxes and the silent film trope of banana peels. As poor communication is a common culprit for failed relationships, this game requires apt communication and trust for the success of completing the mini obstacle course.

Interestingly (and luckily) enough Salvatto and I (who had at that point been besties for 10 years) were able to complete the course successfully in one take while many others were unable to. Though this was still no easy feat, it allowed for the cast as a whole to experience the metaphor physically and to learn from the experience.

On a larger scale I took the metaphor “love is blind” and made an attempt to explore “blindness” in as many ways as I could visually and experientially. In addition to blindfolding the dancers/actors I took the inherent correlation of seeing and knowing to amplify the effect of the “blind” metaphor, and also applied this to my use of light/illumination and darkness/obscurity. In the game “Gift Box” the participants are given a small white box and a small black box. Each box represents/contains information about them. The white box represents things that can be seen easily on them or known about them, things that are in essence easy to share, while the black box represents/contains information that they would rather keep a secret. Which box they focus on is determined by a roll of the dice (a symbol of fate vs. choice which is another theme in the film). An even number tells the player to reveal something from their white box and an odd number tells the player to reveal something from their black box. As the film progresses, and the secrets become larger, the boxes grow to accommodate the size of the secret. The use of the lighting aids in the storytelling by illuminating some aspects of the image and obscuring others. The color as well becomes affected as the final dance is entirely in black and white as the dancers dance on a massive white box while being surrounded in darkness.

The film follows the cinematic tradition of silent films and specifically uses the technical craft of Charlie Chaplin, Terence Mallick and Stanley Kubrick (particularly in *2001*) as a point of reference. In their films, Chaplin, Mallick, and Kubrick have the actions within the frame of the film be the primary vehicle for conveying meaning, with dialogue or title screens (in Chaplin’s case) minimally employed to specify context, add poetic significance, and aid the audience in the clarity of the plot. During their day to day existence my characters’ experiences are captured

in a documentary, cinema verité, style to reflect the "fly on the wall" approach to watching "real" people living in the world. Once we begin to enter into the characters' emotional perspectives, the camera movement and the composition of the shots within the frame become more stylized and unnatural. The movement of the camera becomes more angular, surgically precise, or static which then points to the canonical traditions of painting and how painters, like Caravaggio told stories in still images with composition and light as a primary means of expression.

In an effort to differentiate the characters' physicality, but to keep them as "natural" as possible, I directed my dancers/actors to identify a part of the body as a habitual place to maintain tension. Once this place was identified, I generated structured improvisations on the script. I had the performers simply interact with each other with the script as a guide for emotional trajectory and plot points, but to not slavishly adhere to what was said verbally as the film is silent. This enabled a more naturalistic interaction and performance from the performers. For more pivotal scenes, where the dialogue was more important, I placed particular emphasis on specific lines which were landmarks for the revealing or shifting of thought. The word choice here was often more important in helping to anchor the character into their context. However, I allowed for play with how the performers got to the textual and emotional landmarks and how they left them.

Eventually, the text that appears in the silent film titles disappear. They are primarily in the first act and are sprinkled in the second act to establish the specific world of CANON and to help the audience to root themselves into the story. Once these specifics are established I let the body, image composition, music and editing tell the story.

The *Divertissement Pas De Trois* : *Love Untongued*

The standard contexts for divertissements in the classical ballet tradition usually occur at the beginnings or ends of the ballet (most often in the end or bookending the inner act(s) of the ballet at both the beginning and the end) during a civic celebration, a party, or a wedding. They often are “dances for the sake of dancing” where the members of the court, or locals in the community perform for each other, honored guests, or the crown. A “divertissement”, defined as “a classical ballet term meaning ‘enjoyable diversion’” by Ballet Hub.com:

> Is a grouping of dances called “entrées” that are part of classical ballets. These short dances are typically added to a ballet to display more dancers’ talents whether as solos or in a group piece. The divertissement isn’t always necessarily vital or directly related to the story, but would make for many shorter ballets without them! (“Divertissment”, BalletHub.com)

The general tendency of these dances is to “divert” the audiences’ attention, even if unintentionally, from the plot points of the narrative to focus on what everyone came to see, the dancing; celebrating an occasion through virtuosity, allowing the other talented dancers in the company to dance, and not to necessarily move the plot forward or provide an added layer of richness to the characters. In the divertissement of *CANON’s* opening dance sequence, “The Grace Hill Get Down”, I wanted to honor the tradition of having an isolated *pas de trois* packed with virtuosity and to also create an opportunity to showcase talented dancers. However, I made it a point to use the opportunity to add a layer of depth to the characters who were dancing. Though the plot is not advanced per se in my divertissement, the themes are extended and commented upon through the soloists that perform the *pas de trois* “Love Untoungue’d” where an unspoken love triangle, hiding in the hearts of the dancers bubbles up to the surface. I used a metronome and a heartbeat as the soundscape and had three characters count the same pulse differently to signify different character worlds within the same context. All of the movement was set choreography except for a final improvised solo. Within the *pas de trois*, the

dancers were given freedom to phrase the material I'd given them as they chose with respect to certain fixed landmarks (much like actors and Shakespeare's text), and were encouraged to respond to the various elements of the dance (choreography, music, space, and camera) in an effort to not only represent their character, but to also have a dynamic relationship with their character. This was my attempt to construct a cognitive character by choreographing the emotional and physical movement of their consciousness, guided by Shakespeare but in no way an adaptation of a Shakespearean play in any traditional sense.

The characters are three counselors who work together in The Grace Hill Rehabilitation Center for the Hurt and Lonely. In their choreography, one character (a group counselor played by Jacob Machmer) counts the heart pulse in a march-like duple meter (a highly structured and militaristic time signature), another (a singles counselor named Sachi played by Krystal Matsuyama) counts the same beats as a waltz in a meter of three (the time signature of romance), and the last (a couples counselor named Duyi played by Oliver Wang) in a complex meter of 5 (2+3). Layered in counterpoint with the metronome are the sounds of the characters' pulsing hearts in their respective time signatures. The inner and outer sound worlds of the dancers are shared with the viewer to phenomenologically distribute the cognitive world of each character to the audience, so they can experience what the character experiences via kinesthesia.

The Singles Counselor, Sachi, who counts the waltz, is in love with the Group Counselor and tries to express this to him physically in spite of him being very focused on his work. The counterpoint of their counting and physical effort states is reflective of their disjunctive perspectives and life rhythms, leading to complications as they dance together. When the Couples Counselor, Duyi (a combination of both time signatures), enters, he helps them to reconcile their discord in spite of his love for the Group Counselor. The matter is complicated further when the three perspectives and desires operate simultaneously and eventually all move

to the five meter. The 2nd count of each character's meter carries the same contextual importance for them all as they are all wrestling with being lonely, wanting to be a couple instead of single. They often reach toward the objects of their desires on this 2nd count, but over time this reaching gesture transforms into an act of self-denial. Each time signature carries cultural associations of embodied experience. For example, the waltz (whether it is seen, listened to, or danced) evokes a wistful and romantic sensibility which when placed in a context of unrequited love creates an ironic tension within the dancer, which the viewer can experience as well. The complex five meter is a combination of a duple and triple meter. It was my aim to create for the dancer portraying Duyi a specific tension between two ways of navigating time as he is torn between being in love (the triple) and being a professional (the duple). He is also at odds with his allegiance to the other counselors respectively.

In order to invite the audience into this embodied experience I found it important to utilize pedestrian movements that are relatable to a person's habitual way of life while also making certain expressive gestures specific to each character. Offering one's hand, in a western culture (whether in hand holding or in the exchange of objects) is identified as an open chain of giving and receiving, for example. I then shift from these pedestrian movements into codified classical choreography, as well as contemporary choreography, to detail a heightened state of existence. I have noted from personal experience that many people speak in hyperbole when in heightened states of emotion. Shakespeare often reflects this tendency through his speeches when his characters coin phrases or begin to speak in verse after having spoken in a more naturalistic way just a few lines before. An example of this entering and exiting prose and verse occurs just after Hamlet's solitary and pensive "To be or not to be speech" in Act 3 Scene 1 that is interrupted by Ophelia when she enters to return the gifts he has given her. He abruptly leaves off speaking in verse and begins to speak in prosaic sentence fragments to signal frustration with being brought back down to earth to deal with the banal. She, however,

continues to speak in verse until he pushes her to also speak in argumentative fragments as he does.

Finally, in the tradition of classical ballet (and many dance traditions for that matter) music and dance are symbiotic and support each other without question. Particularly in the classics of the balletic canon following Petipa, music serves as a generator of emotion. From the early 19th century composers began to use motif and leitmotif as catalysts to convey character by associating melody with character, and have the melodies follow their characters through the plot, transforming to reflect the character's changing emotional state. In my approach, music is the sound of the characters' inner and outer world as well, and becomes a philosophical concept and environmental condition that the dancer and character alike must grapple with. The characters become aware of their music. They can then choose to be in harmony with their music or in discord with it according to their state of emotion or the will the character. Sachi (the waltz dancer) is not entirely content with her physicalized waltz rhythm. It especially pains her that she is alone in her rhythm and has no one else to join her. She makes many attempts to bring another person into it with her or leave it herself altogether. She does this in the end of the *pas de trois* when the situation becomes complicated and everyone dances in 5/4 together, but not before they try a compromise in their respective counts. The characters' divergence from the standard symbiosis of music and movement, like Lear's contrapuntally divergent "dance" from the standard iambic feet of Elizabethan playwriting, is possibly the most crucial aspect of my attempt to generate a character with an authorial will and world of their own.

Table 1: The structure of the *pas de trois* finale: *The highlights are the 2nd count of love which are highlighted to show the natural alignments between the characters. One can guess the disappointment one of the characters might feel by counting the number of commonalities and alignments between them as two characters are numerically (naturally) the most compatible. In this section the characters connect romantically on the highlighted numbers.*

v v v v v v v v v v v

Group Counselor: 12 1 **2** 1 **2** 1 2 1 **2** 1 2 1 **2** 1 **2** 1 2 1 2 1 **2** 1 **2** 1 **2** 1 **2** 1 2 1 2 1 **2** 1 **2** 1 2

Sachi (singles counselor): 123 1 **2** 3 1 2 3 1 **2** 3 1 2 3 1 **2** 3 1 **2** 3 1 **2** 3 1 2 3 1 **2** 3 1 **2** 3 1 **2** 3 1 2 3

Duyi (couples counselor): 123 1 **2** 1 **2** 3 1 2 1 2 3 1 **2** 1 **2** 3 1 **2** 1 2 3 1 **2** 1 **2** 3 1 2 1 **2** 3 1 **2** 1 **2** 3 1

^ ^

Group counselor & Sachi = 6 alignments on the second “love” count

Group counselor & Duyi = 8 alignments on the second “love” count

The *Grande Pas De Deux*

In the *Grande Pas de Deux* that culminates *CANON,* I wanted to experiment with merging the extremes of formalism and storytelling. I wanted to test how “abstract” I could make a dance while using the artistic materials at my disposal (movement, music, and image) to still generate meaning that relates directly to, and develops, the narrative in which it lives. It was my goal to recover the romantic and classical ballet period’s emphasis on storytelling and the classical formula of “pure dance” *pas de deux* made by Petipa (i.e. adagio entrance, male variation, female variation and coda), but to also incorporate the aesthetics and choreographic techniques of choreographers like Mikhail Fokine, George Balanchine, the postmodernists and William Forsythe. Drawing inspiration from Fokine and Balanchine, where the story and emotion conveyed in their ballets no longer required a plot, I created movement that developed as a story itself. Utilizing the juxtaposition of classical ballet and replacing mime with everyday gestures, I referenced the work of Forsythe and the postmodern dance tradition.

In the Romantic Era, August Bournonville made many innovations in this direction of merging formalism and representation in his version of *La Sylphide* (1836), originally choreographed by Filippo Taglioni (1832). Fortunately, his choreography has been maintained over the centuries, but its popularity has long since been overshadowed by the increasing ostentation of dancers in Petipa’s ballets. *La Sylphide* contains the nuanced story of James Reuben (a farmer) who leaves Effie (his fiancé) to marry a Sylph only to be cursed by a witch. Sally Banes argues in her book *Dancing Women: Female Bodies Onstage* that the story is told physically through the distinct movement qualities of character sects of farmers (male and female), witches, and sylphs. Banes analyzes the movement of the ballet’s characters as a means to generate the story of the ballet, distinguishing the dominant movement qualities of the collective social groups and the individual principal characters. As an example, she illuminates how the interlocked arms of the rustic, “earthbound”, partnered dances of the farmers is bound,

while the Sylph's movement in Laban Movement Analysis terms is free (Banes 18). This choreographic distinction shows how the Sylphide is a social outsider. Banes states, "that contrast, taken literally, perhaps explains why James has become obsessed with her, for she seems to represent a realm outside of, and free from, social constraints" (18). Even in performing similar steps the characters embody them differently, thus imbuing them with new and individuated meanings (Banes 17). I have deepened this train of thought in my creative work by enhancing the detail in the specificity of each character's embodied relationship to themselves, each other, and their environment which includes the music they dance to.

The music of the *pas de deux*, titled "Canon A" from Conlon Nancarrow's "3 Canons for Ursula", is a 2 voiced canon played on a piano with each part being played in its own time signature and speed. The treble line's time signature is in 7/8 and the base is in 5/8. I used the time signatures in the score to be the names of the primary male and female characters of the ballet and this metrical opposition is the structure I used to write the script for the entire film (i.e. bass line (male character) introduced first then joined by treble (female character); a clash occurs then treble line (female character) finishes first and leaves the bass (male character) to finish alone). Since, traditionally, the male voice is associated with base notes and the female voice with treble notes one could possibly hear a man and woman arguing upon first hearing the piece. Within the music's short duration lies not only a momentary bout within a relationship, but also the entire trajectory of a courtship from its inception to its untimely completion. The two musical lines (like the characters themselves) are made of the same materials that operate at different speeds and registers. They are similar enough to complement each other for a time, but in the end can't finish the journey together in unison. Balanchine visualized music in a similar way in ballets like Concerto Barocco where two women vie with each other as the two solo violins of Johann Sebastian Bach's "Concerto in D minor for Two Violins". I take this idea further into narrative by giving more specific and complex character psychologies to the

respective piano lines as well as a completely fleshed out narrative arc, derived from the music, for the microcosmic form of the *Grande Pas* and the macrocosm of the cineballet.

I began by generating movements from three simple hand gestures (offering an open palm, turning the palm downward, and striking the back of the downwardly turned palm with the other hand) to introduce a common subject for both dancers to embody, but to also show a variance with how the subject is handled, like the King Lear and Duke Signor example above. These gestures are later expanded and developed into ballet vocabulary. The dancers (in the beginning of their solos in the *Grande Pas*) are not aligned with their traditional respective clefs as they have taken on the identity of their partner in the opening adagio and over the course of the film. After the adagio entrance of both dancers, the first variation is performed by 7/8 (the female dancer), who dances to 5/8's (the male dancer) music and vice versa to show a complete loss and challenging of traditional identity. The two dance alone but simultaneously, as opposed to the canonical solo variations performed in isolation onstage, separated by a split screen with identical, mirrored camera choreography as a metaphor for the loneliness that can be experienced even while being in proximity to others. This sequence is thoroughly composed and choreographed cinematically in opposition to the hand- held camera used during more pedestrian sequences to show this *pas de deux* as an expression of extreme emotions and elevated poetic language. There are times, once the split screen is gone, when the dancers even ignore the music in order to enjoy unregulated time with each other. However, as they get comfortable together, haphazard, uncertain and even dangerous partnering seeps in. The choreography is laced with physical and psychological triggers that cause the dancers to go backwards in their memory for the movement material that led them to their misfortune. This discord keeps the partnering from moving forward and leads the two individuals to link into the separate canonical music apart from each other. This time they link into their respective

traditional time signatures, eventually leaving one person onstage alone as the iris closes on him.

The partnering of a *pas de deux* that occurs earlier in the film between 7/8 and her former lover Daté was created as the antithesis of the *Grand Pas De Deux*. In the earlier *pas de deux*, “Love in Bloom”, the grips in the partnering are tender, open, vulnerable and equally supportive of both the male and female. These qualities are in direct opposition to the grips and choreography in the *Grande Pas* which are not as stable in quality or in construction. The dynamic between 7/8 and Daté is that of trust building through stability. The dynamic in the *Grande Pas* is bi-polar (from loving gestures, to abrasive strikes) and embodied as abrupt, constrictive, and violent.

The use of black and white in the film is a metaphor of things that can be seen/known (white) and things that are unseen/unknown (black). The characters environment around them, in which they cognize and can “know”, is white and encircled by a black iris that, as it expands, reveals more white space around them. The dancers themselves are black as a symbol of the inner “self” that is unknown. The spatial awareness extends to each other and eventually comes to include the entire space once the dancers join each other. Even in its entirety, the boundaries of the space are limited as they are dancing on a massive white box. The box metaphor is introduced earlier at the Grace Hill Rehab Center in a game where the characters reveal things that are known about them through small white boxes and things that are unknown about them through black boxes. The massive white box on which they dance is surrounded by endless black space, the unknown. Their thematic movement material that was used to love and abuse themselves comes to do the same to their partner when solo material develops into partnered material.

Afterword

I believe my greatest achievement toward developing cognitive characters myself came while creating the *pas de trois* with the three counselors and in the *Grande Pas De Deux* during the choreographic and editing process. Both of these gave me the sense that the characters had cognitive potential through their circular engagement and integration of their mind, body and environment, as well as the characters ability to transcend their materials and respond to the conditions of their materials within their contexts. I would like to mention a specific set of victories that emerged from the *Grande Pas De Deux*.

In the *Grande Pas De Deux* the black iris that encases the characters becomes a symbol of confining time and closes on them when they link onto their respective musical lines. The space around them grows increasingly restricted and eventually becomes too tight for them to inhabit together. While designing this sequence on my computer 7/8 ended up outside of the iris surrounded by darkness, leaving 5/8 inside the iris with their two shadows. This was highly symbolic of their toxic relationship and their character arcs. 5/8 has abused her and himself in many ways and is a troubled man in general. We never learn the extent of his mental illness and we never discover if he ever does. He becomes trapped in his recursive battle with his conscience (embodied by 7's shadow) and with his consciousness (embodies by his own) in a mobius strip that leads him to re-register at Grace Hill (albeit at a different program) at the end of the film. We leave him in the very position at the end of the film that we found him in at the beginning without much cognitive development.

From early on in the film 7 sees that 5 isn't one to be trusted completely, but is lured by her desires for love to do so. When the pressure of the abuse (and a number of deal-breaking secrets) become too much to bear, 7 leaves the confining relationship with 5 and ventures into the unknown leaving him to battle with his unknown soul and her memory in his known world. With this action she can fully see 5 and herself at a distance and becomes a spectator with the

audience. She transcends not only the confines of the iris, but of all that it symbolizes (knowledge, time, the conventions of film and therefore the film itself) as she escapes the control of even the writer/director/editor of the film. In the interview with Charlie Rose, Bloom speaks of this happening with Shakespeare via his most elusively conscious characters saying that they run away from Shakespeare's control and begins to author the play (charlierose.com 20:20-20:44). Though I personally wouldn't compare 7 with Shakespeare's other characters in any other way (as she is my first true attempt towards creating a cognitive character and the very beginning of a hopefully long and fruitful adventure of creating more), I am linking the occurrences of the characters dictating the outcome of the art in which they live, therefore transcending it and becoming a conscious co-author themselves.

It is my goal to create works that stimulate the many dimensions within a spectator that I experience while reading, reciting, and watching Shakespeare. I aim to go to the source of the physical moments that may have caused characters like Lear to coin those highly singular metaphors of strife and Duke Senior to generate the balance needed for his troupe to remain in good mental health during their exile. Striving to compose a "poem unlimited" while creating a clear frame that allows both the performer and audience to truly feel and experience the life of my characters, I hope to provide a transformative space for all participants involved to achieve a healthy cognitive existence. As our conceptual systems are metaphorical, and as metaphor not only helps us grasp and relate to difficult concepts, but to inform future actions of the viewers, my creative purpose is tied to the act of creating containers for cognitive experience and development in an effort to help viewers to illuminate and therefore navigate more successfully the difficult situations of their own lives. I have found how music, the body, and the image can come together like the brain, the body and its environment to generate the circle of embodied cognition. These findings have at once confirmed my instincts and fueled my goal to generate cognitive characters, with Shakespeare as my instructor. I hope that *CANON* and my

subsequent cineballets will have the kind of phenomenological effect on audiences who view my work that his plays have had on me.

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