

Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter now, including display on the World Wide Web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

Sarah Freeman

April 12, 2015

All Being Displaced: Movement Translations of Flannery O'Connor

by

Sarah Freeman

Anna Leo
Adviser

Emory Dance Program

Anna Leo
Adviser

Rosemary Magee
Committee Member

Janice Akers
Committee Member

2015

All Being Displaced: Movement Translations of Flannery O'Connor

By

Sarah Freeman

Anna Leo

Adviser

An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Emory Dance Program

2015

Abstract

All Being Displaced: Movement Translations of Flannery O'Connor

By Sarah Freeman

The use of literary texts as source material has taken many forms in Western concert dance, but following the shifts of the postmodern era, many choreographers discarded the idea of representing a linear plot structure. As a Dance and English double major I am interested in how narratives are constructed and sustained in performance, so my project takes linear plot as a variable in the choreographic process. With my dancers, I created two dance pieces inspired by Flannery O'Connor's short story "The Displaced Person." We created one piece while I communicated only unspecific literary concepts to the dancers, and the organization of movement didn't follow a particular plot. We created another piece after the dancers had read the story, in which I structured movement to follow the story's linear narrative.

To further develop my personal connection with the work, I researched O'Connor's personal life through her letters and manuscripts in the Emory Manuscript, Archive, and Rare Book Library and visited her family home Andalusia in Milledgeville, where I created a solo based on my research. I presented the two narrative pieces and the solo in an evening length concert entitled *All Being Displaced*. Throughout the process I found that constructions of narrative are overwhelmingly personal, even in the presentation of universal themes such as exclusion or family. Working within the restriction of a linear structure pushed me beyond my own choreographic tendencies. My connection with O'Connor as a Southern woman and artist allowed me to explore imagery and dynamics with a deep sense of rootedness.

All Being Displaced

By

Sarah Freeman

Anna Leo

Adviser

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Emory Dance Program

2015

Acknowledgements

This project is supported in part by the Emory Center for Creativity and Arts, Scholarly Inquiry and Research at Emory, the John H. Gordon Stipe Society, and the Emory Dance Program.

Thank you to Anna Leo, for being as endlessly excited by words, and dance, and words-and-dance-together as I am, for having fun with me, encouraging me, pointing me in the right directions, and always knowing when I needed a Kit-Kat. Thank you to Rosemary Magee for mentoring me through the research process and providing wisdom and opportunities that were invaluable to this project. Thank you to Jan Akers, Blake Beckham, Emily Hammond, Greg Catellier, Lori Teague, and George Staib for your generous feedback, coaching, and reassurance. Thank you to Anne Walker, Kendall Simpson, and Cyndi Church for saying yes to my ideas and making them a reality. Also thank you to: Theater Emory, Julia Hudgins, the Emory Manuscript Archive and Rare Book Library, Sara Harsh, Andalusia Farm, Leslie Taylor, the Aquinas Center of Theology, the Bill and Carol Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry, and all my family and friends who have so graciously and constantly supported me in this process. Finally, to my incredible cast of ten movers, thinkers, and friends, thank you for leaping blindly into this bizarre world with me and never looking back.

Table of Contents

I. The Movement Grotesque: A Technique for Embodying Narrative	1
II. FLAN: Personal Reflections on O'Connor	7
III. Being Displaced: Process	25
a. Movement and Narrative Techniques in Western Concert Dance History	25
b. Introduction to Movement and Narrative Techniques: Celeste Miller	33
c. Mystery in Incomprehension: The Untranslatable in "The Displaced Person"	34
d. Choosing My Source	41
e. Piece I: Creation	43
f. Piece III: Creation	51
g. Elements of Design	58
h. Cast Narratives	63
i. Entering Performance	65
j. Feedback	69
k. Conclusion	74
Appendix A: Promotional Flyer	77
Appendix B: Concert Program	78
Appendix C: Project Budget	80
Appendix D: Project Grant Proposal (Stipe, CCA, and SIRE)	82
Appendix E: Post-Concert Audience Feedback Form	84
Appendix F: Emory Report Article	85
Appendix G: Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry Blog Post	89
Appendix H: Performance Photographs	91
References	96

I. THE MOVEMENT GROTESQUE: A Technique for Embodying Narrative

I think the writer of grotesque fiction does [things] in the way that takes the least, because in his work distances are so great. He's looking for one image that will connect or combine or embody two points; one is a point in the concrete, and the other is point not visible to the naked eye, but believed in by him firmly, just as real to him, really, as the one that everybody sees.¹

In the quotation above, Flannery O'Connor was explaining a writing style, but she very well could have been describing the process of choreography. In a language of bodies rather than words, the choreographer or performer attempts to communicate two points through one image—the physical movement and the intention behind it. Take a “thumbs-up”: the message is not just [a thumb went up], it's [good job] or [I like]. Even less familiar movements are always grounded in a social context, so that the viewer's personal experience provides fertile ground for the comprehension of the second, gestural point, the meaning. The more common and socially recognized the gesture, the more comfortable the viewer is receiving that meaning and the less *grotesque* that single gesture becomes. In the context of a dance concert, a *plié*, which in everyday life would be read as a blank, abstract movement, is an expected gesture that signifies *dance*. The mental distance between the two points, physical and intentional, is less.

On the other hand, a gesture like squeezing one's head through a tiny space between the arms creates social anxiety: there are few antecedents, or social expectations, so the audience has more difficulty reading it. Its grotesque-ness draws more attention because the distance between the point in space (physical) and the point in the dancer's mind (intention) is greater. O'Connor explained, “it's not necessary to point out that the look of this fiction is going to be wild, that it is almost of necessity going to be violent and comic, because of the discrepancies that it seeks to

¹O'Connor, Flannery. *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*. Ed. Sally and Robert Fitzgerald.

combine.”² When combining these movement images into larger phrases, distance becomes even more important. Contrast in shape, contrast in time, contrast in social meanings can extend the sense of the grotesque further. But these discordant images of discordant points can still produce a cohesive whole, if “the characters have an inner coherence, if not always a coherence to their social framework.”³

I believe that this inner coherence occurs in a dance when the images are fully realized by those on the inside, the choreographer and the performers. By realized I mean that the second point, the intention created in the mind of the choreographer, is as clear and visualized in her mind, and the minds of the dancers, as the one that everybody sees, the physical. When a narrative is that second point held in mind, the use of this grotesque awareness will result in a clearer, more shocking and effective transmission of the essential ideas, than if that same narrative was demonstrated in the non-grotesque. The non-grotesque could take many forms in which distance between points is small, such as *showing* movement easily recognized in a social context (mime) or *telling* the recipient what is going on in a narrative fashion (dialogue). Therefore abstraction in the sense of separation of meaning is actually the clearest method by which to communicate narrative.

To help in the realization of the image, however, the abstract must be tethered to the source in an invested way. The development of the image grows from the subconscious of the creator, and so will intrinsically be a personal image. In a 1940 *Journal of Philosophy* article, William Norton theorized that “art originates causally as the intended communication of the artist... the communication of what he thinks valuable enough to express well, [so] it must

² *Mystery and Manners* p. 43

³ *Mystery and Manners* p. 40

reflect his scheme of values in the contents imparted.”⁴ I agree that the better you know yourself, where you come from, how you connect to the source material, the more fully realized these images connecting the body to the narrative can be. Norton further suggested that “since all sound art rests upon an esthetic tacit or articulate in the mind of the artist, the first prerequisite of any artist is to understand the principles upon which his work proceeds. I assume here that an artist is a better artist when he knows what he is doing.”⁵ Though I disagree that the artist must be fully aware of his reasoning and logic throughout the process, I do believe that a consistent drive for self-awareness and self-analysis post-process contributes to an ongoing enhancement of practice. O’Connor sentiment that art communicates most clearly when the moral judgments of creator are known and acknowledged also echoes the call for self-analysis: “In the greatest sense, the writer’s moral sense coincides with his dramatic sense, and I see no way for it to do this unless his moral judgment is part of the very act of seeing, and he is free to use it.”⁶

How do we communicate narrative through imagery? O’Connor answered, “Fiction begins where human knowledge begins—with the senses.”⁷ Though we have five senses, only two are used in the production of meaning—what we see, and what we hear in a translated language based on what we see. Because taste, smell, and touch do not form the basis for common modes of language, those senses contribute to an overall experience but are not the primary vehicle for communication. In both artwork and life experiences, “whatever is vividly expressed is apt to be accepted as true by the uncritical, just because it is clear.”⁸ The clarity of visual imagery means that viewers accept the “truth” of what they see as factual. And what

⁴ Norton Jr., William J. “Modern Art and Social Responsibility.” *The Journal of Philosophy*. 37.12. (6 June 1940) p. 327-28

⁵Norton p. 327

⁶ *Mystery and Manners* p. 31

⁷ *Mystery and Manners* p. 42

⁸ Norton p. 327

exactly are they seeing and hearing? Narrative is defined as “a spoken or written account of connected events, a story.”⁹ These segmented events or experiences are the images a storyteller tries to relate, whether through writing, speech, or bodies moving through space. The western conception of daily events taking place in linear time—this then that then this—means that meaning is constructed from the order of the images in a story. The final variable in the construction and reading of a narrative is the storyteller herself, who decides how things are ordered, how long certain events take, what images are considered significant events in the first place.

In a completed text, all these decisions have already been made by one person. But they will be interpreted in different ways by the reader/ viewer/ listener, whose experience taking in these images will depend on his abilities, her mental state at the time, his personal experiences, how she sees time, and the physical conditions surrounding the viewing experience. Meaning will be reconstructed by this person in the moment, but later he will remember the time and the images of events and experiences in an entirely different way. So in a way, translation is never possible. From one language to another, certain things are always lost, or as Emily Apter proposes, *Untranslatable*. In literary studies this is sometimes forgotten, “when translation [is] assumed to be a good thing under the assumption that it is a critical praxis enabling communication across languages, cultures, time periods and disciplines.”¹⁰ The *Untranslatable* includes phenomena such as “Glossolalia, or speaking in tongues—language that bars access to translation”¹¹ or the fact that “Critical traditions and disciplines founded in the Western academy

⁹ Dictionary.com

¹⁰ Apter, Emily. “Introduction.” *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*. New York: Verso, 2013. E-book. Loc. 179

¹¹ Apter Loc. 196

contain inbuilt typologies—adduced from Western literary examples.”¹² The Untranslatables that have been overlooked or forgotten however, often locate the greatest opportunity for cross-cultural analysis; differences in language reveal larger cultural trends.

In more minute linguistics, the Untranslatable “directs one to the logic of grammar, the limits of reference” and in broader semiology it references “Logos, Good, Truth, Marx’s General Equivalent—nouns, in short, at their greatest difference from material referents.”¹³ If one believes Apter, translation from English to French is just as specific or unreliable as translation from English to movement. As the intermediary, the creator’s self is as much of an influence as the original author, and the viewer of these images is as much of a translator shaped by her own abilities, especially how she sees, hears, and how her body moves through daily events.

Being almost blind, and having not known that what I was seeing was not what everyone else was seeing for seven years of my life means that I don’t particularly trust my vision. Even with aids, there is still a constantly present sense of façade, that behind this clear and sharp world in which I can comprehend the same narrative as everyone else, there is a shadowy, murky real world. In this imagined space, because I can only see what happens a few inches in front of me, I am isolated and unseen, in a sense free from tethers to act in socially appropriate ways—much in the same way that putting on sunglasses allows one the freedom to avoid small talk with strangers. My unique method of seeing meant that as a child I would construct my own narratives of the shadowy figures around me which were often more fantastical and frightening than reality. Even after glasses, the fear that once I removed them the pile of towels would turn back into a kidnapper remained. Reading was necessarily intimate, because I had to hold the book up several inches from my face—but at this distance I can see extraordinarily,

¹² Apter Loc. 179

¹³ Apter Loc. 226

superhumanly well. I can see every little tiny hair on my arm, every pore on my face in detail in a mirror (my vision comes in handy for grooming), as if only the hyper-detailed world immediately around me was actually real.

I consider creation as a form of prophecy, in that the creator attempts to communicate a message, to translate on behalf of an idea, to an audience or receptor who might not necessarily receive this message as it was intended (who in fact rarely does). O'Connor believed that "prophecy is a matter of seeing near things with their extensions of meaning and thus of seeing far things close up. The prophet is a realist of distances, and it is this kind of realism that you find in the best modern instances of the grotesque."¹⁴ The great distance between what is *there* and what I can *see*, this grotesque duality between my shadowy image and everyone else's sharp clear one contributes to my interest in distortion, exaggeration, and the bizarre. It is a desire not only to see and be seen, but also to bridge that gap in comprehension, to show others the images of the shadowy world that feels like mine, since I now have the ability to see the clear reality. "Art requires a delicate adjustment of the outer and inner worlds in such a way that, without changing their nature, they can be seen through each other."¹⁵ I want to translate between my two texts of experiences, to perform that delicate adjustment.

I love reading because it allows me to inhabit the thoughts and minds of another being, whether fictional or real. While I couldn't see an entire body moving, I could see an entire page, a whole world that I could bring close enough to comprehend. Knowing these things about myself as an artist, understanding my moral judgments and tendencies as much as possible, what I have learned from the project is an approach to creating that synthesizes both. A source text satisfies my desire to communicate with another character, to be inside the mind or experiences

¹⁴ *Mystery and Manners* p. 44

¹⁵ *Mystery and Manners* p. 34-35

they have. I then learn as much as I possibly can about the entire world of the text—the author, the historical context, the music, the landscape—and I dive as deeply as I can into my personal connection with the viewing experience of that text. Impressions of stress or anxieties I have, what I am reading in class, the important relationships in my life at the time will all come through purposefully or not. “Ghosts can be very fierce and instructive. They cast strange shadows, particularly in our literature.”¹⁶ To be as clear as possible, I should realize my own ghosts as much as possible. By creating a work that has so much inner cohesion that its relationship to outer social rules or expectations is irrelevant, the distortion between the images I have created in response and the original meaning of the text will be clear to the viewer, and a narrative will emerge that is both abstraction and story.

II. FLAN: Personal Reflections on O’Connor

At his lecture “Flannery With Her Irish Up,” I asked Dr. Brian Giemza how he thought O’Connor’s identity as a Southerner and woman would have been shaped by her first experience leaving home to attend the Writer’s Workshop at the University of Iowa. “A fish doesn’t think about the water until he’s out of it,” he responded. Identity can be firmly constructed through experiences of exile and displacement, a filling of the negative spaces and figuring out who you are based off who you are not. O’Connor wrote that “to know oneself is, above all, to know what one lacks,”¹⁷ with “lacks” used not in a pejorative sense of the word, but in sensing of difference.

¹⁶ *Mystery and Manners* p. 45

¹⁷ *Mystery and Manners* p. 35

We “go away and find ourselves by departing from home,”¹⁸ and O’Connor’s college years were a time for defining herself as a Catholic, a woman, and a Southerner far different from those around her.

But what happens when one is trapped in a space that is supposed to be home? Once one has a defined idea of oneself and one’s tendencies, there is a fear of stagnation in the known. Contained by her own bodily restrictions and her beloved but isolated home, O’Connor felt that in her return home, “I was roped and tied and resigned the way it is necessary to be resigned to death, and largely because I thought it would be the end of any creation, any writing, any WORK for me. And as I told you by the fence, it was only the beginning.”¹⁹ The resilient human psyche does not allow one to exist in a state of exile forever. One creates a new home; one finds in the rural a microcosm of the larger world.

O’Connor’s technique of “passive diminishment” borrowed from Teilhard de Chardin mandated that “the serene acceptance of whatever affliction or loss cannot be changed by any means will bring increase.”²⁰ Sally Fitzgerald wrote that O’Connor “scorned the loneliness of the artist,” but practiced her vocation in solitude simply because she felt she had to do it.²¹ Accepting her illness allowed her to see it as a form of transformative exile, “a place more instructive than a long trip to Europe, and it’s always a place where there’s no company, where nobody can follow.”²² I am lucky enough to have experienced a trip to Europe instead of a degenerative illness, but O’Connor’s description of the unconscious restructuring of isolation and

¹⁸ Magee, Rosemary M. (in press.) “Imaginary Orphan, Imaginary Homeland: Displacement in the Fiction of Flannery O’Connor and Salman Rushdie.” University of Kentucky Press. p. 13

¹⁹ MARBL Letter to Maryat Lee, 9 June 1957

²⁰ O’Connor, Flannery. *The Habit of Being*. Ed. Sally Fitzgerald. New York: Farrar, 1979. Print. p. 53

²¹ *The Habit of Being* p. 53

²² *The Habit of Being* p. 156

estrangement from home resonated with me. As a college student structuring my own personal and creative identities, I chose in my research to focus on the periods of her life in which a change in location challenged her constructions of self and art.

1955 “I reckon Mr. Lindley will come to see me if he is expert in penetrating the Georgia wilderness. The only way to get there is by bus or buzzard”²³

The day after New Years Day, I drove one hour from my home in Warner Robins Georgia to Flannery O’Connor’s home in Milledgeville, where I made my solo. In Warner Robins, I had Chick fil A for lunch. In Milledgeville, I had Zaxby’s for dinner. O’Connor owned over 40 peacocks, but I like chicken.

1954 “Since you show an interest in the book I presume you are a foreigner, as nobody in Georgia shows much interest. Southern people don’t know anything about literature of the South”²⁴

In elementary school I always read on the playground while other children did physical activity. They always left me alone until third grade when I was embroiled in a contest to get the most Accelerated Reading points with the grand prize of shaving the principal’s head. We formed an assembly line of students passing me books to read and shout out answers to the computer quiz questions. I won.

“The anguish that most of us have observed for some time now has been caused not by the fact that the South is alienated from the rest of the country, but by the fact that it is not

²³ *The Habit of Being* p. 77, letter to Elizabeth McKee, 5 April 1955

²⁴ *The Habit of Being* p. 69, letter to Ben Griffith, 13 February 1954

alienated enough, that every day we are getting more and more like the rest of the country, that we are being forced out not only of our many sins, but of our few virtues.”²⁵

My grandmother was born in Savannah, but after marrying her second husband, GrandJohn the Episcopal priest, she moved to Paris and Florence, where he was the rector of the American Cathedral. She came back with several mink coats. She pronounces my name *Say-ruh*, and says that she has had a brilliant *i-dear*, but croissant comes out Cwah-SOHN.

1957 “and we expect you to visit again in Milledgeville, a Bird Sanctuary, where all is culture, gracious-ness, refinement and bidnis-like common sense”²⁶

My mother once made me participate in a fashion show for one of her friends who ran a trunk show. Stuffed into frilly dresses, I walked around an estate where peacocks were in fact roaming wild, until I “accidentally” fell into the fountain and got to wear my t-shirt again.

1952 “Harcourt sent my book to Evelyn Waugh and his comment was: “If this is really the unaided work of a young lady, it is a remarkable product.” My mother was vastly insulted. She put the emphasis on *if* and *lady*. Does he suppose you’re not a lady?”²⁷

For my eighth birthday, Grandma and GrandJohn took me to Natalia’s (the nice restaurant in Macon), and the opera at the Grand Opera House. At Natalia’s I got in trouble for eating my steak with ketchup. At the Opera, GrandJohn and I both passed out after 15 minutes.

1949 “I have just got back from 2 days in NYC. There is one advantage in it because although you see several people you wish you didn’t know, you see thousands you’re glad you don’t know.”²⁸

²⁵ *Mystery and Manners* p. 29

²⁶ MARBL letter to Maryat Lee, 10 March 1957

²⁷ *The Habit of Being* p. 35, letter to Robert Lowell, 2 May 1952

²⁸ *The Habit of Being* p. 19, letter to Betty Boyd, 5 November 1949

1957 “A few years ago the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce sent the equivalent in Tokyo a bag of grits, as a good will gesture. Presently a thank-you letter arrived saying that the Tokyo Chamber thanked the Atlanta Chamber for the grits seeds, that they had been planted but had not yet come up. That story is just to illustrate that you are going amongst a heathen people and that you may not always be understood.”²⁹

I visited Zach’s family home in New Jersey this summer for the first time. At our family reunion in Florida, my mother texted me asking how his house was. I replied “It’s really weird how different they are from us. Their beds are always made but they all cuss all the time.” I told Zach and had to explain what cuss meant. Over the winter break, I attended my first Hannukah at his house. I assumed it was the equivalent of Christmas, and so was confused to get more presents with less ceremony.

1946 “I was supposed to read my short story in the workshop yesterday but when I got there Mr. Engle... announced he would read it himself since no body would understand it if I did.”³⁰

Freshman year for Parents weekend, I led the charge of trying to find a group of 11 students from Harris Hall and all of their parents a brunch meal on a Saturday. The woman taking my name at iHop didn’t understand “Freeman” the first few times. Finally, in front of these new friends from around the country, I annunciated, “Ey-uff, Ah-ur, e, e, ee-yum, ay, ee-yun” and she got it.

1943 “It is very cold. I will be powerful glad to get back in the heat.”³¹

In London I was so cold that I slept curled up in a ball always facing the wall side and developed a pronounced knot on one side of my neck. My body was tense and I felt angry all the time.

²⁹MARBL letter to Maryat Lee, 4 April 1957

³⁰MARBL letter to Regina, undated

³¹MARBL letter to Regina, 9 August 1943

When I came home to Hartsfield Jackson I heard a voice, pained, flat, wishing she was home or out with friends, “weh-cum to Adlanna, intanashunul to the left, duhmestic to the right” and I sighed with relief.

“They have just called up here and said they are going to put new mattresses on all the beds so we have to undue them all. I am satisfied with the one I’ve got. Nuts.”³²

“It is nice to be able to open our own door and have the milk sitting there every other day. I don’t find things too expensive as my tastes are simple.”³³

The famous story about Great Aunt Happy from Raleigh is that once when she visited my grandma, she brought her own used coffee grounds to reuse to make a few more cups. For meals throughout the day, she would set out a cabbage on the counter next to a knife and cut off chunks when she got hungry. She hasn’t paid for a movie in 45 years.

“My parent took advantage of my absence to clean up my room and install revolting ruffled curtains. I can’t put the dust back but I have ultimate that the curtains have got to go, lest they ruin my prose.”³⁴

“I am going because there isn’t anybody to leave me home with. I reckon I will have to wear the dress the lady made for me... it will be bad enough going without burning up in that thing... If you get any undershirts, don’t get them unless they have the round neck and don’t get any of those bias things.”³⁵

The women in my family are not overly concerned with glamour, but my grandmother, my aunts, my cousins and I share an interestingly dichotomous preference for dramatic evening fashions and a decrepit-looking thrift store daily look. My mother prefers solid colored t-shirts from Old

³² MARBL letter to Regina, 2 February 1946

³³ MARBL letter to Regina, 26 September 1946

³⁴ MARBL letter to Regina, 17 April 1957

³⁵ MARBL letter to Regina, 1 September 1942

Navy with printed Bermuda shorts in a corresponding color. Whenever I wear a nice pair of heels, she in her practical tennis shoes just raises her eyebrows as if in awe of my bravery.

“I didn’t mean I was fat when I said I was disgustingly healthy. I’m not fat yet, but I don’t have any room to grow. I just mean I don’t look very intelligent. I was in Nashville a couple of weeks ago visiting the Cheney’s and met a man who looked at me and said... “That was a profound book. You don’t look like you wrote it.” I mustered up my squintiest expression and snarled “well I did” but at the same time I had to recognize he was right.”³⁶

On the first day of AP Psychology, our teacher notified us that he was about to look at all of our GPAs to see where we stood. He called me up to the front of the class and wrote on a sticky note. “You look dumb, but you’re not.”

“I come from a family where the only emotion respectable to show is irritation. In some this tendency produces hives, in others literature, in me both.”³⁷

When I came to Emory, I almost lived with my cousin, but decided not to establish my reputation as the less crazy of a pair. Julia likes to disappear. She earned the moniker Jumper Julia after leaping from a second story fraternity house window and dashing off when she tired of the party. Last spring, she posted a screenshot to Facebook of messages from three friends, myself included, asking her “where are you, your mom is looking for you” with the caption “it’s that time of year again”

“I guess all the bumbling boys at Notre Dame will be forced in off the golf courses and football fields to squint at a live novelist. I may not say anything, I may just make faces. Anyway, the word Beauty never crosses my lips.”³⁸

³⁶*The Habit of Being* p. 65, letter to Elizabeth and Robert Lowell, 1 January 1954

³⁷*The Habit of Being* p. 163-164, letter to “A” (Betty Hester), 28 June 1956

³⁸ MARBL letter to Maryat Lee, 4 April 1957

My mother once told me that in college a girl approached her and said, “I could teach you how to do your makeup so good, you would look so pretty!” After that, she simply wore less makeup.

“I am doing fairly well these days, though I am practically baldheaded on top and have a watermelon face. I think that this is going to be permanent... I stay strictly out of the sun and strictly do not take any exercise. No great hardship.”³⁹

My mother wears training bras from the preteen section at Target, I never thought this bothered her. One night I heard her crying in my parents’ room. The next day I asked her what was wrong and she said that Miss Melinda, who was her other small boob-ed friend, had gotten breast implants. She said she felt less put down than abandoned.

“There’s nobody here but me and my mother and the upstairs is empty. There is nothing to do here but sit and walk and collect redbug bites but there are a lot of things I would like to show you—the peacocks for one thing before his tail gets ratty”⁴⁰

The day I arrived in London, my mother’s best friend passed away after fighting breast cancer for many years. Over the extremely crackly long distance phone call, she sounded composed, but in my miniscule dorm room surrounded by suitcases, I cried. My selfish aloneness felt even greater.

“Saw Mr. Shramm today said he could either fit me for a job I didn’t want or make me a better writer and drawer- I took the latter. My work is very intensive writing.”⁴¹

“We are all working on the Vanderbilt deal... Of course I am not counting on getting it. Ps don’t tell anybody about the Vanderbilt thing please.”⁴²

³⁹ *The Habit of Being* p. 55, letter to Sally and Robert Fitzgerald, 25 January 1953

⁴⁰ *The Habit of Being* p. 162, letter to “A,” 1 June 1956

⁴¹ MARBL letter to Regina, 28 September 1945

⁴² MARBL letter to Regina, 25 April 1947

“Dear R, Got a letter from Davidson today saying that the fellowship there had been discontinued- so that is that. When it is given it is only given to Vanderbilt students.

However, continue to pray that the Lord will provide something else.”⁴³

Before I got a job at Moving in the Spirit, whenever I was home my father would gingerly ask, “So have you had any ideas about next year?” My mother stayed silent. I thought he was simply curious. When they took me out to dinner with a friend and asked her the same question I could finally see how their fear of stressing me out was almost as great as the fear I’d end up on the street.

“From 8 to 12 years it was my habit to seclude myself in a locked room every so often and with a fierce (and evil) face, whirl around in a circle with my fists knotted, socking the angel. This was the guardian angel with which the Sisters assured us we were all equipped. He never left you. My dislike of him was poisonous.”⁴⁴

Once I went to Baptist youth group with my ninth-grade boyfriend, but I couldn’t figure out which television had the right words to the rock song we were supposed to be singing and there was a worksheet to fill out about your personal connection to Jesus and I got over-stimulated.

“When I was twelve I made up my mind absolutely that I would not get any older. I don’t remember how I meant to stop it. There was something about teen attached to anything that was repulsive to me. I certainly didn’t approve of what I saw of people that age. I was a very ancient twelve; my views at that age would have done credit to a civil war veteran. I am much younger now than I was at twelve, or anyway, less burdened”⁴⁵

⁴³ MARBL letter to Regina, April 30 1947

⁴⁴*The Habit of Being* p. 131-132, letter to “A,” 17 January 1956

⁴⁵*The Habit of Being* p. 136-137, letter to “A,” 11 February 1956

At All Saints Episcopal Church, my brothers and I are the only regular attendees between the ages of 7 and 35. In the Christmas Pageant, I was always Mary, and Will was always Joseph. The median age of parishioners is 68. I attempted to go to church once after moving to Atlanta, but the atmosphere lacked of sense of millions of grandparents waiting to see your new hairstyle.

“The pride in the tin leg comes from an old scar. I was in my early days, forced to take dancing to throw me into the company of other children and to make me graceful. Nothing I hated worse than the company of other children and I vowed Id see them all in hell before I would make the first graceful move. The lessons went on for a few years but I won. In a certain sense.”⁴⁶

In third grade the only way my mother could get me to go to ballet on Wednesdays was by taking me to the bakery beforehand and buying me a Danish. I didn’t mind dancing, but I hated tights. Finally the power of the Danish ran out and I quit. 3 months later I went to see a play at the Alliance with adorable, beautiful community children dancing, whose mothers probably only fed them carrots, and as they were showered in applause, I decided to get used to tights.

“I have started drinking tea instead of coffee and I think I like it better”⁴⁷

My mother eats mostly fish and vegetables but consumes enough sweet tea per day to fill Lake Superior. Grandma only needs one espresso to continue her day. As a freshman I started drinking coffee to write papers and she still brings up the victory at every holiday.

“bought from A&P crushed pineapple, Vienna sausages, eggs...Now I am not straining my eyes but naturally they get tired by the end of the week”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *The Habit of Being* p. 145-146, letter to “A,” 10 March 1956

⁴⁷ MARBL letter to Regina, 16 January 1947

⁴⁸ MARBL letter to Regina, 28 September 1946

After I got my kindergarten yearbook I would hold it inches from my face, reading the names and faces of my peers under the covers, so my mother wouldn't come scold me for staying up too late or reading in the dark. We only realized I needed glasses when I kept scooting my chair closer to the TV to watch Aladdin.

“I have developed a decided limp but I am told it has nothing to do with the lupus but it is rheumatism in the hip and I trust them to be telling me this straight. It galls me to have supported the lupus for four years and then to be crippled with rheumatism (a vulgar disease at best) of the hip. I am not able to walk straight and not crippled enough to walk with cane, so that I give the appearance of merely being a little drunk all the time”⁴⁹

“I have enough energy to write with and as that is all I have any business doing any how, I can with one eye squinted take it all as a blessing”⁵⁰

When I got glasses, when I was 7, I realized that leaves came on trees. When I didn't wear my glasses, a crumpled pile of sweaters in the corner was a witch. The town hanging behind the door was always a bedroom intruder. I'm still waiting for my eyes to quit changing so I can get Lasik, but at my last appointment, the left one had gone from a -9.0 to a -9.5

“Please write me a card while I am in the hospital. I won't be able to do anything there but dislike the nurses”⁵¹

“I got your letter a long time ago when I was at Emory Hospital. I stayed there a month, giving generous samples of my blood to this, that and the other technician”⁵²

Last spring, I found out accidentally that one of my two best friends at Emory, who is one year younger than myself, has lupus. She had kept this from me for 2 years. I chose to do this project

⁴⁹ *The Habit of Being* p. 67, letter to Elizabeth Wenwick, 2 February 1954

⁵⁰ *The Habit of Being* p. 57, letter to Elizabeth and Robert Lowell, 17 March 1953

⁵¹ *The Habit of Being* p. 20, letter to Elizabeth and Robert Lowell, undated 1950

⁵² *The Habit of Being* p. 24, letter to Betty Boyd Love, 24 April 1951

before I knew that O'Connor had the disease, and when that became apparent, I worried that she would realize I knew, and think that I had chosen the project as some kind of strange homage to her. Finally I told her how I had found out, and that the disease would be a central part of my thesis. She wasn't angry, and told me about her time being in the hospital for chemotherapy treatments. "People think it would be nice to get to rest somewhere for three days, but when you're in one room, three days feels like forever." I remember that when I first met her, I noticed that her face was always red, but I had assumed that it had calmed down due to an acne treatment.

Every morning O'Connor would wake up, go to mass at Sacred Heart with Regina, come home and write for 3 hours, go to lunch with Regina at the tearoom in downtown. Milledgeville. At noon. So everything else happened before noon. Then she would write letters to her friends or feed her birds. Every morning when she left her room at the front of the house, if she looked left she would see a staircase she couldn't walk up. On Sundays when I'm home I wake up, and go to church with my mother and father, Will and Timo. After church we go to Panera for lunch. Then, for three hours, I go to Target with my best friend and wander around until I buy a pack of gum, or a magazine.

Solo Creation (PII):

Before I left home to visit Andalusia, my mother and Grandma insisted on taking a picture of me armed with notebook, Polaroid camera I had just gotten for Christmas, headphones and backpack—a real researcher. My arrival at Andalusia was anticlimactic, though not disappointingly so. The gravel driveway into the woods reminded me of the road to my Great-Aunt Rosie's house in Florida, and I felt welcomed by the unpretentious signs for Parking. Rosemary and others had already told me that the house was preserved with a lack of ostentation,

but as I walked up the porch steps I was almost nervous that I was at the wrong place, that this wasn't an entrance that I was allowed to make.

I introduced myself and my project to the staff member, and she searched to find connections to dance to tell me about. She noted that O'Connor's work sometimes displayed a plodding rhythm of walking up stairs, and that at least one climatic scene takes place on a staircase landing, yet O'Connor was physically unable to walk up the staircase outside her bedroom door. She asked me if I wanted to play the piano, to keep it in tune, but I don't play, to my Grandma's chagrin. As I wandered around the rooms of the house I felt obligated to find meaning and emotional connection with the objects not even on display, just still living their object lives. I took some Polaroids, and attempted to imagine using the metal braces and typewriter visible in O'Connor's room, but I felt like an imposter, intruding on someone else's life and making more of it than she would have.

Going outside felt like breathing. I almost skipped toward the barn, picturing Joy Hulga from "Good Country People" trapped in the loft. I really was blown away seeing the size of the tractor, imagining its murderous journey towards Mr. Guizac. Knowing that I was alone in the Hill House where the farmhand family lived, I took some unabashed selfies in the cracked bathroom mirror and sent them on to Mama and Grandma. I put on my carefully prepared playlist of Beck and Roseanne Cash and barreled down the hill towards the pond and a one-mile hiking trail. The woods were bleakly beautiful, almost identical to the ones around my house at home or in Lullwater Park where I like to run on the trails. I put on my previously chosen opera score and found a clearing where I felt safe, hidden from the house and the 2% chance another visitor would appear. The draft of the solo that I created there was a fragmented conglomeration

many different ideas that popped in to my head strung together, some transitions forgotten as I would be distracted by a squirrel or a stick getting in my shoe.

I spent the night in a hotel room alone, watched several bad action movies and ate cookies from CVS. The next day I went to Sacred Heart; it was pouring rain. The church doors were unlocked, so I walked right in. No one was in the sanctuary, but from a door behind the altar I could hear a voice singing along to “I’m Yours” by Jason Mraz. I hoped it was the priest. A nativity scene was still set up, and the paneling of the church was in a medium colored wood, even the confession booths in the back seemed warm. I drove to O’Connor’s grave and put some red berries on it because I didn’t have anything else and the woman at the Milledgeville Visitor’s Center had told me to go there. On my way home I drove by the tearoom where O’Connor ate with Regina, but I was more concerned with my own lunch waiting for me at home.

Back on campus, in developing the solo for presentation, I struggled to articulate to others and myself how all the episodic parts, the ideas and images that had poured into me in the woods, fit together into a cohesive whole. Feedback usually focused on transitions and timing, allowing ideas to develop naturally and flow together logically, but I felt I had to hold on to all my ideas. My research and lecture experiences the semester before had introduced me to a small but highly invested community of O’Connor devotees, and I felt a great responsibility to this figure: to depict her with the respect, wit, grace, and independence that she would have been capable of, and I couldn’t leave anything out or the O’Connor police would quite possibly crack down. I needed a re-centering in the dance aspect of the dance.

In a Creativity Conversation hosted by the Emory Dance Program in February, alumna Christine Suarez encouraged the audience, “make your work *more* of what it is, more *you*” and I realized I had forgotten that this was not just O’Connor, but me. I tried to let go of feelings of

responsibility and focus on how it felt to physically move in the structure I had created. The solo was physically challenging, almost exhausting. I chose to play with balance, testing it, failing, needing to recover. Breath control was imperative. The postures were inspired by O'Connor's ideas of distortion and brokenness but were specified by my own bodily abilities. My shoulders are unnervingly mobile (I can wrap an arm behind my head and feed myself snacks), my vision is horrific, my jaw pops in and out of place and I constantly tilt my head to one side or the other. I have a tendency for classical imagery in the Hellenistic sense of athleticism and graphic lines, and my sense of timing echoes my writing style—lots of punctuation. I began to claim ownership of the solo and play with timing, even cutting sections out.

Singing came to symbolize this ownership for me. O'Connor's beloved peacocks often “combine the lifting of the tail with the raising of his voice. He appears to receive through his feet some shock from the center of the earth, which travels upward through him and is released: eeee—ooo-iiii! Eee-ooo-iii! To the melancholy this sound is melancholy and to the hysterical it is hysterical. To me it has always sounded like a cheer for an invisible parade.”⁵³ Meredith Monk, one of my personal dance heroes, pioneered the use of wordless narrative in her solo *Education of the Girlchild*.⁵⁴ Her “revelation that the voice can be as flexible as the spine,” that it can be used in performance as a “direct line to the emotions... a wordless narrative...like every song you have ever heard and yet like none ... the texture of a life, of a history is embodied in it.”⁵⁵ When I used to sing the Queen of the Night as a child to delight my father, an avid opera fan, I always felt an insane confidence that I could be an opera star. Now that I know I will not be, the first time I sing I feel a crushing weight of expectation to hit the notes of the famous aria.

⁵³*Mystery and Manners* p. 14-15

⁵⁴ Steinman, Louise. *The Knowing Body: Elements of Contemporary Performance and Dance*. Boston: Shambala, 1986. Print. p.109

⁵⁵Steinman p.109

When I sing “Casta diva” at the end, I allow myself to breathe in the middle of the note, to be off-key, to take ownership of my own voice so much that I last longer than the recording.

“Placing language in the realm of the physical, and placing movement and gesture in the realm of language, allows us to integrate all the powers available to communicate,”⁵⁶ and I do feel in control of my communication.

I had originally choreographed the removal of my contacts as a reference to myself: if I was a character in an O’Connor story, what would my disability be? My vision is my disability, so I wondered what life would be like if the Bible salesman stole my crutch. Finally performing the removal of my contacts at the American College Dance Festival was completely unlike what I expected dancing almost blind to feel like. The minute specificity and perfectly alert characterization required of the solo could be exhausting, especially combined with the awareness of hundreds of eyes on me. Removing the contacts both forced me to breathe and regain my bearings, and the blurred landscape around me allowed me to reimagine myself as a three dimensional object moving through space, supported and contained by a gelatinous sea. I felt like a better dancer, more stable and self-sufficient when I was forced to reevaluate my body in space.

In the adjudication session I was originally taken aback by the adjudicators’ comments that watching was “like looking into someone else’s madness” and “weirdness was it’s own reward.” I felt that those terms were so general as to be dismissive—what *kind* of madness, what *kind* of weirdness had they seen? But this was perhaps a self-critique, that the episodic nature of the solo had translated emblems of so many different versions of one person. In the context of other suggestions such as “take time to set up the punch-line” and “go further in pushing the

⁵⁶Steinman p. 107

comfort zone” these comments went back to timing and letting images resolve. I focused even more specifically with ideas of mapping the space, losing control of my body parts, self-soothing repetition, and vulnerability.

Going into performance I worried more about my speaking role than the movement section. I met with Jan Akers for a coaching session, and we worked on differentiating between the three different characters I would portray: myself as narrator, O’Connor as letter-writer, and Regina as speaker in letter. The Southern accent and enunciation of particular words was the main focus of the lesson, allowing my Southern diction to increase for each character. In high school when I performed theater more than dance, I always wondered why people felt that they were doing “too much”—be more dramatic for goodness sakes! But now, not having spoken onstage in 4 years, I felt silly reciting lines in an accent. It didn’t help that my awareness of my own southern accent is meager; when I talk to my mother on the phone it reoccurs, but when I speak to someone from the Midwest it fades again. I am never really sure how Southern I sound, so in trying to sound more Southern I lost all sense of scale. “Sound sense” as Jan called it, or allowing the meaning of the words to influence how I pronounced them, and recalling the speech of my grandmother or great-aunts who I see less frequently and thus have more startling accents, helped me shed self-consciousness.

I don’t think any preparation could have readied me for the experience of the performance itself, however. Walking onstage on opening night, knowing that I was about to present myself as myself, not merely a character or body, and seeing the hundreds of eyes already tapped into the energy of PI eagerly awaiting my communication, was a staggering sensation. I recited all my text and poured out everything in my solo, but offstage I felt drained, not fulfilled. Only when my contacts were out and I saw a blur did I feel like I could relax and

experience the material for myself. Alone in the car ride home I sobbed without any feelings of sadness or disappointment. I was incredibly proud of my performance and the other dancers, but I was terrified both at the thought of facing that audience again, and at the idea of only doing it one more time. Performing the solo on a proscenium stage at ACDA and at Schwartz in rehearsal was challenging, but not creatively sapping. Backstage, waiting to go on, I was in tune to the energy of the other dancers, part of a community, and as soon as I stepped in front, I was blinded by how alone I was. I am used to becoming vulnerable onstage, but creating and experiencing that communication with others. In the solo, I was differentiated, expected, wanted, all alone.

After my first Emory Dance Company performance, my mother told me that she wanted to laugh but felt like it would be rude. “Laugh!” I encouraged her. “It’s what you felt!” Now, she is always the first to laugh; in fact, she has expressed a glee in her responsibility to teach others that “it’s ok to laugh at modern.” In the intimate space, I could hear her distinctive snorting guffaw, which I usually appreciate so much. I was incredibly distracted. Was this funny? It wasn’t funny to me. It was all of my ideas and images of a woman who was funny, and it was weird and mad in specific ways but I never felt like laughing. Meeting with Anna reminded me that it was my role to get to that place, to be vulnerable and present the experience as it occurred to me, but it wasn’t the same experience that the audience was going to have. My story was not their story, and a miscommunication was not a failure, it was a translation. Hearing my mother’s voice was an added challenge that my identity as a performer and creator and daughter are all connected. I took the audience’s response and eagerness so personally that I almost drowned in their energy.

On closing night, I isolated myself backstage from the other dancers before I went on, and I pictured the audience’s individual eyes in front of their individual brains, who would all

respond in different ways. My text delivery was not as powerful, but I focused on breath in my movement, and my technique was stronger, more grounded. I was desperate in my search for my contacts, but not in my drive to get through the material. My mother, present again, still laughed, and I still heard it, but I thought about her voice on the phone the night before when I told her how overwhelmed I had been and she suggested I move the solo upstage, away from the audience. I chose not to do that, and I thought about how the solo was mine but everyone's, as I tried to balance on one leg and push my face through my hands. I thought, this might be funny right now, and I heard my voice and thought, this might be Southern right now.

III. BEING DISPLACED: Process

Movement and Narrative Techniques in Western Concert Dance History

The intersection of text and dance is a broad topic to say the least, as it includes disciplines of historical research, movement analysis, anthropology, aesthetics, and journalism.”⁵⁷ While dance studies and theory has been accepted in the university setting as a whole, Goellner and Murphy found that English departments in particular display a “western academic distrust of the body, a logocentric tradition,” which means that movement is often neglected in literary analysis.⁵⁸ However, the opportunity for dance to serve as a model of constructed performativity and bodily identity could “enrich many of the structural and theoretical discusses taking place in literary studies” of comparative political or social systems.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Goellner, Ellen W. and Jacqueline Shea Murphy. “Introduction: Movement Movements.” *Bodies of the Text: Dance as Theory, Literature as Dance*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1995. Print. P. 2

⁵⁸ Goellner and Murphy p. 4

⁵⁹ Goellner and Murphy p. ix

Dance, meanwhile, has undeniably been interacting with literature. Changes in the use of narrative as a choreographic device often accompany shifts in the linear history of Western concert dance.

What are some of these uses, and what does narrative look like in movement form? Goellner and Murphy describe a narrative theory in which the “structurally descriptive mode” uses “representational mimicry of lived moments” to precisely depict stable figures and a decisive point of view.⁶⁰ This technique appears in the early Romantic ballets such as *La Sylphide* but was cemented in Petipa’s formulaically plotted ballets of the late 19th century such as *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890).⁶¹ It continued to inform neo-classical choreographers such as George Balanchine, whose ballet *Orpheus* (1948) serves as an example of a “structurally descriptive” narrative. The ballet follows a plot from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in which Orpheus, the son of Apollo, must rescue his dead wife Eurydice from the Underworld by playing his lyre. The caveat is that on their ascent, he must not turn back to see if she follows, which of course he does, and thus loses her.⁶² Balanchine’s sinewy, concave choreography strikes a balance between classical technique and pantomime that creates a feeling of tension between performance and inner turmoil.⁶³ The ballet depicts these events in linear order, with characters differentiated by gender, costume, and prevalence onstage, and the choreography mimics the emotional arc of loss in the plot.

The structurally descriptive form also found its way into early modern choreography, though pioneers such as Martha Graham often focused on specific sections of a larger plot in

⁶⁰ Goellner and Murphy p. 2

⁶¹ Anderson, Jack. *Ballet and Modern Dance: A Concise History*. Hightstown, NJ: Princeton Book Co., P: 1992. Print. p. 104

⁶² Goldner, Nancy. *More Balanchine Variations*. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2011. Print. p. 30

⁶³ Joseph, Charles M. *Stravinsky and Balanchine*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2002. Print. p. 196

order to communicate their own perspective. Graham used a technique of “inner logic” to suspend time and allow audience members to find new engagements with her narratives by focusing on a particular moment in a character’s life.⁶⁴ Her piece *Night Journey* (1947) recreates the section of Sophocles’ play *Oedipus Rex* when lovers Jocasta and Oedipus discover they are actually mother and son. Graham goes on to portray their inner turmoil and tragic fates through dramatic pantomime, especially highlighting the grief of Jocasta (who was played by herself).⁶⁵ By turning the focus of a previously male-dominated narrative and performance form (Greek theater) to the untold female perspective, Graham highlights the woman as a creator and agent in her own right, and suggests that movement is an indicator of identity.⁶⁶

Even in the post-modern era, choreographers such as Mark Morris have used a straightforward depiction of plotted events to subvert societal expectations. Unlike classical ballets or Graham’s “Greek cycle” dances, in his piece *Dido and Aeneas* (1989) Morris incorporates a linguistic narration. The choreography is set to Henry Purcell’s 1688 opera, which tells the story of Dido, the Queen of Carthage, who falls in love and then is abandoned by the hero Trojan Aeneas.⁶⁷ Morris’s structurally descriptive choreography presented simultaneously with the vocalization leaves little room for interpretation of “what happens when.” Because the choreography also includes heavy references to symbolic gestural Kuchipudi and Bharatnatyam traditions and storytelling tropes of classical ballets (such as the royal procession or a family member pressuring a heroine), an unambiguous sense of pantomime also pervades the

⁶⁴Steinman p. 122

⁶⁵Siegel, Marcia B. “The Harsh and Splendid Heroines of Martha Graham.” *The American Poetry Review* 4.1 (1975) : 30-34. Web. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27774857>> p. 33

⁶⁶Yaari, Nurit. “Myth Into Dance: Martha Graham’s Interpretation of the Classical Tradition.” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 10.2 (2003) : 221-242. Web. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30221918>> p. 230

⁶⁷Martin, Carol. “Mark Morris’s *Dido and Aeneas*.” *Dancing Texts: Intertextuality in Interpretation*. Ed. Janet Adshead-Lansdale. London: Dance Books, 1999. Print. p. 139

narrative.⁶⁸ However, in his treatment of character, Morris completely flips expectations of retelling by casting himself as both the female Dido, and her nemesis, the Sorceress. The new interactions of gender and performativity created in this representation of identity questions past and current treatment of sexuality in society and performance.⁶⁹

Yet choreographers did begin to grow tired of the structurally descriptive. The departure of avant-garde literature and theater is characterized by fragmentation, “words, phrases, texts separated from conventional uses.”⁷⁰ In trying to replace the compositional form that structural description of narrative supplied, contemporary performers find a different solution for each work: “the compositional form is an extension of the content.”⁷¹ Although the affect of this fragmentation on an audience can be challenging, even threatening, as it “seems to attempt to obscure communication,”⁷² the movement away from a linear perspective in all art forms encourages audiences to escape a normal reality. Steinman also argues that the portrayal of nonlinear time echoes the way humans actually process thought, especially in an era of growing technology in which “our synapses are primed for quick transitions” and our framing of the “moment” rarely flows evenly.⁷³

Virginia Woolf articulated bluntly, “I am bored by narrative. The appalling business of the realist: getting on from lunch to dinner.” Her desire to portray the “moment” in its entirety reflects the performance shift away from a sense of measured time, of going from one idea to another as it actually happened.⁷⁴ Of course, choreographers have different concepts of

⁶⁸ Martin p. 135

⁶⁹ Martin p. 140

⁷⁰ Steinman p. 104

⁷¹ Steinman p. 127

⁷² Steinman p. 104

⁷³ Steinman p. 121

⁷⁴ Steinman p. 121

fragmented process. Meredith Monk invented the term *composite theatre* with an emphasis on the organic-ness of *compost* as she “takes the elements, the sounds, the images, the gestures, revolving around a given theme and place[s] them in fertile contact with one another, where they break down to create a new luminosity, the heat provided by performance.”⁷⁵ Matthew Maguire relies on his own nonlinear experience of reality to break down several linear stories: “I take the pieces, I chop them up, I keep them all floating at once, and then I reintegrate them so they fit at the same time” choosing the word *collage* to best represent this process. Ping Chong’s idea of *bricolage* augments that definition a focus on the “medium of chance to awaken our inner flow of awareness.”⁷⁶ Trisha Brown’s piece *Accumulation* (1971) is perhaps an example of narrative at its most fragmented can be reconstructed. The piece begins with a gestural story in her hands, a single movement of her wrists twisting with a thumb outstretched. She repeats this gesture and adds a twist of the hip, continuously accumulating gestures in a pathway so that eventually the first hand gesture, which served as “recognizable landmark... loses its familiarity, as does a word repeated over and over.” Brown tells the audience a story while she performs all these gestures, so that the interpretations of meaning linking word to gesture are overlaid with amazement at her virtuosic memory.⁷⁷ Through randomness, collage, fragmentation of body parts, and recombination with narrative, Brown constructs a dual system of time, both physical and vocal.

Just as choreographers are not limited to traditional expressions of linear narrative, though, neither are they limited by or from it. Pina Bausch’s *Blaubart* (1977), a translation of the Bluebeard myth, relies on both linear structure and fragmentation. Inspired by Bartók’s opera, it tells the story of Judith, the fourth wife of Bluebeard, who masochistically decides to disprove

⁷⁵ Steinman p. 124

⁷⁶ Steinman p. 124

⁷⁷ Steinman p. 111

the rumors that her husband has murdered his three previous wives. When the piece premiered in America, Bausch was criticized for seeming to support the hetero-normative and violent stereotypes that are implicit in the original story.⁷⁸ Bausch connected with Bartók's opera originally because of her own choreographic interest in "the exploration of love as a source of tension and paradox."⁷⁹ Her use of imagery and repetition actually reorients the work from the opera's original themes to what she described as a "continuing battle of the sexes, particularly the feeling of being drawn together while simultaneously sensing rejection, and the tension between an individual's inability to survive without others in society and the need to be alone."⁸⁰

In particular, the image of Bluebeard's three dead wives, preserved as museum pieces that reappear and pile on top of one another, creates a host of interpretations. The suggestion of bodies as pieces for collection engages with assumptions of gender, while the tableaux of jumbled bodies wearing white, "recalls also the stark images of Holocaust victims lying in strangely aesthetic piles."⁸¹ The dancer who plays Bluebeard controls a tape recorder which plays a fragmented version of the original Bartók score, and movement repetitions set to the constant stopping and starting of sound deconstruct the aspect of male dominance in the original work.⁸² For Bausch this piece accompanied the introduction of a new method of working which she eventually became famous for, in which she "stimulated the dancers' imaginations and memories by asking them to improvise responses to questions" in this case about male-female

⁷⁸Mumford, Meg. "Pina Bausch Choreographs Blaubart: A Transgressive or Regressive Act?". *German Life and Letters*. Oxford: Blackwell P, 2004. P.44

⁷⁹Mumford p. 47

⁸⁰Mumford p. 47

⁸¹Mumford p. 49

⁸²Mumford p. 46

relationship dynamics.⁸³ Her own anxieties as a creator and controller influenced Bluebeard's ambiguous status of control and the development of the piece's narrative.

Bill T Jones's work *Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/ The Promised Land* (1990) displays a more clearly articulated social and political engagement with narrative. The first section of the piece provides a vaudeville style staging of the namesake text, Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, complete with an oversized, cartoonish set and old woman narrator.⁸⁴ Following sections depart sharply from this narrative, however, to draw out various problems with the original text and its subsequent place in American history. Section Two depicts five different versions of a solo by the main character Eliza, all danced by different company members and exploring gender roles in history.⁸⁵ In Section 3, Jones dances as his mother sings "Wade in the Water" and a tableaux of da Vinci's "Last Supper" painting appears while one dancer raps about growing up on the streets. In the last section, one naked dancer is joined by dozens of other naked bodies, who stand and face the audience.⁸⁶ These seemingly dichotomous parts all engage with different historical aspects of "relations between African America performance, slavery, and political identity."⁸⁷

After the explosion of popularity of the book *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the mid 1800s, staged versions of the text gained prominence as well, running from 1852-1930.⁸⁸ While in the novel dance was often used to demonstrate how slaves resisted subordination and deserved

⁸³Mumford p. 50

⁸⁴ Murphy, Jacqueline Shea. "Unrest and Uncle Tom: Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company's *Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/ The Promised Land*." *Bodies of the Text: Dance as Theory, Literature as Dance*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1995. Print. p. 93

⁸⁵ Murphy p. 94-95

⁸⁶ Murphy p. 97

⁸⁷ Murphy p. 83

⁸⁸ Murphy p. 88

equality,⁸⁹ straightforward stagings of the play essentialized the motives for dancing, and contributed to stereotypes of African American dance and bodies as “lower and [more] shameful” than European dance traditions.⁹⁰ The “play” staging of Uncle Tom’s Cabin in Section One of *Last Supper* exaggerates and recognizes through parody how dance has been used as a tool for oppression, whether through “dancing the Jim Crow” for slave masters (Murphy 84) or dancing for exercise on slave ships to the Americas.⁹¹

The other sections of the piece engage with the historical theme of violence in narrative as well. One of the female Elizas is played by a male as stereotypically gay, challenging notions of the gay man as spectacle.⁹² Jones’s solo suggests the trope of tragic young male death in his exploration of the Christian religion (Jesus) and his own sexuality (partner Arnie Zane had recently passed away from AIDS).⁹³ Finally, the section in which one man raps about violence demonstrates a replacement of actual violence with performance—unlike the original stagings of Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Jones’s work is commenting on the relationship to violence instead of depicting it literally and thus seeming to support it.⁹⁴ Postmodern audiences used to the spectacle of violent climax in movies, books and music may seek such an ending to signify a plot, but Jones’s decision to perform past violence “presents ways that contemporary dance can be used ... as a tool for political reform.”⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Murphy p. 86

⁹⁰ Murphy p. 91

⁹¹ Murphy p. 82

⁹² Murphy p. 96

⁹³ Murphy p. 97

⁹⁴ Murphy p. 99

⁹⁵ Murphy p. 98

Introduction to Movement and Narrative Techniques: Celeste Miller

Before I even chose “The Displaced Person” as my source text, I spent a day in a choreographic laboratory at the home of Celeste Miller. Miller described her process to me and three other participants by showing us a video of performance of “Multi Medea Idea,” a solo she developed for herself and has been performing for several years. Miller’s technique for deriving movement from a passage of text is highly literal. Taking a small passage from a larger source, usually a description of a character, perhaps the length of three sentences, Miller selects key words and creates a particular movement to represent each. For example, in “Medea” the description of a dress became Miller gesturing around her waist in short strokes to indicate a long elegant gown. Miller then vocalizes other sections of text or creates her own text in response, which she speaks while performing the movement.

She asked me to provide a source material for the group to work with, so I chose the story “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” and the passage “the grandmother had on a navy blue straw sailor hat with a bunch of white violets on the brim and a navy blue dress with a small white dot in the print. Her collars and cuffs were white organdy trimmed with lace and at her neckline she had pinned a purple spray of cloth violets containing a sachet.”⁹⁶ In my interpretation, the key words were Navy, Straw, Sailor, Bunch, Violets, Brim, Dot, Collars, Cuffs, Trimmed, Lace, Neckline, Spray, Violets, Containing, Sachet. I developed a series of movements based off of these words and performed them while speaking the text, ““A good man is hard to find,” Red Sammy said. “Everything is getting terrible. I remember the day you could go off and leave your screen door unlatched. Not no more.”⁹⁷ I then performed this short composition alongside another dancer who had created a different movement phrase from the first text passage, and was

⁹⁶ O’Connor, Flannery. “A Good Man is Hard to Find.” *The Complete Stories*. p. 118

⁹⁷ “A Good Man is Hard to Find” *The Complete Stories*. New York: Farrar, 1971. Print. p. 122

also speaking the second passage aloud in an improv. The interactions between our voices, speaking the same sections of texts, and our movements, completely different but still related through systems of imagery and a language environment, were astoundingly interesting.

The pieces that I created with my cast in this project included aspects of all the approaches to text I researched, but I believe they were primarily influenced by my own experience of the story as an English major. By habit and personal choice, I performed a close reading of the literary devices and plot in combination with texts I encountered in my research and other classes.

Mystery in Incomprehension: The Untranslatable in “The Displaced Person”

In *Mystery and Manners*, O’Connor espoused a kind of writing in which:

...fiction will always be pushing its own limits outward toward the limits of mystery, because for this kind of writer, the meaning of a story does not begin except at a depth where adequate motivation and adequate psychology and the various determinations have been exhausted. Such a writer will be interested in what we don’t understand rather than in what we do (41-42).

What we don’t understand is precisely the focus of Emily Apter’s Introduction to *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*. When moving between languages and texts, Apter argues for an examination of the “Untranslatable,” or locations where meaning has slipped through the cracks or been twisted in the process of translation. These intersections, rather than standing in “opposition to the always translatable... [can be understood] as a linguistic form of creative failure with homeopathic uses,”⁹⁸ and can be used to “demarcate where logic fails...where inexpressible things put pressure on speech; or where the nonsense of mysticism and metaphysics prevails.”⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Apter, Emily. “Introduction.” *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*. New York: Verso, 2013. E-book. Loc 359.

⁹⁹ Apter Loc. 214

Though the events of “The Displaced Person” take place in a single rural location, the intermingling cultures represented on the farm serve as a microcosm for a larger globalized world. For O’Connor, “grace erupts from within the ruptures and dislocations of the modern world,”¹⁰⁰ and in this story, the isolated setting highlights the meaning found in these instances of miscommunication and illogic—the Untranslatable. Instances of mystery represented for O’Connor the transformative challenge of maintaining faith while accepting that full comprehension of God’s grace is impossible,¹⁰¹ and occasions of ambiguity and fissure in “The Displaced Person” in particular point to a transcendence beyond the physical in cases of oppression and violence.

The introduction of the Guizac family immediately interrupts the established social dynamic of Mrs. McIntyre’s farm, a fracture made obvious as Mr. Guizac kisses Mrs. McIntyre’s hand and “Mrs. Shortley jerked her own hand up toward her mouth and then after a second brought it down and rubbed it vigorously on her seat.”¹⁰² The distance between the hand that is actually kissed and the hand that jerks up focuses attention on the cultural difference illuminated in introductory gestures. O’Connor “estranges her characters from old and stable social contexts...and brings them to new consciousness through metaphor.”¹⁰³ This gesture as a metaphor for European and American social differences immediately establishes a problematic racial tension which comes into play again as Mr. Guizac attempts to convince Sulk to marry his cousin to save her from a concentration camp. Mrs. McIntyre’s shocked admonishment that Mr.

¹⁰⁰ Magee p. 14

¹⁰¹ Elie, Paul. “Pious Anxiety: Flannery O’Connor’s Prayer Journal.” *Work in Progress*. Web. 30 January 2015. <<http://www.fsgworkinprogress.com/2014/12/pious-anxiety-flannery-oconnors-prayer-journal/>>.

¹⁰²O’Connor, Flannery. “The Displaced Person.” *The Complete Stories*. New York: Farrar, 1971. Print. p. 195

¹⁰³ Kessler, Edward. *Flannery O’Connor and the Language of the Apocalypse*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986. Print. p. 38

Guizac “would bring this poor innocent child over here and try to marry her to a half-witted thieving black stinking nigger,”¹⁰⁴ emphasizes not the disparity of social customs that is problematic to her, but her own racist inability “to recognize in the racial other the unity of the body and spirit that they so desperately need.”¹⁰⁵

Miscommunication occurs even between characters speaking the same language; as the priest and Mrs. McIntyre discuss her mounting issues with Mr. Guizac, the peacock finally spreads his tail, “tiers of small pregnant suns float[ing] in the green-gold haze over his head.” The “transfixed” priest gasps that “Christ will come like that!” while an embarrassed Mrs. McIntyre complains that “He didn’t have to come in the first place” apparently still speaking of Mr. Guizac. To this the priest finally removes his attention from the peacock and replies “He came to redeem us,”¹⁰⁶ presumably maintaining his focus on the similarities between the peacock and Christ. Miscommunications in meaning here draw attention to the similarities between the three subjects, which seem to be accidentally conflated. Later, Mrs. McIntyre asserts that “Christ was just another D.P.,”¹⁰⁷ and indeed “Like Mr. Guizac, he did not fit into the customs and values of his surroundings.”¹⁰⁸ These comparisons set up expectations of sacrifice that Mr. Guizac’s death fulfills, but also draw attention to the opportunity for redemption and grace that Mrs. McIntyre is losing in her ability to recognize herself in the racial other. The fulfillment of the metaphor is even more disappointing because of the clarity with which the Untranslatable underlined the similarity between disparate characters.

¹⁰⁴“The Displaced Person” p. 222

¹⁰⁵ Hardy, Donald E. *The Body in Flannery O’Connor’s Fiction: Computational Technique and Linguistic Voice*. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2007. Print. p.142

¹⁰⁶ “The Displaced Person” p. 226

¹⁰⁷ “The Displaced Person” p. 229

¹⁰⁸ Magee p. 3

Death itself also serves as a borderland in which meaning can be twisted and reconstructed. Rather than a defined physical state, death is a location of both “ultimate morphing dismemberment”¹⁰⁹ and a “spiritual resting place...a true home[through which] to experience the glimmer of grace and possibility of redemption.”¹¹⁰ At the moment of Mrs. Shortley’s death “she “only ‘seems’ to contemplate for the first time the tremendous frontiers of her true country’ [my emphasis]. Mrs. Shortley is left on the border of truth and the reader on the threshold of meaning” wondering whether she experienced an “ultimate displacement” of emotional transcendence or only seems to experience more than a bodily change.¹¹¹

Mrs. McIntyre experiences a similar Untranslatability of location at the moment of Mr. Guizac’s death: “she felt she was in some foreign country.”¹¹² She “suffers unacknowledged guilt and remorse until she becomes mentally rather than physically displaced,”¹¹³ ending in a kind of physical limbo, trapped in her own paralyzed body.¹¹⁴ The illogic diction of feeling “foreign” in one’s own land and body focuses attention on the importance of mental constructions of home and race. For O’Connor, “place” does not “represent a verifiable reality ... [but] a metaphoric means of apprehending what lies beyond her environment, not the thing seen, but a way of seeing.”¹¹⁵ If “from a theological perspective, home locates faith and spirituality,”¹¹⁶ the familiar, then conversely “a location of “exile, or an awareness of marginalization” as a way of seeing can prompt a transformation such as Mrs. Shortley’s.¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁹ Hardy p. 93

¹¹⁰ Magee p. 8

¹¹¹ Kessler p. 39

¹¹² “The Displaced Person” p. 235

¹¹³ Kessler p. 39

¹¹⁴ “The Displaced Person” p. 235

¹¹⁵ Kessler p. 40

¹¹⁶ Magee p. 3

¹¹⁷ Magee p. 16

The Untranslatable makes its way into the body in the consideration of different ways of seeing. Images lost in the space between inward and outward vision are often the most necessary or redeeming. “Limited vision characterizes many characters. Some see only what meets the eye, and their inability to see metaphorically tells us that the author will very shortly devise some violent means of opening their eyes.”¹¹⁸ In the case of Mrs. Shortley, limited outward vision prevents her from recognizing the beauty and mystery of the peacock, and metaphorically, the value of the racial other. Though at one moment the tail hangs right in front of her,¹¹⁹ she “characteristically ignores the embodiment of the mystery of the universe in the physical by turning inward to contemplate her own prejudices.”¹²⁰ The lost image emphasizes not a transcendent inner awareness, but a “grotesque self-involvement,” an immoral and indifferent isolation rather than a transformative one.¹²¹ Ironically, Mrs. Shortley’s vision begins to expand beyond herself when her home and social values are threatened; she “turns to the Bible and through religious vision transcends her own” as a “vision from Ezekiel of ‘fiery wheels with fierce dark eyes in them’” replaces her exterior awareness.¹²² Though her vision has increased in a sense, the sticky Untranslatability of inner and outer image still remains, proving that visual revelations do not mean Mrs. Shortley has reached a transcendent coherence.

The body provides other instances of sticky translation in the arrangement of parts. Upon the arrival of the Guizacs, Mrs. Shortley “recall[s] a newsreel she had seen once of a small room piled high with bodies of dead naked people all in a heap, their arms and legs tangled together, a head thrust in here, a head there, a foot, a knee, a part that should have been covered up sticking

¹¹⁸ Kessler p. 100

¹¹⁹ “The Displaced Person” p. 200

¹²⁰ Hardy p. 85

¹²¹ Hardy p. 122

¹²² Kessler p. 38

out, a hand raised clutching nothing.”¹²³ Beyond the assumptions of horrific violence and enraging disrespect of life and privacy that this image provokes, its power emerges from the uncomfortable dislocation of part from whole, of an arm translated onto a hip or a head onto an ankle. Rachel Carroll explains that “the dispassionate quality of this description, with its grotesque motifs of fragmentation and dismemberment, suggests a stunned incomprehension” of both the logic of bodily arrangement and the scope of human depravity.¹²⁴ O’Connor’s idea of the grotesque “is that there is very little separation between the human body and other bodies,” so through a close-up view of the illogical arrangement of these body parts meaning emerges.¹²⁵ At the moment of Mrs. Shortley’s death, she “thrashed forward and backward, clutching at everything she could get her hands on and hugging it to herself”—a physical engagement with the exterior world which could mean “Di Renzo argues, she ’overcomes her xenophobia.”¹²⁶ The translational mutability of the human form can signify a horrific abuse, or a revelatory engagement with humanity.

At the most minute level, the Untranslatable extends to grammatical composition. Donald Hardy’s thesis of the body centers around the assumption that “the interactions of grammatical voice and the body ...illuminate the struggle with divisions of spirit and matter.”¹²⁷ O’Connor herself in an essay title “The Symbol” argued that “there is a section in Eliot’s “Ash Wednesday” which is written to sound like a litany. I think this is an instance where structure can be said to act as symbol.”¹²⁸ In the case of the grammatical body, illogical translations of subject/verb

¹²³“The Displaced Person” p. 196

¹²⁴ Carroll, Rachel. “Foreign Bodies: History and Trauma in Flannery O’Connor’s ‘The Displaced Person’ . *Textual Practice* 14.1. 2000, p. 98

¹²⁵ Hardy p. 143

¹²⁶ Hardy p. 143

¹²⁷ Hardy p. 2

¹²⁸ MARBL composition from Iowa Writers Workshop

agency focus meaning around spiritual control. After Mr. Guizac's death, in addition to a bodily numbness, loss of vision and voice, Mrs. McIntyre's "hands and head began to jiggle."¹²⁹ The structure of this phrase contains an "ergative subject" that is, an actor that technically does not have control over the action it is performing.¹³⁰ Throughout the story, body parts seem to have a will of their own, such as the peacock tail that commands the priest's attention¹³¹ or Mrs. McIntyre's "bounding forward with her mouth stretched" in an excuse for a smile at her introduction to the Guizacs.¹³² The ergative usage "reveals a split in the semantics/ pragmatics of a person," a loss of bodily control which reveals a corresponding emotion disconnection.¹³³ Even more disturbing is the translation of the ergative to the non-human realm in the case of the tractor, which "move[s] forward, calculating its own path."¹³⁴ That the tractor seems to possess its "own murderous will" as an inanimate object is another instance of Untranslatable logic that calls attention to the assignment of agency.¹³⁵ A machine does not murder a person, and the uncomfortable grammatical structure symbolizes the discomfort one should have with the "viewers" of the murder.

In these examples, meaningful Untranslatability is located in the illogical literary endowment of agency to bodies that cannot rationally control their own movement. In the introduction to *Bodies of the Text*, Goellner and Murphy argue:

"For too long within the academy, bodies have been static metaphors for unknown and mysterious forces and have only been allowed to signify hidden desires, irrational

¹²⁹ "The Displaced Person" p. 235

¹³⁰ Hardy p. 50

¹³¹ Hardy p. 3)

¹³² Hardy p. 105

¹³³ Hardy p. 51

¹³⁴ "The Displaced Person" p. 234

¹³⁵ Hardy p. 9

impulses, the unconscious. Reclaiming the body-subject, exploring the body's discursive meaning—its “perceptions, action, and responses that are not linguistically constituted” is, in part, the work of dance studies.”¹³⁶

Deconstructions of bodily agency do allow new meanings to emerge in a linguistic context, but questions of the Untranslatable agency of the body run both ways. What meanings are we missing by assuming, as Goellner and Murphy accuse, that the body is only an object of the mind? The concept of body as a rational being capable of translation could produce many images of meaning. A state of flux inherent to the nature of dance “might help literary critics learn how to talk about changes.”¹³⁷ Fragmentations in understanding and intention are accepted as inherent to dance and post-modern performance—the Untranslatable is almost assumed. Perhaps then, movement is one of the most fitting ways to engage with the Untranslatable in fields such as literature where meaning is traditionally assumed to be available, logical, and clear.

Choosing My Source

After determining that narrative was the variable I was interested in testing, I knew I would have to create two works based on one source. After a suggestion from Anna Leo that I consider using an author whose works were available in MARBL, I immediately thought of O'Connor, whose letters I had seen in the archives on a visit with my freshman writing class. I began by considering several stories from the collection *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, including the title story, “Good Country People,” “The Artificial Nigger,” and “Everything that Rises Must Converge.” The problem with most of these stories was that they consisted of at most six main characters, often three or four, and I felt that for greater choreographic mobility, I needed a large

¹³⁶ Goellner and Murphy p. 11

¹³⁷ Goellner and Murphy p. 5

cast of dancers who were characters in my work as equally as O'Connor's were in the story. I chose "The Displaced Person" for its array of complex individuals, as well as for the complex intersections of social and racial identity and persecution. The cast that I assembled was based off the following list:

Mrs. McIntyre- Aneyn O'Grady

Mrs. Shortley- Hannah Gold

Mr. Shortley- Julianna Joss

Priest- Lauren Lindeen

Mr. Guizac- Natalie Eggert

Mrs. Guizac- Loris Takori

Sledgwig and Rudolph (their children)- Diana Bender-Bier and Shauna Bowes

Astor and Sulk- Jake Krakovksy and Tim Harland

I reached out to dancers whom I thought would be able to contribute meaningful analysis and original movement to the choreographic process. Since they would not only be portraying but also creating themselves as individuals in the world of the works, I looked for clarity of personal expression and willingness to take social risks, as much as modern technique. The themes of the story include racism, the Holocaust, and issues of gender, so I believed it was important for my cast members to represent a demographic just as diverse in religious, racial, and gender identity as O'Connor's characters. I reached out to theater alumni Jake Krakovsky and Tim Harland for both their perspectives as men and their working familiarity with characterization techniques in theater rather than dance.

I chose not to reveal the particular source material to the dancers for the creation of the first piece and did not tell them which character I thought of as I cast them. I wanted their

contributions and interpretations of the movement we created to only be influenced by non-narrative elements of the story like dialogue, setting, or motif that I could reveal to them as necessary, rather than an overarching knowledge of the entire story. I did tell the dancers that the story was a piece by O'Connor, and explained why I hid the rest of the information.

Piece I (P1): Creation

Rehearsal Exercise 1: Sound Environment and Comfort

For the very first rehearsal I asked the dancers to bring the first piece of music that they had ever choreographed a piece for, or if they did not remember the first one, then a very significant one. For phase one, I asked them to develop a short, 30 second phrase to that piece of music, not going back to the movement styles and tendencies they had when they originally used the piece, but a style more indicative of their current relationship to choreography. The styles ranged from emotionally lyrical in the case of Lauren Lindeen to upbeat pop with Ke\$ha's "Tik Tok" from Natalie Eggert.

For phase two of this exercise, I taught the dancers a longer phrase of my own movement in silence. I then chose a completely different piece of music for each dancer, from minimalist chords to horror movie-esque operatic screaming and discordant clanging. I asked the dancers to intersperse two short chunks taken from the phrase I had taught them into their own solo phrases, and then they performed these conglomerate phrases to the new piece of music I had chosen for them. Some of the dancers noted that it was much more comfortable to perform the movement I had created in silence to this new music than the movement they had created in their original phrases because they had fewer associations with it. Others said that they had a hard time

focusing because they were only thinking about the last time they had performed it to more comfortable music.

For phase three, I asked the dancers to perform the conglomerate phrases again to the new music selections, but while mentally imagining the original piece of music that they had brought to the rehearsal. The dancers felt that it was much more difficult to perform the choreography I had taught them while thinking about their original song, and I noticed that their dynamics started to be affected much more strongly than in either of the first two exercises as they attempted to move away from the sound environment they were currently in.

For the final phase of the exercise, phase four, I asked the dancers to perform the conglomerate phrase to the new piece of music and internally give in to and embody that piece of music, to completely disregard the original sound they had created to. The dancers here seemed the most comfortable and at ease with the phrase, the two separate pieces looked much more seamlessly integrated. Lauren Lindeen said that she felt she could more easily latch on to the certain elements in the sound such as fluidity, and most of the dancers agreed that it was much easier to work with what they were hearing as they danced than to fight against it.

I found all of these observations resonated with other types of displacement as well. The concept of mentally fighting against one's surrounding environment when physically taken from home began to inform the phrases I choreographed for this piece. When choreographing I often attempted to imagine myself in a completely different location than the space I was creating in, to see how the feeling of incongruity affected my movement choices. I found myself straying away from my usual tendency for frontal movement that faces audience members in favor of indirect pathways and an upward, rather than forwards, gaze. I also reversed the process by creating phrases in locations that felt physically uncomfortable: outside in an apartment complex

while walking a dog, at a party, in the gym in front of an entire weight-lifting sports team. It did not matter exactly where these locations were, just that I felt out of my element in the process of creation. Again, I noticed a tendency towards twisted, crossed and non-forward movement, though the phrases I created outside were more full-bodied and expansive, while the ones made in a more social setting were smaller and more intricate work with the hands and shoulders, with steps often in a sideways path.

Rehearsal Exercise 2: Movement Miscommunication

After working with the material generated in these solos and my own phrase work for several rehearsals, I wanted to dive into duet work. In the conversation between Mrs. McIntyre and the Priest about the peacock and Mr. Guizac's presence on the farm,¹³⁸ the multiple levels of meaning that a very slight manipulation of language can allow fascinated me. The use of the non-specific pronoun "he" by the priest in the last lines invokes not only the male bird and the capital He of Christ, but also the earthly male in question, Mr. Guizac, and thus allows a comparison to be drawn between all three possible antecedents. If the peacock and Mr. Guizac could be the redeemers of the (also non-specific) us, then Christ and the peacock could just as well be the he who "didn't have to come here in the first place." The question of agency in the act of redemption is thus called into question. Did Mr. Guizac have to come to the farm in Georgia? Other parts of the story suggest that if he wanted to escape violent persecution in his home of Poland, yes, he did. What did the peacock have to do? He did not have to spread his tail, but his decision to do so filled the priest at least with a reverential measure of amazement and pleasure. As a farm animal, however, he did have to go wherever he was bought or brought. And

¹³⁸ "The Displaced Person." p. 227

what of Christ? Was it his decision to be born as a sacrifice for humanity or did he “have to come” because of someone else’s authority? And for Christians, what would be the consequences of him not coming?

I wanted to represent this phenomenon of miscommunication and multiplicity of meaning in the piece through movement, to see how complexities of communication could be translated from the linguistic to the physical. I gave each dancer a partner, and together we came up with two different vague subjects which could be unknowingly discussed by two people as if they were the same thing. Natalie talked to Loris about living with a “he” that was a boyfriend, while Loris was referring to living with a “he” that was a pet dog. Shauna and Julianna were both discussing a planned fall break trip, which one thought was an elegant rustic spa getaway, while the other was imagining intense forest camping. Aneyn and Lauren both referred to their desire for sisters, though Lauren meant sorority sisters while Aneyn was bemoaning her lonely life as an only child. Hannah and Tim contemplated an impending doom, though for Hannah it was an organic chemistry test and for Tim it was death. I instructed the dancers to create short, improvised conversations in which one person realized that the two participants were not on the same page, and slowly realigned her idea of the subject to the other person’s without verbally acknowledging “oh, you meant....”. These conversations were funny, and at times, extremely awkward. I then asked each set of partners to transcribe the dialogue into movement by choosing particular turns of phrases in which meaning was lost or created such as “sisters to spend time with” or “I love cuddling with Buddy” and imagine gestures or phrases of movement that communicated those ideas for each person, still in a back and forth, conversational format. The resulting duets were as awkward and complex as the verbal conversations, and full of a sense of social awareness as well.

Rehearsal Exercise 3: Viewership and Hostility (intense watching, watching body parts)

I created a phrase through improvisation, while keeping in mind these short quotations from the text of the story:

- 1: “A newsreel of bodies”¹³⁹
- 2: “She was having an inner vision”¹⁴⁰
- 3: “Your place too low for anybody to dispute with you for it”¹⁴¹
- 4: Polish words dirtying English words¹⁴²
- 5: Prophecy: the children of wicked nations¹⁴³

To engage with the central theme of vision and bodily awareness in the story, I had dancers perform this phrase one at a time, first while no one paid her any attention, then while the rest of the cast had the directive to stare intensely at her, and finally, knowing that the other dancers were staring at a particular body part on her. The dancers all agreed that it was much harder to remember the choreography while they knew eyes were on them, but almost unbearably uncomfortable to perform wondering what specific body parts were the focus of scrutiny.

Rehearsal Exercise 4: Celeste Miller Technique

As another creative exercise, I borrowed Celeste Miller’s method of translation and gave each dancer a specific bit of text related to one character which they were assigned to translate into movement. The characters and phrases were

¹³⁹ “The Displaced Person” p. 196

¹⁴⁰ “The Displaced Person” p. 200

¹⁴¹ “The Displaced Person” p. 206

¹⁴² “The Displaced Person” p. 209

¹⁴³ “The Displaced Person” p. 210

Loris, Shauna- Sledgwig and Rudolph: Sledgwig sounded to Mrs. Shortley like something you would name a bug, or vice versa, as if you named a boy Bollweevil”¹⁴⁴

Tim and Lauren- priest: “he was a long-legged black-suited old man with a white hat on and a collar that he wore backwards”¹⁴⁵

Natalie and Diana- Mr. Guizac: “He was short and a little sway-backed and wore gold-rimmed spectacles... Suddenly, as Mrs. McIntyre put out her hand to him, he bobbed down from the waist and kissed it.”¹⁴⁶

Aneyn and Julianna- Mrs. McIntyre: “Mrs. McIntyre was a small woman of sixty with a round and wrinkled face and red bangs that came almost down to two high orange-colored penciled eyebrows. She had a little doll’s mouth and eyes that were a soft blue when she opened them wide but more like steel or granite when she narrowed them to inspect a milk can”¹⁴⁷

Hannah and Jake- Mrs. Shortley: “she stood on two tremendous legs, with the grand self-confidence of a mountain, and rose, up narrowing bulges of granite, to two icy blue points of light that pierced forward, surveying everything”¹⁴⁸

We combined the phrases that the dancers created in random duets, and found groups of two and three that had moments of interesting juxtaposition or connection.

Large Group Sections:

Another integral component to the development of PI was the inclusion of collective, pedestrian sections, such as the opening placement of wood, the circle that tightens in, out and up

¹⁴⁴“The Displaced Person” p. 196

¹⁴⁵“The Displaced Person” p. 195

¹⁴⁶“The Displaced Person” p. 195

¹⁴⁷“The Displaced Person” p. 197

¹⁴⁸“The Displaced Person” p. 194

during Tim and Hannah's duet, and the circle that expands in and out before a solo from Diana. I established these structures because I thought it important to highlight a group mentality of interdependence so that solo or duet work could be layered with a context of chosen independence, exile, or abandonment. I selected the pedestrian movements to emphasize the individuality and human-ness of all these characters. In particular at the beginning I gave the dancers a choice between walking as a human, a peacock, or a dog (as Natalie introduced in her duet with Loris). The inclusion of these animal pantomimes both suggested uninterrupted daily life on a farm, but the constant switching between "species" set a tone of slight insanity, and represented a question posed by the story for me about what the difference between human and animal behavior really is, especially in a setting where they interact so closely.

Motifs:

The Terrible Thing: One day while improvising I created a gesture that I described as "The Terrible Thing" and the name stuck. This posture appears at the end of Julianna's solo in which she somersaults forwards, and stands up in a crouch balanced on one foot, which rests on top of her own hands. This image represented a sort of masochism and adherence to systems of violence, both supporting and inflicting pain on oneself in relation to the ground one stands on.

Limpness: Losing control of one's body weight, or being supported entirely by another dancer appeared several times: when Diana holds a plank balanced on Tim's back, as Lauren drags a dangling Natalie or Shauna fireman-style back and forth across the stage, as Julianna balances on Natalie's lunged leg and Shauna and Loris sit on top of a pile of bodies at the end of the piece. Balancing or being supported only by other bodies came to represent the dependence

of living in an isolated community and the struggle of requiring help from people one does not necessarily trust with one's vulnerability.

Pile of bodies: This was a literal interpretation of the passage in which Mrs. Shortley imagines: "a small room piled high with bodies of dead naked people all in a heap, their arms and legs tangled together, a head thrust in here, a head there, a foot, a knee, a part that should have been covered up sticking out, a hand raised clutching nothing."¹⁴⁹ This realization of physical displacement was too visceral to not be addressed literally, such as in the clump that tackles Jake or that piles on top of Julianna after the trio between Aneyn, Lauren, and Hannah. I imagined a more minute version of this bodily dismemberment in the body part replacement section that appears in that trio, in which one dancer stands while the other two replace her nose with a hand, or foot with a head, etc. (this motif reappeared at the end of PIII to form the gesture line).

Disability: The instances of bodily and translation failure in "The Displaced Person" including the "accident" which kills Mr. Guizac lead me to include several instances of accident: both Diana and Hannah trip over someone's limb to wipe out on the floor and Aneyn has a loud cough which sometimes seems like a mistake. After her fall Hannah is pinned down on the floor by the other dancers as she attempts to move, and I instructed Lauren to whisper "terrible things" to her as she is forced to listen. This scene especially reflects Mrs. McIntyre's mental displacement and paralysis at the end of the story, in which she can only listen while the Priest "explain[s] the doctrines of the Church" at her bedside.¹⁵⁰ I feel that physical struggle is just as interesting as emotional struggle onstage, so I told the dancers not to try to make all their movements look easy or polished if they didn't actually feel that way.

¹⁴⁹"The Displaced Person" p. 196

¹⁵⁰"The Displaced Person." p. 235

Feedback:

We displayed the piece to Anna Leo, Rosemary Magee, and the dance department at the end of the semester class showing, and I met with Rosemary to hear feedback after we returned in January. Her comments revolved mostly around the poetic nature of the piece; she felt “ a sense of things coming apart and reforming in a new way...with phrases that turn in upon themselves.” As someone who was already familiar with the story she noticed that she did not pay attention to the narrative but felt a more visual and poetic experience. She noticed the themes of the peacock, isolation, distortion, transcendence, and miscommunication. We discussed the arc of the piece, which I felt was very flat, and she agreed that the overall experience was episodic, with periods of tension and release, but commented that many of O’Connor’s physical landscapes are also flat, the only noticeable feature being trees.

Piece III (PIII): Creation

Before returning after winter break, I sent the text of the story to my cast and instructed them to read it before the first rehearsal. At that rehearsal, we discussed the story, and I told them which character I wanted them to portray in this new piece, which had greatly changed from the original cast list I wrote.

Aneyn: Mrs. McIntyre

Julianna: Mrs. Shortley

Loris: Mr. Shortley

Natalie: Priest

Diana: Mr. Guizac

Hannah: Mrs. Guizac

Lauren: Rudolph

Shauna: Sledgwig

Tim: Sulk

Jake: Astor

Many of them expressed both horror and delight in the short story, saying that it made certain images I had described in the first piece come to light, or put the snippets of dialogue in a new context. They were all especially struck by the chilling description of the pile of bodies image and the death of Mr. Guizac. The first major choreographic process departure that I made for the narrative piece was to segment the narrative into fourteen individual events that would be translated into movement, but remain in that particular order. I originally thought that we would complete one segment per rehearsal in order, but this became impractical, so separate events were often developed in the same rehearsal by different groups, or across several rehearsals. The movement sections were ALWAYS put back in the order of their corresponding event segment, however.

Event 1: The Guizacs Arrive at the Farm

1. Bounding Forward with a Stretch
2. Narrowing and Widening
3. Do something socially inappropriate
4. Scraping things together
5. Moving through a pile of bodies
6. A quake trembled in the heart of the mountain

7. The buzzard glides and drops in the air until it alights on a carcass
8. Abrupt spin around

Each dancer created a movement phrase based on these quotations from the text describing the arrival of the Displaced Family, and I instructed them to keep the phrases in the numerical order I gave them. Diana and Natalie in particular did not enjoy this restriction. These phrases provided the opening duet between Aneyn and Julianna, part of the group phrase lead by Natalie, and Diana's solo between Aneyn and Julianna. I created the "ducky" group phrase to represent the entrance of the family of newcomers to the farm, lead by Natalie as the priest.

Rehearsal Exercise- Moments of Conflict/ Contact Duets:

I instructed the dancers to bring short passages of the text in which they found a particularly interesting interaction between characters, and to highlight around five words that stuck out in particular. We found matches between people with similar phrases, and each couple created a duet with moments of contact centered on those specific words, which I will reference in order they eventually appeared in. Julianna and Loris- Mr. Shortley seducing Mrs. Shortley with a cigarette became the last part of Event 2, and was reconstructed as Event 7, Mrs. Shortley's death. Natalie and Diana- pile of bodies became the double duet between them and Aneyn and Hannah, which occurs while other dancers lie framing the space on the floor, which represented part of Event 5, Mrs. Shortley learns a secret. Hannah and Lauren- Mrs. Shortley's vision in the car became part of Event 6, the Shortley's Escape. Shauna and Aneyn- Priest and Peacock on the Porch, which was lost.

Event 2: Mrs. Shortley (Alone, Conversation with Astor and Sulk, Seduction by Mr. Shortley: I developed the material for Julianna's solo as Mrs. Shortley questioning the intrusion

of the Guizacs, and her duet with Jake and Tim as a conversation with Astor and Sulk, each believing in his or her own superiority and established place on the farm. Julianna and Loris's duet was constructed as one of the contact duets, based on the passage in which Mr. Shortley seduced Mrs. Shortley by chewing a cigarette.

Event 3: The Guizacs Settle In: Hannah and Diana as Mr. and Mrs. Guizac return in an expanded, airborne, full-bodied version of their original entrance, the "ducky" phase, to symbolize the Guizac's quick adjustment and high work ethic on the farm

Event 4: The "Negroes'" Status is Questioned: As questions about productivity and place on the farm arise, Jake and Tim wander aimlessly around stage, then attempt to join Hannah and Diana in a repetitive full body lunge and twist, which represents grueling farm work, but quickly fall behind in pace and drop to the floor, uninterested in continuing their work.

Event 5: Mrs. Shortley Learns a Secret: In this section Aneyn and Natalie as Mrs. McIntyre and the Priest enter together, separate from the other moving bodies on the floor, and have a friendly duet, which leads to a double duet with Hannah and Diana. Natalie and Diana developed this duet as a contact conversation in response to the phrase about a newsreel of bodies, and this section demonstrates Aneyn's growing comfort with the newcomers, familiarity with the priest, and the growing distance between she and Mrs. Shortley. In this section, Shauna rather than Julianna took the part of Mrs. Shortley, watching the duet between Mrs. McIntyre and priest with feigned disinterest and attempting to conceal her abandonment by crawling back and forth.

This section also contained the image of the body planks on the ground, referencing back to the wooden planks arranged in the same configuration in PI. I thought that this moment spoke to the sense of community and isolation that was established in PI and wanted to highlight the

growing relationship between Mrs. McIntyre and the Priest. The other bodies become the constructed setting of the farm, suggesting to me that the location is created by human interaction as much as physical material.

Event 6: Mrs. Shortley's Vision: This section ran somewhat parallel to Event 7, but consisted of the duet between Hannah and Lauren which was developed as part of a contact duet based on Mrs. Shortley's manic seizure in the car, and the "Jenga-teepee" of bodies balanced on top of Shauna. In entering that pile, I gave the dancers the direction to turn their focus completely inward, performing a personal gesture sequence but not recognizing the physical space or other bodies around them in reference to Mrs. Shortley's grotesque self-involvement.

Event 7: Mrs. Shortley's Death: This event was a reprise of Julianna and Loris's seduction duet from Event 2, in this case given a more aggressive, antagonistic intention lead to Loris leaving Julianna to join the Jenga pile. Julianna's headfirst exit, searching for someone through her skull, represented the moment of her death, and echoes of trust, betrayal, dependence and escape resonate through the Jenga pile as Tim dangerously pulls out bodies one by one. Shauna's decision to leave the pile before she is crushed foreshadows the ending of the story and represents the question of Mrs. Shortley's ultimate fate—was her moment of death transcendent or grotesque in the ugly sense of the word?

Event 8: Mrs. McIntyre and Astor Debate: Tim as Astor leads Aneyn into a duet about familiarity and gentle correction between two people familiar with one another's habits to suggest the conversation about Mrs. McIntyre's husband the Judge.

Event 9: The Marriage Plot: Jake as Sulk and Diana as Mr. Guizac recreate the duet from Event 8 as Mrs. McIntyre watches distrustfully. Their clumsier version of the interaction references Mr. Guizac's desperate attempt to convince Sulk to marry his cousin and save her,

both characters unaware of the social inappropriateness of this plan. Aneyn as Mrs. McIntyre crawls to Jake to remind him that he does not belong in this duet, and Diana as Mr. Guizac is left behind.

Event 10: Priest on the Porch: Natalie as the Priest re-enters her duet with Aneyn, but this time intentions are circular and aggressive, as the discomfort from Event 9 leads Mrs. McIntyre to distrust both Priest and the Displaced Family, and the miscommunication between the two about the symbol of the peacock highlights their emotional distance.

Event 11: The Shortleys Return: A large group enters from downstage in a more fighting effort variation on the ducky theme. This group now consists of more characters than those who were previously The Shortleys to emphasize the rising tensions and emotional resistance to the foreigners.

Event 12: Mrs. McIntyre's Struggle: As the images of displaced body parts fitting together and people left out of these human puzzles build in a musical chairs style accumulation, Aneyn as Mrs. McIntyre is last to join the line gesturing at the front, symbolizing her decision to fire Mr. Guizac.

Event 13: The Accident: The cast slowly covers each other's eyes, blinding one another to the horror of their abandonment of Diana as they walk away. Natalie as the Priest who bears the responsibility of introducing these different cultures is the last to attach on to the train of bodies, which for me symbolized the tractor that crushes Mr. Guizac, emphasizing the agency of all parties involved watching the accident.

Event 14: Purgatory: While in the story the aftermath of the accident concerns Mrs. McIntyre displaced in her own body, being whispered to by the priest, I felt that this moment pointed to the ambiguity of blame and guilt—who is at fault for Mr. Guizac's death, and how

does guilt impose a feeling of physical isolation? I translated this question onto Diana as Mr. Guizac, who covers her eyes as the lights fade, while the rest of the cast has removed their blinders from one another in order to stare at her. This dichotomy in vision referenced the isolation imposed by staring that we explored in PI, and the status of victimization itself. Is Mr. Guizac a perfectly innocent sacrifice, or do his actions have a role in his death? As he covers his eyes, I imagined that he—as a human being who stumbles like all others—shirks to face how he fits into larger systems of oppression. Human nature ensures that prejudice and unkindness are not one-way streets; a victim of injustice must still examine her own role as perpetrator of injustice towards others.

Sign Language Interpretation:

The dancers each translated the long solo phrases they had already created based on the list of eight quotations from Event 1 into a pattern of arm gestures. I instructed them to keep the gestures centered around their face and shoulders to mimic the style of American Sign Language. Throughout the piece there was always one dancer standing in place very far downstage right performing his or her pattern of gestures. I instructed the dancers to approach the gestures as if they were translating the Events that were taking place on stage as a sign language translator for the deaf would do at a large-scale opera or play. I was interested in the presence of this translator as both an intermediary and a part of the performance, and this role symbolized for me the intersection of text and movement.

Sign Language is a method of transcribing words into gesture that is easily recognized because of the specificity of signifier and signified and so classified and accepted as language rather than a performance. However, the physical tendencies and creative energies of the

translator would make their way into the translation as she uses her own body to communicate and must decide how to synthesize and divide the spoken text into translatable symbols of Sign Language. While the interpreter is often physically differentiated from the rest of the performance, she aids in the communication of art to an audience, and so I saw her role as performative and chose to incorporate many dancers into the role instead of singling out one.

Elements of Design

Set: I began imagining a set halfway through the creation of PI as I watched the dancers move around the abnormal farm landscape in my mind. In a meeting with Anna Leo, I conceived of a design of rough pieces of wood which change position throughout the concert as we considered how to transition between the three sections of the concert. I wanted one set that could be manipulated to reflect the images and themes of each piece, both a container for and reflection of the movement. I first imagined 10 raw, unfinished wooden planks to represent the body of each dancer that could frame the space and be piled together to represent the image of dismembered bodies. I imagined the space delineated by the planks growing smaller for my solo to indicate the physical confinement that O'Connor experienced after her diagnosis and move to Andalusia. I chose to have the dancers move these planks around me as I stood reciting my text as a representation of O'Connor's lack of control of her physical environment, but at the end of the solo, to move them myself into the jumbled pile in acknowledgment of the powers of creativity to affect the way we sense location. Theatre Emory generously offered to provide the wooden planks, and in their set construction shop I discovered the strips of door molding that I decided to use. The suggestion of building materials, an unfinished home, appealed to my image

of location as a space of mental, as much as physical construction, and the lack of ornamentation matched my research into O'Connor's aesthetic sensibilities.

Costumes: Characterization is central to my understanding of narrative—when I sense character differentiation I begin to develop my own story, as if I have been given permission. I felt that PIII as the narrative should therefore be costumed as blankly and identically as possible, or the sense of narrative in that piece would be almost overwhelming. I did not want to communicate a gender, time period, or individuality, so Cyndi Church and I found identical black tank jumpsuits. These costumes were as neutral as I could imagine clothing being, the main connotations of the black being bleakness and death and the uniformity suggesting a mass collective—both vague concepts that I was comfortable putting next to the narrative work. I did, however, imagine the dancers in period costumes with some differentiation for PI to emphasize the different relationships the dancers had created within abstraction. We selected gender-specific, 40s and 50s era conservative dresses in a muted color palette of blacks, browns, blues and tans, in a reference to O'Connor's aesthetic sensibilities.

I knew what the costume for the solo would be from my research and my time in Andalusia developing it. O'Connor said that children would “chorus as the peacock swings around, ‘oh, look at his underwear!’ This underwear is a stiff gray tail, raised to support the larger one, and beneath it a puff of black feathers that would be suitable for some really regal woman, a Cleopatra or a Clytemnestra, to use to powder her nose.”¹⁵¹ Being in O'Connor's private space felt like an invasion to some extent, that I was transgressing into a personal realm in which information was both more tender and more vibrant. I selected period underwear to communicate that the solo was a woman in a private moment, but tried to steer away from any connotations of

¹⁵¹*Mystery and Manners* p. 9

sexuality and glamour by choosing unflattering lines and a loose fit. The costume was relatively not that revealing, but something about the removal of clothing produced an immediate and crippling sense of vulnerability in me that affected my performance. The white color also had a sterile-ness that suggested a hospital or mental institution—both locations of confinement, restriction, and hyperawareness of bodily and social isolation, and both locations pertinent to O'Connor and Milledgeville, where there is a famous asylum.

Program: Since handwritten communication was such an integral part of my research in the MARBL archives, I wanted the program (the only textual object that the audience would receive) to reflect the value of personal communication. The programs were folded into letter-sized envelopes of different colors with string and button closures so that upon receiving it, the audience would have to move, to physically engage with the text of the program. The program itself was designed with two handwriting style fonts, MAWNS Handwriting for the headings and Iowan old style (a coincidental reference to O'Connor's alma mater) and doodles reminiscent of O'Connor's book covers for *The Habit of Being*, *Mystery and Manners*, and *The Complete Stories*.

Lighting: Lighting cues were designed by Gregory Catellier. I imagined PI to start off in a natural daytime setting, moving eventually into a more mental, imagined, fantastical and less grounded space. PIII had a more isolated and untethered feeling, and Greg suggested a more sinister orange color, which faded into a blank and somber black. In PIII the Sign Language interpreter was always spotlighted by a special in teal or yellow, and at the end as the line abandoned Diana, the two complementary colors were combined together to produce a brighter white light.

Music: The pedestrian choreography of PI made me imagine an older, nostalgic sound, so I began researching composers of the World War II era. I found that under the Nazi occupation of Germany, jazz music was considered “fremdländisch” or alien and became a symbol of resistance in the camps themselves.¹⁵² One of the most popular jazz musicians of the era was Jingo Reinhardt, a Belgian born French composer of Romani ethnicity.¹⁵³ His compositions “Honeysuckle Rose” and “Swing ’39” became the score for the first half of PI. I learned also that many Jewish European composers were displaced from their homes during World War II as well, such as Arnold Schoenberg, who immigrated to America in 1933.¹⁵⁴ A version of his “String Quartet No. 3, Op 30: II. Adagio: Thema- Variation” in which a German voice intersperses plaintive bursts of strings became the second half of the PI score. Aneyn, who speaks German, offered to translate the voice for me, and I considered it, but I felt more and more that the sound of the voice, rather than the meaning of the words being spoken, was what influenced the dynamics of the piece, so it was never translated. The constant stopping and starting of music and text contributed to the feeling of a climax-lessness, buildup and uncomfortable redirection.

For PIII I worked with Kendall Simpson more collaboratively to find a more dramatic and cathartic soundscape. I originally wanted more modern composers to create distance from PI, but when I told him that I had chosen Schoenberg and Reinhardt, he introduced me to Gorecki, whose “Symphony of Sorrowful Songs” is inspired by prisoners in the camps. The slow buildup and soaring climax of “Symphony No.3, Op.36: Symphony of Sorrowful Songs: I. Lento”

¹⁵² “Jazz Under the Nazis.” *Music and the Holocaust*. ORT. Web. 2 Feb 2015.

<<http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/politics-and-propaganda/third-reich/jazz-under-the-nazis/>>.

¹⁵³ Gopnik, Adam. “Gypsy: The Life of Django Reinhardt.” *The New Yorker*. 6 Dec 2004. Web. 3 Feb 2015. <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/12/06/gypsy>>.

¹⁵⁴ “Arnold Schoenberg.” *Music and the Holocaust*. ORT. Web. 2 Feb 2015.

<<http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/politics-and-propaganda/third-reich/schoenberg-arnold/>>.

provided an appropriately somber accumulation. After the modern and crackly “Carry Cot” by Colleen during Aneyn and Julianna’s duet signifying original life on Mrs. McIntyre’s farm, we added Michael Gordon’s “Weather Three” which included an alarming siren sound to signify the entrance of the Guizac family. “Weather Three” faded into the Gorecki until the ending train of blindness moves away from Diana, when the sirens returned, signifying her second displacement.

I chose the sound for my solo for personal reasons. My father listens almost exclusively to NPR and opera, so my conception of home always includes a classical soundtrack. I knew that I wanted a voiced element to the score of the solo, and that unlike PI (the only piece that existed at the time I made the solo) it should include a female voice. O’Connor struggled in her conceptions of herself as a Christian and writer, choosing to read as many great writers as possible “Faulkner, Kafka, Joyce...I read everything at once so much so that I didn’t have time to be influenced by any one writer.”¹⁵⁵ I likened this struggle to find one’s own voice while learning from others with the overwhelming technical prowess and sense of cultural awe that accompanies the female aria. I sang the Queen of the Night “Der Holle Rache Kocht in meinem Herzen” aria myself as a child, to impress my father and grandma, and the distinctive rhythm has remained in my body. I found “Norma: Casta diva” simply by researching the most famous arias by Maria Callas, whose voice in “Ave Maria” I had connected to as the score for Monica Bill Barnes *Small Finale*, a piece in which I was cast during my sophomore year. I often listen to opera as I study, because the sound of the human voice comforts me, while the untranslatability

¹⁵⁵Elie, Paul. “Pious Anxiety: Flannery O’Connor’s Prayer Journal.” *Work in Progress*. Web. 30 January 2015. <<http://www.fsgworkinprogress.com/2014/12/pious-anxiety-flannery-oconnors-prayer-journal/>>.

of lyrics allows me to focus on my own writing, not distracting me while I create my own narrative.

Cast Narratives

I know that the dancers' individual experiences and personal values influenced the creation and development of the work as much as it did the performance, and I was lucky enough to receive feedback from several of them as an assignment for Modern IV. As a newcomer, Diana was struck by the process of creating without a narrative "I felt like I was focused more on telling your narrative through finding my own, personal narrative, since we all had very little idea of the plot and of the direction and intention at that point. In this way, we all attached to the movement in different, unique ways and could, in the end, tell Flannery's one story with the voices we found at the beginning of the process through your movement." It was very gratifying for me to hear how the decision to not tell the dancers the story aided in the personalization of narrative for PI.

As a dancer whom I have worked with before in many contexts, Natalie surprised me with the specificity of the inner narrative she created for PI. "I start off as Flannery, a young Flannery. Still in college, pre lupus, discovering her sharp wit. Some friends, Loris or Tim, invite me to this party thing and since I'm young and open to new experiences, I say sure. It turns out they're members of a cult and we go to their ritual get together. I'm a little scared mostly of them finding out that their practices scare me. I don't want to be identified as an outsider, so I do my best to blend. Somewhere along the line, I can't tell if I'm still pretending to be a part of their community or if I am actually a part of their community. I find my way back to "reality" and my Flan identity when we all sit on Hannah. After that, I'm going about my usual life. I am living in

the “real” world but I now come to see my life through a new lens. The weirdo’s world and my own world suddenly don’t seem that different.” Stories like this one prove how one mind could never imagine all the connections that another will form—cults had never entered my vocabulary around the piece, but here they were in Natalie’s performance.

Julianna, on the other hand, struggled with the characterization I asked her to do in PIII. “Mrs. Shortley is racist, xenophobic, paranoid, and generally awful at times, but she is still strong, smart, resourceful, and at the end of day, she has a certain dark tenderness about her...How could I possibly be this character? However, before the first performance, what you told me provided me with great clarity. You told me, “Imagine that you are a woman who is completely alone, whose life just ended as you knew it, and you know what you have to do to get what you want, but people will suffer and you are dealing with this choice.” With this statement, you managed to hone the essence of what Mrs. Shortley was grappling with and I was able to latch onto that. *Rather than becoming another person, I related this to my own life.*”

Without ever discussing it with me, Julianna described the same technique that I had been discovering throughout the process. She said, “as artists we are forced to put ourselves into the work. We all have had moments where we felt alone, where our lives seemed to turn upside down, where we are entangled with difficult decisions. After you told me this, every intention behind every movement became so clear and real. By the time when I die in the piece, the emotions that I felt being entrapped in this struggle felt completely authentic and I truly felt I had entered a different reality.” The reality that we created together was as different from the world of the story that inspired it as it was dependent on the personal lives and stories of the dancers who populated it.

Entering Performance

In the second to last rehearsal before Tech Week, the dancers requested that we walk through the linear narrative of the story on top of PIII, since as we had reassembled sections in order they had lost some sense of time, and cause and effect. We marked through the piece slowly as I summarized Events 1-14. In some Events, the dancers were not aware of how the choreography that I had created referred back to the story, so they expressed excitement and engagement at being told what certain sections “meant” to me.

I also received feedback from Emily Hammond on PIII. Her main observations were that vision and the focus of eyes were central to the piece, so the dancers needed to consciously see one another and form relationships rather than moving through the choreography, and that the spatial intention of the person in the sign language translation role was sometimes unclear at moments when attention was naturally drawn to that role. These clarifications of reality were echoed in feedback from Anna after a full run-through. The piece needed a refreshment of genuine action rather than performativity. While the talk-through of narrative onto movement had assisted the dancers’ development of character and sense of flow, it had also divorced them from the physicality of the movement they were creating in the moment with their bodies. At the tech rehearsal we felt that the energy of both pieces, but PIII in particular had begun to drag painfully, so we asked the dancers to speed up dynamics and transitions by a significant amount. This greatly improved the overall dynamic experience of the piece but Aneyn expressed later that she had begun to find a rhythm and a personal connection to the story as it was being created, and physically changing her routines took her out of that story. She felt that this was neither positive nor negative, just necessitated a more focused re-engagement with her mental narrative.

As we entered performance I focused on the creation of a community, centering the dancers to the text and to each other. At dress rehearsal warm-up I asked them to reengage with a sense of narrative in PI, to think back and imagine a story for themselves, for a character that they had created. They translated this story into physical contact with another body, warming up the other dancer with squeezing, massaging, or brushing that represented their story. the idea of microcosm to the dancers. At dress rehearsal 2, I read the dancers the following passages from *The Habit of Being*.

1. “I am interested in making up a good case for distortion, as I am coming to believe it is the only way to amok people see.”¹⁵⁶
2. “I think what the colored man says in your story is very good. But you don’t have to say the colored man is about 45—instead paint him as a fat middle-aged insolent Negro and as hurt by the old man as the old man will shortly be by him. The deaf and dumb child should be seen better—it does no good just to tell us she is seraphically beautiful. She has to move around and make some kind of show of herself so we know she’s there al the time.”¹⁵⁷
3. “The pride in the tin leg comes from an old scar. I was, in my early days, forced to take dancing to throw me into the company of other children and to make me graceful. Nothing I hated worse than the company of other children and I vowed I’d see them all in hell before I would make the first graceful move. The lessons went on for a number of years but I won. In a certain sense.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶*The Habit of Being* p. 79

¹⁵⁷*The Habit of Being* p. 84

¹⁵⁸*The Habit of Being* p. 146

For the opening night warm-up Tim and Jake led some theater improv practices. One series emphasized visual connection by forcing the dancers to clap at the same time, communicating only through visual intent. Another series encouraged mental and facial awareness by translating entire movement sections into facial expressions. Before performing, I told them that how they see creates where they are; while the physical setting was in the Schwartz Dance Studio and the imagined setting was the rural farm, the distance between those images contained an entire world. All the problems and relationships and interactions of the world were represented in those ten bodies, so the movement reflected both a sense of epic scale and particularity of individuals. I expressed how lucky we all were to be physically able to express ourselves in a manner of our choosing, that the ability to get up and leave the pile of bodies was both a mystery and a blessing.

On closing night, we stretched and breathed together in a circle while listening to a recording of O'Connor reading "A Good Man is Hard to Find" out loud, and we allowed her words to influence a personal improv warm-up. The dancers communicated to me that the opening night performance was extremely intense and dynamic, but the closing night performance felt calmer and rich with individual intention.

After entering performance mode I realized that much of the difference between the two pieces for me centered on the dynamic arc of the works. I felt that the creation of P1 had been a flowing, continuous process of arranging and rearranging, overlapping material, and the resulting piece had a kind of landscape-like flatness, where characters *could* do certain things, but we did not feel we were seeing what they would do in a specific situation. I sensed an arbitrariness, an openness of possibility, in which a tension was constantly built and dissipated, never allowing the viewer to pin down or experience a final, climactic "release." I feel that this horizontal,

evenly seismographic arc characterizes much of my prior work as well, so I wanted to challenge myself in the second piece to develop a pronounced climax.

Aristotle espoused a tight climatic plot structure “similar to the tying or untying of a knot.”¹⁵⁹ Murphy argues that violent climax, “is what many Americans have been trained to watch for ... what we’ve been told over and over again makes a story a story” and that as a result choreographers do feel that this kind of climax is necessary to being heard and making an impact.¹⁶⁰ She uses *Last Supper at Uncle Tom’s Cabin/The Promised Land* to demonstrate how by getting the entire plot out of the way in the first act, immediately tying and untying the knot, audiences are freed up to read a comment on violence in the depictions through rap and other references later in the piece rather than accepting a portrayal as “necessary parts in an escalating chain.”¹⁶¹ I think, however, that plot and violence need not necessarily be separated in order to voice a state of dependence or avocation.

O’Connor felt that the Christian writer “may well be forced to take ever more violent means to get his vision across to a hostile audience,” but violent means and violent acts are not synonymous.¹⁶² With all her depictions of literal violence, O’Connor’s narratives could still appear land-scape like in their flatness. She struggled with this at least occasionally, as she wrote in 1955, “I frequently send my stories to Mrs. Tate and she is always telling me that the endings are too flat and that at the end I must gain some altitude and get a larger view.”¹⁶³ Yet this larger view did not mean increasing the gore—She was speaking in regards to her story “The Artificial Nigger” in which a boy and his grandfather visit the city, and in a moment of need, the

¹⁵⁹ Steinman p. 127

¹⁶⁰ Murphy p. 82

¹⁶¹ Murphy p. 100

¹⁶² *The Habit of Being* p. 33-34

¹⁶³ *The Habit of Being* p. 78

grandfather pretends not to know his grandson. In these seemingly action-less moments of emotionless violence, O'Connor hits a climax higher than the literal descriptions of bodily pain. Mrs. McIntyre's mental displacement at the end of "The Displaced Person" follows the climax of Mr. Guizac's death, but communicates a message of betrayal and insufficiency far more violently.

I found that emphasizing the climax in PIII did not center around the symbol of the train leaving Diana, her violent death, but in the combination of parts leading up to and following that moment: the omnipresence of the sign language narrator who eventually started the train, the increasingly caustic relationship between Aneyn and Natalie, the music, and the mental distances between collective groups, duets, and individuals. Structuring events in order helped me achieve that logic and specificity, that these characters would do this in this situation. Working linearly distorted my flatness, but the creation of climax was achieved through the violent means, not the violent source.

Feedback

I asked the audience members to fill out a survey of three simple questions.

1. Do you see a narrative in each piece?
2. If so, do you see a different narrative in each piece?
3. Briefly describe the narrative of each, or if you did not see one, any feelings or themes it communicated to you.

Out of 138 total surveys completed between the two performances, 101 responded yes, that they saw a narrative in both pieces. Out of those 101, 92 said that they saw a different narrative in each.

Some of those who saw the same narrative in both pieces, the Yes/No group (nine surveys), referenced a similarity of motif in each piece (Thursday 49), themes of *family* and *community* building each other up and tearing back down (T52, T49, T50, Friday 46, F47), striving and longing between *group* and *individual* (T51) struggle and turbulence (T53, F46). Several referenced the imagery of chickens and farm life (F47, T52, T48). This group was the smallest but also gave the least descriptive answers.

Of the group that responded No/No, three surveys (T70, T68, T69) were left blank, or had a message such as “I was very confused but it was good” (T69). Fifteen surveys did not see a narrative in either of the two pieces. Recurring themes were that PIII felt *emotional* or *sad* than the first (F64, F56, F54, F53), that the first was about “individual and community” while the second was about “imitation” (F67) or a “breaking of dependence (F61). One, who said that he or she was new to dance, noticed, “I kept getting struck with the theme of desperation. I noticed my heart racing and blood pumping.” (T66) I found out later that the comment, “What does it mean if I head butt someone?” (F57) came from one of my friends who was fascinated by the top of skull into belly head butt that Julianna uses to push Loris. He said that to him this image looked like one person trying to impregnate another with their brain. For me, this image always suggested the need for physical contact coupled with desire for self-protection and aggression, putting the hardest part of one’s own body into the most vulnerable place on someone else.

In the No/No group, four surveys decided that Piece I depicted a narrative while PIII did not. One accused me of “trying to trick us into believing that the 2nd had the linear narrative with the dramatic movie soundtrack music and introducing the idea of narrative midway” (F59), while others saw scenes from farm life in PI and a series of choreographic devices in PIII (T55, T58, T54).

Finally, in the No/No group, fifteen surveys believed that PIII was narrative while PI was not. Some surveys left it there (T67, T57, T56). Many surveys commented on the choice of music in PIII (F51, F60, T62). One picked up on a “group suffering from a metaphorical blindness to see what they were doing to ‘the other’” (F51) and several and referenced the conflict between collective and individual as the reason for seeing narrative (F51, F50, F62, T65, T59). One survey saw a specific narrative of a family trying to join a community, and 6 out of 7 family members being successful in their adaptation while one was displaced at the end (T65). Several surveys (F52, F65, F66, F49) still commented on the heightened emotion in PIII in comparison to the more “light-hearted PI” (F49): my favorite description was “gut-wringing, a step more intimate than gut-wrenching” (F52). One of the most interesting interpretations of PIII was “it was talking about narratives, and how each person had a different interpretation of what the dancers were doing and the person at the end was affecting their interpretation by meddling with them” (T64)—where most people assumed Diana was rejected by the line of gesturers, this person saw her as having agency.

Responses from the Yes/Yes surveys were more complicated. Some surveys did not give any differentiation between the two pieces, though they had checked the yes box for two different narratives. Recurring themes in these surveys were *oppression* (F24, F43) *group* (F2), *vision* (T45), *pain* (T44, F44) *loss* (T43, T42), *humor* (T42), *anxiety* (T41), and *isolation* (T33, TT47). Surprisingly, nine surveys felt that PI was my narrative, and nine surveys felt that it was PIII. Those who chose PI explained that the first piece’s farm setting, (“a time and place in history” (T25)) and layers of comedy felt more “story-like,” while the darkness of the second piece seemed more abstract and thematic (F30, T22, F6, T8). One of the most articulate of these surveys described PI as “more specific, a Place as opposed to a Space” as in PIII, and but that

both “felt like clay spun by the same artist” (T6). The surveys choosing PIII, on the other hand, listed its heightened emotionality and group dynamic as the reason for finding narrative (F31, F13, F10, F34, F33) and found more linearity in its uniformity (F10, F22, F33) in comparison to the “chaos of PI (F8).

The majority of the Yes/Yes surveys, however, did not attempt to decide which Piece was my plot at all and simply described the two different narratives they saw. Two dichotomies were commonly drawn:

1. PI was set in the country (F29, F17, F19, F20, F14, F11, F7, T9, T16, T17, T26, T15, T39, F39, F37) and lighthearted (F26, F25, F19, T20, T21, T17, T29, T28, T1, T30, F35) while PIII was tense and sad (F29, F28, F26, F25, F17, F19, F20, F11, F7, F3, T23, T31, T20, T21, T29, T28, T26, T1, T4, T39, F40, F35)
2. Interactions of individual versus group, PI had a feeling of community (F27, F19, F16, F12, T23, T31, T11, T20) while PIII was about inclusion and exclusion (F27, F19 and struggling to find one’s place (F18, F16, T11, T20). However, some felt the opposite, that PI was more individualistic and PIII presented a team dynamic (F32, T27, T24)

Several other surveys referenced the “animalism” (T16, T1, T14) or “naturalness” (F4) of PI in comparison to a more “human focus” (T14) in PIII. One description was of PI as less linear but more cerebral, while PIII depicted tragedy (F15), and some referred to the dancers clarity of intention in PIII (F9, T18, T10, F35). Some surveys mentioned that music and lighting were integral to their experience viewing (F15, T3, F11, T19, T29, T10, T30), one person even saying that “I felt as though the music (in PIII) was driving the dancers to build up to a climax or turning point of some sort” (T30). Others referenced the costumes in PI as more elaborate (F9),

while those of PIII were more uniform. Several people revealed that they were familiar with the story and so spent the entirety of the second piece trying to decide if it was narrative or not (F23), or that my comments in the solo played into their understanding (F5). There were certainly more mentions of war and the Holocaust (T9, T16 T17, T26) or ability and disability (F4) in relation to PIII.

However, there were some survey narratives that were completely singular in their construction. Of PI: “it came out of a memory, a childlike dream (T18) / “people doing farmwork but experiencing famine” (F36). Of PIII: “life is not easy and goes on too long, and we end up alone” (F14) / “an overwhelming and shared but not acknowledged sense of shame” (F12) / “more minimalist and structured, almost communist in relation to the first” (F39) / “the process of a large scale eugenics movement” (F36). A few admitted that they had no idea what was happening: “I can tell there is something important and I can get the taste of it, but I can’t fully understand it- and I like that” (T31) “I felt something and I just cant explain it right now” (T38).

Written feedback from my Modern IV classmates illuminated more of their personal interpretations. Diana’s attempts to break into the line at the end spoke to one on a personal level: “For me it seemed like a lot of what we go through as young adults in a large city in an even larger world. It seems like everyone around us is stuck in a routine and often we fall into routines as well but there’s a small voice inside of all of us that wants us to return to who and what we are.” Another connected most powerfully with the sign language translator, so interpreted the piece as about senses and the translation of senses... “The sign language is also intriguing because those are not real sign language but an outward spilling of inward feelings that are important, yet aren't interpretable and understandable. In a way, the sign language is supposed to translate what the dancers are trying to say to the audience, however, since the sign

language is made up and a few audience [members might] know real [American] sign language, interpreting the movements becomes a work done by the audience.”

Conclusion:

Though all this feedback is almost overwhelming in variety, I found that it ultimately justified my idea that personal experience determines what will be read as narrative far more than any choreographic structures, and that a personal analysis on the part of the choreographer ensures that themes come through independent of how narrative is read. No matter what they “checked” off in a box, the audiences overwhelmingly sensed the landscape and sense of community that we focused on in PI, and read the tragedy in PIII. Which piece they read as a narrative depended on whether they associate plot more with a sense of setting and character or emotional drama. I do believe that the costumes played a large role in how the audience mostly interpreted individuality and family dynamics in the first piece, and uniformity or more abstract social relations in the second. Another factor to consider is that many surveys that were stacked on top of one another shared similar kinds of spacing or wording on the page, leading me to assume that they were filled out and turned in by friends sitting together. It would be natural to talk to other audience members about the performance as you filled out the survey, and I do not think this dilutes the results of the surveys at all. Even writing down one’s opinions is still part of constructing the narrative of the piece, so the experience of sharing with friends is a valid influence on how you see narrative yourself.

Similarly, another viewer commented that she started to feel that the second piece was the narrative, but then began wondering if she was only being influenced by the questions I posed after my solo. The answer, of course, is yes. One cannot isolate certain parts of attending a

performance as the “audience experience.” There is no beginning to your analysis of a work, it is simply swallowed by and goes on to inform everything else that is going on in your head, and the more awareness of how personal life affects the creation and viewing of a piece, the more clearly communication can be sent and received. “To tell a story and receive a story, you have to be inside the story, to find your place in it.”¹⁶⁴ Beginning this project, my hypothesis was that audiences, especially those unfamiliar to dance, enter a performance seeking a narrative meaning for the movement they see, but because of this process, I agree with Murphy. Audiences don’t go into a performance “expecting well-developed plots complete with climax and resolution...but rather for the overall sense the piece is communicating, for the emotional and kinesthetic connection they find in it.”¹⁶⁵ Audiences seek communication that they connect with on a personal level, which will be structured as whatever narrative they can imagine. While of course, one work will not speak clearly to every viewer, a clarity, investment, and involvement of process ensure that the message will be waiting as loudly and clearly as possible to be picked up and translated.

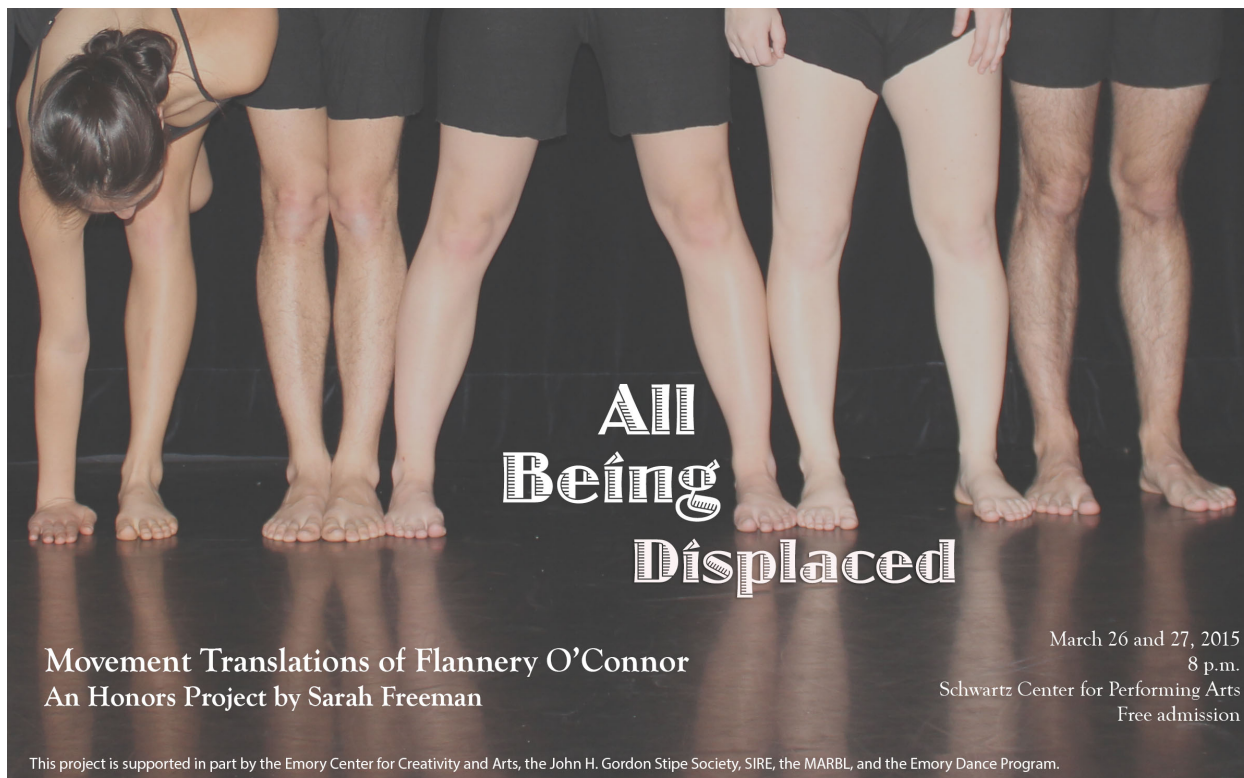
The second part of my hypothesis was that choreographers prefer to work in abstraction to communicate themes. I feel that this is true because in the struggle to articulate one’s personal voice in the face of so many choices of images prompts a search for structure such as aesthetics, or chance, or functionality rather than linear logic to construct meaning. I believe in the value of all of these techniques, and in the process employed all of them to what I believe was great effect. However, my own narrative at this time is a student of English as well as a student of Dance, so my literary analysis skills are working alongside my use of choreographic devices. This project allowed me to explore the interactions that subconsciously occur between my two

¹⁶⁴ Steinman p. 121-122

¹⁶⁵ Murphy p. 99

disciplines. The greatest difference between the two methods of translation for me was the decision to create my own sense of linear time versus following someone else's. The richer the source material, the more interesting interactions I can have with it, and choosing to work with O'Connor's linear structure helped me challenge my own habits and push myself to structure images in a different way. The data I collected in the surveys after the performances shows that if my awareness of the two distant points contained in one grotesque image is clear, if I am engaging with the mystery and the Untranslatable in words and movement, themes of the text will be communicated no matter which structure I use. Through my research I have seen how character studies, postmodern presentations, social commentary, and critique serve as possible ways to engage with text, but my project was at heart a personal exploration, a discovery of process, and an embodiment of narrative.

Appendix A: Promotional Flyer



**All
Being
Displaced**

Movement Translations of Flannery O'Connor
An Honors Project by Sarah Freeman

March 26 and 27, 2015
8 p.m.
Schwartz Center for Performing Arts
Free admission

This project is supported in part by the Emory Center for Creativity and Arts, the John H. Gordon Stipe Society, SIRE, the MARBL, and the Emory Dance Program.

Appendix B: Concert Program

Mary Flannery O'Connor was born in Savannah, Georgia in 1925, and moved to Milledgeville when she was twelve years old. After earning an undergraduate degree in Social Sciences from Georgia State College for Women and a graduate degree from the School for Writers at the University of Iowa, she stayed for time at the Yaddo artist colony in New York, and at the home of Sally and Robert Fitzgerald in Connecticut. In 1951, at the age of 25, O'Connor was forced to return home to the family farm Andalusia due to health complications that were later diagnosed as lupus. Until her death in 1964, she lived with her mother Regina at Andalusia, where she wrote her second novel, two collections of short stories, and daily letters to friends, colleagues, and admirers of her work.



Thank you

To Anna Leo, for being as endlessly excited by words, and dance, and words-and-dance-together as I am, for having fun with me, encouraging me, pointing me in the right directions, and always knowing when I needed a Kit-Kat. To Rosemary Magee for mentoring me through the research process and providing wisdom and opportunities that were invaluable to this project. To Jan Akers, Blake Beckham, Emily Hammond, Greg Catellier, Lori Teague, and George Staib for your generous feedback, coaching, and reassurance. To Anne Walker, Kendall Simpson, and Cyndi Church for saying yes to my ideas and making them a reality. Also to: Theater Emory, Julia Hudgins, the Emory Manuscript Archive and Rare Book Library, Sara Harsh, Andalusia Farm, Leslie Taylor, the Aquinas Center of Theology, the Bill and Carol Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry, and all my family and friends who have so graciously and constantly supported me in this process. Finally, to my incredible cast of ten movers, thinkers, and friends for leaping blindly into this bizarre world with me and never looking back.



ALL BEING DISPLACED

MOVEMENT TRANSLATIONS OF FLANNERY O'CONNOR

March 26 and 27, 2015
A SENIOR HONORS THESIS BY SARAH FREEMAN





I

Choreography: Sarah Freeman with dancers

Music: “Honeysuckle Rose” and “Swing ‘39” by Django Reinhardt, “String Quartet No. 3, Op. 30: II. Adagio” by Arnold Schoenberg

Performers: Diana Bender-Bier, Shauna Bowes, Natalie Eggert, Hannah Gold, Tim Harland, Julianna Joss, Jake Krakovsky, Lauren Lindeen, Aneyn O’Grady, Loris Takori

II

Choreography and Performance: Sarah Freeman

Music: “Die Zauberflote: Act II No. 14: Arie- Der Holle Rache Kocht in meinem Herzen” by Mozart and “Norma: Casta diva” by Bellini

III

Choreography: Sarah Freeman with dancers

Music: “Carry-Cot” by Colleen, “Weather Three” by Michael Gordon, “Symphony No. 3, Op. 36, Symphony of Sorrowful Songs I: Lento- sostenuto tranquillo ma cantabile” by Henryk Górecki

Performers: Diana Bender-Bier, Shauna Bowes, Natalie Eggert, Hannah Gold, Tim Harland, Julianna Joss, Jake Krakovsky, Lauren Lindeen, Aneyn O’Grady, Loris Takori

Design

Lighting Design: Gregory Catellier

Costume Design: Cynthia Church

Music Design: Kendall Simpson

Set Coordinators: Malina Rodriguez and Sara Ward Culpepper

Photography: Lauren Lindeen

Graphic Design: Zachary Elkwood

Emory Production Staff

Technical Director: Gregory Catellier

Stage Manger: Luke Reid-Grassia

Light Board Operator: Sarah Beach

Stagehand: Tara Hemmer

Costume Coordinator: Cynthia Church

Dance Program Director: Lori Teague

Dance Program Coordinator: Anne Walker

Promotional Assistance: Rachel Walters, Nick Surbey, and Nikoloz Kevkhishvili

House Mangament: Nina Vestal

Videographer: Hal Jacobs

This project is supported in part by the Emory College Center for Creativity and Arts, the John H. Gordon Stipe Society, Scholarly Inquiry and Research at Emory (SIRE), and the Emory Dance Program.



EMORY UNIVERSITY
Center for Creativity & Arts
College of Arts and Sciences



Appendix C: Project Budget

PROJECT BUDGET

EXPENSES

Personnel (Stipe and CCA)

Artist Fee for Alumni Professionals (x 2): **\$600** (\$300 x 2)

Stage Manager: **\$400**

Backstage Assistant (x 2): **\$480** (\$240 x 2)

- These costs were provided to me by Greg Catellier, who will serve In Kind as the Technical Director and will hire the Stage Manager and Assistants. They will be paid by the hour. The artist fees for the professional alumni dancers is a stipend, not equal to what an hourly wage for the time they are committing to the rehearsal process would be.

Travel/ Accommodations (SIRE)

Gas to Milledgeville for Research Site Visit: \$28.85

Accommodations: \$65

- For the creation of my solo I will need to drive to Milledgeville and stay there for 2 days, exploring Andalusia on the first day and creating the solo composition on site on the second day.

Equipment and Supplies (SIRE)

Costumes (21 costumes x \$25): \$525

Paper for Programs (Printing is In Kind from the Dance Program): \$50

- For each of the two pieces my dancers will require one costume, and I will require one costume for my solo piece. The Dance Program provides printing In Kind in their office, but I need to provide the paper for the programs.

Advertising/ PR (SIRE)

Flyers and postcards: \$100

- To increase visibility of my project on campus I would like to print several posters and leave postcards in high traffic areas a few weeks before the show.

Other (SIRE)

Videography: \$200

- I would like to hire a professional videographer to document the final performance in the Schwartz Center so I can watch the entire show before completing my final paper and refer to it for future projects, and the Dance Program can keep a copy of the performance in the office for future students.

Total Expenses: **\$2,448.85**

Income

STIPE Society Grant : \$800

CCA Grant: \$500

SIRE Grant: \$1,150

Total Income: \$2,450

Appendix D: Project Grant Proposal (STIPE, CCA, and SIRE)

My project will unite artistic and literary disciplines by creating a modern dance concert based on the life and work of Flannery O'Connor. As the choreographer and researcher, I am working with a cast of eight current Emory students from the Dance Program, two alumni from the Theater Program and one student rehearsal assistant to create two dance pieces based off the short story "The Displaced Person." One piece will follow the narrative plot structure of the story in a linear way, and the other will translate literary devices such as motif, symbol, characterization, imagery, and dialogue into movement. As this is my honors thesis project, I will also be working closely with my thesis advisor, Anna Leo, in researching ways of translating text into movement. In addition, I hope to reach out to professors in the department of Theater who have had experience translating literary text into dramatic forms. I am also meeting frequently with Dr. Rosemary Magee, special researcher for the MARBL, and her research assistant, Laney Graduate School student Sarah Harsh, both of whom are working closely with the newly announced acquisition of O'Connor material. I hope to explore the new collection and read the letters from O'Connor as a college student to shape the creation of a third and final piece, a solo based on her life. At Dr. Magee's invitation, I attended an annual O'Connor lecture at the Aquinas Center, where I met and spoke about O'Connor with scholars and enthusiasts around the Southeast. I hope to continue to reach out to the members of the O'Connor community throughout the development of the project for information about her life and engagement with the creation process. The Emory Dance Program will provide assistance in the presentation of the formal concert. Emory Dance faculty members will serve as technical director, costume designer and constructor, and lighting designer, aid in the hiring of a stage manager and tech crew, assist me in the dissemination of web flyers and other publicity materials, and most importantly will provide the space for the performance to take place, the Schwartz Center. Currently Emory Dance Company is providing rehearsal space in the Woodruff PE Center. September to December: one two-hour rehearsal per week

October to November: Research O'Connor's life through her letters and manuscripts at MARBL, as well as reading critical analyses of "The Displaced Person."

December 12: show first piece and Dance Program End of Semester showing

January 2: submit a draft of my research of O'Connor and journal of the creative process thus far

January-March: two two-hour rehearsals per week, research on the history of text and movement studies in dance

January: visit O'Connor's residence in Milledgeville, create a 10-15 minute solo composition based on O'Connor's life and letters

February 22: press release goes out to the CCA and Dance department March 16: send out online flyer for publicity March 20: costumes finished March 24: tech rehearsal in the Schwartz Center Dance Studio

March 25: dress rehearsal March 26 and 27: Performance at 8:00 pm April 5: Final research paper completed

The intended audience for this project is all Emory students, especially those interested or studying humanities, as well as English, Dance and Theater faculty members. I also hope to engage the wider Atlanta dance community and the group of Flannery O'Connor scholars and enthusiasts that I came into contact with at the Aquinas Center lecture. I feel that range of different organizations and individuals involved in the creation of this project speaks precisely to how it will enhance the arts at Emory; I hope it will be a truly multidisciplinary process in bringing together two departments that have a lot of crossover thematically but not enough in reality. I want to both expose the dance department to a new literary context for viewing text and movement, and show the English department the work of one of its seminal authors in a new light. I want to draw attention to the new acquisitions for MARBL and demonstrate how the arts are just as important as a research tool as literary criticism. I believe that all the humanities serve to enhance one another, and I chose this project because I do not want to separate my love for dance and for literature. I hope my project will help inspire other artists and scholars at Emory to unite all their passions.

Appendix E: Post-Concert Audience Feedback Form

All Being Displaced: Movement Translations of Flannery O'Connor

A Senior Honors Concert by Sarah Freeman

1. Do you see a narrative in each piece? Yes No (Circle one)
2. If so, do you see a different narrative in each piece? Yes No (Circle one)
3. Briefly describe the narrative of each, or if you did not see one, any feelings or themes it communicated to you.

Appendix F: Emory Report Article

4/6/2015

Flannery O'Connor archive helps inspire senior dance thesis | Emory University | Atlanta, GA



Flannery O'Connor archive helps inspire senior dance thesis

By Kimber Williams | Emory Report | March 24, 2015



Loris Takori, Julianna Joss, Natalie Eggert, Jake Krakovsky, Aneyn O'Grady, Hannah Gold and Tim Harland will perform March 26-27 in "All Being Displaced," a dance concert choreographed by student Sarah Freeman for her senior honors thesis.

Perhaps it was the spot-on descriptions of the rural Georgia landscape, or those eccentric Southern characters that seemed so peculiar, yet hauntingly familiar.

Or maybe it was the sheer authenticity of Flannery O'Connor's words, a sense of kinship she felt with a writer who had lived and worked only an hour away from her own hometown.

Whatever the pull, when Emory senior Sarah Freeman first read the works of the iconic Southern writer back in high school, she recalls an instant bond.

"I think my imagination really connected with the landscape she describes,

4/6/2015

Flannery O'Connor archive helps inspire senior dance thesis | Emory University | Atlanta, GA

those weird characters that I could imagine knowing," says Freeman, who is majoring in English and dance and movement studies.

Rediscovering O'Connor's work while at Emory only intensified her interest. So when Freeman sought inspiration for choreographing a dance for her senior honors thesis, she found herself turning to topics that had long intrigued her — O'Connor's life and the writings.

This week, the public is invited to see Freeman blend the worlds of dance and literature at a free evening-length dance concert inspired by O'Connor.

"All Being Displaced: Movement Translations of Flannery O'Connor" will be presented Thursday, March 26, and Friday, March 27, at 8 p.m. in the Dance Studio of the Schwartz Center for Performing Arts.

The performance features 10 dancers in two pieces inspired by the O'Connor short story "The Displaced Person" and a solo by Freeman rooted in her research into O'Connor's personal letters and archives at Emory's Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library (MARBL).

"I actually didn't come to Emory thinking that I would major in dance, I loved reading and literature and was just going to focus on English," says Freeman, who recently previewed her solo at a dance conference in Milledgeville, Georgia, near O'Connor's family farm, Andalusia.

"But I took a ballet class just to stay in shape and found a dance department that has both challenged me and supported my interest in English. It's been an incredible opportunity to marry my passions."

When words inspire movement

In many ways, Freeman's timing couldn't have been better. While at Emory, she took classes with Anna Leo, an associate professor in the Department of Theatre and Dance, whose own interests "revolve around poetry as a structural basis for choreographic work."

Leo had not only sought out poetry as a creative springboard for her own choreography, she had also assigned students to consider MARBL texts as a basis for their work.

"When the Seamus Heaney exhibit arrived, it really clicked for me," Leo recalls. "Working with MARBL, we chose 20 of his poems that through rhythm, content or structure offered possibilities for inspiration."

Drawing from the MARBL collection, her students produced short dances — an assignment that Leo has repeated this year, too.

So when Freeman expressed an interest in using narrative text to inspire her choreography, Leo suggested a senior honor's project rooted in both disciplines.

"To me, the writing process — especially poetry — is so similar to the choreographic process," she explains.

"Poems are honest extrapolations. When you're creating something, you're

4/6/2015

Flannery O'Connor archive helps inspire senior dance thesis | Emory University | Atlanta, GA

trying to encapsulate an idea. You arrange, edit, rearrange, start over again and move things around until you find the combination that suits you."

Leo encouraged Sarah to let words inspire movement. "And Sarah is such a free spirit, unafraid to experiment and open to whatever pathways might emerge. She'll try anything," she says.

O'Connor: Through the lens of dance

Last summer, Freeman had already targeted O'Connor's work for her inspiration and was working with material about the author at MARBL when MARBL Director Rosemary Magee let her know the collection would soon expand.

In October, MARBL announced the acquisition of new materials from the Mary Flannery O'Connor Charitable Trust. The new archive included never-before-available writings and drawings, more than 600 letters from O'Connor to her mother, unpublished short stories, a prayer journal, diaries, family photographs and personal items.

Those items — especially the letters a young O'Connor wrote while she was in college — would provide a profound influence, Freeman says.

"MARBL was amazing," she says. "I remember first visiting as a freshman, but this time I was poring over material to pick up on personality, mood, the personal touch. Just to see her handwriting had such an impact on me."

Throughout the process, Freeman has worked closely with Magee, who now serves on her thesis committee. "We've talked a lot about O'Connor, and I've been able to direct her to different materials. I've actually learned a great deal from Sarah and about O'Connor through this lens of dance," Magee says.

Increasingly, MARBL is being utilized as a seedbed for inspiration, scholarship and teaching in the arts, according to Magee. "That's one of the great qualities of a liberal arts environment," she adds. "It encourages an enormous creativity and curiosity across the disciplines. And students like Sarah have embraced those opportunities."

Choreographing at Andalusia

Freeman began rehearsals in earnest in September, what she describes as a "collaborative process" explored in tandem with her dancers.

Two pieces in her concert are directly inspired by "The Displaced Person," an O'Connor short story thought to have been based upon a refugee family hired to work at Andalusia, her mother's dairy farm, where the writer lived from 1951 until her death from complications of lupus in 1955.

"The story is extremely layered in terms of racial and class interactions and had all these characters with conflicting motives, different types of mental illness and disability, so there were so many opportunities to explore," Freeman explains.

4/6/2015

Flannery O'Connor archive helps inspire senior dance thesis | Emory University | Atlanta, GA

As an experiment, Freeman created two different dances inspired by the same short story. For one, the dancers were provided only "motifs or snippets of dialogue; they didn't know the full plot of the story," she says. "I wanted it to be as uninfluenced by linear plot structures as possible."

Then Freeman allowed dancers to read the full text. A second dance was built upon the complete story line. Both dances will be presented separately, divided by a solo work performed by Freeman.

To gain insight for her solo, Freeman visited Andalusia earlier this semester — an iconic Southern setting, with its screened porch and rocking chairs, rolling pastures and towering shade trees.

Traveling from her own home in Warner Robins to Milledgeville, Freeman speculated what it must have been like for the writer "as a young person just starting life to have to move back home — her room, the grounds, it was so beautiful, but also physically confining."

"For me, the solo became not so much about her illness, but about the realities forced upon her by the illness."

Walking the farm, Freeman stopped to choreograph her solo on the red Georgia soil that she imagines O'Connor herself once strolled. "I really was in the middle of the woods by myself, like the modern dancer everyone might imagine," she laughs.

The result is a solo that touches upon issues of displacement and disability, as well as lifelong questions woven throughout O'Connor's life and work, Freeman says.

"Overall, this experience has reminded me of how proud I am to be from the South," she says. "Reading about (O'Connor's) thoughts on the South, about humor and people in her community, finding that connection with the landscape, I realize how all of that has shaped me."

Share

Related Stories »

Emory celebrates acquiring the archive of Flannery O'Connor Oct. 9, 2014

Emory celebrates reaccreditation, 'Nature of Evidence' Feb. 2, 2015

Resources »

[Department of Theatre and Dance](#)

[Manuscript, Archive, and Rare Book Library](#)

http://news.emory.edu/stories/2015/03/er_flannery_oconnor_inspired_dance/campus.html

4/6

Appendix G: Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry Blog Post

4/6/2015

From Word to Movement | foxcenterresearchcommons

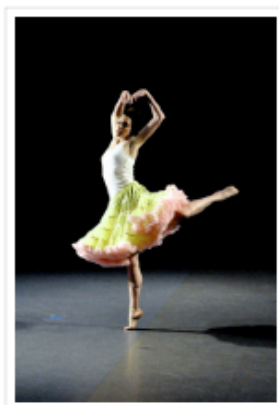
foxcenterresearchcommons

Undergraduate Research at The Fox Center of Emory University

From Word to Movement

Posted on [March 23, 2015](#)

by Sarah Freeman 15C



My friends tell me that when I walk around campus they can always pick me out from the number of bags I am carrying. There hasn't been a backpack invented that can handle a laptop, chargers, 7 packs of gum, water bottle, seltzer bottle, coffee mug, 2 notebooks, a folder, running shoes, change of sweatpants and a sports bra, lapa skirt for African class, sculpture reflection for modern dance class, packed lunch, silly string and candy bar props for rehearsal, costumes for 21 dancers, and 17 library books. For three years I embraced the bag lady look, even playing it up with a homeless style hairdo that was really just laziness. Being a dance major is a different kind of study all together, so the supplies I need are much different from a normal student, and usually I am happy to get a workout by lugging around 50 pounds of life. But last fall, when I started choreographing my senior honors thesis concert and researching for my corresponding paper, things got out of control. My car looked like a person had lived in it for 4 years with leftover snacks and enough changes of clothing for the entire

4/6/2015

From Word to Movement | foxcenterresearchcommons

dance department. It might sound silly and unimportant, but a physical space of my own on campus was the greatest gift anyone could have given me.

The Fox Center Fellowship came in with just that gift, and the small office I have on Clifton Road has been invaluable this semester. I can store my books on the bookshelf, my costumes in the closet, retreat from the rest of the campus into a comfortable desk and get a cup of coffee. Motivation comes in all forms. For me as a dancer, the physical location is almost as important as how my body feels, how tired I am, what deadlines are coming up, in inspiring or forcing me to get to work. My thesis is both paper and performance, and the latter aspect is a continuous source of inspiration. I work with a cast of 10 phenomenal dancers to create two dance pieces based off the writings of Flannery O'Connor, in particular the short story *The Displaced Person*. It's easy to come to rehearsal excited to create with my friends, or to reread and reimagine a brilliantly bizarre piece of writing. I find it much harder to motivate myself to sit down and research methods of combining dance and text, or write about my process.

O'Connor was forced to move back to her childhood home in Milledgeville, GA after being diagnosed with lupus at age 25. My thesis performance examines how physical limitations both affected her interpersonal relationships and provided a writing environment of rich landscape and emotional intensity. Having the environment of the Fox Center as location of sanctuary and retreat on campus gave me a new and particular understanding of how the routine and comfort of O'Connor's setting played into the development of her work. As the date of my thesis performance approaches (2 weeks!) I know that whether I need to hole myself up in a cozy room to write or lay outside on the grass to de-stress, the physical location of my process will make its way into the work itself, just it did for O'Connor.

Freeman's senior honors thesis *All Being Displaced: Movement Translations of Flannery O'Connor* will be presented in the Schwartz Center Dance Studio on March 26 and 27 at 8 pm. Admission is free and no reservations are required.

SHARE THIS:



Be the first to like this.

RELATED

[Studying the Past in Modern Times](#)

[Fox Center Experience Solidifies Desire to Pursue Academic Passions in the](#)

[Is Writing a Social Activity?](#)

Appendix H: Performance Photographs (credit Lori Teague)

Piece I





Piece II



Piece III





References

- Anderson, Jack. *Ballet and Modern Dance: A Concise History*. Hightstown, NJ: Princeton Book Co., P: 1992. Print.
- Apter, Emily. "Introduction." *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*. New York: Verso, 2013. E-book. Loc 65-569.
- "Arnold Schoenberg." *Music and the Holocaust*. ORT. Web. 2 Feb 2015.
<<http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/politics-and-propaganda/third-reich/schoenberg-arnold/>>.
- Carroll, Rachel. "Foreign Bodies: History and Trauma in Flannery O'Connor's 'The Displaced Person'." *Textual Practice* 14.1. 2000, 97-114.
- Elie, Paul. "Pious Anxiety: Flannery O'Connor's Prayer Journal." *Work in Progress*. Web. 30 January 2015. <<http://www.fsgworkinprogress.com/2014/12/pious-anxiety-flannery-oconnors-prayer-journal/>>.
- Goldner, Nancy. *More Balanchine Variations*. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2011. 24-30. Print.
- Goellner, Ellen W. and Jacqueline Shea Murphy, eds. *Bodies of the Text: Dance as Theory, Literature as Dance*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1995. Print.
- . "Introduction: Movement Movements." Ellen W. Goellner and Jacqueline Shea Murphy. 1-18.
- . Murphy, Jacqueline Shea. "Unrest and Uncle Tom: Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company's *Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/ The Promised Land*." 81-106.
- Gopnik, Adam. "Gypsy: The Life of Django Reinhardt." *The New Yorker*. 6 Dec 2004. Web. 3 Feb 2015. <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/12/06/gypsy>>.
- Hardy, Donald E. *The Body in Flannery O'Connor's Fiction: Computational Technique and Linguistic Voice*. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2007. Print.

Jazz Under the Nazis.” *Music and the Holocaust*. ORT. Web. 2 Feb 2015.

<<http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/politics-and-propaganda/third-reich/jazz-under-the-nazis/>>.

Joseph, Charles M. *Stravinsky and Balanchine*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2002. Print.

Kessler, Edward. *Flannery O'Connor and the Language of the Apocalypse*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986. Print.

Magee, Rosemary M. (in press.) “Imaginary Orphan, Imaginary Homeland: Displacement in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor and Salman Rushdie.” University of Kentucky Press.

Martin, Carol. “Mark Morris’s *Dido and Aeneas*.” *Dancing Texts: Intertextuality in Interpretation*. Ed. Janet Adshead-Lansdale. London: Dance Books, 1999. 130-147. Print.

Mumford, Meg. “Pina Bausch Choreographs Blaubart: A Transgressive or Regressive Act?”. *German Life and Letters*. Oxford: Blackwell P, 2004. 44-57.

Norton Jr., William J. “Modern Art and Social Responsibility.” *The Journal of Philosophy*. 37.12. (6 June 1940) : 325-332. Web. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2018434>>

O'Connor, Flannery. “The Displaced Person.” *The Complete Stories*. New York: Farrar, 1971. Print. 194-235.

---. “A Good Man is Hard to Find.” *The Complete Stories*. New York: Farrar, 1971. Print. 117-133.

---. *The Habit of Being*. Ed. Sally Fitzgerald. New York: Farrar, 1979. Print.

---. *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*. Ed. Sally and Robert Fitzgerald. New York: Farrar, 1961. Print.

---. *A Prayer Journal*. New York: Farrar, 2013. Print.

Siegel, Marcia B. “The Harsh and Splendid Heroines of Martha Graham.” *The American Poetry Review* 4.1 (1975) : 30-34. Web. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27774857>>

Steinman, Louise. *The Knowing Body: Elements of Contemporary Performance and Dance*. Boston: Shambala, 1986. Print.

Yaari, Nurit. "Myth Into Dance: Martha Graham's Interpretation of the Classical Tradition".

International Journal of the Classical Tradition 10.2 (2003) : 221-242. Web.

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30221918>>