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The world of the pose

Constructing a dramaturgy of the pose

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Abstract

This is an interdisciplinary practice led study (actor training/theatre/visual arts). The study asks, what does the treatment of the pose as a dramaturgical tool offer the contemporary practitioner? It examines the impact of a pose dramaturgy on a dramatic text, characterisation and performance practice. In addition, it explores the pose as a tool to investigate performance practice and aims to engage its spectators in co-creation. This aspect is guided by the principles of Sanford Meisner's actor training strategy: the Meisner technique. Furthermore, the Meisner technique is explored in an unconventional way, both as a theoretical tool to think through a devising process, and as a tool for the actor to engage with the self in the creative process and on the stage. The study offers a sensory approach to text exploration, characterisation and performance practice. The study privileges and foregrounds the actor's embodied learning processes as an important (underrepresented and undervalued) knowledge producer in the theatrical discourse. The study's aim is to create a practice mode in which actors/practitioners may extract their own unique creative practice explorations, and language.

Using desk-based, fieldwork and practice investigations, the study analyses and attempts to codify the pose in theatrical performance, which includes how performance structures support the pose moment and the pose template.

The codified structures derived from this study of the pose could be applied to other art forms. Due to the status of the pose as an image, the theatrical performance might not be the finite

event, as the image (the pose) can be transferred and re-investigated through other art forms, such as visual arts, interactive events and film.

The study posits that, while modern technologies are available, there is still much to learn about actor and spectator engagement from the sensory world of the pose.

Keywords: Meisner technique, Pose, *mie* pose, *Attitude* pose, tableaux vivant, actor training, dramaturgy, sensory, Sanford Meisner, co-creation, diversity, inclusivity, devising, practice, kabuki, Caravaggio and theatre.

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Author's Declaration:

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institutions.

Nicole Kovacs, November 29th, 2022.

Chapter One: Introduction

In this thesis I will produce an argument to show that the pose has been overlooked and underexplored as a dramaturgy tool, as a method of analysing a play text, as a mode in which to explore a sensory approach to characterisation, and as a tool in theatrical practice that seeks a specific mode of co-creation from its spectators.

The study responds to an ongoing conversation dominating theatrical discourse concerning the role of the trained actor, the playwright and the contested 'passive spectator'. Previous responses to these discussions have included replacing trained actors with amateurs, the playwright with unplanned happenings, and activating the so-called passive spectator with surprises and provocations. There was a desire among theatremakers during the avant-garde at the turn of the 19th Century to break down the 'barrier separating those who act and those who watch and to release the theatre from the dominance of the literary text' (Scholz-Cionca, 2001, p. 29). From a historical perspective, the pose has, on multiple occasions, caught theatremakers' and practitioners' attention. When the avant-garde, at the turn of the 19th century, and Euro-American theatre practitioners coming after, challenged the status quo of theatre practice, the pose was one of the elements they explored. This practice element was inspired by Japanese and Chinese theatre aesthetics and practices. The pose moment highlighted an exciting performance moment where the barriers were removed, and the

spectator and the actor collectively influenced a performance moment on stage. There are

multiple reasons why I argue that the pose deserves a study such as this. In the pose I saw

multiple structures at work: the energy of its formation; the punctuation of the character

portrayed; the connection during the pose moment to the spectators. This made me consider if

it would be possible to create a performance dramaturgy that was built on the powerful

energies related to the pose and still communicate a narrative that made dramaturgical sense.

The reason for a sensory approach is to create a performance state that, by hypothesis,

emancipates the spectator and the actor alike. This is reminiscent of Roland Barthes' argument,

as examined in Chapter Two, 'that a work's meaning is not dependent on authorial intention

but on the individual point of active reception' (Bishop, 2006, p. 41). From a co-creative practice

perspective this means that what is shown on the stage must be mobilised by the spectator.

From a pose dramaturgy perspective this points to the pose as a liminal state offering itself to

be mobilised by the spectator. The study explores the pose as a tool that leads to a more fluid

approach to performance and production of performance narrative.

As the study goes on to argue, the answer to breaking the barrier between the performance

and the spectator lies not with the actor, the playwright or even the 'passive spectator', but

instead must focus upon, the 'how,' and the 'what.' The study shows how a shift in how and

what is presented and perceived opens up a reimagining of the possibilities of what constitutes

the dramaturgy of the performance of a dramatic text.

Another undervalued entity in the theatrical discourse is the actor's agency in the evaluation

and development of theory, performance, and dramaturgy. Here, the Meisner technique is

explored in an unconventional way: as a theoretical tool to think through a devising process,

and as a tool for the actor to engage with the self in the creative process and on the stage.

The study offers suggestions regarding the application of the codified structures it derives from

this theatrical performance practice to a continuing investigation of other artistic disciplines,

such as visual arts, interactive performances, and online performances.

Lastly, although this study offers insight into a specific mode of co-creation, it does not provide

a substantial quantitative study of individual spectators in order to examine how or what

spectators create. However, in Chapter Four, I will provide an example of a spectator's creation

as documented in a review of the practice research conducted in this study.

Research Questions:

1. What opportunities does the treatment of the pose as a dramaturgical tool offer the contemporary practitioner?

2. What impact does a pose dramaturgy have on a dramatic text?

3. In the exploration of a pose dramaturgy as an alternative device to explore a dramatic text, what does a pose dramaturgy add/offer to a performance setting and the exploration of character?

4. How might a pose dramaturgy be used as a tool to explore a sensory approach to characterisation, engagement in practice and performance?

5. What opportunities might the pose offer as a tool to investigate practices that seek to inspire co-creation from its spectators and provide a deeper experience of the 'now'?

6. Are there identifiable communicative pose states and structures that can be codified and applied to a pose dramaturgy?

The impact of the pandemic on this study

When I first began this study, my main inquiry was to examine the dramaturgy of pose and its impact on a play text and the playing world. Additionally, I was interested in the interaction between a pose moment and the pose template sourced from the work of a visual artist, which in this inquiry is drawings by the Italian painter, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610). Furthermore, I wanted to inquire if using the pose in a theatrical performance might provide the spectator a deeper experience of the now, much in the same way an attentive viewer might observe a work of visual art.

When the pandemic happened in the middle of this study, I had to withdraw the latter part of the inquiry that relied on reviewing spectator co-creation. This was because all the theatres closed, and personal distancing rules were enforced. I did manage to complete the planned field research prior the pandemic, which relied on my own spectatorial experience, introduced later in this chapter.

The civil unrest generated by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, inspired both new and productive insights as my research practice unfolded. The BLM demonstrations raised awareness of the injustices experienced by people of colour in United States, which impacted other people of colour worldwide. During this period, I experienced a heightened awareness of my own existence as a person of mixed-race in my private life and in my experience as an actor, spectator, student, and academic. An experience, which I have internalised. My 'strange' accent ('Get rid of it!'), dark skin colour (Not Black enough, not white enough), my multi-national status (Where are you from? What are you?), my repeated status as 'the only person of colour'

in the room – all variations of that which has 'othered' me throughout my entire life and career,

no matter where I was in the world. It reignited my long-term fascination with the pose as a

practice element that bypasses racial and gendered constructs.

Introduction to the pose

I first became interested in the pose in 1999 when I performed in New York City in an American

adaptation of *Benten Kozo,* a popular Japanese kabuki play written by Kawatake Mokuami in

1862. Had it been authentic kabuki theatre, as a woman I would not have been able to perform,

as all female roles were, and still are, performed by *onnagatas* (male actors specialising in

female roles). In *Benten Kozo*, as in all kabuki theatre productions, the *mie*[1] pose moments

were the highlight of the performance. This is where I learned first-hand, the excitement of

performing a pose and experiencing the spectator's direct engagement during the pose

formation in the form of calls of encouragement directed to me on the stage. This opened a

performance world where I was not only performing on stage with my fellow actors but, during

the pose moments, my closest alliance was with the spectators. Their energy provided me with

the intensity and energy needed for the pose formation. The experience highlighted the power

of the interaction between the actor, the spectator, and the shared experience of 'the now'.

The pose might appear as an old-fashioned topic, but as I will show in the following section,

posing and poses have thoroughly impacted our lives in the 20th and 21st centuries.

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[1] The climax of any section of a kabuki performance, is expressed in that pose of dynamic and fluid tension called a *mie*. (Pronko, 1969, p. 140) detailed explanation of the *mie* pose on page 54.

The pose in popular culture

Although this study is solely focused on the pose in theatrical performance, I want to start with highlighting the broader context of poses and posing in Western popular culture, to draw attention to our relationship to poses and posing. Posing has been a formative practice and experience in Western culture in the 20th and 21st centuries. We may not think of it, but we have extensive experience of posing, 'reading' poses and being affected by poses, often using them as a springboard for our imagination. From our formative years we have been coaxed in how to pose, for example by parents, relatives, and friends. During the pose moment, our poses have been evaluated and critiqued, sometimes through encouragement or directions, such as 'stand closer', 'smile!' 'Your eyes were closed!' 'Put your arm around' this or that person. Most school children have posed for the yearly class photo. An experience that for some is a dreaded annual event; an awkward commemoration of growing up. We pose with other people in mind, trying to project how we want to be seen, yet, once the pose moment has happened, we can no longer control its perception. The act of posing is constructed for others, the beholders who view the poses. Without someone later looking at the photograph, the pose has no meaning or effect. We have been exposed to pose images from our introduction to language with the presentation of single images: a pose image of a man, woman, child, a door. Later, we are exposed to poses through advertisements; models in magazines, newspapers, book

illustrations; poses of our idols, actors, and musicians. Furthermore, on social media, the pose of an 'influencer' can produce high monetary value.

Contemporary visual artists, such as the African American artist Kehinde Wiley, use poses to call attention to the lack of representation of people of colour in museums or among the museum's subjects and objects. Wiley produced a series of visual arts images reinterpreting old master paintings by replacing the former Caucasian subjects with African Americans (Sanyej, 2019).

Figure 1: (above) Kehinde Wiley, After Sir Joshua Reynold's portrait of Doctor Samuel Johnson (2009)

Figure 2: (above) Sir Joshua Reynold's, Portrait of Samuel Johnson (1770)

Once you start focusing on communicative pose structures, you notice them everywhere.

Joshua Chima, a young Black law student from Mansfield College, Oxford, posted a photo on his LinkedIn account with the caption, 'Times are changing, increased access to opportunity is among the most important ways of allowing social mobility to flourish' (Chima, J., 2021).

Chima's photo was mimicking a pose taken in the same place decades earlier with British Prime Ministers Boris Johnson and David Cameron.

Figure 3: (above) Photo credit: Joshua Chima/LinkedIn

Figure 4: (Above) The Bullingdon Club poster. (Photo credit: see List of figures)

Here, like in Kehinde Wiley's work, the pose is narrated by a demand for inclusion, and visibility in societal and power structures.

The pose has been in and out of popular culture in the 20th and 21st centuries. One example, which could be argued as a seminal point of the pose's impact on popular culture, is Jennie Livingston's documentary, *Paris is Burning* (1990).

Figure 5: (Above) Paris is Burning, Photo credit: Press/Criterion

Livingston documented the lives of a group of trans African Americans and Latinx in New York City's Ballroom Scene. Livingston followed her subjects' struggles to survive their everyday lives and show them reach a high point when competing in the Ballroom Scene in New York City. Each competitor presented their style, as models walking on a catwalk, often wearing their own creations. Their walk was accentuated by 'sharp' static poses that culminated in a final pose. This was a 'win-all' pose, an exclamation point to their performance, the 'here-I-am-look-at-me' pose moment. Later in 1990, the American pop star Madonna brought posing, or 'voguing' to pop culture with her music video 'Vogue', which alluded to the fashion magazine *Vogue* and its fashion models posing, but also borrowed heavily from the Ballroom Scene highlighted in Livingstone's documentary. In 2007, the pose made a return to the centre of pop culture with *RuPaul's Drag Race*, a TV reality show, again, catapulting New York's Ballroom Scene from the 1980s into the middle of mainstream culture.

These are just a few examples of how posing and poses have impacted lives in the 20th and 21st centuries in popular culture.

To pose is a call for attention.

Acting strategy and practice background supporting this study

The knowledge-building that I have engaged with through my training and work as an actor has provided me with insight and foundational understanding of the framework and contextualisation of the pose practices investigated in this study. Throughout the research I

drew on my own understanding and experience of practice, as theories of acting historically investigate similar parameters relating to the actor's presence and impact on stage.

The Meisner technique

In this introduction to the Meisner technique I will briefly state my connection to the work of Sanford Meisner (1905–1997). Then I will summarise Meisner's position in relation to other important actor training theorists, highlighting who and what his influences were, and which are relevant to this study of the pose. Lastly, I shall identify elements of the Meisner technique with specific focus on his repetition exercise and its practice of rhythm, tension, doing, intuition, and imagination.

I am a graduate of Meisner's acting school, the Neighborhood Playhouse School (NPH) of the Theatre in New York City. I have worked with Meisner's theories for over twenty-five years, and they have become an integral part of everything I do on stage, how I approach my practice, and how I perceive performances. As Meisner argued, it takes twenty years to become an actor' […] [after that] […] all the principles and ideas would be chewed up and digested into a kind of actor instinct, a technique that functioned almost by itself. (Meisner, 1987 p. xv)

I thought it useful to take a moment, in this introduction chapter to position Meisner in 20th century actor training theory and include a basic introduction to the Meisner technique. Sanford Meisner was a founding member of the groundbreaking theatre collective, the Group Theatre, which was active in New York City from 1931 to 1941. It included among its members Lee Strasberg (1901–1982) and Stella Adler (1901–1992), both of whom went on to create their own acting methods derived from Konstantin Stanislavski's (1863–1938) work. Meisner started

in the Group as an actor and was introduced to Stanislavski's work by Strasberg who had

received lessons at the American Laboratory Theatre from former students of Stanislavski,

which included Maria Ouspenskaya and Richard Boleslavsky.

In 1934 Stella Adler went to Paris with Harold Clurman, another member of the Group,

to meet with Stanislavski to clarify some of his acting principles. Adler and others at the Group

had trouble understanding the value of emotional recall (affective memory). This issue was not

only discussed in the Group but had previously also been discussed at the Moscow Art Theatre.

Vera Soloviova, a former student of Stanislavski's stated:

> (Michael) Chekov argued with Stanislavski about emotional memory. Chekov
>
> claimed it was useless to him. While Stanislavski insisted that although Chekov did
>
> not need it because of his overacting imagination, other actor's not owning such a
>
> treasure were in need of these techniques.

(Gray, 1964, p. 27)

Adler spent five weeks studying with Stanislavski, discussing his original idea of *affective*

memory, which Strasberg had made the focus of his actor training. Stanislavski disclosed that he

had changed his mind regarding 'affective memory' (Rotté, 2002 p. 192). Stanislavski now

believed that actors who engaged with the memory of past experiences to create an emotional

life for their character, would be much better off if they worked from their imagination. When

Adler returned from her meeting with Stanislavski, she informed the Group members they had:

been misusing emotional memory exercises by overemphasizing personal circumstances in preparation, and that Stanislavski recommended use of the given circumstances of the play and the magic 'as if' as a character.

(Gray, 1964, p. 35)

Strasberg refused to renege on his stance on emotional recall much to the dismay of many of the Group members. It was argued that this was one of the frictions that propelled its demise.

Imaginary circumstances.

Adler and Meisner moved forward with the new development in Stanislavski's work and later built their acting methods on the concept of *imaginary circumstances* (Meisner, 1976, p. 503). The imaginary circumstances were to become a central concept in Meisner's acting technique. His counterargument to Strasberg's emotional recall was simple, 'your imagination is, in all likelihood, deeper and more persuasive than the real experience' (Meisner, 1987, p. 79). Adding that, 'over time the meaning of the past changes. That is one of the reasons [he did not] like "emotional memory" and [...] the reasons Stanislavsky gave it up' (Meisner, 1987, p. 82–83). This means that something that might have initially been an upsetting event might lessen in importance as the years go by. Thus, the value of that memory would be unreliable as a tool to emote.

Reality of Doing / Object of Attention.

In *Meisner on Acting*, Meisner foregrounds three theatre practitioners whose work inspired him. They were actor and director Michael Chekhov (1891-1955), actor and director Ilya

Sudakov [1890–1969] and actor/director I.M. Rapoport (all affiliated with the Moscow Art Theatre, and students, and collaborators of Stanislavski's) (Meisner, 1987, p. 10). An English translation of Rapoport's essay 'The work of the actor', was among the work that was read and discussed during the Group theatre's years. It has been argued that the Rapoport essay is the 'most lucid outline' of Stanislavski's work (Edwards, 1960, p. 409). The influence Stanislavski's work as (interpreted by Rapoport) has had on both Strasberg's and Meisner's different approaches to actor training is evident when examining Rapoport's essay. Where Strasberg was drawn to his 'sense memory' exercises and the contested 'emotional recall,' Meisner was heavily inspired by Rapoport's theories on 'object of attention,' and 'imaginary circumstances.' Rapoport's argument in relation to object of attention states that in life 'the attention of every person is always to some degree, or another focused on some object' (Cole, 2014, p. 35). Rapoport's definition of object of attention is as follows:

1) *Sight* (we look at something);

2) *Hearing* (we hear something);

3) *Touch* (we touch something);

4) *Smell* (we smell something);

5) *Taste* (we drink or eat something).

(Cole, 2014, p. 35)

The object of attention is what is seen, heard, felt, smelled, and tasted. Rapoport argues that the theory of object of attention would be a useful strategy in helping actors be less self-conscious when on stage. He argued that if the actor's focus was on an object of attention, then they would be less self-conscious. This is echoed by Meisner who argues that the actor must be attached to something outside of them, what is seen, heard, and felt (Meisner, 1987, p. 24). From the first to the last class at the NPH, and as documented in *Meisner on Acting,* his focus is on the reality of doing. Although there is unmistakable evidence of Rapoport and Stanislavski's influence on Meisner's work, the solution to how to train the actor to engage with object of attention / reality of doing is Meisner's own invention. He invented the *Word Repetition Game* to teach the student actors to focus their attention on something outside of themselves and work from their impulses instead of from a self-conscious, intellectual, and analytical place.

The Word Repetition Game.

In the beginning of the *Word Repetition Game*, two actors stand in front of each other. Actor A starts the game by saying aloud something he observes about Actor B.

ACTOR A: Blue eyes
The only thing Actor B must do is to repeat what Actor A said.

ACTOR B: Blue eyes.
ACTOR A: Blue eyes.
ACTOR B: Blue eyes.
And so forth, until the exercise is stopped. This usually happens when one of the actors tries to make the exercise more exciting by adding an inflection or pushing an emotional dramatic response. The rhythmic quality of this work is present from the start. Meisner alludes to the

rhythmic quality in his work in *Meisner on Acting* when he is instructing students in the repetition exercise, 'try to tighten the repetition', adding, 'try to let it move in its organic rhythm' (Meisner, 1987, p. 62). Some instructors at the Neighborhood Playhouse even snap their fingers as the repetition passes between the actors to stop them from thinking and staying in the organic rhythm that has developed between them. This is not necessarily a fast rhythm but, when observing a repetition exercise, it is noticeably clear when the rhythm is organic and when it is compromised by thought, or an actor's insecurity. Later, the repetition develops as the actor continues to tune their ability to *really* listen and pay attention to the other actor. To *really* look at the other actor, and observe behavioural clues from their face, and body language. What they are projecting from the tone of their voice, body language, eyes will inform the moment, instead of relying on the meaning to come from what is said from the play text.

This method attunes the actors' awareness of the other actors on stage with them.

Energy and Rhythm.

Of Meisner's acting strategy I have highlighted the imaginary circumstances, reality of doing / object of attention, and the *Word Repetition Game*. The throughline that connects them all is the kinetic aspects to this work, which is related to energy and rhythm. Energy and rhythm are not foreign elements of acting strategies. Many 19th and 20th century theatre practitioners and theorist have drawn on the work of Emile Jacques Dalcroze (1865–1950) a Swiss music educator

who developed an approach to music education where students engage their musicianship with their whole body. As Davidson argues in his paper, *The listening actor'*, 'the language of music [was] not only a means of communication from the outside in, but also a means of expression of what [the musician] feels within himself' (Davidson, 2023, p. 7). Additionally, Davidson posits that the musicality of Meisner's techniques, with its focus on listening, is influenced by Dalcroze Eurhythmics. Furthermore, he posits that Meisner was influenced by Dalcroze Eurhythmics during his early studies as a pianist at the Damrosch Institute of Music, which later became the Julliard School. Moreover, Davidson states that Dalcroze's work was:

> a core component of actor training at the Moscow Art Theatre where Stanislavski coined the term Tempo-Rhythm to describe the phenomenon of physicalizing two contrasting rhythms simultaneously. The Polish–Russian emigre Richard Boleslavsky prescribed DE for all his actors at the American Laboratory Theatre in New York City writing, 'Just as rhythm is the basis of all the arts, so it is in the actor's art. The performer whose body is not rhythmically trained has no instrument on which to play'. Elsa Findlay taught DE at The Lab for six of its seven seasons. Her students included Harold Clurman and Lee Strasberg, two founders of the Group Theatre who invited Sanford Meisner to join their acting company in 1931.

> (Davidson, 2023, p. 9)

Stanislavski's approach and development of Tempo-Rhythm is addressed in Norris Houghton's (1909–2001) essay, *Moscow rehearsals; an account of methods of production in the Soviet theatre.* In it, Houghton, a recognised authority on 20th century Russian theatre, observed

Stanislavski instructing his actors to talk to their partner's eyes, not the ears, adding, 'the person who talks produces a kind of rays; the person addressed absorbs those rays.' (Houghton, 1936, p. 60). Soloviova, an actress who worked with Stanislavski confirmed Houghton's observations:

> We worked a great deal on concentration. It was called 'To Prana' rays of communication into space and to each other. Stanislavski said, 'send the prana there. I want to reach through the tip of my finger – to God – the sky or, later on, my partner. I believe in my inner energy, and I give it out – I spread it.'

> (Soloviova, 1964, p. 137)

As Soloviova recounts, Stanislavski's interests ranged more broadly to incorporate and explore the movement of the actors' energy, their environment, and engagement with each other. Soloviova's mention of the energy between the actors mirroring Meisner's repetition exercise.

Meisner's intuitive actor training can be applied to any context as it deals primarily with being aware in the present moment. His work has been incorporated into more than acting training. The American director and actor, Sidney Pollock, a former student of Meisner, argues:

> The fact is that every area in which I function as a director – writing, production design, costume design, casting, staging, cinematography, even editing is dominated by, and concerned with, the principles and ideas I've learned from Meisner.

The technique offers ways of 'being in the world' and seeing the world. From that premise, I set out to explore Meisner's actor training as applied theory in the devising process, where I seek to explore practice from a sensory rather than analytical perspective.

Methodology: practice as research (PaR)

The actor / researcher

The methodology used in this study is practice as research (PaR). With regard to PaR studies of performance artists, most of the literature addresses its difficulty in being acknowledged as a legitimate form of knowledge production due to its ephemeral and material form. In this PaR study I want to foreground the actor as the knowledge producing, researching, learning agent. It was important for me to explore the research from the perspective of an actor, as the actor's voice and especially the female actor's voice does not appear to be privileged in the same way as other voices previously included in theatrical discourses. Many of these are often from a male perspective, yet it is *our* bodies that make the work possible; it is *our* minds that interpret the work; and it is *our* voices, souls, interpretations, consciousness that connect the work to and with the spectators.

In *Practice as research: transdisciplinary innovation in action.* Baz Kershaw argues:

There could be no theatre or performance studies without the creative practices of performers, actors, directors, designers […] Yet the relationship between the academics who created the disciplines and the practitioners who made the art has been mostly an uneasy one.

(Kershaw, 2011, p. 63)

Often actors are solely considered performers, therefore, the accumulative research they produce throughout their career is seen as being of value only to the actors themselves and to the role they play. This is a disservice to what the actor has to offer. I would argue that the value of an actor's work should be acknowledged as providing a particular insight into human experience and should be considered as rigorous ontological investigations into what it means to be human. Kershaw makes a similar argument highlighting that the ontological/epistemological binary is a major focus for the fluid dynamics of theatre and performance research methods. (Kershaw, 2011, p. 3)

The actor's work and the theatre have been appropriated as a model of investigation in other academic disciplines, such as philosophy, psychology, and theology. However, when the actors and theatre claim their agency, it becomes problematic due to its ephemeral and material form. I would posit that the actor's and theatre's agency has been historically developed, challenged, tested, and tried, continuously for hundreds of years, as shown with this study's use of Japanese kabuki theatre. When Philip Zarrilli argued in *Acting (re)considered: theories and practices* that 'every instance of performance contains an implicit theory of acting' (Zarrilli, 2005, p. 3) he was partly correct. Implicitly, the actor is also an embodiment of hundreds, or

even thousands, of years of theatrical practice. Take Stella Adler (1901–1992), mentioned in the

Meisner section, who came from an acting family. Her father was the actor Jacob Adler (1855–

1926), a well-known Yiddish theatre actor, and her brother Luther Adler (1903–1984), also an

actor. She grew up in the theatre influenced by the traditions her father had brought with him

from his Yiddish theatre traditions from Odessa, Russia. Despite having grown up with

knowledge of the theatre and being connected to past traditions, she still sought new

knowledge to improve the artform. An ongoing historical process that has explored what

worked and did not work on stage.

Actors and the theatre, more generally, have periodically re-evaluated and re-introduced

theatrical practices from the past. Avant-garde practitioners returned to the Greek, or the

kabuki theatre to challenge the status quo of their times. The work process of the actor is

rigorous, repetitive, accumulative, which is similar to other sciences. One cannot work on a

theatrical practice without working through it repetitiously and thoroughly, to gain a better

understanding of the work. A work process where the practitioner, as the Italian theatre

director and author Eugenio Barba argues, is engaged in a process of experimenting and

learning from 'errors as walls and errors as doors.' (Barba, 2000, p. 65) adding, that:

> the 'errors' guide us, obliging us to extract a new complexity from those that
>
> constituted the previous stages of the work. It is by attempting to respond to these
>
> new difficulties, to break down these doors, that we may experience leaps in
>
> perception in ourselves or in the spectator: the dramaturgy of changing states. [...]

At this point a phenomenon occurs which seems strange when we speak of it, but it is a sign that the work is on the right course. It is as though the work no longer belongs to us but starts to speak with its own autonomous voice and language, which we have to decipher.

(Barba, 2000, p. 65)

This rigorous practice process is prominent in all aspects of actors and theatremaker's work. It is present in the beginning stages, as students learn the craft, and deepens with experience over time. This constitutes rigorous and methodical research, which some actors, theatremakers, and theorists have historically attempted to codify into systems promoting different perspectives, techniques, and knowledge through investigations, discussions, books, papers, and performances.

Francois-Joseph Talma (1763–1826), a French actor whose writings on the actor's art and whose work Meisner favoured, argued, 'the actor has the advantage, that all he learns is embodied in his own personality, not translated through some medium, like the painter's canvas or the novelist's page' (Talma, 1883, p.p. 3–4). Talma privileging the actor's agency. Much like Meisner, who argued, 'the actor's chief instrument is himself' (Meisner, 1987, p. xviii). Here I would like to add German scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte's, definition of Talma's use of the term, 'embodiment':

In the second half of the 18th century a new concept of acting emerged, which was to be termed 'embodiment'. Previously, actors were described as playing or representing a character … now, the actor 'embodied' a dramatic character.

(Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p. 77)

Fischer-Lichte highlights that the actor is not someone who plays a role and takes on that character. Instead, they embody the character. This too is a unique experience, which the actor has knowledge of. There are multiple structures at play when an actor performs. The actor is self. The actor expresses a version of self as they embody a role. In his paper, *Stanislavskian acting as phenomenology in practice* (2011), Daniel Johnston interprets Stanislavski's, *An Actor's Work: A Student's Diary,* through the lens of Martin Heidegger's phenomenology in *Being and Time,* argues that:

the actor's art can be seen as an embodied philosophy that makes different ways in being-in-the-world manifest, and ultimately, gestures towards the 'meaning of being.'

(Johnston, 2011, p. 65)

Johnston is not only alluding to the actor's study of character but also to the actor's ability to simultaneously embody two different worlds, 'the fictional world and the actual world' (Johnston, 2011, p. 65) and through that the actor's ability to compartmentalise their experience of the now. As I have highlighted in this methodology section, there are multiple dichotomies/binaries at play when an actor works from the fictional world to the actual world;

the inner world and the outer world; with expressions of the text and the subtext, rhythmic

structures within the character and without in relation to other characters, the stage and the

space. These could be argued to be unique philosophical structures in which the actor is

engaged.

Kershaw and Nicholson argue:

> Debates […] turn on how research 'methods' and 'methodologies' might be
>
> reconceptualized for theatre and performance studies by thinking philosophically,
>
> procedurally and practically about working processes that resist unhelpful
>
> dichotomies and fixed binaries which separate embodiment and intuition from
>
> intellectual practices, emotional experiences and ways of knowing.
>
> (Kershaw, 2011, p. 2)

Yes, the actor feels. Yes, the actor is intuitive. Both states that are continuously constituted,

examined, questioned, discussed, and experimented with. Theologians, mathematicians, and

biologists feel and are intuitive too when they conduct their research. Take the following quote

from a paper in the *Journal of evaluation of clinical practice*. The paper poses the question,

'What is knowledge and when should it be implemented?' It argues that:

> the kind of knowledge that is worthy of translation into clinical practice will only
>
> come with 'wisdom'. Knowledge, as wisdom, gives equal weight to quantitative
>
> data, qualitative findings and experiential and tacit understandings in medicine.

The same parameters of knowledge production are being discussed in this research. This supports the argument that PaR is a necessary and rigorous mode of conducting research.

To make a full examination of the pose in this study my research was conducted from three different research perspectives: desk-based, field-based, and practice-based (in this order). All disciplines were investigated with the actor's perspective, work, and thought process in mind.

In my desk-based research I set out to explore selected pose practices and practitioners to discover what constituted a pose moment. How were the poses performed? At what point in the performance did pose moments take place? How did the pose impact the spectator and how was it communicated, received? What did the pose add and offer to a performance setting? How was the pose used dramaturgically?

In the field-based research I wanted to examine the pose from a spectator's perspective.

The practice research explores the codified pose practice elements derived from the desk-based and field-based research.

Lastly, I would like to state, that while I have conducted the research, and noted my experiences, it is not about me, Nicole Kovacs, per se. It is, instead, about my role as an actor investigating, researching, and developing a practice investigation.

Thesis structure

Chapter One: Introduction to the pose and the acting strategy and practice background supporting this study.

Chapter Two: The dramaturgy of the pose. In this chapter I will attempt to codify selected pose practices to identify structures at play during the pose formation, the pose state, and the dramaturgy of the pose. I will look at the pose from four different perspectives, starting with the solo performance pose practice of the *Attitude* pose, followed by the staged group performances of *tableaux vivants*, then an examination of Japanese kabuki theatre's *mie* pose. Then I will examine the pose structures supporting the pose moment that were identified from the pose in performance practice section and go on to examine key characteristics relating to the pose moment, and spectator co-creation. In this section I will define how the term co-creation is to be understood in this thesis. I want to state briefly how it is meant to be understood. I view the pose as an arrested state, a state which encompasses a world. The French writer and critic, Denis Diderot (1713–1784) argues,

> When one sees this picture, one says: delicious! If one pauses to look at it or if one comes back to it, one exclaims; delicious, delicious! Soon one catches oneself conversing with this child and consoling her.

(Fried, 1988, p. 58)

Diderot is referring to the French painter Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725–1805) painting, *The Broken Mirror.*

Figure 6: (above) Jean-Baptiste Greuze, The Broken Mirror (1762–63)

I was inspired by Diderot's notion of the image 'calling' him over and making him engage with it. This offered a powerful example of how an image might inspire co-creation through memory and imagination. This was one of the aspects I became more interested in as the study progressed and I began to see the pose moment as a world in which to interact rather than solely as an aesthetic image.

The second part of this chapter explores the interdisciplinary binaries between the performance art pose and visual art pose template. Here I am leaning on the connection between the visual artwork of the Italian painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610) and performance art. The impact of Caravaggio's work will be discussed and examined further in Chapter Four. I shall briefly highlight philosophical structures relating to the experience of 'the now', drawing on the French philosopher Henri Bergson's (1859-1941) theory of memory and perception.

Chapter Three: Field research. Experiential essays, includes three experiential essays exploring the pose in live performance. The first two essays highlight an examination of my own

perspective as a spectator as I watch two different pose practices that foreground the pose.

The first examines a live performance in Naples, Italy of *Tableaux Vivant da Caravaggio,*

twenty-five tableaux based on Caravaggio's visual arts work. The second essay examines a live

Japanese kabuki theatre performance, in Osaka, Japan. The third essay is related to a practice

experience conducted during a three-week *nihon buyo* dance workshop in Kyoto, Japan.

Chapter Four: Practising the Pose, documents my studio practice work with the pose. From

desk-based research and field research I set out to produce a system in which to pair pose

templates with a play text, *A Streetcar Named Desire.* The work includes condensing the play

text for pose practice and an examination of the pose templates sourced from Caravaggio's

visual arts images. The practice research findings were showed at a live practice presentation of

Sensing Blanche, performed at the James Arnott Theatre in Glasgow, September 30th, 2021. The

chapter concludes with post-practice reflections.

In Chapter Five, Thesis Conclusion, I will reflect on how the pose impacted the devising process,

what I learned from it and its effectiveness as a dramaturgical tool. Added to this conclusion *is,*

The Pose: possibilities for future research and practice where I will highlight how using the pose

in performances might expand both its use and impact. By applying the pose and practice

elements from the theatrical practice to other art disciplines a multidisciplinary form of

expression across different creative platforms could be created.

Chapter Two: The Dramaturgy of the Pose

Codifying the pose in theatrical performance, performance structures supporting the pose moment, and the pose template.

Etymologically, the word 'pose' comes from the Latin, *pausara,* meaning 'halt, cease, or pause.' In 1818 the act of posing was referenced as 'posing the body; attitude, position for effect,' and later, in 1850, it was referenced to a model posing for an artist (Harper, D., 2022).

I will begin this chapter by defining why I have used the terminology 'codifying' in the title of this chapter. The term was derived from Houghton's essay, *Moscow rehearsals; an account of methods of production in the Soviet theatre,* which I have referenced in Chapter One*. In it,* Houghton argued that:

> The theatre system is really only a conscious codification of ideas about acting
>
> which have always been the property of the most gifted actors of all countries
>
> whether they know it or not. Its basis is the work of the actor with himself in order
>
> to master 'technical' means for the creation of the creative mood, so that
>
> inspiration may appear oftener than is its wont.

> (Houghton, 1936, p. 57)

Houghton makes an interesting point when he states that actor training theory is an attempt to codify ideas about acting. To learn from past and present practices and practitioners it is necessary codify the practice, structures, and elements. This allows the actor to later learn from and understand the technicalities involved when exploring a pose in performance practice.

Such investigation is part of the continuous process of the actor's craft and the theatre's aim to be impactful in its communication of stories, ideas, and experiences.

In the next part of this chapter, I shall review the pose theory from three different pose performance disciplines. When it comes to posing in contemporary theatre practice it can be argued that all roads lead to Japan's kabuki theatre. Kabuki has used pose moments, the *mie* pose, throughout its four-hundred-year history, which is why it was valuable to use as the main source material in this study. There are well-known contemporary practitioners who have used poses in their theatrical practice, such as the American theatremaker Robert Wilson (1941–) however, as his work is heavily inspired by kabuki theatre, visible in his use of costumes, make-up, movement, style, and poses, I have excluded it from this study[2]. Although the same could be argued for many of the 19th and 20th century avant-gardists, who also found inspiration in the kabuki theatre, I have selected some who brought new insight to pose practice and theory. In addition, I wanted to explore different pose practice disciplines to gain a wider perspective. I have, therefore, included a solo performance pose practice and group performance pose practice. Both these disciplines, as with the kabuki theatre, claim to be the originating source of the perspective pose discipline.

This section will start with the solo performance pose of Lady Hamilton, move to the group pose, the *Tableaux vivant* pose, and lastly, to the kabuki theatre's *mie* pose. This will allow investigation of whether there are identifiable themes and structures that connect the different

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[2] I examined a selection of Wilson's work from *Madame Butterfly* (2004), *Pelléas and Mélisande* (1997), and his collaboration with the American composer Philip Glass, in *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) and *Adam's Passion* (2015).

pose performance disciplines that might provide a technical framework to apply to a pose practice exploration. Here I will ask:

- How is the pose used dramaturgically?

- How is the pose performed?

- What does the pose moment represent? (i.e. Its meaning.)

- Are there identifiable structures at play during the pose moment? If so, what are they?

- What does the pose moment communicate?

- How do spectators engage with the pose moment?

In the second part of the chapter, I take a closer look at some of the pose structures that were identified in the first section. This section aims to contextualise co-creation by borrowing from the French philosopher Henri Bergson's theory of memory and perception.

Lastly, I will focus on the pose template and the interdisciplinary binaries between the performance art pose and visual art pose template. In this section the work of Caravaggio is foregrounded. Caravaggio's work has been appropriated by theatre practitioners, such as Beckett, and is argued to have been inspired by actors and the theatre. I will examine the palindromic exchange between the two artforms.

The pose in performance practice

The Attitude pose

Attitude poses were a solo performance artform performed in private salons in the late 17th century to the early 18th century. An Attitude pose performance entailed the performance of

poses in succession depicting characters derived from popular cultural icons from literature, mythology, and visual arts. (Maierhofer, 1999, p. 222) Attitude poses were solely performed by young, beautiful women. The artform is thought to have been invented in Napoli, Italy at the residence of the British diplomat Sir William Hamilton, and performed by Lady Hamilton (1765–1815), a British model and Hamilton's muse. In her seminal study, *Monodrama, attitudes, tableaux vivants,* scholar Kirsten Gram Holmström argues:

> Attitudes were created by an English aristocrat, Sir William Hamilton, and his
>
> beautiful and talented mistress, not in an attempt to reform the art of dancing, but
>
> as an experiment with a mobile, emotionally-charged version of pictorial art.
>
> (Holmström, 1967, p. 238)

Others argued that Lady Hamilton became interested in poses from watching actors' gestures in the theatre (Lebrun, 1903, p. 66). Another suggestion to the origin of the *Attitude* pose was that Hamilton developed them during her many sessions of modelling for the British painter George Romney, who painted over twenty-five portraits of her. However, there is also the possibility that Hamilton invented an entirely new artform. In the study, *Emma Hamilton and Late Eighteenth-Century European Art (2018),* scholar Ersy Contogouris argued that Hamilton should be credited with being the first modern solo performance artist:

> (Hamilton) showed a way for women performers to take charge of their own
>
> bodies, direct their spectators' gazes, and use their times' cultural vocabulary and
>
> gender stereotypes freely and potentially subversively. In this sense, there is no
>
> doubt Emma's Attitudes stand as precursors of performance art.
>
> (Contogouris, 2018, p. 92)

I agree with Contogouris, that Hamilton's work should be considered as a precursor to performance art and, as I will show later when I unpack Hamilton's work from an actor's perspective, she could not have gained the experience she had without gaining knowledge to dictate and curate her performances.

When Lady Hamilton performed, she used props as shown in the Italian artist Pietro Antonio Novelli's (1729–1804) engravings of her *Attitude* poses (see Figure 7. below). A shawl was her most favoured prop, but she also used vases, flowers, weapons, and at times, children, if they were needed to complete a pose image. With the props Hamilton transformed herself into different representation of characters, such as 'Iphigenia, Medea, Diana, Niobe, Hebe, Juno, a sibyl, and other figures mostly from Greek myth and drama' (Maierhofer, 1999, p. 222).

Figure 7: (above) Pietro Antonio Novelli, The Attitudes of Lady Hamilton (1791).

The most quoted description of Hamilton's *Attitude* pose performance was the German writer, Johan Wolfgang von Goethe's (1749–1832) account taken from the travel diary from his trip to Italy, dated 1786–1788. Here, Goethe described his observations of Hamilton's performance at the English ambassador Lord Hamilton's residence in Naples, Italy. Goethe wrote:

A box standing upright caught my eye, open in front, painted black inside, and

surrounded by the most splendid gold frame. The space was large enough to hold a

standing human figure, and we learned that indeed such was its purpose. This

admirer of arts and girls, not satisfied with seeing the lovely creature as a moving

statue, also wanted to enjoy her as a colorful, inimitable painting. And so, inside this

golden frame, dressed in many colours against the black ground, she had

sometimes imitated the ancient paintings of Pompeii and even some masterworks.

(Goethe, 1989, pp. 261–2)

Goethe described Hamilton as standing inside a black box with a large frame like a moving

statue, imitating visual arts works. His description seems somewhat removed from the

experience as he clearly views the performance as a folly of Lord Hamilton's, who, as Goethe

argues, is 'an admirer of arts and girls'. However, in another entry, Goethe described a different

aspect of Hamilton's performances, stating:

as soon as she was ready, she suddenly lifted the first shawl, which had thus acted

as a kind of curtain: sometimes she caught it halfway, when it was to serve as

drapery for the figure she was representing.

(Holmström, 1967, p. 115)

The two entries from Goethe's diary appear to describe two vastly different performances. In

one Hamilton appears as a passive object for the male gaze, whereas the other has Hamilton in

a much more active performance mode. The description of the sudden lift of the shawl is worth

paying attention to as it signifies a more active and direct performance state. It indicates that

Hamilton did not just stand in a frame but appeared as being in control of the room. The

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description indicates a performer showing her skills, throwing the shawl up in the air, catching if halfway down, draping the fabric to suit whichever character she was embodying in her pose. Keeping in mind the proximity between Hamilton and the spectators, a swift movement of a shawl would have moved air around the room and that air must have been felt on the spectators' skin. This would mean that the connections between Hamilton and the spectators were not only through the representations of different characters from the world of art and literature, but also a sensual connection derived by the movement of the air projected by Hamilton's shawl sweeping the spectators' bare skin. The reason for these two vastly different descriptions of Hamilton's art may be that Goethe, as some scholars have argued, might never have actually seen Hamilton perform. As scholar Waltraud Maierhofer argued in, *Goethe on Emma Hamilton's 'Attitudes': Can Classicist Art be Fun?* it would have been impossible for Goethe to have seen Hamilton perform as the time frame of Goethe's visits to Italy and Hamilton's performances do not match. Instead, Goethe most likely collected the account of Hamilton's performances from written documented sources, or possibly via word of mouth. As Maierhofer argues:

> Despite the fact that Goethe's text is written in the first person and placed within an autobiographical context, I read it as a fictional construct … Emma Hamilton or William Hamilton's letters do not mention Goethe's visit … He could not have seen Hamilton's attitudes performed in 1787 because they were developed later.
>
> (Maierhofer, 1999, p. 226)

However, there are more reliable accounts of Hamilton's performances, such as that of the French painter Madame Vigée Lebrun (1755–1842) who was present at many of Hamilton's

performances and used Hamilton as a muse in her own visual arts work. Vigée Lebrun wrote in

her memoirs:

> Nothing indeed, was more remarkable than the ease Lady Hamilton required in
>
> spontaneously giving her an expression of sorrow or joy, and of posing marvellously
>
> to represent different people.

<div align="right">(Vigée Lebrun, 1903, pp. 66–67)</div>

Figure 8: (above) Élisabeth Vigée Lebrun, Bacchante (1785)

Vigée Lebrun marvelled at the emotional shifts Hamilton was able to make and provides some

insight into how the performances were constructed with Hamilton moving from one character

to the other in a fluid manner, changing her personality and emotional state with each

depiction. However, the spectator's willingness to get emotionally involved in Hamilton's

performance might not have been entirely due to her performance power, as it is also ascribed

to a cultural phenomenon at the time – 'the cult of sensibility'. 'The "rules" within the culture of

sensibility,' Maierhofer argues, 'required that the audience confirm and mirror the actress's

effect by showing their own emotions through tears' (Maierhofer, 1999, p. 233). This argument

means that some of the people who attended Hamilton's performances did so to be moved and

experience their own emotions by mirroring the emotions of the performances. Here,

Maierhofer, references the German artist Marianne Kraus's (1765–1838) reaction to one of

Hamilton's performances:

> the spectator's strong reaction to the mostly tragic classic poses. At first she seems
>
> to envy their sensible souls and their ability to show compassion, but later her ironic
>
> phrases seem to hint at the inappropriateness of the occasion, and she is appalled.
>
> […] Kraus cannot grasp why the women, much less the men, weep so copiously.
>
> (Maierhofer, 1999, p. 233)

This description highlights Hamilton's ability to engage the spectators in her performances. This

attests to a performer in charge of her craft, knowing how to surprise her spectators, and

effectively switch between different emotive states. If one takes Goethe's bland description of

Hamilton's performances and compare it to Kraus's description, then it is hard to think that

there were by the same performer. Kraus describes a powerful connection between Hamilton

as a performer and her spectators. So powerful that when she performed her tragic classic

poses the spectators responded by openly showing their compassion, prompting an emotional

response. Whether the spectators were moved by Hamilton for her performance skills, or they

were expressing emotions because of the cult of sensibilities, Hamilton's must have had a

powerful impact on her audiences otherwise it would have been impossible for them to engage

so deeply in them.

An *Attitude* pose template.

I dissected one of Hamilton's pose moments to gain a better understanding of its communicative structures. I selected one of the pose template images from Novelli's drawings (see Figure 9, above). The pose template depicts the moment Medea murders one of her children to revenge her husband Jason's marriage to Creon's young daughter Creusa. In the pose Hamilton is depicted with one arm raised above her head, and with the other hand she is holding down the head of a child kneeling before her. Most of the spectators who saw this pose would have been familiar with this image and ascribed it to the story of *Medea.* Because of Hamilton's use of props along with the child posing with her, every component of the narrative in her pose moment was present: a woman holding an axe in one hand and pressing down the head of a kneeling child with the other. One could question, how much of the signage was needed to convey the narrative of this specific pose moment? Did the axe have to be present?

Did the child even have to be there? Without the axe and the child, would it still be possible to convey the same fierce suggestive state? Moreover, would it still be possible to promote spectator co-creation? Despite the obviousness of the pose template image (the woman, the pose, the axe, and the child) Hamilton still needed the engagement and co-creation from her spectators to complete the narrative of her pose suggestion with their mind's eye. Here I would argue that if the intensity of Hamilton's pose was strong enough, the impact on the spectator might have promoted a completion of her suggestion. I do not see how the spectators could engage with her pose moments if they happened in 'rapid succession' unless her practice entailed creating a sensuous frenzy, which is quite possible, however, for there to be a pose, there must be an arrested state. Although the length of the pose moment is unclear, accounts range from a duration of one to ten minutes. How long does the audience need to engage in a pose moment? Too long and they might have tired of it; too short and they might not have had enough time to engage with the pose image. From a performance perspective she has to exert the power to remove the image, change to another pose, and, through that, control the performance, its rhythm and desirability.

I will now return to Contogouris's argument, highlighted in the beginning of this section (Page 42), regarding Hamilton's agency as a solo performance artist. I would argue that it would be impossible for Hamilton to be unaware of the effect she had on her spectators, bearing in mind that she performed daily. To perform is to produce knowledge. With experience a performer becomes aware of what works and what does not work. Furthermore, I would argue, if Hamilton did a pose that did not get the response she wanted the first or second time, she would have changed it. This would mean that Hamilton selected her poses and produced the

order they in which they were performed. Even if she selected her poses randomly, I would posit that the randomness was affected by the response she received from the spectators.

The following pose practice elements are identified in Hamilton's work.

- **Proximity.** Awareness of where the performer's body is in the space in relation to the spectators.

- **Movement.** The use of movement before the pose moment to generate excitement and, at times, ecstasy.

- **Duration.** Exerting the power to make the pose and the power to remove it. These structures rely on the energy in the room and the performer's ability to sense it and act upon it.

- **Rhythm.** I would argue that rhythm is the underlying structure of her performances and impacted everything she did.

The Tableaux Vivant pose

The staging of *Attitude* aimed, as discussed in the previous section, to engage the spectators emotionally; the main objective of a *tableaux vivant* pose was its success in replicating a visual arts masterpiece by using living bodies as its representation (Holmström, 1967, p. 238). Moreover, *Attitude* was a solo performance artform by young female performers, whereas *tableaux vivants* were group staging practised by both males and females. *Tableaux vivants*

were predominantly performed in private salons but were also staged in theatres. Surprisingly, considering his reaction to Hamilton's work, Goethe was credited for popularising *tableaux vivant* in the late 17th century and originating the practice of *tableaux vivants* in staged performances. An example of this is Goethe's production of *Die Wahlverwandtschafen* (Holmström, 1967, p. 231)*.* However, not everyone took to Goethe's use of *tableaux vivants*, as a reviewer argued in *Allegemeine Litteratur-Zeitung*:

> The actors hold the appropriate attitude as long as their nerves and sinews will allow them. Everyone pretends to be delighted by this dumb living-dead drama, in which the petrified actor finds himself vastly interesting, while the spectator tries with cries of appreciation to conceal his dissatisfaction and his yawns. Now that we have thus learnt to use living people instead of dead colours and brushes when describing moving scenes.
>
> (Holmström, 1967, pp. 216–217)

The reviewer deemed the tableaux too literal, only asking of the spectator to recognise the artwork but failing to give the spectator the engagement and experience the visual arts work would have provided through the artist's use of colours, brushstrokes, and shadows that are part of the sensorial experience the viewer of the artwork is engaged with. Furthermore, the reviewer argued that a *tableaux vivant* can only be a lesser experience than the original visual arts work on which the tableaux was based. The reviewer adds that by staging a *tableaux vivant* Goethe had removed what made the visual arts work 'live.' This highlights that without an added context to a *tableaux vivant* image there might not be much to gain from the experience other than how much the *tableaux vivant* pose looked like the visual arts image on which it was

based. Hamilton, however, connected with her spectators by engaging them in a co-creative process, as I have posited, through their memory and imagination, these important elements and practices were removed from Goethe's *tableaux vivants*.

The following pose practice elements were identified from *tableaux vivants* pose practice:

- The *tableaux vivant* poses lacked impact as, I argue, no meaning was attached to it other than its success in imitating the original artwork the pose was based on.
- The importance of attaching a narrative to the pose moment, to engage the spectator's imagination.

The mie pose

In Japan's popular kabuki theatre, the *mie* pose has been a part of the four-hundred-year-old history. Kabuki stands for – song, dance, and skill. Kabuki: **Ka** – represents *song,* **bu** – represents *dance,* **ki** represents *skill* (Green, 1952). All roles in kabuki are played by male actors. Although, the origin of kabuki has been traced to a female dancer called Okuni no Izamu, women have been banned from performing kabuki theatre since 1629, a ban which is still in place (Hachimonjiya, 1969, p. 4).

Figure 10: (Above) Kabuki actor, Heisei Yakusha Oh-kagami - Ichikawa Danjuro as Benkei by Paul Binnie (1967-)

In its simplest description, a *mie* pose is the climax in a piece of acting that is accentuated by an impressive pose in which the actor becomes statue-like with his eyes wide open (Miyake, 1954, p. 38). The *mie* pose is used to alert the spectators to pay attention to heightened, important moments/characters in a kabuki performance. Kabuki scholar Faubion Bowers argued:

> the pose is a kind of exclamation point interjected at given intervals to signify the
>
> end of a sequence of movements or to call to the audience's attention to the
>
> importance of the specific moment.
>
> (Bowers, 1964, p. 191)

There are multiple times in a kabuki performance where a pose moment might take place, such as an important character's entrance on the *hanamachi*[3], a narrow stage path running through the audience to the main stage, also known as the flower way[4]. The American theatre scholar Leonard C. Pronko (1927–2019), a leading authority on Japanese kabuki theatre, defined the *mie* pose as:

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[3] Hanamachi, also known as the flower way, is a platform stage running from the back of the theatre, through the spectator seating area to the main stage in the front. Like the catwalk at a fashion show.

[4] fans of kabuki used to leave flowers for their favorite actors on the stage.

The climax of any section of a kabuki performance, is expressed in that pose of

dynamic and fluid tension called a *mie. Mie,* like other movements of the kabuki

actor, are always formalized and range from relatively small and somewhat realistic

poses, to the highly flamboyant *mie* using all the limbs of the actor and

accompanied by vigorous movements of the head and facial muscles. There are two

basic *mie* postures: the upright with the heels together, and the box-form, with one

leg bent and the other straight. Sitting *mie* are also possible, as are variations of the

box-form with the actor posing on steps of two different levels … Originally the *mie*

were used only in moments of violence, tension, passion, to show extremes of

emotions, but gradually, because they were appreciated by the public, they came to

be used at any moment of climax, whether violent or not.

(Pronko, 1969, p. 140)

Pronko highlights the immense physicality involved in the production of a *mie* pose. The kabuki

actor uses his body, his limbs, head, and facial expression. His movement pattern varies from

small bursts to large movements. Furthermore, the crossing of the eyes can also be an intricate

part of a *mie* pose formation. As Pronko argued:

The shape and plasticity of an actor's face and the size of his eyes also help

determine the effectiveness of his *mie*, and whether he will cross his eyes or not.

(Pronko, 1969, p. 140)

These are the multiple structures the kabuki actor must engage with when he is producing his

pose. This includes paying attention to the box-like form, as Pronko noted, which can be

standing or seated. Below, Pronko describes a spectacular *mie* performed by kabuki actor

Kiechiemon, in his pap*er,* 'Freedom and tradition in the kabuki actor's art' (1969):

> One of the greatest twentieth-century actors, Kiechiemon, who was unmatched in
>
> the classical dramatic roles, did not dance. Kiechiemon, we are told, had a thrilling
>
> *mie* technique which was somewhat similar to building with blocks: the spectator
>
> could almost perceive him piling form upon form until he reached the culmination
>
> of his pose.

(Pronko, 1969, p. 141)

The *mie* was produced through tension accentuated by an accumulation of small pose

moments leading to a final *mie* pose moment. The small jolts are part of, not only the actor's

corporeal tension leading to the final *mie* pose moment, but a collaboration between the

actor's energy meeting the energy of the spectators.

The *mie* pose is not just a form of an expression of a heightened, important moment in the

narrative of the performance, or a way of signalling the arrival of an important actor or

character to the stage, it is part of a much larger and more intricate practice system that relies

on rhythmic and tensional structures. The kabuki performance is in constant state of tension,

accumulating, being harnessed, then expressed in the pose formation, only to be restarted

after the pose dissolves and the performance moves forward. As kabuki scholar Faubion

Bowers (1917–1999) argued, the kabuki theatre 'goes from pose to pose, from tension to

tension' (Bowers, 1964, p. 191). The *mie* performed by the *onnagatas* (male actors specialising

in female roles) differ in style from the male roles (*arrogato*). Bowers argues:

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Women instead of 'cutting' a *mie*, employ a device known as *kimari*. For their climatic pose they tighten their facial muscles, tense their bodies in whatever attitude required, and remain motionless for a few seconds. In both the *mie* and the *kimari*, while the clappers are beaten, the head is rolled to form a specific diagram.

(Bowers, 1964, p. 192)

Wooden clappers, also known as *ki* are used as an alert to a *mie* pose moment, as an accentuation during the pose, and an exclamation of the pose's completion. This means when an *onnagata* cuts a *mie,* she moves her head in one direction, the *ki* is beaten on the floor, followed by silence; she moves the head and body in another direction, the *ki* is beaten; with the *mie's* completion, it will be accentuated with a final loud clanging of the *ki.* This introduces another layer to the *mie* pose moment with the sound of the wooden clappers interacting with the actor performing a pose moment. As Bowers argues:

As the actor prepares to 'cut' a *mie*, a stage attendant rapidly beats two wooden clappers on a small floorboard of resonant wood at the side of the stage. As the actor completes the pose and crosses his eye, two resounding whacks of clappers signify that the motion is completed and the pose is over. The clappers intensify the emotion and drama, and alert the audience to the importance of the moment. The crossing of the eye is regarded as a movement to show the maximum tension of an actor's emotional agitation.

(Bowers, 1964, p. 192)

I have highlighted some of the tensional and rhythmic structures that are part of the *mie* pose

formation and the kabuki theatre performance. This leads to consideration of the role of the

spectator. Although most spectators of a kabuki performance know the plays, the actors, the

moments, and the *mie's,* there are multiple signifiers indicating where to look. Attention is

drawn to exciting and important moments through aural alerts, with loud 'banging' of the

wooden clappers; and visual alerts, with lights shooting up from the *hanamachi* floor at the

arrival of an important character, famous actor or to indicate the beginning of a *mie* moment.

The spectators, as in all theatrical performances, have a significant role, however, in Japanese

kabuki theatre some spectators have a performative role directly interacting with the actors on

stage. During heightened moments in the performance some audience members are heard

directly communicating with the actors on stage by shouting encouragements (*kakegoe)*. In his

book, *Kabuki, Backstage, Onstage. An actor's life* (1990)*,* kabuki actor Matazo Nakamura (1933–

2017) argued, 'When a scene reaches its climax, you will hear shouts of "Otowa-ya!" or

"Narita'ya!" from the audience. These shouts are called *kakegoe*' (Nakamura, 1990, p. 117).

However, as Nakamura argues, only highly skilled audience members should perform this

practice:

> The third-floor balcony is also the home of the *omuko* or men who shouts during
>
> the performance. *Omuko* means 'the ones across the way,' which probably comes
>
> from the fact that they are usually in the back of the theatre. In the Edo period
>
> everyone shouted their approval of the acting, but doing this just right is difficult
>
> and is mostly done by specialists. Some people think they are paid by the theatre,
>
> but they are actually amateurs who love kabuki and are organized into clubs and

receive passes that allow them into the third-floor balcony for free, where they

enliven the atmosphere of the theatre.

(Nakamura, 1990, p. 117)

This is an extraordinary representation of the role of a spectator. Taking all this into

consideration the kabuki spectator is surrounded by the performance on a phenomenological,

sensorial, and intellectual level. The kabuki spectator has the long wide stage in front of them

to feast their eyes. They have the *hannamichi* stage running through the spectators' seating

area at the lower level, physically surrounding them with the performance. Due to this

proximity between the performers and the spectators; the spectators near the *hannamichi* can,

similarly to Hamilton's performances, feel the air from the movement of the actor's garments

on their skin, even catch a hint of the actor's scent. However, for those spectators sitting away

from the actors on the stage, having the *omuko* shout the *kakegoe* from the third tier means

that the entire audience are surrounded by the performance, from the stage to the back of the

theatre. As the *omuko* partakes in this performance moment, it is important that the *kakegoe* is

rhythmically intact with the performer and the performance, and not hindering or disturbing

the moment, as Nakamura argues,

> The effect is ruined if the timing of the *kakegoe'* is off. It is wonderful when the
>
> timing is on; if it's off by just a little, instead of allowing the actor to take a breath
>
> and give power to his speech, the effect will be exactly the opposite. The actor
>
> won't be able to take a breath at all. It is difficult to explain the timing, but in any
>
> case, we actors want all the well-timed *kakegoe* that we can get. They are a big
>
> help, encouraging us and giving us the breath that we need to go on.

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This creates a symbiotic connection between the spectators, the actors, and the energy and tension in the space created conjointly by all the elements. It means that spectatorship in kabuki theatre requires an innate skill and awareness of rhythm to be able to participate in the moment of the actor performing his *mie.* From the perspective of the spectator, then the *omuko* of the kabuki theatre, performs on a more constructed, yet intuitive level of spectatorship.

The last element I would like to address regarding the *mie* pose is the concept of *ma*. Bando Tsurunosuke (1929–2011), one of the leading kabuki actors of his time, stated in an interview in 1963 with the American scholar Samuel L. Leiter, that 'the most difficult element is the pause (*ma*) – filling up the empty space of time when the actors do not move' (Leiter,1966, p. 395). Ronald Cavaye, a former concert pianist and music professor at the Musashino Academy of Music in Tokyo, when asked about the *ma* argued:

> Well, that's not so easy to explain but without it Kabuki wouldn't be half so
>
> interesting as it is. Imagine, for example, this speech that everybody knows –
>
> > *'To be or not to be?'*
> >
> > *(Dramatic pause)*
> >
> > *'That is the question.'*
>
> In kabuki that pause would be called a *ma,* and *ma* are tension filled moments
>
> applicable to acting movements, dance, or speech. The internal psychology of a

moment is expressed by the actor, who holds the attention of the audience in a

pregnant pause that creates tension and emphasis.

(Cavaye, 2007)

Cavaye interprets the *ma* as a 'pregnant pause' that is there to create tension and, with that

tension, hold the spectator's attention: a tension that has partly been produced in collaboration

with the spectators leading up to the pose moment. There is an element of the kabuki actor

harnessing the tension that has been part of the formation of the pose moment with the

energy produced by the spectators' energy. Kabuki scholar Earle Ernst (1911–1994), defines the

moment of the pause (i.e. the *mie* pose) as a moment, 'time stops in the static (…) *mie* pose of

the Kabuki actor' (Ernst, 1969, p. 138). Ernst's argument of time stopping during a pose

moment is exactly why the pose is so powerful in a theatrical performance. The pose state

offers a moment of what could become a deep connection, even collaboration between the

performer and the spectator. It is the liminal space in which an emotional narrative could be

projected –harnessed by the actor; perceived and interpreted by the spectator.

The following pose practice elements were identified from the *mie* pose:

- **Post pose.** The importance of the lead into the pose moment.
- **Alerting the pose moments is coming.** The use of aural and visual alert (e.g. a beam of
  light on the hanamachi when an important actor enters the stage) to excite and point
  towards an important pose moment.

- **Tension.** How tensional structures, provided by the actor performing the pose and the assigned spectator reacting to its formation, empowers the pose propelling a psychological, sensorial, and emotional connection between actor and spectator.

- **Using poses to signify heightened important moments.** Performing the pose moments during heightened important moments in the play text thereby creating a dramaturgy that goes from pose to pose, from tension to tension.

Examining the structures supporting the pose moment.

What is elucidated by the reviewed literature of pose practices thus far is that the pose has been used as a dramaturgical tool to identify heightened important moments in a performance. Furthermore, the impact of the pose moment is often influenced by the spectator's engagement during the pose formation. The pose moment is telling the viewer to 'pay attention to this.' In the next section I will review the invisible structures (tension, rhythm) connected to the pose moment that were highlighted by the pose practices examined for this study (*Attitude, tableaux vivant, Mie*). This will enable further insight into how to think about these states and structures in a devising process. Can they be codified into a practice system to implement in a devising process? As I shall argue, the key to developing theatrical practices that bypass or transcend constructs, such as racial and gender identities, is through these structures. Later in the chapter I shall unpack the pose template and the interdisciplinary binaries between the performance art pose and visual art pose template. In this section the work of Caravaggio is foregrounded. Caravaggio, whose work has been appropriated by theatre practitioners, such as Beckett, is argued to have been inspired by actors performing in the theatre.

The following 'invisible structures' have been identified in this chapter in relation to the pose, 'rhythm,' 'tension,' '*ma*,' the power of the actor/performer and 'imagination.' In this section I will codify their function and consider how practitioners might regard these structures. This leads me to the Italian theatremaker Eugenio Barba (1936–) who argues, in his paper *The deep order called turbulence*, that in a theatrical performance there are three dramaturgies that happen simultaneously. The first is, 'an organic or dynamic dramaturgy, which is the composition of the rhythms and dynamisms affecting the spectator on a nervous, sensorial and sensual level' (Barba, 2000, p. 60). This is prominent in both the *mie* pose formation and its effect on the *omuko* and the other spectators; and Lady Hamilton's poses and her effect on her spectators (excitement/infatuation). This, Barba argued, should be considered as a layer of dramaturgy. Secondly, Barba suggests there is the dramaturgy of the narrative of the performance, the play. (Barba, 2000, p. 60) Lastly, is what Barba terms 'the dramaturgy of changing states.' Barba argues that dramaturgy of changing stages 'distils or captures hidden significances, which are often involuntary on the part of the actors […] and are different for every spectator.' (Barba, 2000, p. 60–61) For, as Barba argues:

> [t]he spectator, actor and director it is a spring from one state of consciousness to another with unforeseeable and extremely personal consequences, both sensorial and mental.

> (Barba, 2000, pp. 60-61)

Adding later:

The dramaturgy of changing states concerns the performance as a physical and

sensorial event, as an organism-in-life. It has nothing to do with the written text,

with the dramaturgy of words.

(Barba, 2000, p. 62)

Barba argues that there are multiple layers of states and consciousness that make up a

theatrical performance. Apart from the layers of play text and rhythmic layers that constitute

the performance, there are also the layers of changing states that are informed by, as Barba

argues, 'extremely personal consequences both sensorial and mental.' (Barba, 2000, pp. 60–61)

Below is an example of a pose moment that Barba's argument can be applied to, and an

example of how to discuss and frame practice that relies on a perceptive and sensorial

engagement from the spectators. The pose moment is derived from a performance of Brecht's

play *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939), with the Austrian actor and director Helene

Weigel (1900–1971) in the role of Mother. In the scene, Mother lets out what has become

known as 'the silent scream'. Here is academic and literary critic George Steiner's (1929–2020)

powerful description of that moment:

As the body of her son was laid before her, she merely shook her head in mute

denial. The soldiers compelled her to look again. Again she gave no sign of

recognition, only a dead stare. As the body was carried off, Weigel looked the other

way and tore her mouth wide open. The shape of the gesture was that of the

screaming horse in Picasso's *Guernica.* The sound that came out was raw and

terrible beyond any description I could give of it. But, in fact, there was no sound.

Nothing. It was a sound of total silence. It was silence which screamed and

screamed through the whole theatre so that the audience lowered its head as

before a gust of wind.

(Steiner, 1961, pp. 353–354)

Figure 11: (above) Helene Weigel, Silent Scream. Photo credit: Hainer Hill

Figure 12: (above) Ichikawa Ennosuke as Nikki Danjo by Paul Binnie (1967 –)

Steiner's co-creation is not only produced by his imagination, in that he hears the silent scream

'through the whole theatre', but it is also produced by his associative memory in that Weigel's

pose reminded him of Picasso's painting *Guernica.* I am interested in this much more fluid and

layered form of narrative building. Steiner clearly followed the narrative of Mother's storyline,

but also layered his experience with the Picasso artwork, which was a reference to fascism. His

co-creative production is a direct response to Weigel's performative suggestion. This means

that Weigel's performance moment is both complete and incomplete at the same time.

Without the pause there would not have been time for contemplation and if there had not been enough time, it would have felt rushed. The liminality of the moment provided room for the spectator to take over and engage with self, providing multiple layers of expression and meaning to the context of the moment. As George Home-Cook argues in his study, *Theatre and Aural Attention* (2018) 'silence has a tendency to make us readily aware of our own existence' (Home-Cook,2015, p. 99). The static pose moment, the information of it that was withheld (the sound of the scream), enabled Steiner to participate in the moment through his imagination and memory. From his study *Great Director's at Work,* academic David Richard Jones, mentions a passage from Brecht's model books where he references notes Brecht made as an instruction for Mother's body posture during the silent scream. Jones stated:

> Weigel sat at a round table (down left) and scoured knives while the Chaplain, to her immediate right, dried glasses. A long silence ensued. When the shots rang out offstage, Weigel's face was seized by what Brecht called 'a look of extreme suffering,' an 'unscreaming open mouth and backward-bent head.' The famous model book photographs show this moment clearly. Weigel's hands, still in her lap, did not betray any special tension, but her body was bent by some mysterious force thrusting up against her lower back. That force pushed her chest out, her shoulders up, and her head back. Her eyes were closed and unreadable. The audience's focus was on her silent mouth, frozen open in an agonized expression.
>
> (Jones, 1986, p. 120)

Figure 13: (above) Helene Weigel, Silent Scream. Photo credit: Hainer Hill

There is an interesting dynamic in the description of Weigel's pose. The 'tension' in her torso from a 'mysterious force thrusting up against her lower back,' yet her hands lie softly in her lap. The force pushed her chest out, her shoulders up, ending with Weigel's head leaning back. It is as if something has been set in motion that must be received by the spectators. With every action there is a reaction. Weigel's body is here the action, and the spectator (Steiner) is reacting. These elements (Weigel's pose structure) act as what I would term a 'transfer point' of narrative where the emotional content for the spectators to take over and finish with their imagination, as exemplified earlier with Steiner's experience of Weigel's pose moment.

Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874–1940) was another avant-gardist who looked for inspiration in kabuki theatre and explored many of its practice elements through his own practice. Meyerhold's former student the Russian director Sergei Eisenstein (1898–1948) argued that Meyerhold had 'plundered' all his ideas from kabuki theatre (Eisenstein, 1949, pp. 18–19). Meyerhold argued that one way to get an engaged spectator was through their imagination by creating a performance model where there were gaps in the performance. These would appeal

to them on a conscious and subconscious level where they might instinctively begin a creative process of filling in the blanks. Meyerhold argued:

It would seem that the naturalistic theatre denies the spectator's capacity to fill in the details with his imagination in the way one does when listening to music? But nevertheless, the capacity is there.

(Meyerhold, 1969, p. 6)

Meyerhold's argument highlights a key issue in theatrical practice, commenting on the spectator's capacity to engage their imagination freely and organically when they are listening to music or looking at a work of visual art. This becomes, for some reason, a much more challenging task when the same instincts are called upon in theatrical practice. Meyerhold posits that one way of creating that link between performance and spectators' imagination is through leaving out some of the information in the performance. This is what occurred in Weigel's silent scream that propelled Steiner's response of hearing a 'raw and terrible' scream which reminded him of Picasso's *Guernica.* This pose moment acted as a tool to manipulate the spectator's engagement on a conscious and subconscious level. I must add that the pose moment does not hold all the power: Weigel's skill as a performer is what opened the door to the possibility of these co-creative strategies.

To take a closer look at the invisible structures, such as rhythm and tension, I examined Meyerhold's 1926 production of Gogol's *The Inspector General*. Meyerhold had divided the play into fifteen episodes, where all but four were presented on platforms as *tableaux vivants*

(Kiebuzinska, 1988, pp. 68–69). As Christine Kiebuzinska argued in her study, *Revolutionaries in the theater* (1988):

> the characters froze in their poses as they came out on the moving platforms: They
>
> paused for a long time under the spotlights and suddenly began to move and to
>
> speak … In the concluding episode they froze in rigid, distorted poses. The light
>
> went out for a few seconds, and when they came on again the audience saw not
>
> actors but mannequins in the same ridiculous poses.
>
> (Kiebuzinska, 1988, p. 69)

Meyerhold introduced some interesting 'layers,' starting with actors posing on a moving platform, thereby introducing stillness (the actors poses) in movement (the moving platform). Then he made another shift and had the actors move and speak, which was followed by rigid poses. The performance was lit by a bright light that switched into darkness, and from darkness to light again, replacing the human bodies in the poses with mannequins.

Meyerhold's rhythmic structures constantly removed the known by making the performance unpredictable, and thus making it impossible for the spectators to take anything for granted as they had no idea what was coming next. For example, the spectators, might have been surprised to see the actors have disappeared and have been replaced by mannequins.

I argue that these structures, the silence, as used in Weigel's silent scream and Meyerhold's actors posing in silence, created tension in the spectator much like the tension created when a kabuki actor performs a *mie* pose. Meyerhold practice system, as shown in the example, provides a system to explore a theatrical performance from a rhythmic perspective,

much like a musical score. From frozen poses to movement and energetic chatter, to frozen distorted poses.

The shift from actors to mannequins introduces an element that I would term as a counter-rhythm. This is an effective tool to engage the spectators co-creatively on a conscious and subconscious level. It could be argued that Meyerhold introduced multiple counter-rhythms in the performance, starting with actors that are not moving, that is a counter-rhythm, a performance surprise. Every movement and stillness were in place to provoke the spectators into engaging with the performance. Here Meyerhold addresses the rhythmic and tensional quality in his theatrical practice:

> In the movements of an actor the pause signifies not an absence or cessation of motion, but, as in music, preserves an element of motion. Just because an actor is not in motion at a given moment it does not mean that he has relinquished the sphere of music. The actor remains constantly on stage, not only because there are no wings and hence no refuge offstage, but above all because once he has grasped the significance of the pause he continues to participate in action.
>
> (Meyerhold, 1969, p. 149)

Meyerhold is referring to an energy that, I argue, is the same as a tension that runs through the performance and does not end because the actor halts in a pose moment; even in stillness the rhythm is still part of the performing movement. As Meyerhold was heavily inspired by kabuki theatre, it is not a coincidence how closely his theories mirror kabuki actor Nakamura's reference to the *kakegoe* and the importance of their calls being rhythmically in sync with the

performer as otherwise it would throw off not only the actor but the whole performance.

Rhythm played a significant role in his theatrical practice. As Meyerhold argued:

> Time is a very precious element on the stage. If a scene visualised by the author as incidental lasts longer than necessary, it casts burden on the next scene which the author may well intend as most significant … Thus, the spectator, having spent too long looking at something, he should quickly forget, is tired out before the important scene.
>
> (Meyerhold, 1969, p. 28)

If the pace of a scene is too long, it not only affects the scene following it, but the rhythm of the whole performance is off. And the actor would have to work hard to regain the momentum. One might be lured into thinking that rhythm equals speed, but rhythm as tension is not about speed; it is about being intuitively attuned to rhythm of the moment. Meyerhold argued that a theatremaker creates a performance with the spectator as the fourth creator. Thus, the success is based on whether the theatremaker is attuned to an inner rhythm; how they devise a performance by the ebbs and flows of tension; and how the actor internalises that rhythm or rather allows it to flow through (Meyerhold, 1969, p. 63). I argued earlier that Lady Hamilton must have been attuned to the rhythm and tension in the room at her *Attitude* performances to access the spectator's attention with tension by determining or feeling how long to hold her poses and using the swift movement with her shawl to call attention to a pose. Tension, in this case, is there to provoke attention. In the devising process of a creative performance,

represented by pose images using gaps and suggestions for the spectator to complete with their imagination, the theatremaker must devise a performance that is simultaneously both complete and incomplete. The power of the pose moment lies in its liminal state and the efficacy of that pose moment lies in rhythmic tension leading up to it and its completion. A rhythmic quality may have been set by the directors (e.g. Brecht and Meyerhold), but it is innately produced and timed by the actor's performance, which is also affected by, and responding to, the energy of the audience as a group.

The pose template image and visual arts image.

In this section I will consider the relationship between visual arts and performance art that encompasses what might be described as a historic palindromic exchange of ideas from performer to visual artist and from visual artist to performer.

I will begin this section with the kabuki actor's use of visual arts images, which were created (mostly) by fans of kabuki. Tōshūsai Sharaku's print (See Figure 14, below) of the actor Ōtani Ōniji III from 1794–1795, shows Ōtani performing a *mie* pose with his eyes crossed.

Figure 14: (Above) Tōshūsai Sharaku (1794–1795), Ōtani Oniji III in the Role of the Servant Edobei

This print is not only a visual arts image of an actor but, along with other kabuki visual arts images, serves as a performance catalogue of *mie* poses for past and present kabuki actors to study and learn from. Bowers argues, 'The color prints of the Genroku, and later years, are not

merely portraits of actors, but of the actors in these poses, and as such have been acting as guides to kabuki actors of subsequent centuries' (Bowers, 1964, p. 191). Conversely, kabuki scholar A.O. Scott argued that the kabuki actor was actively engaging in setting up an aesthetic moment for a visual artist (Scott, 1953, p. 105). Much like Lady Hamilton, who with her *Attitude* poses, often created pose moments with the visual artist in mind, manifesting their compositions. Throughout his life Meyerhold was influenced by visual arts. This included 'constructivists, mystic and symbolist painters Soudeikin, Anisfeld, Bakst, Korovin, Golovin...' (Houghton, 1936, p. 87). In his production of *La Dame aux Camélias,* Meyerhold tried to infuse the quality of Manet and of Renoir into the production. Another time he brought paintings by Botticelli and Hans Memling to a rehearsal to show his actors the bas-relief arrangement and gestures he was trying to achieve (Law, 1998, p. 21). Houghton argued that Meyerhold believed, 'the actor should become on the stage a sort of visible symbol of poetic thought' (Houghton, 1936, p. 87). The Italian painter Giotto di Bondone (1266–1337) was another favourite of Meyerhold's. Giotto's work was also favoured by Beckett who saw his images both as 'a 'living symbol', and as a 'symbol of itself' [...] Beckett termed this plastic' (Carville, 2018, p. 41).

This highlights how visual artwork can provide a 'platform' where theatremakers can interrogate creative ideas. This interrogation can take place for as long as needed as it is a static image. There are numerous examples of this reciprocal relationship, between visual artists and performance artists.

For this section, as Caravaggio's work will be key in Chapter Four: *Practising the Pose*, I will highlight Caravaggio's visual art works and the palindromic exchange between it and theatre

practitioners. In her doctoral dissertation, *Caravaggio's Drama: Art, Theatre, and Religion during Italy's Spanish Age,* Kathy Johnston-Keane hypothesised:

> Caravaggio wanted to create 'memory images' that he believed surpassed those of past painters. By choosing theatre, the artist modelled his work after 'quick' images rather than 'dead' ones. Caravaggio had easy access to these 'quick' images, for they were the dramatic performances that were readily available to him in the streets, churches, and confraternities. These 'living' images were thought to have had the strongest impact on their viewers.
>
> (Johnston-Keane, 2010, p. 323)

According to Johnston-Keane, Caravaggio used the theatre to impact his viewers by creating 'quick' images to mobilise the beholder's engagement. Caravaggio's ability to capture a present moment might be why so many artists and practitioners have found inspiration in his work. One of the many artists who have appropriated Caravaggio's visual arts work is the Irish playwright and theatre maker Samuel Beckett (1906–1989). In his study, *Images of Beckett,* James Knowlson documents an episode where Beckett saw a Caravaggio painting, which connected him to an idea and helped him materialise that idea as a practice concept on stage. Knowlson stated:

> (Beckett) wrote to me in April 1973 about his play, *Not I,* in which *Mouth* pours out a stream of sound with a huge figure of a standing, listening Auditor: 'image of *Not I* in part suggested by Caravaggio's *Beheading of St John the Baptist'.* This huge, powerful painting hangs in the oratory of St John's Cathedral in Valletta, Malta*,*

where Beckett and Suzanne spent a holiday in 1971, just before he started to write

Not I. The crucial elements for Beckett's play are the head of John itself, reduced

further by Beckett to the bold image of a babbling mouth, and the observing

spectators – most movingly, an old woman with her hands held over her ears,

which, when it coalesced with the memory of the Moroccan waiting figure, became

Auditor, capable only of making gestures 'of helpless compassion'. Since Beckett

had already had the idea of a head spouting words like water from a fountain many

years before, the importance of Caravaggio's painting was to provide an insight into

the way in which the two different images might be configured in practice on stage.

(Knowlson, 2003, p. 55)

Furthermore, Knowlson argues that Caravaggio's images such as *The beheading of St John the*

Baptiste, David with the Head of Goliath, and Supper at Emmaus 'reverberate in the mind,

when one thinks of Beckett's own visual pictures in plays such as *Not I, That Time* and

Catastrophe' (Knowlson, 2003, p. 79). Knowlson notes that Billie Whitelaw, who worked with

Beckett for many years and is considered as one of the premiere interpreters of his work,

commented:

when he directed her in Footfalls, 'he was not only using me to play the notes, but I

almost felt that he did have the paintbrush out and was painting.' He was

concerned to ensure that his bold, powerful, resonant images and 'frozen' tableaux'

should make their maximum impact in the theatre.

(Knowlson, 2003, pp. 72–73)

I found it noteworthy that Whitelaw mentioned the 'frozen tableaux' as having a maximum

impact in a theatrical performance. This is a recurring theme, the pose state produced to

heighten the impact of a performance moment. The theatremaker and performer signalling to

the spectators, pay attention to *this*. The tableaux have inspired practitioners as a world in

which to engage. Additionally, I would argue that for the pose moment to have a powerful

impact on the performance moment, it needs a performer capable of empowering the liminal

space, the *ma.* It would be difficult to have a conversation about the practices mentioned in this

chapter without Lady Hamilton, Helene Weigel, Billie Whitelaw, or a kabuki actor who begins

their training at the age of three or four. Fischer-Lichte terms the 'actors' ability of commanding

space and holding attention to the *strong concept of presence*' (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p. 96). I

would argue that the strong concept of presence does not only refer to a performer's charisma

but also to their capacity of filling out the *ma*, withholding the performance in a suggestive

state for the spectator to engage with the pose moment. The strong concept of presence

includes the actor's ability to harness and sense the tension and rhythmic structures of the

performance, the energy of the spectators, and the space.

On multiple occasions in this thesis I have mentioned co-creation in the form of memory and imagination on a both a conscious and subconscious level. In this section I will highlight the philosophical structures that have been explored in this investigation. What does engaging the spectator's imagination in the co-creative process really mean? And if, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, the desired purpose of the pose moment is to use it as a tool to engage the spectator's imagination and memory, then what are the theoretical structures supporting this hypothesis? The term co-creation has risen in popularity in the past decades and reflects on 'the role of the audience in the creative process' (Walmsley, 2013, p. 108). In the paper, *Co-creating theatre: authentic engagement or inter-legitimation* B, Warmsley argues that 'there is no generally accepted terminology to describe arts participation' (Walmsley, 2013 p. 108). He states:

> The ambiguities reveal the lack of consensus on a definition of co-creation. However, the definitions provided in the literature coalesce around a number of key ideas: collaboration, interaction, invention, participation, experience, value and exchange.

> (Walmsley, 2013, p. 109)

However, as Walmsley argues, the term co-creation often points to an active, vocal, participatory spectator. An example of this is the Schauspiel Stuttgart Model. Schauspiel Stuttgart is known for its experimentation with spectator co-creation and encourages spectators to protest during performances (Heim, 2012, p. 191). In Volker Losch's *Dogville*, 'audience members shouted out "Stop, stop!" at the stage during an explicit rape scene' (Heim,

2012, p. 191). Similar modes of protest in performance were explored by avant-gardists such as Brecht, Artaud, Meyerhold, and Marinetti. However, as with the *Omuko* of the kabuki theatre, this mode of spectatorship requires an expert or connoisseur to engage and respond at the right time and in the right way. In the example of the *Dogville* production, the protest is inherently an appeal to extroverted audience members who are not afraid of 'doing the wrong thing' or 'ruining' the performance by disturbing the event. This would exclude most audience members as they would find it too awkward to engage in protests in the theatre. As Walmsley argues, 'co-creation attracts a highly niche audience of "theatre people" who are active learners and risk takers' (Walmsley, 2013, p. 111).

An important element to include in this discussion is why theatremakers and theorists want to use the word or even the concept in the first place. Co-creation implicitly refers to a desire to create a theatrical practice that engages its audience. For the avant-garde this trope became inherently connected to the 'passive spectator' who needed to be engaged and activated in a theatrical performance. The passive spectator was defined as someone who passively observed a theatrical performance as a consumer. In his study *The emancipated spectator* (2014) the French philosopher Jacques Ranciére [1940–] questions the trope of the passive spectator. Ranciére argues:

> according to the accusers, being a spectator is a bad thing for two reasons. First,
> viewing is the opposite of knowing: the spectator is held before an appearance in a
> state of ignorance about the process of production of this appearance and about
> the reality it conceals. Second, it is the opposite of acting: the spectator remains

immobile in her seat, passive. To be a spectator is to be separated from both the

capacity to know and the power to act.

<div align="right">(Ranciére, 2014 pp. 5–6)</div>

Ranciére argues that there is a conflict between theatremakers' accusations of the passive

spectator and the role of the spectator. Ranciére questions the presumption theatre

practitioners and theorists have made about the spectator's passive state, asking, how can

theatremakers know that the spectator is not thinking? Ranciére questions if:

> to view means to take pleasure in images and appearances while ignoring the truth
>
> behind the image and the reality outside the theatre? Why assimilate listening to
>
> passivity, unless through the prejudice that speech is the opposite of action? These
>
> oppositions – viewing/knowing, appearance/reality, activity/passivity – are quite
>
> different from logical oppositions between clearly defined terms.

<div align="right">(Ranciére, 2014, p. 11)</div>

Ranciére argues the spectator is not sitting in a passive state and, therefore, does not need to

be activated, as being a spectator is also being a human. As such, there will always be the

process of linking what is seen with what is known by association, knowledge, intuition, and

sensorial response. Later Ranciére notes:

> It is in this power of associating and dissociating that the emancipation of the
>
> spectator consists – that is to say, the emancipation of each of us as spectator.
>
> Being a spectator is not some passive condition that we should transform into
>
> activity. It is our normal situation. We also learn and teach, act and know, as

spectators who all the time link what we see to what we have seen and said, done

and dreamed.

(Ranciére, 2014, p. 15)

This study's definition of co-creation could be interpreted in relation to the emancipation of the

spectator. It explores co-creation from the perspective that the spectator's agency is implicit,

active and associative. The spectator is acknowledged as already 'creating' in their role of

spectating, instinctively, with their imagination or memory images that are associated with

what they see. The French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941) argues:

> There is no perception which is not full of memories. With the immediate and
>
> present data of our senses, we mingle a thousand details out of our past
>
> experience. In most cases these memories supplant our actual perceptions, of
>
> which we then retain only a few hints, thus using them merely as 'signs' that recall
>
> to us former images.

(Bergson, 1991, p. 33)

This means, according to Bergson's hypothesis, that what is perceived is always interpreted by

our past experiences, our memories. This provides an exciting entrance into how to think about

spectator co-creation, not as something which must be seen in a specific way, but instead as

something which *suggests* itself to the spectator and allows the spectator's subconscious to

make meaning of it. It opens a much broader and personal form of interpretation. As Walmsley

argues, 'Co-creation is ultimately messy, raw, incomplete, contingent and context-dependent,'

however its aim is to deepen spectator engagement in the theatre (Walmsley, 2013, p. 108).

From a theatremaker's perspective, it takes control and dominance out of the equation and instead allows for exploration of what could be interpreted as a more fluid or malleable form of presenting theatrical work. This hypothesis is interesting to investigate regarding the pose template image. Returning to George Steiner's statement on Weigel's silent scream, as Mother. I have repeated Steiner's statement below to juxtapose it with Bergson's argument and highlight how Bergson's philosophical framework acts in this theatrical context. Steiner stated:

> As the body of her son was laid before her, she merely shook her head in mute denial. The soldiers compelled her to look again. Again, she gave no sign of recognition, only a dead stare. As the body was carried off, Weigel looked the other way and tore her mouth wide open. The shape of the gesture was that of the screaming horse in Picasso's *Guernica.* The sound that came out was raw and terrible beyond any description I could give of it. But, in fact, there was no sound. Nothing. It was a sound of total silence. It was silence which screamed and screamed through the whole theatre so that the audience lowered its head as before a gust of wind.

> (Steiner, 1961, pp. 353–354)

I will start by unpacking what is to be understood when Bergson's posits, 'the immediate and present data of our senses,' in this context. The immediate and present data is what is presented on the stage. What Steiner saw on the stage in front of him was the body of the son laid out on the floor in front of Mother. Mother did not accept her son's death. This 'immediate and present data' acted, according to Bergson, as 'signs to recall former images.' Steiner's senses were exposed to Mother's sign of a desperate grief which she was unable to accept and

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come to terms with. Mother looked the other way and tore her mouth wide open, but no

sound came out of her mouth. Steiner's memories supplanted what was in front of him, here,

Mother's gaping mouth, with a notion of inconceivable pain, brought forth memories of

Picasso's painting *Guernica*.

Figure 16: (Above) Helene Weigel, Silent Scream, Photo credit: Hainer Hill

Figure 17: (Above) Pablo Picasso, Guernica (1937)

This example highlights how a theatrical performance merged with, albeit a memory image of a

work of visual art, uncovered the depth of an experience by a visceral identification with the

concept of pain. As Bergson argued, 'When perception, as we understand it, is once admitted,

memory must arise' (Bergson, 1991, p. 43). This experience, in many ways, mirrors Beckett's

realisation when he looked at a Caravaggio visual arts image, it triggered his memory of a

devising problem and connected his creativity, thereby finding a solution for his staging issue.

With his mind's eye Steiner created performance experience that was unique to him as the

memory images he produced were entirely different from the person sitting next to him or any

other person who experienced the performance. 'There is no perception without memory,'

Bergson argued, 'memory does not consist in a regression from the present to the past, but, on the contrary, in the progression from the past to the present' (Bergson, 1991, p. 239). Bergson suggested that we think that perception is a photographic image of the present moment when the present moment can only reflect the past. All we see is reflected by what we have seen before. It also highlights there is no difference between Beckett's creative associative process and the spectator's creative process, in this case Steiner's, as they are both expressions of organic human processes, linking what is seen with what has been experienced/associated/seen before. I would argue that this justifies the inclusion of Meisner's actor training theories in the devising process. For, if the act of creation/association is the same for the actor and the spectator alike, then it makes sense to consider the spectator as an actor and, with that, connect what engages an actor to the spectator. The shift provides a theoretical framework for exploring the concept of co-creative practice.

This mode of performance practice infringes on the authorship of the performance. If the spectator is not just someone who watches a performance, then who is the performer? In the *Death of the author* (1968), the French philosopher Roland Barthes [1915–1980], as referenced by Claire Bishop, argues 'a work's meaning is not dependent on authorial intention but on the individual point of active reception' (Bishop, 2006, p. 41). Viewing this theory through the lens of the theatre, no matter the intended effect of what is shown on the stage, meaning can only be activated by the individual spectator. In *Death of the author,* Barthes highlights ethnographic societies' practices of narration, Barthes states, 'The responsibility for a narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator, a shaman, or relator whose "performance" – (is a form of) mastery of a narrative code...' (Bishop, 2006, p. 41). In theatrical practice, it could be

argued, there are multiple narrators, the playwright, director, actor, scenographer. However, once a play is released as a performance for an audience, who then, holds the mastery of the narrative code? The actor or the spectator? My hypothesis is that both the actor and the spectator do. It is complicated to think this through as it implies that the narrative code is not a specific monoculture. Instead, it relies on associative, sensuous, sensorial, reactive energies and, therefore, cannot be other than a fluid and changeable form, interpreted by many (the individual spectator) as well as the actor working on stage.

I have already highlighted some suggestions for considering spectator co-creation during the devising process. First and foremost, I have hypothesised that to pose is to call for attention. A pose moment is a signal, indicating to the spectator, 'pay attention to this!' Avant-gardists, such as Craig, Meyerhold, Beckett, and Brecht, touched upon theories to activate their spectator's engagement/co-creation in the performance, inspired by the kabuki theatre, as I have already shown. They experimented with practice forms that left gaps in the performance and/or added suggestions to promote the spectator's co-creation. Becht did so with Mother's Silent scream. Craig experimented with suggestions in his production of *Macbeth* by replacing actors playing the three witches with moving shadows projected against the backdrop (Burden, 2004, p. 447)

However, these powerful tools to engage the spectator co-creatively were often subsumed within performances that relied on the written play text as the main form of communication. This is similar to kabuki theatre, as I shall highlight in the following chapter, where all the elements that promote spectator co-creation are present, yet, spoken play text lines are prominent in the practice.

The mode of co-creation pursued in this thesis seeks to explore a theatrical performance of a traditional play text where the main form of communication is a pose dramaturgy. The question then becomes, how can textual information be communicated into a narrative form that tries to meet the spectator's co-creative state? In this conceptualisation, the pose moment represents a liminal state that provides the spectator with time to engage in a performance moment. This has, been exemplified by the *mie* pose, and by Hamilton's poses where the spectator's projected lust, desire, and admiration is animated during the pose moment and its formation. Lust, desire, and admiration are all qualities of what could be constituted as narrative production, devised by the spectator, associatively, sensorially, and sensuously. This engages with Barthes' argument that what a writer writes is activated by the reader. The same might be argued from a co-creative practice perspective: what is shown on the stage must be mobilised by the spectator.

The co-creation hypothesis in this study leans on the notion that a co-creative process is not a singular event with a singular meaning but instead an aggregate, implicating various narratives, some relating to the dramaturgy of the performance, others from associative images, sensorial sensations, memory images, and imagination. In theory, this might appear as a messy combustion of ideas, however, it is testing the hypothesis that a linear perceptive state is an illusion since personal experience – and perception of that experience - are derived from multiple associations drawn from various moments in a person's life or imagination. This is illustrated by George Steiner, who was clearly capable of following the Mother Courage narrative while also engaging his associative images. He did not have a choice as this is, according to this hypothesis, how humans perceive.

In this mode of practice, the act of creation does not solely rely on the spectator, the actor, the

director, or the playwright, but instead suggests a collective and individual mode of co-creative

practice. However, I will posit that it is the actor's ability to produce a powerful suggestive state

that is at the forefront of strong co-creative practice. The actor is not, and cannot provide, the

full performance; that responsibility lies with the spectator's co-creative ability. This suggests

the performance landscape must be complete and incomplete at the same time. There must be

a 'full' performance with a dramaturgical arc to be experienced by a variety of spectators who

produce a variety of meanings at different times during the performance. What moves and

activates some spectators may not move and activate others. The performance must,

therefore, be set and fluid at the same time. My whole thesis posits the claim that the pose

holds within it a most acute moment of visual, visceral and corporeal co-creation.

In addition, the co-creative ability/success/failure of the spectator will always vary and make it

difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of this form of practice, which is why it has been so

difficult for academia to define. However, as this thesis posits, it is important to conduct

research into what might, according to the hypothesis highlighted in this section, be a more

organic mode in which to engage with the spectator's implicitly active and receptive co-creative

state.

In this chapter, I have highlighted various uses of the pose in performance practice. What

connects all these pose moments is that they were used at heightened important moments in

the performance. In kabuki, the pose was, and still is, used on multiple occasions during the

performance as a narrative building entity. In other practices the pose was used sparingly, such

as Weigel's single pose moment in *Mother Courage.* I have shown the pose used in

performance practice as a solo performance artform, such as Lady Hamilton's *Attitude* poses, or

as a group event, as shown in the *Tableaux vivant* section.

In the beginning of this chapter, I stated etymologically, 'to pose' means 'to pause', but as my

examination showed, the pause might be a cessation of movement but not a necessarily

cessation of meaning, or even action. The pose is used to signal to the spectator to pay close

attention to a performance moment. Furthermore, it acts as a prompt for the spectator to

further investigate that moment. The liminal state of the pose moment, which in Japanese

theatre practice is termed as *ma*, holds within it a projection of narrative or what I would like to

term as a 'world on its own'. Additionally, I have stated the importance of the performer using

the pose state to empower that pose with the emotional content needed for the pose moment

and engage the spectators consciously and subconsciously. This means that the pose image

operates in two states as it is both complete as an aesthetic image, suggestive of its narrative

content, and incomplete as its suggestive state awaits a co-creative collaboration from the

spectator.

Dramaturgically, the pose has, across the different disciplines, been used in, heightened and

important moments in a performance.

Of the surrounding structures empowering the pose I have identified the following as being

significant:

- **tension**

- **rhythm**

- **movement before the pose**

- **awareness and acting upon the energy in the room**

- **spectator co-creation**

- **liminality**

Additionally, I have highlighted the importance of the skill of the performer to sense when to perform the pose moment and when to remove it – as referenced with Hamilton's performances or the kabuki actor's *mie* I would argue that the pose holds within it a powerful notion of how to explore and economise meaning making and engage the spectator in co-creation through an implied suggestive dramaturgy of pose moments, offering multiple layers of engagement.

This chapter has codified the structures that are engaged to empower a pose moment. The findings of this chapter will be applied and investigated in Chapter Four: Practice Research.

In the next chapter, I will examine pose states as observed from my field research. This will provide a different and necessary perspective to the study.

Chapter Three: Field Research. Experiential Essays

The field-based research was conducted to examine pose practices from different perspectives. In the first two essays I examine the pose from a spectator's perspective. The third essay details a practice research element where I used my own body to investigate the Japanese *nihon buyo* dance practice during a three-week programme. During each of these experiences of, what at times seemed like foreign practices, my Meisner training provided me with the tools to absorb, be present, and engage with them.

Tableaux Vivants in Napoli, Italy. 11 November 2018

I will preface my experience of the live *tableaux vivant* performance in Napoli with my own history and connection to Caravaggio's work, to better position it.

I was fascinated with visual arts long before my attention turned towards the theatre. It started with Chagall, then Modigliani, before I became aware of Caravaggio's work in my early teens and was intrigued by the chiaroscuro effect and the myth of this obscure, dangerous, and misunderstood artist. Ever since, his name and work have, in some strange way, been part of me. It is as though, when someone mentions his name, there is something personal about it that strikes me. This emotional connection to his work goes back decades. I remember the impact his work had on me and how it developed my fascination for the play between light and shadows.

I saw my first Caravaggio paintings in person, years ago at the National Gallery in London where three of his works are exhibited; *Boy Bitten by a Lizard, The Supper at Emmaus* and

Salome Receives the Head of St John the Baptiste. I remember that after I had paid the entrance

fee, I almost ran through the corridors of the museum to Room 32 where his paintings were

displayed. I was overwhelmed with emotions as I stood in front of what felt like a memory of a

long-lost friend. They were so much more than visual arts images; they were a part of me; they

were mine. The connection was already there. Just like the connection most actors have to

iconic play texts or playwrights like Tennessee Williams. It is a connection of the outsider

finding an inner saturated world into which they might gain a sense of belonging: the world of

the theatre; the world of the play text; the playwright; and the characters they inhabit. I am

stating this to highlight how a pose image not only acts as an aesthetic template, but also

inhabits layers of connectivity and consciousness that, in this case, are saturated with

memories. As Bergson argued, 'perception and recollection, always, interpenetrate each other'

(Bergson, 1991, p. 67). Much like Beckett, connecting his theatrical world to the Caravaggio

image he saw in Malta, Bergson hypothesised that:

> (memories)complete our present experience, enriching it with experiences already
>
> acquired and the latter is ever increasing, it must end by covering up and
>
> submerging the former.
>
> (Bergson, 1991, p. 66)

This hypothesis highlights how my own connection to the work of Caravaggio has been

enriched over decades from which my memory and perception cannot be detached, as my

experience is pre-layered. It is my hypothesis that some theatremakers and performers see the

theatrical experience through a portal of other art forms. Beckett's well-documented

connection to the visual arts manifested itself through the creative process, as identified

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earlier. Beckett finds a staging solution by looking at a Caravaggio. Whitelaw, one of Beckett's leading interpreters argued, as mentioned in Chapter Two, that he, was not only using her to play the notes, but she almost felt that he 'did have the paintbrush out and was painting' (Knowlson, 2003, p. 73). Beckett was creating a theatrical practice in which he interrogated the theatre through a portal of visual arts.

In November 2018 I went to Napoli, Italy, to see Malatheatre – Ludovica Rambelli Teatro's *tableaux vivant* performance of twenty-five of Caravaggio's visual arts images. These included many connections to my research in Napoli. *Tableaux vivants* originated in Napoli where they were staged on processional carts during the 'year-long festivities of the Jubilee Year' (Johnston-Keane, 2010, p. 7). Lady Hamilton invented her *Attitude* poses in Napoli at Lord Hamilton's residence. Lastly, Caravaggio lived in Napoli at two points in his life. He painted *The Seven Works of Mercy, The Flagellation of Christ,* and *The Martyrdom of St Ursula* in Napoli. *The Martyrdom of St Ursula* is thought to be Caravaggio's last work before he was murdered in 1610.

Malatheatre – Ludovica Rambelli Teatro was founded in 2006 by Ludovica Rambelli. Inspired by Pier Paolo Pasolini's short film *La Ricotta* [5](1963), Rambelli decided to explore Caravaggio's working method by performing *tableaux vivants* of his paintings. 'He used actors to build the scenes he painted,' Rambelli argued, adding, 'in fact we did not reproduce his work, but created

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[5] Pasolini's film stars the American actor/director Orson Welles and takes place on a film set centered around a chaotic production of a *tableau vivant* depicting religious iconography. The film got its director Pasolini in trouble with the catholic church and was sentenced to four months in jail. A sentence which was later changed to a fine.

what happened in his studio.' Rambelli passed away in 2017 and, since then, the company has been led by director Dora de Maio.

The performance took place at the *Museo Diocesano,* in the Roman Catholic diocese of Napoli. I saw the performance twice on the 11 November. The first performance was at 10:30 am and the second at 12:00 pm. They were identical and lasted 32 minutes.
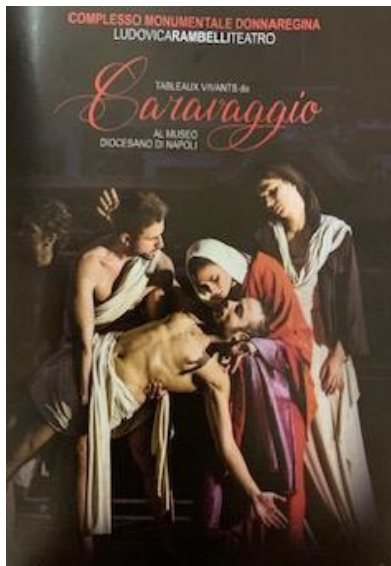
Figure 18: (Above) Performance programme. Photo credit: N. Kovacs

They sold small booklets (see image above) for three euros with photographs of the twenty-five Caravaggio visual arts works included in the performance. As I approached my seat, I noticed the first tableau on the platform in front of me, a basket of fruit standing on a black cloth, Caravaggio's*, Basket of Fruit* (1596). The performance was lit by a strong side light, the chiaroscuro lighting effect favoured by Caravaggio in his visual arts images. A lighting effect that was also used by Lady Hamilton for her *Attitude* pose work. There were eight actors in the

performance: four men and four women. If they were needed for a tableau, they stepped onto the platform. If they were not needed, the actors lay down on the floor behind the platform stage in order not to interfere with the visual of the tableau on the stage. Classical music (Bach and Mozart) was played throughout the performance. The music held multiple functions: as a score for the emotional context of the tableaux images; as an accentuation of the space in the marbled-covered diocesan museum; and it appeared, as a score to which the actors timed their movements. They used long pieces of fabric to wrap around their bodies, draping it around their arms, legs, and bodies in any form or fold needed for the depiction of a character. At times covering a body if they needed a table or a chair for a tableau. On one occasion a piece of fabric was rolled into a ball as a representation of a baby Jesus. There was a synergy in the movement of the actors as a group, which indicated to me that they had worked together for a long time.

The first *tableau vivant* they performed was, *Entombment of Christ.*

Figure 19: (Above) Ludovica Rambelli Teatro, Tableau Vivant of Caravaggio's The Entombment of Christ.

 Photo credit: Gennaro Parricelli

Figure 20: (Above) The Entombment of Christ by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio. Photo credit: Vatican Museums

Each new tableau formation was signified when the actor/s made a sudden shift in their movements before they froze in the pose/s needed for the tableau image.

The first time my fellow spectators and I experienced the dynamics leading up to the tableau pose it caused an eruption of approval, some spectators gasping, while others applauded enthusiastically.

In the previous chapter I referred to the swift movement as a counter-rhythm. The vibrancy of the counter-rhythm raised the aliveness of the performance, alerting us to pay attention. The actors held their tableaux poses for a couple of minutes each, with the first two tableaux being held for the longest duration, which I gather was to train us to immerse ourselves in the experience.

However, after my initial reaction, which was excitement, I began to question the meaning of the experience. The fact was that these were not Caravaggio visual arts images. These bodies in front of me could not replace Caravaggio's use of colours nor the chiaroscuro effect. I could not

connect them to the inner experience and connection to his work that I had personalised over the years. My reaction surprised and disturbed me as I sensed a small panic rising within me. Had I travelled by plane and on the train through Italy to see this? I questioned what kind of experience I had anticipated? Was there a part of me that thought I would somehow get closer to Caravaggio by seeing these tableaux?

I noticed my fellow spectators glancing between their booklets and the *tableaux vivant* on the stage in front of them and wondered if there was something I did not understand that they did. My fellow spectators were exploring the accuracy between the Caravaggio visual arts image in the booklet and the success of actors replicating that image on stage. However, I was looking for more; I was looking for what I perceived was something to match my memories of Caravaggio's work. Then I realised that my approach to the experience was ineffective. I had arrived at the performance with preconceived notions of what I wanted it to be and what I wanted it to mean to me. This approach is the enemy of experiencing and being in the present moment.

I was reminded of my Meisner training, which taught me that to be in the present moment, I must direct my focus outside of myself by simply noticing; What do I see? What do I hear? After all, the interconnectivity of perception and memory is already part of the natural experience, if I am following Bergson's hypothesis. Meisner argued, the foundation of acting is the reality of *doing* and when you do something you really do it. You listen, you really hear; you look and really see (Meisner, 1987, p. 16).

So, I *really* looked at what was happening in front of me instead of trying to understand the experience and its meaning. When I made the adjustments, the performance world opened to me as my eyes began to travel over the tableaux. I became aware of the people depicted in the tableaux, and the predicament they were in. I noticed the play between the light and the shadows falling on the actors' bodies in the pose moment. The placement of fabrics and the shadows in the folds. I followed each individual character's reaction to the moment, their expressions of shock, hopelessness, or powerlessness. And through that sensed a connection to them as people, having human experiences, that I, on some level, could connect to. When I saw a woman raising her arms in despair towards the sky, I connected with the act of pleading for help. In another tableau, where a woman was consoling a loved one, I connected with the act of consoling or being consoled. The intensity of being present appeared at times to erase the barrier in my mind's eye between the performance in front of me and my imagination.

There was one moment during the tableau of *The Incredulity of St Thomas,* where I almost got out of my chair to get a closer look at the wounds. Of course, there were no wounds to be seen, these were actors in front of me, yet my imagination took that next step to finish what was suggested to me. The deeper my engagement became, the more I became aware that the tableau would soon finish. At times, my eyes raced over the image so I would not miss anything, then, I would go back over it once more. But there never was enough time, which I would argue is what kept me excited and engaged in the performance.

The second to last image was *Bacchus.*

Figure 21: (Above) Young Bacchus Photo credit: Gennaro Parricelli

The actor playing the young Bacchus in the tableau had a feisty childlike energy about her as she stepped onto the platform. Another actor placed a box underneath the black cloth. The actor sat on the box and was handed a glass of wine. With a jolt, and a deep breath, her body sank into the pose. This moment elicited the most excitement from the audience, with some yelling 'Bravo!' – Young Bacchus, stood up, looked directly at the audience, smiled, as she raised her glass, 'salute!' she said and drank. The performance was over.

The performance brought my attention to how preconceived notions hindered access to the present moment and this made me question and explore if there might be a way to project Meisner's methods. Another element that excited me was the experience of the *ma* during the tableaux, how it had pulled my engagement inside the performance as I scanned the images swiftly so I would not miss anything, then went back over the image to take in as much of the image as I could within the time provided. It was a partially stressful experience as there was never enough time, but therein lies the conundrum: too much time, and I would have been bored; too little time, stressed. Liminality improves concentration as the liminal space is, as scholar Jill Dolan argues, 'evanescence.' In *Utopia of Performance*, Dolan argues, 'At the base of

the utopian performative's constitution is the inevitability of its disappearance; its efficacy is premised on its evanescence' (Dolan, 2005, p. 8).

This live performance of *tableaux vivants* was a much more compelling and meaningful experience than my desk-based research of *tableaux vivant* suggested it would be.

The Shochikuza Kabuki Theatre, Osaka, Japan. 25 July 2019

My knowledge of kabuki theatre is derived from my desk-based research for this study and the research I produced for my MLitt studies. However, my memory and practice knowledge of kabuki stems from the year I spent performing in the kabuki play, *Benten Kozo,* as previously mentioned in Chapter One. Up to this point the kabuki theatre I had experienced was not *real* kabuki but instead an Americanised version of some of its elements and practices. In many ways this attests to the allure of kabuki, which continues to fascinate theatre practitioners as much today as it did for the avant-garde early in the last century. Kabuki theatre has, in the decades since my performance experience, had an almost mythical status in my mind. Now I was to experience authentic kabuki theatre in person. I was looking for two specific elements in the performance to note: the first was how the *mie* pose moment was performed, and the second was the impact it had on the spectators.

I was at the Shochikuza Kabuki Theatre in Osaka to see the morning and afternoon performances. The programme included three different plays starting with a comedy, followed by a one-act, and ending with a three-act. Although, I could talk at length about the beauty of the theatre, the costumes, and my fellow spectators (who were almost exclusively Japanese),

and the customs I noticed, I will concentrate on how the *mie* pose is performed and its impact on the performance and me as spectator.

Before I continue, I would like to point out that in the beginning of the kabuki performances I had to call to mind Meisner once more to engage in the performance. Initially, I was confused by how much spoken play text was in the performance because when Japanese theatre aesthetics is discussed there is rarely a mention of this aspect, Instead, such discussions exclusively address the exiting practices, the colours, the *mie,* and symbolic representations, but never how much information is produced through spoken play text lines. I wondered why the play text was needed when there was so much symbolism. I almost missed the first *mie* moment because I had anticipated big movements and sound. What I saw, instead, were little movements with almost no facial expression; it baffled me. I felt, at first, that the performance was distant from me due to me not understanding the Japanese language. Then, I let go of my preconceived notion of the practice and the excitement I had come to the theatre with and just asked of myself to be present and observe. Once more, this became my entrance into the performance and an extraordinary, emotional theatrical experience that I will never forget.

The first thing that stood out from my desk-based research and practice experience was that I had wrongly assumed the *mie* pose was made with one big, fast, powerful movement. Instead, the *mie* poses I saw in the three performances that day appeared as a series of small intervals with little staccato movements ending in a final pose. At first this confused me. I then remembered Pronko's description of Kiechiemon's 'spectacular' *mie* pose moment (referenced in Chapter Two), where Pronko stated Kiechiemon pose was 'similar to building with blocks: the spectator could almost perceive him piling form upon form until he reached the culmination of

his pose' (Pronko, 1969, p. 141). I had expected these building blocks to be made in sharp, dominant movements but instead, the movements the actors made to build their poses appeared soft. During the *mie* pose formation the actors showed minimal facial expression. The body and facial movements were in sharp contrast to the loud slamming of the *ki.* The actors' bodies seemed to stiffen during this formation, with the actors expressing an intensity from their eyes that I have not seen expressed on stage before. It was as if there was a dynamic of the actors moving and repressing their movements simultaneously.

A man in my section (the third tier) suddenly started shouting from his seat. The first time he shouted, I turned around and looked at him. I was mortified. At that time, I did not know about *omuko* and the *kakegoe*, and that his calls were an honoured intricate part of the spectator tradition of kabuki theatre. He looked concentrated and focused as he stared down on the stage, in many ways mimicking the look of the actor performing his *mie* on stage, as if he were channelling the performer's energy. No one else was looking at him but me. He was loud! His shouting was sporadic, yet it was as if the few other audience members who joined in were waiting for his lead. My misunderstanding of the moment created a sense of danger and a sense of something happening that was unknown to me. This both excited and scared me as I was far from the stage but, at the same time, something on the stage was connected to something directly behind me. This meant that even in the third tier, the cheap seats, I and everyone in the theatre were surrounded by the performance.

Although there were many other things going on from a performance perspective, I will solely focus on the pose moment and how it was used as a dramaturgical tool. Throughout this sequence, the dramatic arc concerned the actor/character attempting to perform his *mie* pose

and struggling to do so. Again, as I do not speak Japanese, I did not understand the actual narrative of the performance. Furthermore, I wanted to see how much I would understand of the performance without exact knowledge, which I thought might help me later when I explored my own practice. The sequence began when the actor, a samurai warrior, who was one of the leading characters in the three-act arrived on the *hanamachi*. Throughout the entire scene he never stopped fighting off his adversaries until the very last moment.

The *hanamachi* lit up when the samurai arrived. He had a long staff sword in his hand. Every time he moved his staff sword, it was followed by laborious moans. On multiple occasions during the scene the samurai tried to perform a *mie* pose but was unable to do so because of his wounds represented by his blood-soaked costume. There were moments when he was too exhausted to speak and a chorus or the *samisen* (string instrument) took over his voice and gave him the sound or the words that he was unable to produce himself. At times, his voice sounded otherworldly, with a deep frightening death rattle that I have never heard before. At other times, he vocally performed in a higher pitch, indicating his desire to summon his last strength to finish his task and perform his pose. Even though I did not understand the language, what unfolded onstage spoke directly to my soul. The tension produced by his efforts and inability to do what he intended moved me. I fought to hold back the tears and could hear from the sudden wave of coughing and sniffles from the audience that I was not the only one. I found myself dumbstruck by how moving and deeply human this theatre, which has been described as stylistic, stiff, unnatural, unreal, and puppet-like, was. Finally, the samurai made it from the *hanamachi* to the main stage. On the main stage lay a large boulder with a narrow pathway leading to the top where a large anchor lay. Attached to the anchor was a pile of heavy rope.

The wounded samurai began to scale the rock. The weaselling sound coming out of his mouth was horrific. Vocally, I have never heard anything like it before. When he finally managed to make it to the top, a deep mournful moment ensued. He grabbed the end of the rope and tied it around his waist. He took another moment and appeared resolute. Then, he threw the rope with the anchor attached into the 'ocean' behind him (upstage). The anchor made its way 'downwards to the bottom of the ocean,' which was indicated by the motion of rope unravelling and disappearing downwards upstage. Just before the anchor pulled the samurai down, he stood on the edge of the landing and finally, he was able to perform his *mie* pose. The pose was powerful, beautiful, mesmerising, and performed with such dignity and honour. He fell backwards, still in his pose, to his death at the bottom of the ocean. Shouts of '*Matte imashita!*' began to ricochet throughout the theatre. *'Matte imashita! Matte imashita!'* – which means, 'I have been waiting for that!'

Figure 22: (Above) Performance programme. (Above, right) the final mie pose.

I felt deeply moved, dumbstruck, and humbled as I left the theatre. His pose was not only a liminal state but the power of that pose moment came from everything that led up to it. The tension was released when he finally, defiantly, performed his *mie* pose. The tension leading up to it impacted the meaning of the pose moment. This made me realise how crucial rhythm and tension is to the success of the pose moment.

Traditional Theatre Training at Kyoto Art Center. 17July – 10 August 2019

In my field research I observed the pose in performance from a spectator's perspective, additionally, I wanted to explore the pose from a practice perspective with my own body. I initially wanted to investigate the traditional pose practice of Japanese kabuki theatre, however, as kabuki only allows male performers, I directed my attention to *nihon buyo*. The *nihon buyo* dance art form is performed by *geikos* (also known as *geishas*), *maikos* (*geiko* apprentices) and by the *onnagatas* (male performers specialising in female roles). This means that *nihon buyo* is performed in the structure of a kabuki play but is also performed out of context as a dance on its own. What it interesting about Japanese theatre aesthetics and the different practices is the cross-pollination of elements from one art form to the other. The merger is created by shared practice elements originating from sacred dance practice, *Noh, nihon buyo*, *bunraku* (puppet theatre), and kabuki. The physicality of the kabuki actors is known to be influenced by *bunraku* puppet theatre. Many of the plays performed in kabuki were originally performed in the puppet theatre.

I had selected the nihon buyo workshop because the dance incorporates many pose moments. The purpose for taking the workshop was to gain an understanding of how the pose was used

as a dramaturgical tool in this dance practice. I wanted to engage with the pose formation and perhaps get a sense of what the *ma* is and how it is performed.

We received sixteen lessons over a three-week period. In the beginning the lessons lasted 2–3 hours, later when we were working on our solo pieces, we received private lessons with the sensei for about an hour.

The teaching method was unfamiliar: it relied on shadowing or mirroring the sensei's movements (as shown in the photo below. Figure 21). As the class progressed, I learned that movement, rhythm, the meaning of the sound of the music (the emotional context it produced), body posture, and the positioning of the body was vastly different from my own past experiences.

Figure 23: (Above) Learning choreography by mirroring sensei Yayoi's movements. Photo credit: Julie Dind

The solo piece that I had been given was called *Goshoguruma*. There were fifty different movement patterns with the fan that I had to memorise, many of them ending in pose moments. I know the exact number as I had to figure out how to learn.
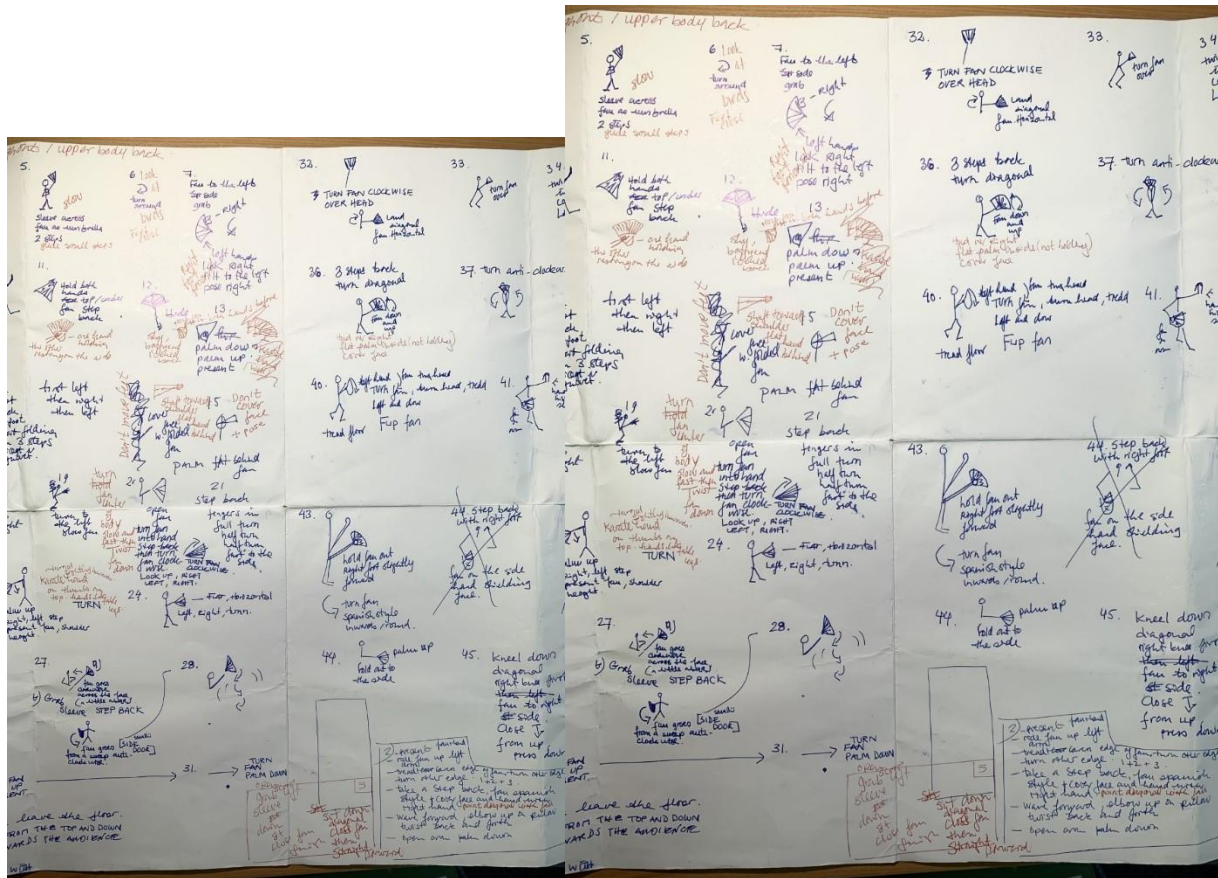
Figure 24: (above) drawing the choreography. Photo credit: Nicole Kovacs

During all the pose moments, Sensei Yayoi yelled, 'Boyfriend!' I learned that all the poses were

there to present a pretty picture to my boyfriend. However, I was not to show the picture

directly, instead as if I just happened to stop in the most favourable position to be seen by my

boyfriend. The pose was there to create the most aesthetically pleasing picture. I was told to

only make expressions through the eyes, but even that was restrained, just as I had observed in

the kabuki theatre performance. The head movements were specific and had a three-step

movement, softly swaying forehead right, then left, and end in the right position. One-two-

three, which is also used by kabuki actors during their *mie* pose moments. Some other pose

formations entailed presenting the beautiful fabric of the kimono, holding up a sleeve, with

knees slightly bent, standing at an angle, with the behind tucked under, shoulders back, chin down. Every part of the body had a specific positioning.

Later, it occurred to me that the human body movements and positioning I was trying to understand was most likely not the correct approach to this dance practice. In her article, *The Legacy of Nihon Buyo,* Joyce Rutherford Malm argued:

> Buyo is almost devoid of torso movement. This could be related to the range of movement possible while maintaining a mask in position. Again, when speaking of a possible cause of a particular attribute of style, such as the lack of torso movement in Buyo, I do not mean to imply that this was the sole cause. If the masks were worn in all the major dance genres preceding Buyo affected the style, so did many other factors. Headdresses and wigs were, and are, often heavy. Costumes, particularly the obi, a wide sash, under which stiffening is worn by women, also limited torso movement. The bunraku puppets (...) do not bend in the torso...

(Malm, 1977, p. 15)

Malm is using the word *buyo*, short for *nihon buyo.* This is another example of how the different artforms have influenced each other. The body posture I was learning in the dance classes was influenced not only by *bunraku* puppets, but also by the mask wearing of *Noh* actors and historic dance practices where masks were used. While masks are rare in *nihon buyo,* the positioning of the head and torso is as if you are wearing a mask or headpiece. Many of the *nihon buyo* dance pieces incorporate working with the dance fan, as mentioned at the beginning of this section. The fan changes representation and meaning throughout the dance. It might represent an umbrella, a letter, or be used as a shield to hide shyness, a sword, or even a

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leaf falling from a tree. The movement before the pose moment creates little stories that the

pose moment accentuates. For example, when my fan was closed, I opened the fan, one-fold at

a time, as if I were opening a long letter, each fold representing a new page, until it was fully

open. Then, I posed with the fan, as if I had just read the most beautiful love letter which

swelled my heart.

The week before the performance, it was time to look at our costumes for the performance.

The costume was heavy, and there were so many *obis* on top of each other, worn underneath,

layer after layer, pressing tightly against the body and making it difficult to move. As Malm

suggested, these *obis* were there to limit upper torso movement and they did! It was terrifying.

Knowing the costumes could not be cleaned caused some anxiousness, and I prayed I would not

sweat. Furthermore, with the body movements restricted by the kimono, tightened with the

many *obis*, bending the knees, getting up and down from the floor was an additional layer of

terror – what if the kimono ripped? What if the fabric got caught under the *tabi* socks as I was

getting up from the floor?

Figure 25: (above) Costume. Photo credit: Julie Dind Figure 26: (Above) Nihon buyo performance Photo credit: Takuya Oshima

It was hard to believe I was moments away from performing in a hundred-year-old *Noh* theatre. On reviewing my performance that day, I could clearly see all the mistakes Yayoi Sensei had pointed out during the rehearsals: going too fast, feet too wide apart, shoulders hunched, my difficulty in having a non-expressive face, finding the balance and depth of emotive expression without showing it.

I have included a link to one of the last rehearsals before the performance to show the teaching and learning process. Link to Nihon buyo rehearsal:

YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-vYoU1fSvA&list=PLMHHl3CZJxcBW6m1X7cdGur6ye38pGsdR&index=2

I will conclude this chapter by briefly summarising the field research, what stood out in the three different practices I researched and codified the similarities I found in the different practices. Additionally, I will highlight which elements of these practices I found useful as I moved forward to interrogate my own practice research for this study.

I shall start with the *tableaux vivant* in Napoli. This performance highlighted the importance of the spectator state. If, in my own practices, I was interested in the inviting the spectators to engage their memory and imagination during the pose moment, then how could I avoid states, such as my own surface reaction to the pose moment, that mainly observed the aesthetic similarities to an original artwork. I contemplated how, by thinking of my Meisner training, I had refocused the experience and was then able to engage with the tableaux through memory,

imagination, and the experience of the present moment. Secondly, I became interested in the swift movement before the pose state and was eager to explore how that movement could be produced in my own practice.

During the three kabuki performances I observed in Osaka, what stood out were the small movements, the pace, the rhythmic quality of the performance, and how performance information was withheld by the actors through the tension in their bodies and emotional expression. I became invested in the idea that the more information is withheld the stronger the engagement from the spectator. Additionally, the tension of the performance, between the performers and the spectators, was an exciting aspect I looked forward to investigating in the practice research.

Kabuki scholar Earle Ernst argued, 'Imitation of Japanese theatre seems to produce only defective copies' (Ernst, 1969, p. 137) adding, 'Western theatre will gain nothing by imitating them; it will gain a great deal by studying the technique by which this fusion is accomplished' (Ernst, 1969, p. 138). What was useful to take away from experience of *nihon buyo* was the impact of tension to multiple structure.

- **Tension in the body during movement.** Controlling the body by not swaying it side to side during movement but instead gliding across the floor.
- **Showing 'perfect' pictures without *showing* that you are creating perfect pictures.** You just happen to stand and walk in an aesthetically favourable manner.

- **Present, yet absent state.** The emotional depth of the *'ma*, which was subdued during

  the pose moment yet powerfully present in its impact, presented a performance state

  empowering and subsequently inviting spectator co-creation.

  - This observation propelled the argument that making sharp, dominant

    movements during a pose formation was not important in relation to making an

    impact during a pose moment.

The research suggests the space that contains the *'ma* holds within it the key to experimenting

with a theatrical practice that aims to connect the actor and the spectator co-creatively. The

connection between the actor and the spectator was evident during the pose moment in *nihon*

buyo, the kabuki actor's *mie* pose moment, and the *tableaux vivant* pose in Napoli, as was

tension and rhythm.

With the desk-based and field research on the pose completed, the next chapter will set out to

examine the identified pose structures in a practice research exploration.

Chapter Four: Practising the Pose

In the practice research, documented in this chapter, I set out to examine the pose as dramaturgical tool, working with an iconic play text. The pose structures and elements that were codified in previous chapters will be implemented and examined in the practice research. Additionally, I used Caravaggio's visual arts images as pose templates for the research. I wanted to explore if a pose template taken from the world of visual arts and inserted into a performance setting might act as a powerful springboard for the spectator to examine, connect with, and discover, much in the same way as if they were engaging with a visual arts work. Furthermore, I have used the work of Meisner's actor training methods in an unconventional manner, by projecting his theories on the devising process with the spectators in mind.

Included in this chapter are selected studio logs, video recordings, and photographic images.

Play text selection

I wanted to work with an iconic play text with a strong female character. By selecting a well-known play text, it provided a world with which most spectators would be familiar. This was useful on multiple levels, as the performance relied on the spectator's co-creation. Knowing the context would potentially provide them with a stronger and more familiar sense of character and world. I noted many of the iconic female lead characters that are prominent in the world of literature, film, and theatre all have strong memory themes attached to them. From Euripides' *Medea,* arrested by her past, albeit, leading towards an active revenge theme, to Charles Dickens's character, Miss Havisham from his novel, *Great Expectations* (1861). The introduction of Miss Havisham could be argued as a presentation of a pose image. Dickens describes Miss

Havisham as, an old woman sitting in her moth-eaten wedding gown, arrested by her misfortune of having been left at the altar as a young woman. Billy Wilder's film noir, *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) introduces another female character, Norma Desmond, who is living in an arrested state, reminiscing her past life as a famous silent movie star. What these iconic female characters have in common is their inability to overcome their past. These examples highlight an interesting theme that has proven useful for the purpose of this study, the exploration of a character who is chained to the past but, simultaneously, she is fighting for survival and creating a new life in the present. This dichotomy provided two active playing worlds, the past (memory) and the present (the now), which led me to Tennessee Williams' iconic play, *A Streetcar named Desire* (1947). As a central plot line, *Streetcar* has a strong memory theme, particularly for its main character, Blanche Dubois. Blanche's actions are intrinsically informed and overshadowed by her past with the constant threat of its revelation in her present state of survival. Furthermore, *Streetcar* has a visceral and poetic quality to the language which has proved useful in the creation of playing worlds. I worked with Williams' multi-character play text by devising it as a solo performance piece centred on the world of Blanche, experienced solely from her perspective.

Condensing, A Streetcar Named Desire for solo performance – pose practice work

In order to devise a play text with a dramaturgy of poses I started with what I wanted the poses to represent or do. From a historical perspective of pose practices in performance, my desk-based research, and field research indicated that the pose has been used to promote or

indicate heightened important moments in the play text or performance. The following are the three most prominent aspects of the pose that I identified in my desk- and field-based research:

1. The pose was used as an indication of a heightened important play text moment (kabuki theatre – *Mie* pose)

2. The pose was used to create a beautiful image or to make a powerful 'look-at-me!' statement (*Nihon buyo* pose; Ballroom Scene pose; drag show)

3. The pose moment suggested a world. This relates to the pause state of the pose moment. What is the story of the pose state? (Helene Weigel –the silent scream pose)

Therefore, I addressed these three main topics when I worked on condensing the play text. In the first process of the condensation of the play text I started by isolating scenes with Blanche. Additionally, I highlighted sensory stage directions that would direct me to the feel of the scene.

Figure 27: (Above) images exemplify the 'broad strokes' made in the beginning of the editing process.

Photo credit: Nicole Kovacs

I specifically paid attention to scenes where Blanche was emotionally challenged, trapped, revealed, hopeful; moments that had heightened impact value. I knew that I would have Blanche interact with other characters from the play who, dramaturgically, would be represented as a light source, therefore, I focused on important interactions Blanche had with various characters. After this first round of selection of play text I had fifteen scenes representing Blanche's dramatic trajectory. It is important to mention that the condensation of the play text of the selected scenes continued throughout the devising process until the day of

the performance, as the need for language lessened as the pose worlds became more meaningful.

Below are the first three scenes. See Appendix A for the full list of the fifteen scenes/moments selected from *A Streetcar named Desire,* working title, *Sensing Blanche* (listed chronologically).

1. Blanche**.** Introduction to Blanche and the play text world.

   The first scene starts with Blanche sitting at the Tarantula Arms having been told by management to leave. The scene is extracted from the play text, where the scene is alluded to, but it is not shown in Williams' original play text.

   2. Blanche **and** Stella. (Act One, Scene One, Page 9)

   The sisters Blanche and Stella see each other for the first time since Blanche's arrival in the French Quarter in New Orleans. This scene was interesting as it engaged with a common theme of sisterhood, rivalry, envy, misunderstanding – this appealed to me as a rich world with which to engage. Furthermore, the meeting is an important event in Blanche's fight for survival.

   3. Blanche **and** Stanley**.** (Act One, Scene One, Page 17)

   Blanche meets Stanley, Stella's husband, for the first time.

   This is the primary dramatic event in *Streetcar*. The tension of the play is drawn in the battle between Stanley Kowalski and Blanche Dubois.

The scenes were selected because they contained heightened important play text/performance moments, relating to Blanche. They were selected with the creation of an overall performance narrative in mind.

I was initially struck, after I had made the first broad strokes of the scene selection, that the sole focus of Blanche's trajectory was it elucidated by the battle between Blanche and Stanley. It shows that everything Blanche does, every hope she has, is crushed, and destroyed by Stanley in the next moment. I gathered as much information as I could relating to Blanche, for example, what other characters were saying about her. I looked at her external life, such as how she wanted to be seen by others. I paid equally if not more attention to her internal life. What were her strengths, and fears? What does she not want others to see and know about her? What is she hiding? What does she really want to happen in the scene? I found some of the answers in the play text, but this is also where I attached my own memory, imagination, trauma, and experiences. I approached the play text by looking for 'worlds.' I needed this information to inform what the individual pose world represented, for example, shame, fear, guilt, lust. Furthermore, by selecting a play text with a strong visceral language produced with impactful words or poetic lines, of which there are many in Williams' work, (some even reaching iconic status in pop culture), I had a rich language that proved useful to create playing worlds with.

Once I had made the scene selections, I shifted my focus to the language of the selected play text lines.

Studio log – 28/01/19

I decided to start with, Act One, Scene One of Streetcar. I started with a blank slate. Just the selected text. I tried to see if I could find a moment which seemed organic to 'fall into,' a pose, but my body did not know when and how to. I gathered that, one needs to know the intention and know what the pose moment is supposed to express. I wrote down questions I needed to answer regarding the pose and the pose moment:

- ***What is the template of the pose moment expressing and why is it happening?***

- ***What kind of movement is expressed before the stillness of the pose and why?***

- ***Where is the movement going?***

- ***What is the temporality of the pose moment expressing?***

- ***Why is the pose dissolving?***

- ***What happens next?***

I began to explore how I could answer some of these questions in Williams' play text. But as with emotions, I could not demand it, I had to coach it slowly to come to me by creating an environment. I had to create a world first, but how? Streetcar takes place in New Orleans, a place that I am familiar with, and that has a distinct 'feel'. Williams wrote in his introduction to Streetcar, 'this "blue" piano expresses the spirit of the life which goes on here.' I started to look for music that held the 'spirit,' but the result of my search seemed 'false,' and 'obvious,' I needed a tension to work with. Something outside of myself. Then I recorded the character, Eunice's line.

‘What’s the matter, Honey? Are you lost?’

I wanted to create a feeling of loss and ‘blue piano.’ I layered the recording and added two layers of the text with what ‘Garage Band’[6] termed as a ‘long panning echo’ and added a layer of long drawn breathing to add to the sensual atmosphere of New Orleans’ French Quarter. Then, I looped the recording on repeat. Now, I had an atmosphere I could work within. I had a tension I, as a performer, could interact with. I started walking around the space, letting my body react to the soundscape. Then, I walked up the steps in the theatre and said the following lines to ‘the audience’[7].

‘They told me to take a streetcar named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at – Elysian Fields.’

I started with ‘the doing,’ saying my lines to each row of seats in the theatre. I walked up and down the stairs. Then came the emotionality, first as a feeling of loss, and anger... as I repeated the lines. I worked on this opening moment for about an hour. Repetition is a big part of my working methods, possibly because of my Meisner training and experience with the repetition exercise. Repetition is a way of opening doors to the subconscious, imagination, and inspiration.

I went back to the music and tried to find some New Orleans jazz, it still seemed forced, not organic, and did not work.

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[6] A digital audio workstation created by Apple

[7] I used the seats as a representation of the audience

> *I think, today's rehearsal of the first lines got me in the right direction, but of course, I will not really know this 'til there is an actual audience in the room. What was interesting about the rehearsal was that Tennessee Williams' play text stood out. The loop of **'Are you lost***?'* installed a sense of confusion. **'Desire'** a sense of heat. **'Cemeteries'** evoked a feeling of abandonment and anger. The words made me think of Williams in his writing studio, searching for those specific words - what did he see in his mind's eye? I sensed a connection to Williams in his creative process.*

The above studio log shows an early important development. To find a connection to the play text I began to search for clues in Williams' language use that would provide me with the sensuous nature of the play text, 'desire,' 'loss' 'blue piano'... The clues directed me to the concept of a sensuous playing world to live in. This world was developed using a soundscape to which I could react. I developed the soundscape because, as I noted in the log, I needed a tension to react to, like the interplay between two actors in a repetition exercise. This first studio session highlighted important concepts and practices that would follow the remainder of the practice research: creating worlds informed by the play text's visceral landscape; and the importance of creating tension to have purpose on stage. What is missing is the most crucial element of this study – the pose moment.

I highlighted that, at this point, I could not create a pose moment before I knew why that specific pose moment was happening. I highlighted iconic lines I wanted to include, such as 'I have been foolish casting my pearls before swine' (Act Three, Scene Four, Page 91) or 'I have always depended on the kindness of strangers' (Act Three, Scene Five, Page 102). Williams' play

texts are loaded with these gems. At times I had to let a line go because it lost its impact in the

context of this abbreviated version. An example of this is Stanley's iconic line, 'stella! Stella!'

(Act 1, Scene 3, Page 42) as it seemed almost comical in this context as most of the scene built-

up before the line had been edited out. The reason that I included the iconic lines was to

connect the spectator to Williams and his original play text, and also because they could be

considered as 'linguistic poses'. Each of these iconic lines demands a pause afterwards for the

visceral impact and meaning to settle. This approach to Williams' language accentuated and

framed these linguistic poses, at times phonetically isolating them, by drawing a word out or

punctuating it, and thus, by arresting the word or sentence encouraging the spectators to take

notice of it. These words had all been specifically sought and selected by Williams. An example

of this is Blanche's first line, which I used from Williams' play text, 'They told me to take a

streetcar named Desire, transfer to one called Cemetery, and ride six blocks and get off at

Elysian Fields!' (Act One, Scene One, Page 7). In most productions of S*treetcar*, the spectator

would be alerted to the words 'streetcar named Desire' because it is the title of the play and its

iconic status. However, by isolating and arresting the names of the streetcars,

'Desire'

and

'Cemetery'

the spectators are invited into the whole arc of the play: on one side, **desire**, lust, life; and at

the other end of the spectrum, **cemetery,** death. Simultaneously, they are invited into the

worlds the words encompass, such as the world of 'desire,' and 'death.' An example of the use

of linguistic poses has been implemented in the first line in the play which is spoken by Eunice, a bit-character[8],

What is the matter honey, are you lost?[9]

The question provided a playing world, highlighting and emphasising the word 'lost', which is projecting Blanche state of being 'lost': lost in New Orleans and lost in her life. Eunice's line is useful because it offers a smidgen of hope with 'what is the matter, Honey?' This line moves the story forward for Blanche, following the hope, and the light. Another example of the use of language is Blanche's line, which she speaks to Stanley when he interrogates her on her life prior to her arrival in New Orleans,

The odor of cheap perfume is penetrating[10]

This line sparks multiple worlds. I found the chain of words; 'odor-cheap-perfume-penetrating', nauseating, which as an actor provided me with a playing world to recoil from as the words came out of my mouth. Highlighting and arresting words from a sentence offers the spectator a moment to connect and think about the meaning of those specific words, the visceral worlds the words encompass, and their effect on them. Often, I would repeat these lines to emphasise for the spectators to pay attention to the visceral worlds. This, of course, is what language does, but often the accentuation of the visceral worlds of language gets lost and remains in its informative purposes rather than its visceral experience. I found that, as the work progressed,

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[8] Eunice's line is projected from the soundscape. Line from (Act One, Scene One, Page 7)
[9] (Act One, Scene One, Page 7)
[10] (Act Two, Scene One, Page 55)

once I started looking for the visceral worlds of the words, the less textual information was needed.

Thus far, I have shown how I have condensed the play text to prepare it for pose practice work. In the following section, I will show the work process in the studio, sourcing pose templates, and working with Caravaggio's visual arts work.

The pose templates. Guided by Caravaggio.

Studio log – 02/11/21

The theatre I worked in was formerly an old church with stained glass windows. The light coming from the outside produced a Caravaggesque chiaroscuro atmosphere in the space. I noticed the dust particles drifting in the stream of light. Being alone in the theatre surrounded by the bursts of natural light and shadows provided a sense of intimacy with the space. Most of the time I found myself encompassed by silence except for the sound of my feet tracing across the floor or when I shifted my pose position on a black wooden box. With me, I had a large book of Caravaggio's work placed on the floor; the page open on the image I was working on. I studied Caravaggio's images to see if I could find a way into his practice that I could develop in my practice. At times I worked for weeks on a single pose image. Sometimes I would change my mind and look for another one. Other times a pose image provided such an onslaught of insights that I stayed with it for months, fascinated, inspired, so much so that it became a challenge to remove myself

from it and work on the next. There were moments where I was working in the theatre, getting lost in my thoughts, memory, and imagination where I halted my actions with a jolt, looked around the space to make sure I was alone. As if I had become a character in a Caravaggio painting unaware of being observed, suddenly seeing a pair of eyes in the dark. This speaks to the private and intimate nature of an actor's job, but I would argue this is so much more than acting; it is an engagement and deep experience of the present moment. As Meisner argued, 'Acting is the art of self-revelation' (Meisner, 1987, p. 145). As I sat in the theatre, posing, surrounded by shadows and light I allowed myself to be guided by the present moment through my senses, and the memory images the moment brought to me.

Figure 28: (Above) The Rest on the Flight into Egypt (1597), Caravaggio

I studied Caravaggio's painting, *Rest on the flight to Egypt* (See image above. Figure 26). At first, I was drawn to the fiddle player, then the teacher. Lastly, as an afterthought, my eyes glanced over to the woman with the child, sitting behind the angel to the right of the image. There is a soft light encompassing the 'world' of the woman and child, that reminded me of a late afternoon light on a summer's day. I looked closer and noticed the

creases on the woman's cheek resting on her child's head. I noticed the red blush on the cheek and ear of the child sleeping in the woman's arms. The crease on the child's neck; his head is heavy with sleep. I had entered the world of the image with my mind's eye so much so that I could hear a light snoring coming from the child and sensed the exhaustion of the mother. My eyes returned to the violinist whose playing has lulled the woman and the child to sleep. I looked at the title of the image once more, 'Rest on the flight to Egypt.' I found myself transported back to my own childhood at my grandparents', lounging in the late afternoon. The orange curtains drawn from the bombardment of the sunlight outside. It was as if Caravaggio sent me on a journey of discovery. Manipulating my path through the image, nurturing my senses, 'til I was ready to discover and sense its primary subject.

This research is not just about revealing these private moments, it is about figuring out how to connect these private moments and experiences for each spectator to engage with on a personal level as co-creators through their own imagination and memory. With each step of my discoveries, a new layer of meaning saturated my experience of the image.

Caravaggio and Chiaroscuro.

I searched for ways in which to use light that would empower and layer the pose moment. An example of this is my study of *The Resurrection of Lazarus*.

Figure 29 (Above). The Resurrection of Lazarus (1609), Caravaggio   Figure 30: (Above) hand detail from
The Resurrection of Lazarus. Caravaggio

I found myself deeply moved by the way the light fell on the bodies in the image and the liveliness in the eyes of the characters looking into the light. Then my eyes were drawn to a hand. I questioned why an outstretched hand could stir emotions within me. I decided to film my own hand to understand why and how Caravaggio's use of light had impacted the image.

Figure 31: (Above) Photo credit: Nicole Kovacs

When I stretched my hand towards the light, it appeared more vibrant, as if it acted as an affirmation of life. Whereas when I moved my hand into the shadow, the creases and wrinkles on my hand were highlighted. The colour of my skin appeared dulled, as if my hand, covered by darkness, became a reminder of my own death. Afterwards, when I moved my hand back to the light, the impact of its liveliness seemed fuller.

You tube link, examining chiaroscuro effect on hand.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8-xQmynZVE&list=PLMHHl3CZJxcBW6m1X7cdGur6ye38pGsdR&index=4

This experience taught me not only to look at light as a light source but also that a deeper meaning was revealed by it. The experiment of moving my hand between the light and shadow revealed a deeper meaning that connected me to my living and dying body. This reminded me of Jill Dolan's reference to Herb Blau in her study, *Utopia in Performance*, Blau argued, 'watching live performance is watching the actor dying on stage' (Dolan, 2005:41). With these dynamics in mind, I was propelled to explore the impact of chiaroscuro on the pose moment, hoping that the interplay between light and darkness might evoke a deeper, more profound experience, either consciously or subconsciously. Most of the time when I worked on the impact of chiaroscuro effects, I did not have artificial stage lighting. Instead, I closed all the curtains in the theatre except for one, which provided a singular light source coming from the window. I studied the light, sometimes from afar, sitting in the theatre seats observing the theatricality of the beam of light falling across the stage floor. Other times I would sit on the black box, inside of the light, and wait to see if an experience would come to me in the form of a memory, or through the awareness of my sensorial life. Sitting in silence watching the dust particles floating in the light promoted a feeling of peacefulness and a sensation of being part of the material world. I would look back in my book of Caravaggio's work, look at the angle his light came from and compare it to the light falling from the church window in the theatre. This

method not only deepened my interaction with the light, but I also sensed a connection to Caravaggio's work.

From a performance perspective the light promoted that which I wanted the spectator to see, directing them towards an experience. The light, like a flash in the pan, revealing a world like a Caravaggio visual arts image. With artificial lighting (i.e. the studio lights), I was able to manipulate the light source, experimenting with the intensity as well as the shape and size of the light and how that might affect and mobilise the spectator's engagement with the pose image. The pose images below are an example of this experimentation.
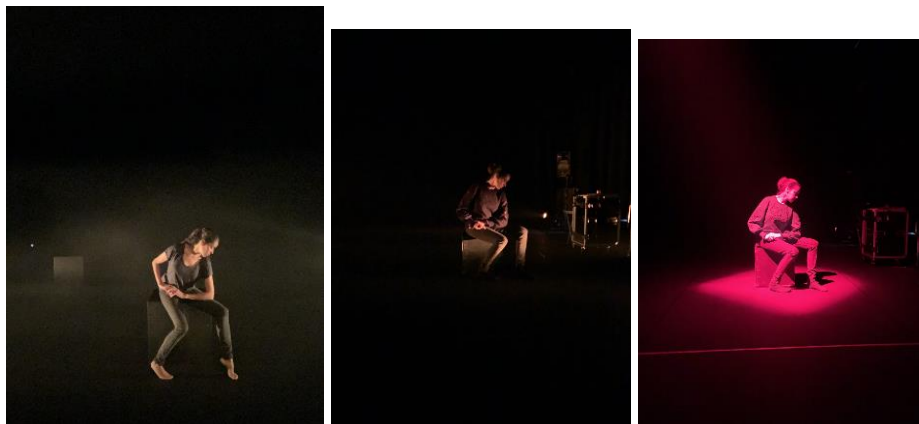

Figure 32: (above) posing, The Crowning with Thorns. Photo credit: Nicole Kovacs

Notice the effect given by the colour of light used in the different pose images. The first image has a cold yellow side light coming from both sides. The second image is encompassed by darkness with only a singular warmer yellow light coming from a low diagonal. The third and last image has a red light coming from above. These are three different worlds created with the same pose template. I would argue that the second image is most successful in mobilising the engagement of an onlooker as the image is withholding itself and by that, drawing attention to it.

When I looked for pose template, I was not interested in the depicted age, gender, or the context of Caravaggio's visual arts image, but solely in what the body the selected pose was expressing. I would read the body language in the same manner as I would read a scene partner's body language and behaviour, during a Meisner repetition exercise, by looking for underlying behavioural messages. As an example, in Caravaggio's, Death *of the Virgin* (1601–1606)*,* there is a character who is shielding his face with his hand. When I looked closer at that image, I noticed the muscles on the hand were strained, indicating the character was trying

with all his might to hide his emotions for others. This provided me with a template that held

dual meaning, as both expressing and hiding the impact of a performance moment in a play

text world or as Delsarte argued, 'an outward gesture echoing the inward emotion which gave

birth to it' (Preston, 2011, p. 7). As I worked on a Caravaggio pose template, it was as though I

was taking a journey into the artist's world. By placing my body in a pose template image, I

traced other bodies that were placed in these poses for Caravaggio. Bodies he instructed,

formed, moved, and shaped with his hands. During this examination I questioned at what point

Caravaggio deemed the positioning of his model's body effective. As I shifted my body trying to

mimic the pose template image, I imagined Caravaggio directing his models to move their

bodies into a position where it produced the maximum effect of liveliness/energy. Often, as I

sat on the black box shifting my body in the pose, there were moments where my body in the

pose appeared to fall into place, when a sharp connection of muscle tension engaged. During

one pose moment, when I turned my head sharply to the right, I felt the tightening of the

muscles between neck and shoulder on the left-hand side. I questioned if these were the same

tension structures Caravaggio was looking for when he worked with his models. My hypothesis

is that the tension points that I discovered with my own body, as I tried to mimic a pose

template, were also what produced the energy and rhythmic quality of the bodies depicted in

Caravaggio's visual arts images. I filmed the pose, looked at it, questioned if the image was

'alive' – appearing to be in movement. I do not know if Caravaggio looked for these tension

points, but I can confidently hypothesise that as I worked on pose moments for lengthy periods

of time, photographing, and filming them, that tension in the body plays a significant role in

energising the pose moment. Here I am reminded of Leabhart's reference to counterweights. Leabhart, a former student of Decroux, incorporates museum visits for his students to gain,

> an understanding of counterweights proves essential to actors as well as visual
>
> artists in depicting physical or metaphysical heaviness. Counterweights
>
> demonstrate a dynamic internal logic that testifies to the truth of the movement or
>
> the image. Moreover, these carefully positioned lines in space generate the
>
> dramatic tension to which the viewer (…) responds.
>
> (Leabhart, 2022, pp. 136–138)

When I searched for a suitable pose template image there were three main elements that were important to identify. Firstly, I was looking for a pose template that was on the cusp, where the character depicted was in the process of doing something. Simply stated, it was arrested in movement, like the children's game Freeze, where children move around until someone yells 'freeze!' and they must halt the action of their bodies in that instant. Additionally, the cusp moment is connected to its liminality. How long is the duration of the pose moment? The cusp moment offers an invitation into a pose world state offering the spectator to capture, absorb, experience a moment. As stated on multiple occasions in this study, the pose moment is performed at heightened emotional moments for the character. It is impacted by the emotions that propel that arrested state. The pose moment as used in this study is a revelation of the internal life of a character and reveals how that character 'really feels' – an outward gesture, echoing an internal state.

In the following section I selected three pose moments to highlight how language, narrative building, and pose moments have been merged and used to create a performance world. I will

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show the variations in the function of the pose moment. Although all pose moments signify an insight to an internal state there are distinct differences in the job they do. The first example shows how a pose world was created using a play text moment, which was alluded to in Williams' play text but not meant to be shown or acted on the stage (Pose: 'S*t Jerome in Meditation')*. The second pose world example highlights the arrested state of a pose moment, what led up to it, what the pose world encompassed, the impact of the pose world on the character, and the play text moment (Pose: *'Boy Bitten by a Lizard'*). Lastly, I experimented with a single pose template, to see if it could express three different pose worlds. (Pose: '*The Crowning with Thorns').*

Creating a pose world.

St Jerome in Meditation. Introducing Blanche.

The first pose moment illustrated the use of textual information, alluded to in Williams' play text but not intended to be shown or acted on stage. As I had already edited out the first scene from Williams' original play text, which introduced Stella and Stanley's life in New Orleans prior to Blanche's arrival, I needed to find a new place to start the performance. This propelled me to explore the worlds alluded to, but not shown, in Williams' play text. For the first scene I noted the following textual information (listed below).

Play text: (Act Three, Scene One, Pages 70–71)

Note. In the following section Stanley incorrectly refers to the Tarantula Arms as the Hotel

Flamingo.

Stanley: (talking about Blanche's life prior to her arrival in New Orleans):

This supply-man stops at a hotel called the Flamingo. This is after the home-place slipped through her fingers. She moved to the Flamingo! A second-class hotel which has the advantage of not interfering in the private social life of the personalities there! The Flamingo is used to all kinds of goings-on. But even the management of the Flamingo was impressed by Dame Blanche! In fact they were so impressed by Dame Blanche that they requested her to turn in her room-key – for permanently! This happened a couple of weeks before she showed here. She pulled the wool over your eyes as much as Mitch's! For the last year or two she's been washed up like poison. That's why she's here this summer, visiting royalty, putting on all this act – because she's practically told by the mayor to get out of town. Which brings us to Lie number Two. She's not going back to teach school! She didn't resign temporarily from the high school because of her nerves! No siree, Bob! She didn't. They kicked her out of that high school before the spring term ended – and I hate to tell you the reason that step was taken! A seventeen-year-old boy she'd gotten mixed up with! The boy's dad learned about it and got in touch with the high school superintendent. Boy, oh, boy, I'd like to have been in that office when Dame Blanche was called on the carpet! They told her she'd better move on to some fresh territory.

Later when Blanche talks with Mitch, she mentions the Tarantula Arms.

(Act Three, Scene Three, Page 85)

Flamingo? No! The Tarantula was the name of it! I stayed at a hotel called The

Tarantula Arms! Yes, a big spider! That's where I brought my victims. Yes, I had many

intimacies with strangers. After the death of Allan – intimacies with strangers was all I

seemed able to fill my empty heart with....I think it was panic, just panic, that drove

me from one to another, hunting for some protection – here and there, in the most –

unlikely places –even, at last, in a seventeen-year-old boy but – somebody wrote the

superintendent about it - 'This woman is morally unfit for her position!' True? Yes, I

suppose –unfit somehow- anyway.... So I came here. There was nowhere else I could

go. I was played out. You know what played out is? My youth was suddenly gone up

the waterspout, …

The sourced information from the play text provided a powerful sense of Blanche's life prior to

her arrival in New Orleans. I thought it would be a powerful start, placing Blanche in the

Tarantula Arms, sitting on her bed, having just been informed by the management that she had

to leave. I started by asking questions to pique and engage my imagination in the process.

Questions such as, what must Blanche have felt when the manager left the room? Did he slam

the door? Did she feel alone? Lost? Where would she go? What should she do? Who would

take her in? Who could save her? Did she feel shame, regret...? The questions helped me to

connect and personalise the moment. The words that stood out in the written context were, 'a

second-class hotel,' insinuating something seedy, 'intimacies with strangers,' 'an intimate

relationship with a seventeen-year-old boy,' – being found out. Blanche stated, she was 'played

out.' The panic 'that drove her from one to the other.' This information provided a powerful

world to live in, for that first pose moment, as well as an interesting place to start the

performance, considering the performance was created from Blanche's perspective. Williams'

original play text starts with, as previously mentioned, life before Blanche's arrival – poker

playing, yelling, vibrancy, and ends with the aftermath of Blanche's visit, tears, silence,

withdrawal. This version reverses the cause and effect as well as the trajectory. It starts with

Blanche's arrival in New Orleans at a low point in her life, then the notion of the possibility for a

better life. Not only is the hope taken away from her, but Blanche is no longer the same woman

as when she arrived, and she ends up as a destroyed and broken woman admitted to an

asylum. This is the effect New Orleans had on Blanche.

To reiterate, I was looking for a pose image representing Blanche sitting on her bed at the

Tarantula Arms. Firstly, I looked for a pose template that ideally had a character seated, but I

also considered looking for pose templates where the character depicted manifested the chaos

I imagined was going on inside of Blanche. Below is a selection of the pose templates

considered for this pose moment.

Figure 33: (Above) The Martyrdom of St Matthew (1599–1600), Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

I considered using *The Martyrdom of St Matthew* (see Figure 33) as a pose template. The

shocked expression on the boy's face could act as an accentuation of the chaos in Blanche's life,

however, I thought it was too active a pose to start the performance with. I decided I needed a

slower entrance to the performance world.

Figure 34: (Above) Supper at Emmaus (1601) Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio.

I examined the *Supper at Emmaus* (See Figure 34, above) and the character with arms stretched

to the side as a potential pose template. I thought of it as a template of Blanche 'arguing' with

the management of the Tarantula Arms, but when I sat in the pose and photographed it, I did

not think it read as anything other than as a static pose and would, therefore, not promote

story-building. I then selected, *St Jerome in Meditation* (See Figure 35, below). The image

depicts a man, seated, alone, in deep contemplation. This image seemed ideal for a pose

template representing Blanche on her bed at the Tarantula Arms, in solitude, contemplating her

life.

Figure 35: (Above) St Jerome in Meditation (1605), Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

Figure 36: (Above) St Jerome in Meditation pose.

The image above is from an early showing (Act One, Scene One) of *Sensing Blanche*, at the *Beginnings. Networks. Endings.,* symposium at University of Glasgow, 1 May 2019. Sitting in the same direction as the Caravaggio pose image, facing front.

Figure 37: (above) *St Jerome in Meditation pose* from my practice presentation, 30 September 2021.

The image above is the same pose template as the two other images, only in the last image, I

turned my back to the spectators. Although this is a Caravaggio pose template, turning my back

to the spectators while in the pose was inspired by the Danish artist Vilhelm Hammershøj

(1864–1916) who placed many of his models with their backs turned towards the onlooker. This

created an instant intimate dynamic in that, by looking at the image, the onlooker is placed

inside the room as an observer, unseen by the subject. I am here reminded of Conor Carville's

study, *Samuel Beckett, and Visual arts*, where he argues, 'Caravaggio's ability to paint

characters that are so demonstrably caught up in their own emotions that they both invite and

exclude us as viewers' (Carville, 2018, p. 242). They invite us through chiaroscuro, a beam of

light uncovering an intimate scene. A scene where the onlooker observes, but its subjects are

unaware of being observed. It is interesting to note that, unlike Caravaggio, Hammershøj placed

his subjects in the shadow, which I argue deepens the effect of the atmosphere of solitude (see

Figures 38 and 39, below.)

Figure 38: (Above, left.)

Interior, Strandgade 30 (1909) by Vilhelm Hammershøj

Figure 39: (Above, right)

Interior in Strandgade, Sunlight on the floor (1901) by
Vilhelm Hammershøj

By turning my back during the first pose moment, my intention was to create an environment where the spectators had to invest in the moment to make meaning of it. During the devising process I termed this devising theory, 'projected Meisner technique'. Meisner created an activity exercise to help the actor concentrate during scene work. He argued that when something is difficult it 'strengthens your concentration.' (Meisner, 1987, p. 54). My hypothesis was that, if my intention was to engage the spectator, I would have to withhold some of the performance information from them. I am both inviting the spectator and excluding them. This was enacted by not showing my face, being seated as far upstage as possible, and lit in a dark red hue, coming from a thin, angled stream of light, from above. Additionally, the red light represented the seediness of the 'second rate hotel'. This pose template image was paired with a soundscape representing the life Blanche had had at the Tarantula Arms. The sonic information was also withheld, meaning the sounds were distorted, weaving between audible and inaudible – sounds of laughter, crying, screaming, sobbing. The tension of the moment was strung between the static pose and the chaotic soundscape. The spectators might ask themselves, what is going on? Why is the actor not moving? How long will she stay in the pose? What does it mean? I wanted to teach the spectators how to engage with the performance by manipulating this first pose moment; I did so by withholding visual and sonic information to engage them in the performance. My hypothesis was that, with my back turned to the spectators, sitting motionless with a chaotic soundscape, the spectators would lean into the performance to figure out what was going on.

The impact and meaning of a pose moment.

Boy Bitten by a Lizard. Blanche and Young Collector scene.

Before uncovering this pose moment, it is important to mention that it was affected by the previous scene leading up to it, where Blanche had just had another confrontation with Stanley where he revealed he was closing in on her life prior to her arrival in New Orleans. The beginning of 'Blanche and the young man scene' was, therefore, tainted with Blanche being affected by the confrontation, exhaustion, being lost, and alone. The new world (Blanche and the Young Collector) began with a knock on the door.

I began by studying the play text to elucidate the world of that pose moment.

Play text: (Act Two, Scene One, Pages 59–60)

 (Blanche and Young Collector.)

Knock on door.

Blanche: Come in. Well, well! What can I do for you?

Young Collector: I'm collecting for The Evening Star.

Blanche: I didn't know stars took up collections.

Young Collector: It's the paper.

Blanche: I know. I was joking – feebly! Will you – have a drink?

Young Collector: No ma'am. No thank you. I can't drink on the job.

Blanche: Oh, well, now, let's see … No, I don't have a dime! I'm not the lady of the house.

Young Collector: That's all right. I'll drop by later.

Blanche: Hey! Uh, what time is it?

> *Young Collector: Fifteen of seven, ma'am*
>
> *Blanche: So late? Don't you just love these long rainy afternoons in New Orleans when an hour isn't just an hour – but a little piece of eternity dropped into your hands – and who knows what to do with it? You – uh - didn't get wet in the rain?*
>
> ~~*Young Collector: No, ma'am. I stepped inside.*~~
>
> *Blanche: In a drug store? And had a soda? Chocolate?*
>
> ~~*Young Collector: No, ma'am. Cherry.*~~
>
> *Blanche: Cherry. You make my mouth water.*
>
> *Young Collector:* ~~*Well, I better be going -*~~
>
> *Blanche: Young man! Young man! Young, young, young man! Has anyone ever told you that you look like a young Prince out of the Arabian Nights? Well, you do, Honey lamb! Come here I want to kiss you, just once, softly and sweetly on your mouth!*

It is a simple scene: Blanche is alone, there is a knock on the door, the visitor is a young paper boy, selling subscriptions to an evening paper. With the simple set-up, Williams has already coloured the scene with a sensual layer that is highlighted with Blanche's first line,

'Come in. Well, well, what can I do for you?'[11]

With 'Well, well...' a world of interest in the young man, desire, and lust is introduced. Again, there is dichotomy of the two streetcars from the beginning of the play text, a streetcar named 'Desire,' and looming in the background, a streetcar called 'Cemetery.' Blanche is trying to escape the ever-growing shadow of death and finds herself in the room with a young man,

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[11] (Act Two, Scene One, Page 58)

awakening her desire. This means that I am highlighting a world of 'desire' and 'lust' as the first layer of the playing world. The second layer informing the playing world is the rain. I have experienced New Orleans in the rain, it is warm and steamy with a constant lull of a faint sound of music from the nearby bars. Both layers are nuances of the same, desire and lust, and provide a stronger sense of the atmosphere I created for the pose moment. Then, I questioned, what is 'the doing' of the scene? It is a seduction scene. Blanche's 'doing' is she is seducing the young man. Why is she seducing him at this point in the play?

Studio log – 12/03/21

She wants to feel safe and loved. Blanche's experiences in New Orleans thus far have been unsettling and traumatising. In this scene with the paper boy, Blanche desperately wants to feel safe and loved again. It appears to her as if she is engaging in a fantasy, a dream where she is safe, in control, desirable again. She is in the 'world' of attracting sexual attention. There is a slow burn tension in the scene. The slower, the more dangerous and forbidden it becomes.

The heightened emotional point of this pose is the moment Blanche asks the young man for a kiss. The danger lies in the fact that anyone could potentially interrupt this seduction, Stanley, Mitch or Stella. This means that Blanche is throwing caution to the wind to feel desired, loved, and safe. If she were discovered, it would have major consequences for her life.

Thus far, I had extracted my playing worlds, 'desire,' 'lust,' and 'seduction,' and I selected the pose moment, Blanche asking for a kiss. I was ready to look for a Caravaggio template image to add to the world that I have extracted from the play text. Caravaggio's *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* is a good template image to pair with the play text moment as it has been argued that it represents a young man becoming aware of his sexuality. The image has a sensuous quality to it.

Figure 40: (Above) Boy Bitten by a Lizard (1593–1594), Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio.

Studio log – 25/03/21

'Boy bitten by lizard' pose.

In the beginning I had a hard time keeping my body balanced as I stood in the pose. Then, I noticed that in the pose template, the tension was strung between the light and the darkness in the image. The hand that is in the front is the one that is bitten by the lizard. The hand has a softness, an elegance to it. The shoulder leaning forward needs to be pulled towards the

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pain. The other hand, which is in the back, has a tightness – it must be clenched. This means the tension in the image is between one part of the body being soft (the front) and the other part of the body being tight (the back). The tension is strung between the shoulders. Think about pulling the back shoulder away, feel the tightness and tension in that part of the body. Moving your face towards the shoulder. Softly place the hand to the front and breathe. The pose moment is right before the exhalation.
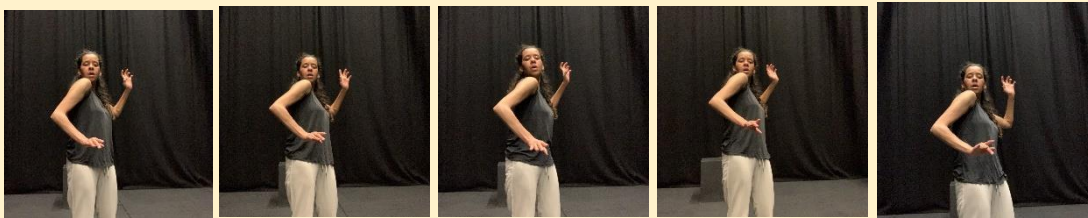
Figures 41-45: (Above) Boy Bitten by a Lizard pose.

In the five images above, I am trying to connect with the tension point in the pose moment. How does the softness of the front hand connect to the tightness of the hand in the back and how does that impact, stance, facial expression?

Blanche and Boy Bitten by a Lizard.

Figure 46.

It is as if, *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* could be a representation of Blanche DuBois in the sense that she is a woman standing on quicksand, slowly fading into old age and obscurity, collating with my analysis of the image, with the darker side of the face in Caravaggio's image representing death. The other half of the face in, *Boy Bitten by a Lizard*, represents desire, passion, danger, which for Blanche is represented by Stanley Kowalski. The dual life forces in Caravaggio's image are similar to Blanche's struggle. Interestingly, Tennessee Williams argued in *South (2006),* that Blanche and Stanley represent the two sides of every human being, just like the light in Caravaggio's image (Rasky, H. 2006). The way Caravaggio has used his light is interesting, because it is not necessarily a light revealing what is in the darkness. There are two completely different images/forces in the face.

Figures 46 and 48: (Above) Details of face (left and right side) in Boy Bitten by a Lizard

If the image was painted with one side of the face in the shade, and the other in the light, then the boy's facial expressions would be the same on the left as on the right side, but that's not how Caravaggio painted it. The left part of the face expresses vibrancy, sexuality, pleasure, and pain. While the right side of the face appears dead, or recoiling, removed. Like the two forces at war within Blanche, wanting to be seen, saved, loved, desired, and the fear

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of fading into obscurity as the streetcars in the beginning of the play, 'Desire' and 'Cemetery'

– desire and death.

Figure 49: (Above) Photo credit: Nicole Kovacs
Nicole Kovacs in Sensing Blanche
Blanche asking the Young Collector for a kiss.

By creating the pose moment when Blanche is asking for a kiss is to halt the action. This means,

the moment has not only become arrested (the pose state) but has also become an

encapsulated world of the pose moment, which means the kiss has not ended. The narrative

does not move forward until I move my body and, by doing so, signal the danger has passed.

Exploring multiple pose worlds in a single pose image.

I began to work on a single pose moment and wanted to challenge it to see if I could attach

multiple pose worlds to it. I also want to explore how I might differentiate and signal the

different pose worlds to the spectators. I was inspired to explore this by my desk-based

research (Chapter Two) where I referenced kabuki actor Kiechiemon's famous *mie* pose

technique where, in Pronko's words, 'like building with blocks... piling form upon form until he

reached the culmination of his pose' (Pronko, 1969:141). I would start the pose formation by

introducing the first pose world, highlighted with a soundscape (the first play text world), then

move my body slightly, and by doing so indicated that the pose world had changed meaning

and moved into the second play text world and lastly, as the pose formation completed, ended

in the last play text world. I have listed the three pose worlds as they moved in succession from

one to the next.

The first pose world entails Mitch telling Blanche he has spoken to his mother about her. This

information improves Blanche's chance of survival dramatically. Blanche lets down the guards

to her past by revealing her pain and guilt for her role in her husband's suicide (see text below).

Play text: (Act Two, Scene Two, Pages 67–68)

Blanche: '*You love her very much, don't you? I think you have a great capacity for devotion.*

You will be lonely when she passes on, won't you? I understand what that is. I loved someone

too and the person I loved I lost. He was a boy, just a boy, when I was a very young girl. When

I was sixteen, I made the discovery – love. All at once and much, much too completely. It was

like you suddenly turned a blinding light on something that had always been half in the

shadow, that's how it struck the world for me. But I was unlucky. Deluded. There was

something different about the boy, a nervousness, a softness and tenderness which wasn't

like a man's, although he wasn't the least bit effeminate looking – still – that thing was

there... he came to me for help. I didn't know that. I didn't find out anything till after our

marriage when we'd run away and come back and all I knew was I'd failed him in some mysterious way and wasn't able to give the help he needed but couldn't speak of! He was in the quicksand's and clutching at me – but I wasn't holding him out, I was slipping in with him! I didn't know that. I didn't know anything except I loved him unendurably but without being able to help him or help myself. Then I found out. In the worst of all possible ways. By coming suddenly into a room that I thought was empty – which wasn't empty, but had two people in it...the boy I had married and an older man who had been his friend for years. Afterwards we pretended that nothing had been discovered. Yes, the three of us drove out to the Moon Lake Casino, very drunk and laughing all the way. We danced the Varsouviana! Suddenly in the middle of the dance the boy I had married broke away from me and ran out of the casino. A few moments later – a shot! I ran out – all did! All ran and gathered about the terrible thing at the edge of the lake! I couldn't get near for the crowding. Then somebody caught my arm. 'Don't go any closer! Come back! You don't want to see!' See? See what! Then I heard voices say – Allan! Allan! The Grey boy! He'd stuck the revolver into his mouth and fired – so that the back of his head had been – blown away! It was because – on the dance floor – unable to stop myself – I'd suddenly said - 'I saw! I know! You disgust me...' And then the searchlight which had been turned on the world was turned off again and never for one moment since has there been any light that's stronger than this kitchen candle...'

Then I moved into the second pose world, which was indicated by a change in the soundscape – of Stanley and Stella talking about Blanche. Blanche, in the pose, overhears Stella and Stanley's

conversation. Blanche's past has caught up with her as she senses the loss of her future (see text below).

> **Play text: (Act Three, Scene One, Pages 70–74)**
>
> ***Stanley:*** *Lie number one: All this squeamishness she puts on! You should just know the line she's been feeding to Mitch. He thought she had never been more than kissed by a fellow! But sister Blanche is no lily! Our supply-man down at the plant has been going through Laurel for years and he knows all about her and everybody else in the town of Laurel knows about her. This supply-man stops at a hotel called the Flamingo. This is after the home-place slipped through her fingers. She moved to the Flamingo! A second-class hotel which has the advantage of not interfering in the private social life of the personalities there! The Flamingo is used to all kinds of goings-on. But even the management of the Flamingo was impressed by Dame Blanche! In fact they were so impressed by Dame Blanche that they requested her to turn in her room-key – for permanently! This happened a couple of weeks before she showed here. She pulled the wool over your eyes as much as Mitch's! For the last year or two she's been washed up like poison. That's why she's here this summer, visiting royalty, putting on all this act – because she's practically told by the mayor to get out of town. Which brings us to Lie number Two. She's not going back to teach school! She didn't resign temporarily from the high school because of her nerves! No siree, Bob! She didn't. They kicked her out of that high school before the spring term ended – and I hate to tell you the reason that step was taken! A seventeen-year-old boy –she'd gotten mixed up with! The boy's dad learned about it and got in touch with the high school superintendent. Boy, oh, boy, I'd like to have been in that office*

Finally, the third and last pose world comes with the sound of a knock on the door. It is Mitch returning to break up with Blanche. Although these three pose worlds were sourced from different parts of Williams' play text, by placing them in succession in the performance, the brutal turn of events leading to Blanche's life coming undone are highlighted.

I used *The Crowning with Thorns* as the pose template to embody the three different pose worlds.

Figure 50 and 51: (Above) The Crowning with Thorns (1603), Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

The reason for using this specific template was firstly for the corporeality of the image and secondly, because of what building the pose felt like in my body.

Studio log – 10/09/20

I study, Caravaggio's painting, *The Crowning with Thorns*, look at the face of the

representation of Christ and ask myself:

'What do I see?'

'Pain.'

'He is not fighting back.'

'He is enduring the moment.'

I look at the full image and notice the energy from the light coming from the upper left-hand

corner, flooding the room, on a diagonal track. The burst of light coming from above seems

to be propelling the movement in the image as if Caravaggio not only used the light to reveal

an image but also used it to produce a notion of energy and movement. The movement

produced by the light appears as if Christ's arrested state is also in movement, actively

leaning into the pain, as if he is helping the two men attaching the Crown to his skull.
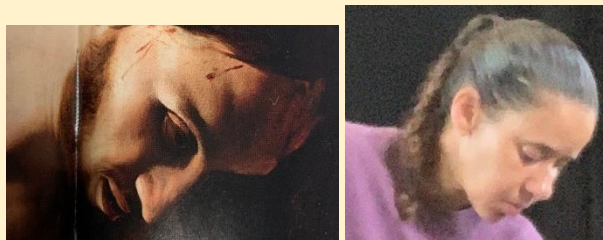
Figures 51: (Above) Figures 52-55: Posing, The Crowning with Thorns. Photo credit: N. Kovacs

I look at the eyes, his head leaning into the pain, the open mouth – the word 'endurance',

comes to mind. I am searching for a connection, a human, emotional element that I can

connect to and attach my own psychology onto.

I am trying to determine where the tension lies in the image and at what point my posing is

on the cusp of becoming?

I question if the tension makes the image appear alive/moving. I filmed this pose with and without tension to see if I would be able to see the difference.

Figures 52-55: (Above) Pose, The Crowning with Thorns. Photo credit: Nicole Kovacs

The (above) images might at first appear as if they are the same, but when one look at the hands, legs, body position, there are slight changes as I try to condition my body to mimic the body in Caravaggio's image and discover where the tension lies in the pose moment.

I have provided three examples of pose states; the first created by sourcing playing worlds that are alluded to from the play text *(St Jerome in Meditation)*. In the second example, I highlighted the work on creating meaning with a pose world and pose template (*Boy Bitten by a Lizard)*, and lastly, I explored how to create multiple pose worlds through a single pose image *(The Crowning with Thorns).*[12]

Exploring identified pose structures: tension, rhythm, and counter-rhythm.

'Tension' proved to be a key element in this pose practice research. The argument by Faubion Bowers, that the kabuki theatre 'goes from pose to pose, from tension to tension' (Bowers, 1964, p. 191), suggested tension as a key element in the kabuki theatre's practice. Therefore, I

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[12] See Appendix B for the complete pose world selection for *Sensing Blanche.*

found it important to examine a tension structure to guide me from one pose moment to the next. From this, I derived a hypothesis that a tension structure must include three points: a beginning, a middle, and an ending point (caused by movement). I have termed the entry moment, 'the tension set-up', followed by the pose moment. If I applied this proposed terminology to the kabuki theatre, as covered in Chapter Two, the tension set-up was created by the aural attention produced by the clanging of the *ki* wooden block, alerting the spectators that an important actor/character is about to enter the stage, which excited the spectators. Tension creates attention. In previous sections I have referenced the importance of tension in multifarious structures, such as tension in the body when mimicking a pose. Tension created by the liminal state of the pose moment (e.g. the kiss in *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* pose). Bowers argument of going, 'from pose to pose, from tension to tension' innately informs a rhythm. In this section I will show how rhythm performs and why counter-rhythm is important to incorporate in the tension structure. I will start with a studio log uncovering my discovery of the importance of rhythm and counter-rhythm.

Studio log – 07/06/21

There is a development of the importance of rhythm, between noise and silence, light and darkness, movement, and arrested pose moments. These different binary opposites cannot be predictable, otherwise the spectator will be lulled into a rhythm of events, knowing what is coming next.

To encourage the spectator to engage with the performance, there must be unpredictability, a counter-rhythm.

I was reminded here of an incident in *Meisner on Acting* (DVD), where during a repetition exercise an actor observes his female scene partner has a moustache. The rhythm of niceties, which had previously guided their repetition, was in that moment overtaken by shock and embarrassment from his female scene partner, creating a new and more potent rhythm – a counter-rhythm. Another example of counter-rhythm could be when an actor makes a mistake on stage, or something goes wrong with a set piece or a missing prop. From a performance perspective there is a counter-rhythm that catapults all involved into a new unchartered reality – a lucid experience of the now, experienced by all at the same time. During a performance, these mistakes cause tension. If it is a clear mistake, experienced as a mistake by the spectators, the spectators also reflect the heightened attention. The excitement of these moments fuels the post-performance chatter between the actors: what happened, how we felt, how we fixed or failed to fix the mistake, how others reacted, did the audience see it. I have chosen to term this shift of rhythm as a 'counter-rhythm,' that which 'interrupts' the flow and takes a sharp turn in a different direction. What excites me about these moments is the aliveness, as well as the individual and collective experience of the now. The job of a rhythmic and counter-rhythmic structure is to create an environment that might propel spectator engagement in the present moment through memory and imagination. This, of course, is what constitutes drama, but I want to focus on the rhythm, rather than using words and meaning, to construct the drama. I have found it fruitful to explore this rhythm and counter-rhythm structure as a tool to engage or manipulate a performance environment potentially propelling the spectator, consciously or subconsciously, to engage with the performance co-creatively. In the following section I will illustrate how the engagement of rhythmic and counter-rhythmic

structures has been incorporated in the devising process. I have selected the second pose of

the *Sensing Blanche* performance to illustrate this process. I selected, *The denial of St Peter* (the

woman in the middle of the image, below) as the pose template for the scene due to the

intimacy and intensity depicted between the woman and the person she is engaging with.

Figure 56: (Above) The Denial of St Peter (1610), Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

I will now explain the sequence highlighting the choices I made relation to tension, rhythm, and

counter-rhythm. The rhythmic choices started with the soft ephemeral call (in the soundscape)

'Blanche, Blanche!' A yellow light appeared on the floor; it is a representation of Stella. Blanche

runs towards Stella's light to meet her, then walks into the middle of Stella's light. Having just

had movement with Blanche running, rhythmically, stillness was an organic choice. As Blanche

enters Stella's light, a soundscape plays with Stella and Blanche arguing. Like an animal arrested

by danger, Blanche freezes in the pose moment. The pose represents a moment gone astray.

The emotional event, 'getting caught in an unwanted situation', as in an unexpected argument.

The soundscape accompanying the pose moment had been distorted and layered to create a

chaotic environment. The cacophony of the soundscape represented a feeling of being

bombarded with accusations, not being able to find a way out. By making the soundscape

difficult for the spectator to decipher, the aim was to give the spectators the same experience

as the actor/Blanche, of being bombarded by an argument. This is an example of 'projected

Meisner technique': making something difficult to decipher in order to promote the spectator's

concentration and engagement. Once more the spectators are treated more like actors than

spectators, however, they are not aware of being trained by the Meisner method or treated like

actors. There is tension between the frozen pose moment and the lively argument in the

soundscape.

From the perspective of the actor performing the tension lies in the difficulty of standing still

for a long time and hearing the assault coming from the soundscape – the body wants to move.

At this point, the actor has been standing in a pose for a lengthy period, which means there

must be a counter-rhythm to keep the performance alive. (The play text used in the

soundscape, listed below.)

Play text. (Act One, Scene One, Pages 9–16)

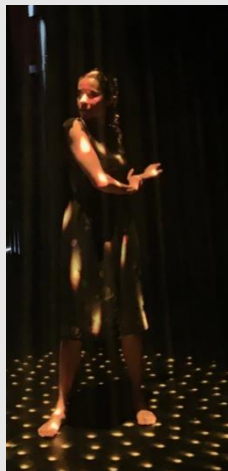Blanche, and Stella's have been recorded and appears as a soundscape.

Figure 57: *Sensing Blanche*. Photo credit: Nicole Kovacs

Blanche: Now, then, let me look at you. ~~But don't you dare look at me, Stella, no, no, no till later, not till I've bathed and rested! You haven't said a word to me.~~

Stella: You haven't given me a chance to, honey.

Blanche: Where – where is?

Stella: Stanley? Bowling! He loves it. They are having a – tournament...

Blanche: Will Stanley like me, or will I just be a visiting in-law, Stella. I couldn't stand that.

Stella: You'll get along just fine together, if you'll just try not to – well – compare him with men that we went out with at home.

Blanche: Is he so - different?

Stella: Yes, a different species.

Blanche: In what way; what's he like?

Stella: Oh, you can't describe someone you are in love with! Here is a picture of him. He's on the road a good deal. I can hardly stand it when he's away for a night. When he's away for a week I nearly go wild. And when he comes back I cry on his lap like a baby...

Blanche: I guess that is what is meant by being in love...

Stella: What?

Blanche: I'll expect you to be understanding about what I have to tell you.

Stella: What, Blanche?

Blanche: You left! I stayed and struggled! You came to New Orleans and looked out for yourself. I stayed at Belle Reve and tried to hold it together!

The counter-rhythm is enacted by the change from the static pose to movement. From a yellow light to a red light. From standing on the floor to stepping up on a box and lastly, from silence to an aggressive, angry, loud performance of a monologue.

Play text (monologue): (Act One, Scene One, Page 16)

Figure 58: Sensing Blanche. Photo credit: Nicole Kovacs

Blanche: *I, I, I took the blows in my face and my body. All of those deaths! The long parade to the graveyard! Father, Mother! Margaret, that dreadful way! So big with it, it couldn't be put in a coffin! But had to be burned like rubbish! You just came home in time for the funerals, Stella. And funerals are pretty compared to deaths. Funerals are quiet, but deaths – not always. Sometimes their breathing is hoarse, and sometimes it rattles, and sometimes they even cry out to you, 'Don't let me go!' Even the old, sometimes, say, 'Don't let me go.' As if you were able to stop them! But funerals are quiet, with pretty flowers. And, oh, what gorgeous boxes they pack them away in! Unless you were there at the bed when they cried out, Hold me!' You'd never suspect there was the struggle for breath and bleeding. You didn't dream, but I saw! Saw! Saw! And now you sit there telling me* with *your eyes that I let the place go! How the hell do you think all that sickness and dying was paid for? Death is expensive, Miss Stella! And old Cousin Jessie's right after Margaret's, hers! Why, The Grim Reaper had put up his tent on our doorstep!... Stella. Belle Reve was his headquarters! Honey- that's how it slipped through my fingers! Which one of them left us a fortune? Which one of them left us a cent of insurance even? Only poor Jessie – one hundred to pay for her coffin. That was all, Stella! And I with my pitiful salary at the school. Yes, accuse me! Sit there and stare at me, thinking I let the place go! I let the place go? Where were you! (repeat) In bed with you – Polack!...... Forgive me – I didn't mean to -*

The force and anger of the monologue is a major shift in the atmosphere of the sequence, this is how counter-rhythm performs. These structures became the metronome of the devising process.

Ghost poses.

The 'ghost poses' were a late development in the devising process, when I realised that after a dramatic moment I needed a transition – something that settled the impact of that event. For this I developed the ghost pose. The ghost poses are not as significant as the pose moments. They are transitional poses and were implemented as reflective pose moments, signifying a reaction to the previous moment, for example Blanche overhearing Stanley and Stella talking about her. For a solo performance, this became an interesting way to being on- and offstage, simultaneously. Below is the studio log from the day I discovered ghost poses. Note, in the beginning I termed them as 'half-poses' because of their different status from the full poses but later I settled on 'ghost poses,' to signify their lithe transitional status.

Studio log – 06/09/21

To 'contain' the playing world as an expression of Blanche's internal state I must slow the performance down by adding 'half-poses'. I have thought of adding poses in which Caravaggio uses himself as the object. 'Half-poses' are in place to give the spectator and Blanche time to take in an impactful moment with the intention of letting the meaning of the world they have just been exposed to seep into their consciousness.

Figure 59:(Above) detail from, The Taking of Christ, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

Figure 60: (Above,) detail from, The Martyrdom of St Matthew, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

Above details from two of Caravaggio visual arts images in which the model is believed to be Caravaggio.

Another example of a ghost pose is after the sequence of the argument between Stella and Blanche, which ended with Blanche's explosive monologue. I realised I could not go from the aggressive loud outburst to the next moment. It did not feel organic. In other words, the rhythm of the performance felt pushed.

Instead, after the violent outburst of the monologue, I stood still on the box for a moment, let my body catch its regular breathing pattern, then I stepped off the box and stood still in a ghost pose, selected from Caravaggio's *The Taking of Christ.* The ghost pose represented the depressing turn of events Blanche's life had taken after the argument with her sister. From an actor's perspective, the outburst had an emotional cost, and a heavy sadness had washed over me. I needed to settle down before I could move on. Finally, with the spectator's perspective in mind, it provided a moment for the performance to settle with them, figure out, or sense, the impact of what had just happened. The ghost pose ended with the beginning of the next sequence, which is the first appearance of Stanley Kowalski, represented by a bright light source.

'Stanley'

Figure 62: (Above) Stanley. Photo credit: N. Kovacs

The colour of the light acted as an indication of change of atmosphere of the playing worlds. From an 'aggressive' red light to a cold, empty, white light.

From old theatre habits to new insights

It was not until the concluding stages of the practice research that the core of my investigation was fully revealed. My role in this practice research was at times complicated by the numerous positions I inhabited: researcher, actor, director, sound engineer, dramaturg, lighting designer, and spectator. At times, these various roles were at odds, and it was challenging to figure out which role was the primary guiding entity. This made me question if I had selected iconic monologues from the play text because they excited the actor in me? I questioned if I had become more focused on making the best performance than exploring the pose research to its fullest potential? It was a technical issue that illuminated how my old practice habits could sabotage new practice thinking. Below are two studio logs written at the end of the practice research period.

Studio log – 20/08/21

When I did the run-through today, the poses seemed insignificant, and it came close to a regular play production. Too much play text.

I keep forgetting I am physically alone on stage. The spectators must sense/create Stanley, Stella, Mitch, Eunice, Young man, the matron, and the doctor in their minds eye. It has proven problematic to find the right transfer. What does a long monologue here and there actually accomplish in the pose research?

Studio log 27/9/21

My practice fell apart approximately three days before we were going to tech. For months I had become obsessed with the male voices in the soundscape of the performance,

Stanley, Mitch, and young man. I had worked with a vocal transformer program that lowered the pitch and tone of my voice, but they sounded too cartoonish, and I was afraid they would come across as a joke and not be taken seriously by the spectators.

What I was not aware of until late in the process was that, despite my creativity, I was still on some levels innately married to the conventional narrative form. Without realising it, my thirty years as an actor were holding my practice research back; I had been seeking to make the experience as easy for the spectator to absorb as possible rather than challenge them and risking alienating them. This problem was particularly prevalent regarding the scenes with Stanley. My thought process had been, if the spectator could not see Stanley as more than a light source, then they would have to hear his voice. I attempted to transfer his physical absence to a vocal presence, which became increasingly problematic as time progressed (as mentioned in the studio log, above). A scene that came back to haunt me for over a year, which I returned to on a continuous basis, was the first scene between Blanche and Stanley. In the beginning I had included all Stanley and Blanche's lines from that first scene. My problem was that I could not figure out how to represent Stanley's voice. I went from transforming my own voice to using a recording of Marlon Brando's voice from his Broadway performance of *Streetcar*, returning to the vocal transformation of my voice into a man's. A sound failure/miscalculation, relating to my recorded transformed voice of Stanley, Mitch, and Young Collector, pushed me to take the risk and fulfil the investigation I had set out to make. I needed to find a new solution if I wanted to make the performance possible. I realised I had been too literal in my interaction with Stanley's play text lines, interacting with his vocal presence in lieu

of his physical absence. This forced me to re-examine the play text. This time I made dramatic

edits, deleting all of Stanley's and Blanche's lines except for one. (Shown below in the play text

box.)

Play text: (Act One, Scene One, Pages 17–18)

Play text of the first scene between Stanley and Blanche

BLANCHE: You must be Stanley. I'm Blanche.

~~STANLEY: Stella's sister?~~

~~BLANCHE: Yes.~~

~~STANLEY: H'lo. Where's the little woman?~~

~~BLANCHE: In the bathroom.~~

~~STANLEY: Oh. Didn't know you were coming to town.~~

~~BLANCHE: I — uh-~~

~~STANLEY: Where you from, Blanche?~~

~~BLANCHE: Why I — live in Laurel~~

~~STANLEY: In Laurel, huh? Oh, yeah, Laurel, that's right. Not in my territory. Liquor goes fast in~~

~~hot weather. Have a shot?~~

~~BLANCHE: No. I rarely touch it.~~

~~STANLEY: Some people rarely touch, it, but it touches them often.~~

~~BLANCHE: Ha-ha.~~

~~STANLEY: My clothes is stickin' to me. Do you mind if I make myself comfortable?~~

~~BLANCHE: Please, please do.~~

STANLEY: Hey, Stella!

STANLEY: Haven't fallen in, have you? I'm afraid I'll strike you as being the unrefined type.

Stella's spoke of you a good deal. You were married once, weren't you?

BLANCHE: Yes, when I was quite young.

STANLEY: What happened?

BLANCHE: The boy – the boy died. I'm afraid I'm - going to be sick!

Blanche: '*You must be Stanley, I'm Blanche,*'

This was the only play text line needed to signify to the spectator who I was 'interacting' with

and what the light source represented. In the documentary *South* (Rasky, H., 2006) Williams

noted that there was an animal magnetism between Blanche and Stanley. From an acting

perspective this provided an action – a doing, to be drawn to something, in this case, a light

source representing Stanley – thus, performing with the dynamic of animal magnetism.

Figure 63: (Above) Blanche Sensing Stanley Photo credit: Nicole Kovacs

The interaction with Stanley was created by engaging with the light source, 'touching' the outside of the light with fearful hands, signalling being drawn to it yet, afraid of it. Showing behaviour instead of words. As Meisner argued, 'an ounce of behavior is worth a pound of words' (Meisner, 1987, p. 14). The insight prompted a re-evaluation and examination of how I could improve the sensorial world of the whole performance of *Sensing Blanche.* After this breakthrough, I decided to edit out most of the lines by Stanley, Mitch, Stella, the doctor, Matron, and Eunice from the performance. I did this as I realised that communicating through worlds, empowered by the pose held an impactful promise, was richer and more profound than being married to the play text form. It is, as George Fuchs, argued in:

> the spectator that the dramatic work of art is actually born – born at the time it is experienced – and it is differently experienced by every individual member of the audience.

(Fuchs, 1959, p. 43)

This moment of insight was born out of the work with the hand pose (referenced earlier in *Caravaggio and Chiaroscuro, pp. 118–122)*) highlighting the interaction between light and darkness as a powerful way of communicating and encouraging co-creation and meaning making.

This completes the practice research in the studio of creating a dramaturgy with pose templates with an iconic play text.

Sensing Blanche. Post-Performance reflections.

Performing *Sensing Blanche* was an intense experience as we had been in lockdown for almost

two years. I had been alone with my practice in the theatre and lived in isolation during the

lockdown. Suddenly, being in a room, in the theatre with so many people was an almost

unnatural experience. Sensing the bodies in the theatrical space was immensely powerful and

triggered 'fear' that I have never experienced as an actor before; my heart felt like it was

pounding out of my chest. I removed myself from my fear by placing my focus on what was

outside of me: the light and the soundscape; and what was inside of me: my inner Blanche,

Stanley, Stella, Mitch, and the doctor. During the performance, the pose moments felt less 'full'

and centred, than they had during my studio practice. I found it difficult to connect and sense

the spectators and could not feel if they were with me. I did not know if they understood the

performance. As a performer you usually have a good sense of whether the audience is with

you or not – it is in the atmosphere of the room. This, I later concluded, was due to the

circumstances and the fact that I was unable to perform over a period due to lockdown restrictions.

When I examined the film documenting the performance afterwards, it looked different from my experience of it. Here, the sections with the pose images and limited use of text, appeared the strongest. In retrospect, by looking at the first pose image (*St Jerome in Meditation* – Blanche at the Tarantula Arms), the image is expressive enough as it is and did not need a soundscape to accompany it. Silence would have been a much stronger choice. I remember being worried that the spectators would not be able to enter the performance world without a soundscape signifying the mood of the moment, however, the red coloured light source, which encompassed the pose moment, did that job. Pose Seven (*The Crowning with Thorns* – One pose: Three pose worlds) seemed too long, with too much play text. I remember losing my confidence and concentration at that moment; I am certain I could have made it work. Performance wise, I found it noteworthy that what centred me in the performance (despite my nerves) were the ghost poses. They provided me with a moment of reflection where I could deepen my engagement in the performance. An example of this was my third ghost pose in the performance, when Stanley and Stella discussed the loss of Belle Reve. Standing in the dimmed ghost pose light looking towards Stanley's and Stella's light, as I listened to them talking about me, gave me a strong feeling of being left out, mocked, misunderstood, and alone. This helped me move on with the performance as it provided me with an emotionality to 're-enter' the next moment where I would be engaging with Stanley.

The performance was essentially incomplete, existing as a suggestive state, suggesting itself to the spectator, for the spectator to complete with their memory, imagination, intuition, and

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senses. This meant that I, as the theatre maker and performer, was left out of its completion. I would experience the performance with my own mind's eye, but I would never know how it was seen and perceived by the spectator. The dramaturgy of the presented play text could be argued to be a dramaturgy based on the emotional and sensory world of the characters instead of focusing on the play text information.

I do not have research supporting the spectators' experience and do not, therefore, know if the spectators engaged their emotionality and imaginary world in the performance. However, I did get the chance to read one of the spectator's experiences of the performance, when he wrote a review of my practice presentation for his online blog, which I have included below.

Sensing Blanche

Last Thursday, for the first time since 2019, I stepped once more into a theatre space: James Arnott Theatre at the University of Glasgow. The School of Culture & Creative Arts is a department I know well from my time studying an MLitt there. On this occasion, I was there to see Nicole Kovacs' performance on the life of Blanche DuBois - the doomed character from Tennessee Williams' A Streetcar Named Desire. (…) During the 35-minute, one-person show, Kovacs inhabited the spirit of DuBois to the extent that you could see the whole cast beside her. Spotlights threw up adjacent areas where Stanley would stand and during those moments the audience could almost smell the menacing beads of sweat forming on his non-existent forehead. We sense the acute danger DuBois is in: the shadows throwing her isolation into stark relief as her pleading hand reaches tentatively into the light to placate a character she knows only too well will do her harm. And yet, like

a moth to a flame, she persists. In the world of structural engineering, there is a concept

known as misfit strain where the natural shape of an object and the natural shape of the

hole it occupies are compared. Kovacs' electric performance makes evident DuBois' misfit

through the absence of family and comforting friends. The Meisner technique is used to

place the audience in the moment alongside the performer - and now and then is

extended into a tableau where DuBois' torture is put on display much as an artefact in a

museum. We taste her fear with increasing intensity. The claustrophobic soundscape

comprises snippets of the play's dialogue in reverb - a form of distanciation which seems

to act as an echo of the visual aesthetic of absence. It is both discombobulating and

menacing. Kovacs is a phenomenal actor with a fine sense of dramaturgy, and I very much

look forward to whatever future work she produces. (Burnham, K., 2021)

I found Burnham's review promising in that it provided insight into his imagination. My

performance is a suggestion; the real performance is created by the spectator's imagination

and memory. The fact that Burnham was already familiar with the play impacted his

experience. It would be interesting to embark on quantitative research to examine how various

groups of spectators read, experienced, and engaged with the performance, and to what

degree a pose practice performance impacted and engaged their memory and imagination.

What is the difference between spectators unfamiliar with the play and spectators who are

familiar with the play? Do the spectators see themselves as participants? Do they feel

connected or alienated by the lack of textual information? Do they see Stanley? How to they

experience the characters represented by light?

Reflecting on the overall performance, I should have taken my time with everything: longer

pose moments in addition to longer and slower interaction with the lights. Working with the

poses in the chiaroscuro lighting effect provided a powerful sense of being in a world, being in

the present moment engaging my imagination and memory, and to a certain extent, with

Caravaggio and Tennessee Williams.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The thesis conclusion has been divided into two sections, both offering suggestions for future

research related to working with poses in performance practice. In the first section I will

highlight the key findings and discoveries made in this study and present the contributions to

new knowledge.

In the second section, *The Pose: possibilities for future research and practice*, I will look beyond

the practice research conducted in this study and offer suggestions for future research related

to working with poses in performance practice. This section was influenced by kabuki training

and practice research from this study showed how practice elements and form moved from

bunraku' puppet theatre to *Noh*, kabuki, and *nihon buyo*. This propelled me to examine if the

pose practice research conducted in this study could translate across different artistic

disciplines and become a plastic form. This section will show how the theatrical performance

might not only be considered as a finite theatrical event, but also an infinite form that can

travel across different art disciplines and through that process be re-shaped into other artistic

areas, expressions, and meanings.

Findings and Discoveries.

The study suggests that by shifting the focus from the play text world, intended by the

playwright, to the emotional and sensory world of the character/s and representing that/those

world/s with pose images (collaborating with the sensory engagement of light- and

soundscapes), provides a mode of practice where the individual practitioners can explore their

unique creative expression. The study demonstrates a mode of *doing* practice, *looking* at

practice that not only provides a unique practice concept for the individual practitioner to express their creativity, but also a meaningful devising process where they can engage with their existentiality from an imaginative and sensory perspective. In addition, it provides a definition of a co-creative practice mode which aims to emancipate both the spectator and the actor and by that deepen their engagement in the now and in the performance both as creative entities.

How the pose impacted the dramatic play text.

The dramatic text was primarily impacted by how it was approached, shifting the focus from the play text world, intended by the playwright, to creating a dramaturgy based on the emotional and sensory word of the character/s. This provided a plastic mode of working with the play text.

The play text I worked with in this study was originally intended for multiple actors. The exclusion of these other characters impacted the volume of the play text that was used in the performance as I explored the play text from the perspective of one character, Blanche Dubois. I did so by identifying heightened important pose moments pertaining to Blanche's trajectory and from that was able to create a full performance narrative arc. This highlights a unique way of working with a play text by using poses as a tool with which to create a dramatic arc, from the perspective of a single character. Furthermore, as all characters in a well-written play have different objectives, it makes it possible to create multiple and vastly different solo-performances from a single play text source and still, in some way, honour the playing world of

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the source play text. For example, *Sensing Blanche* could have been *Sensing Stanley*, *Sensing Mitch*, or *Sensing Stella*. Using poses to create a narrative allows for multiple narrative structures. In the Chapter Four, I developed a guideline on how to source a solo performance narrative from a multiple character play. If I was to create a solo performance from Stanley's perspective, I would call it, *Sensing Stanley,* then, I would decide which play text moments to use to identify Stanley's trajectory in the play? I might have selected a pose moment that represented the apparent change in Stanley's life when he finds Blanche in his house. His liquor is gone, his apartment looks, smells, and feels different. What would that pose look like? In *Sensing Stella*, how might Stella's pose trajectory look? The first pose might be a pose that represented love, pregnancy, and hope. The second pose could be the moment Stella is reunited with Blanche. What would that pose represent? Would she be happy to see her sister again? These interpretations, the selection of the narrative steppingstones of poses, would be up to the individual theatre maker. I found that when I was working on the pose moments, by looking for pose templates from Caravaggio's visual arts work, I started an internal dialogue between the character I was working on/representing and the physical representation I found in Caravaggio's visual arts work that embodied it. This became a fruitful and imaginative way of interrogating a performance moment as I was relying more on sensorial connections in this process rather than solely creating a psychological profile of the character.

As the study progressed it became apparent that the stronger a pose moment became, the less play text was needed to communicate its meaning. This was partly impacted by the devising system I developed in my practice research that allowed me to include and interact with other characters from the play, as absent bodies yet present through sound- and lightscapes. An

example of this is the first scene with Blanche and Stanley where I removed all the play text except for one line. Instead, I directed my focus to the animal magnetism between Blanche and Stanley that impacted their first meeting, which Williams alluded to, and played as the underlying tension of the scene, impacting their present and future interactions. I communicated this by showing Blanche engaging with Stanley's light. A gesture that communicated the sensual meaning of the interaction, which Williams implied as an underlying texture of the scene. This became an operative word, 'underlying', looking for what was underneath the surface of an interaction, meaning how it affected Blanche. The scene was followed by a pose. The pose represented the effect of Blanche's interaction with Stanley, the pose showing the underlying meaning of the moment. I am here reminded of Meisner's argument that 'an ounce of behavior is worth a pound of words' (Meisner, 1987:14). Behaviour is a much more effective way to communicate than words. The English theatre practitioner Edward Gordon Craig (1872–1966) argued that 'had the plays been made to be seen; we would find them incomplete when we read them' (Craig, 1956:143). Craig is addressing the role of the play text as communicating all meaning, which leaves no room for the imagination to come into play. In *Edward Gordon Craig A Vision of Theatre*, Christopher Innes highlights Craig's argument that playwrights, 'such as Shakespeare and Shaw were "useless" to the theatre (…) because as literature their plays are complete in themselves' (Innes, 1998:112). I agree with Craig's argument, however, I would argue that the issue concerning the literary text is somewhat misplaced. Instead, I think that the focus should be on *how* theatremakers might explore and communicate with the play texts.

With the pose practice I developed in this study I have proposed a way for theatremakers to explore a 'complete' play text and create an 'incomplete' performance that aims to leave room for spectator co-creation/imagination. Firstly, by only selecting heightened important moments from the play text. Secondly, by exploring those moments from a visceral perspective. Thirdly, by implementing devising structures, which at times in this research was informed by removing and distorting textual or sonic information; and at other times physical, to pique and engage the spectator's imagination both consciously and subconsciously, as in the first pose where I was sitting with my back to the audience. Additionally, there were devising structures at play that manipulated the rhythmic and counter-rhythmic properties of the performance in order to engage the spectators. These are the tools that I am proposing to use to devise a performance that aims to engage the spectator in co-creation.

As the study progressed the work with the pose impacted a way of thinking through the devising process that impacted and highlighted a way to look at language and textual information. This was done by exploring the visceral worlds of words rather than solely using words as textual information, this I termed as 'linguistic poses,' as shown in Chapter Four with the two linguistic pose worlds, **'*Desire*'** and '**Cemetery.**'

Moreover, the study suggested that by using poses as narrative steppingstones it is possible to engage with a larger spectrum of the play text information provided by the playwright, as exemplified in:

- The first pose: Blanche at the Tarantula Arms.

- The last pose moment: Blanche in the asylum.

This practice highlights, accentuates, and elongates dramatic events.

The following are a selection of probes that might be contemplated during the investigation of a pose dramaturgy of a play text:

- Which word, sentences, or lines are the student attracted to?
    - How do these selections inform a dramaturgic narrative?
- Which pose worlds do the selection of play text words, sentences, lines inform?
- Which artists' visual artwork does the student source for their pose templates?
    - Why did the student select this artist?
- What strengths would the student draw from their experience and through which creative outlet (art discipline) does their work have its strongest expression?

There are complications attached to this form of practice. The first issue is in relation to the playwright, who may not be interested in having their play reworked in this manner. The second issue is that the study does not provide insight into how playwrights might write new plays that appeal to this plastic form of narrative production within the playwrights' work.

The pose: possibilities for future research and practice.

The provided examples highlight how the plasticity of the pose, that is, the supporting pose structures that were codified in this study's research (tension, rhythm, and the *'ma*), can be applied to other art disciplines. This provides actors with a unique practice system where they can interpret a play text world through different art disciplines. Additionally, after each

discipline I have added a list of suggested research questions to provide an approach to reflect on the different proposed practice iterations.

I would like to preface that each of the proposed practice iterations that I am about to propose would warrant their own individual study and should be viewed as a proposal for further pose practice investigations. I contemplated different structures and contexts in which working with pose templates might not only be effective but also connect performances to different art disciplines. The idea of taking my practice and exploring across different art disciplines came to me when I looked around to see how theatres were coping during the pandemic and noticed that many theatres transferred their theatrical performances online. A theatrical performance in London could be transmitted live and be viewed immediately from anywhere in the world with internet access. I would argue that, with some exceptions, a filmed live theatrical performance pales in comparison to acting for film as the body language, interaction between the actors, and the vocal production in a theatrical performance often does not translate and appears exaggerated on film. The intimacy and uniqueness of a live theatrical performance is difficult to transfer through the film medium. The power of theatre lies in the interaction and auto-poetic feedback loop between the spectators, the performer(s), and the space, as Fischer-Lichte argues:

> Performance does not consist of fixed, transferable, and material artifacts; it is fleeting, transient and exists only in the present. It is made up of the continuous becoming and passing of the autopoietic feedback loop.

> (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p. 75)

Without the spectators present, there cannot be a feedback loop with which the performers can induce their performances. I began to think of the pose template's status as an image and questioned how that image might perform in other contexts and art forms. How would the pose templates, for example of *Sensing Blanche*, be expressed through different art disciplines? It could be argued the pose images used in this study have already made a couple of transformations from a live pose by Caravaggio's models, to his visual arts work, to my body, to representing Blanche Dubois' internal life.

In the following practice iterations, I use *Sensing Blanche* as a case study.

Sensing Blanche followed Williams' original narrative (even though many scenes were left out), except for the addition of the first pose, representing Blanche before her arrival in New Orleans, and the last pose, which represented Blanche after New Orleans. As I have already argued in Chapter Four, the first and last pose could be interpreted as representing the same pose moment, 'Blanche after New Orleans'. This would be an indication that the whole performance was a memory, showing Blanche enacting her memory of the events that took place in New Orleans. However, as memories are rarely produced in a consecutive order of events, the performance might be played out of order. This could offer the possibility of experiencing a performance as memory, out of order, that is not in consecutive order of events. It would provide vastly different interpretations of an iconic play text. This would also shake things up in the sense that multiple performances could be executed in a different formation. In *Sensing Blanche*, I used twelve poses in the performance, including ghost poses and reaction poses, listed below are the first three poses as they were shown in the performance, using the

consecutive order of the narrative of Williams' play text. (For full list of performance poses see Appendix C.)

1.

2.

3.

The above poses are an interpretation of Blanche's experience in New Orleans. To work with a dramaturgy of poses is to work with a plastic form capable of transformation; a transformation with multiple possibilities that will challenge how narratives are expressed. The yellow row in the chart below is a representation of the poses, numbered and order (1–12) from *Sensing*

Blanche (as shown on the previous pages). The blue, green, and grey rows represent the same poses but in a different order, highlighting three new possibilities of creating dramaturgies of poses each representing full performances of *Sensing Blanche.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
2	7	12	10	4	9	3	6	1	5	8	11
6	10	8	12	9	2	7	11	4	1	3	5
10	1	5	3	11	8	6	12	2	7	9	4

In the chart the blue row starts with Pose #2, which represents the first meeting between Blanche and Stella leading to their first argument. This is followed by Pose #7, which represents Blanche's seduction of Young Man. The third pose in the blue row is Pose # 12, which represents Blanche at the asylum. This means the first three poses of the reconfigured performance of *Sensing Blanche* would be as follows:
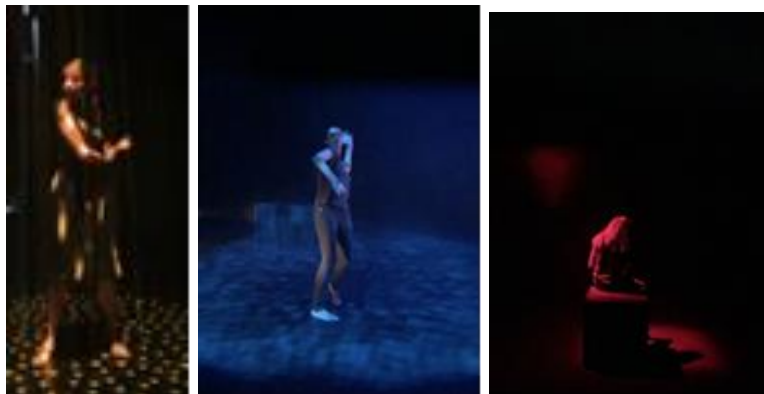
The performance narrative would start with Blanche and Stella's argument. Followed by Blanche's seduction of the Young Collector and lastly, Blanche at the asylum after Stanley's assault.

Research questions that might be asked:

- How might the new pose configuration affect the spectators understanding of narrative?
    - How might it affect Williams' play text?
        - Would it be possible to inspire a different understanding of Williams' work and the characters in his play?
        - What might be discovered by creating a performance world based on the inner world of the characters engaging with how the outer world affects them?
- From a technical perspective, still working with the codified structures, how would the different order of events affect the rhythmic and tensional structure of the performance?
- How would the new pose order impact
    - The spectator's experience?
    - The actor's performance experience?
    - The performance world?

This form of practice provides practitioners and students a mode in which to experiment with the production of narrative and dramaturgy.

Historically, consecutive narratives have been prevalent but what if it is not the most organic way to tell a story? What if the way we think naturally, through random associations, was a more powerful alternative to creating performances? If the practice model that I have developed in this thesis was followed by other practitioners, also working with *Streetcar*, their versions would differ significantly. Which character would they select to tell their story: Stan,

Stella, Mitch, or Blanche? If they chose Blanche, which poses would they tell her story with? From the work of which artist would they source their pose templates? Which play text lines would they highlight? Which order of events would they favour? This would open a new way of engaging, interpreting, and expressing iconic play texts, which might also remove the predictability and regurgitations of templates, to explore new performance worlds. By regurgitating I mean that when I initially selected Tennessee Williams' play *A Streetcar Named Desire,* as the iconic play text to be used for this research, I looked at different productions of the play. These included productions staring Natasha Richardson (Broadway), Blair Underwood (Broadway), Beverly D'Angelo (Broadway) Gillian Anderson (St Ann's Warehouse, Brooklyn, N.Y.). I saw two of these productions live (the Richardson and Anderson versions). I would argue that what connected all the performances was that they appeared to be heavily inspired by the expressional template created by the American director Elia Kazan's movie version of the play, starring Marlon Brando and Vivienne Leigh. Starting with Brando as the template for masculinity and Vivienne Leigh as the template for the Southern lady in distress. Often these interpretations (regurgitations) become about the Southern accents and the aggressive male in the white t-shirt. The beauty and power of Williams' language often gets lost. I am not arguing against the traditional way of performing Williams' plays, or plays in general, however, I am merely open for different possibilities of engaging in the theatrical world. Another outcome of this study is for plays to reach a diverse group of interpreters without 'othering' their participation. By othering I mean a production becomes the 'Black' version, or the production with 'colour-blind casting' (awful term).

The pose as a visual arts image.

As suggested in the practice chapter, the more impactful a pose moment is the less play text is needed. To challenge this hypothesis, might large photographic images of the poses from the theatrical performance be an effectful representation of the performance world? Can the pose images stand on their own in a gallery exhibit as an expression of e.g. *Sensing Blanche*?

Below are examples of research questions that might be asked for future creative practice investigations with pose images as visual art images.

- How would the photographic images of the poses used in a performance, (e.g. *Sensing Blanche*) perform as visual arts images?

- Would it be possible to express Blanche's trajectory effectively through the selected images?

- Would images taken from the theatrical space be effective, or would they need, as I would advocate, to be re-framed? I would argue that what works in a theatrical space might not communicate as strongly in a different medium, as shown in the images below. The first two images (below) are from *Sensing Blanche,* and the second set of images were created outside of the theatrical space.

Figure 64–67: (Above) Posing. Photo credit: N. Kovacs

However, it occurred to me that once the images were moved to a different art

sphere/expression, they might be denied their original meaning. The pose images (with me as a

person of colour) might be viewed (whether I want it or not) in the context of racial structures

and/or as a political statement. Where I initially wanted the onlooker to experience Blanche's

trajectory through a set of visual arts images, a new dimension and meaning might potentially

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hijack that intension. However, this intrusion might be an interesting aspect to explore with the visual arts images.

Using the pose as an interactive tool online or in person.

Building on the visual arts exploration above, how might those same pose images perform with an additional soundscape? It could be the soundscape used in the theatrical performance or a soundscape made specifically for the images.

Below are research questions and explorations that the student or practitioner might ask during their investigation:

- If the soundscape was played through headphones, would the image and sound provide an intimate experience between the onlooker and the image?
    - What would happen if the soundscape were played aloud in front of each image, with the viewers grouped together?
    - How might these two modes affect the onlooker and how does the effect differ?
- Does the onlooker need to be familiar with the sourced play text (in this example) *Streetca*r? Or would the interactive experience have a life of its own?

Instead of filming a theatrical performance and showing it online, would the combination of image and sound work as a more intimate and impactful iteration of a theatrical performance?

This form of exploration might be attractive to students of contemporary theatrical practice because they have grown up with social media and have a strong connection to the image.

Below I have included a link to an example to how the combination of image and sound might perform.

Implementing the practice theory created in this study for an online film presentation.

In November 2021 I received a commission for a seminar hosted by the Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies at Glasgow University and the Stirling Maxwell Centre to create an artwork that engaged with the recognition of racism. I was initially asked to do a small performance lasting about five minutes, drawing on my PhD practice research. However, due to covid restrictions the event was moved online. Without the possibility of a theatrical performance and working off the autopoietic feedback loop between the performance and the spectators, I thought it would be difficult for the performance to be impactful. Instead, I decided to explore the plasticity of the practice research conducted for this study and see if it could be transferred to film work. I decided to focus on the pose and the practice structures that were codified in this study. There was a lot of work involved with creating the short film, so I shall briefly state that I

was making an argument that racism is violence. In addition, I was tired of racism somehow staying a Black issue and wanted, instead, to shift the focus to the viewer, asking indirectly, why do you not think it is about you? I sourced textual material from the lyrics of Billie Holliday's song, *Strange Fruit[13]*, Tamika Rice's Black Lives Matter speech, [14] and from the work of W.E. Dubois[15]. I used photographic images and Caravaggio pose template images. I did not use any moving images for the film, but instead drew on the tension between silence and sound, from chaos to stillness. Before the showing of the film, the organisers alerted the viewers to the still images and silence in the work. This was so they would not think there was something wrong with their computers. I saw this as a negative element, removing some of the impact the film might have had because the silences were there to create tension and, through that, impact and unsettle the spectator to question themselves highlights how prevalent predictability is. I titled the work, *The Gaze,* to highlight how racial issues are often projected to people of colour, my argument being, to shift the focus to the people 'gazing.'

Additional notes about *The Gaze.*

Although limited textual information was applied to the project, the impact comes from what is withheld, a projected space encompassing the *'ma* as a silence, a gap, with the aim to confront the viewer with their own role in the societal passive gaze on racism.

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'Strange Fruit' written and composed by Abel Meeropol, drawn from a poem by Meeropol published in 1937.

[14] Tamika D. Mallory, speech from news conference during the George Floyd protest in Minneapolis Saint Paul, May 2020.

[15] (Du Bois, W. E. B 1903, 2) The souls of black folk: essays and sketches, A. C. McClurg & co, Chicago.

Afterwards I received positive feedback for the work, but as with *Sensing Blanche*, I would argue the real performance – what moved the viewers, came from the mind's eye of the viewers themselves.

The Gaze highlighted the plasticity of the structures derived from the practice research and proved transferable to the film medium.

It is noteworthy that I used film, which is concerned with moving images, without using moving images. Instead I used static images and relied on the viewers to produce the moving images, enforced by sound and silence, with their minds' eye/imagination. The devising process remained the same whether it was for a theatrical performance or a short film: selecting play text, sourcing pose images, creating a soundscape and conducting the devising process through the exploration of tension and rhythm and the *'ma*.

The Gaze

YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKfz65269XU

Please note there are long moments of silence in the video.

Devising with the pose – creating music.

The employment of the pose, tension set-up and release, counter-rhythm, spoken play text lines and soundscape, propelled me to question if the order of the use of practice elements created a rhythmic pattern? Moreover, could that pattern become a score? Could a

performance element represent a note or a sound? What if I took the practice elements of

Sensing Blanche and selected the following:

P (representing the pose moment)

S (representing the soundscape)

T (representing the spoken play text line.)

This was, after all, how I began to write down the devising process.

When I devised the performance, I was thinking of the rhythmic and the counter-rhythmic

choices when selecting what was to come next. I did this to create tension in the performance

and unpredictability in mind of the spectator, attempting to create tension to attract attention.

I questioned if what I have created in my choice selection of pose moment followed by

soundscape, or soundscape followed by spoken play text lines, could form a rhythm and if there

is a rhythm, could it become a piece of music? As an example, I have listed all the selections and

order of poses, soundscape, and spoken play text lines of *Sensing Blanche*, below:

S**P1**- STSTSTSTS**P2**T- TSTSTS**P3**T- S- TSTSTSTS**P4**T- ST- STSTST- STSTSTSTS**P5**S-

TSTSTSTSTSTSTSTST**P6**T- TSTST**P7**- S**P8**- TSTSTST+**P9**- STSTSTSTSTSTSTSTSTS**P10**-

TSTSTSTSTSTSTSTSPTST- **P11**

This could be a way for theatre makers and musicians to create scores that are based on

devising choices. The second is, if one could make a sound from the devising choices might that

sound also highlight ineffective choices, by musically not being possible? Or might it offer

another order because the sound would be better with P1P2TTS (Pose 1, followed by Pose 2,

play text lines, play text lines, soundscape)? Would I be able to hear if the choices were too

bland if the music sounds flat? Or would there be an error in the performance, highlighted by notes that cannot follow each other?

The value of this research should be seen as a creative strategy for practice exploration that, in addition to its plastic form, answers the contemporary moment's urgent call for diversity and inclusivity in theatre study programmes, actor training, and practice.

As an acting training strategy, pose practice aims to connect the actor to their unique creative language, teaching them to explore the now/*'ma.*

This study's approach to embodied learning could potentially benefit other study programmes, such as visual arts, where students might gain a distinct perspective of an artist's work by engaging in pose practice, making a dramaturgy of poses much like my own embodiment of the figures in Caravaggio's visual art images. This pose work provided me with a unique and powerful connection to Caravaggio's work and, from that, a gateway to my own creative expression. Additionally, the research might benefit certain studies of philosophy pertaining to perception theory by offering an alternative mode of exploring theories, as in this study where I applied Henri Bergson's perception theory. As I worked with these theories, I kept thinking about how useful it would have been to create a partnership between these two disciplines, both for the devising theatre student and for the philosophy student, to engage in a philosophical collaboration regarding, for example, perception theory.

Finally, to be impactful I would argue there needs to be a reframing of the value of actor training, theory, and practice, with an acknowledgement by academia of the actor's unique

ontological and philosophical perspective to get the full scope of knowledge production that

has historically been codified by practitioners, past and present.

Appendix A:

Full list of the fifteen scenes/moments selected from *A Streetcar named Desire,* working title,

Sensing Blanche (listed chronologically.)

1. BLANCHE**.** Introduction to BLANCHE and the play text world.

    The first scene starts with BLANCHE sitting at the Tarantula Arms having been

    told by management to leave. The scene is extracted from the play text,

    where the scene is alluded to, but it is not shown in Williams' original play

    text.

2. BLANCHE **and** STELLA. (Act One, Scene One, Page 9)

    The sisters BLANCHE and STELLA see each other for the first time since BLANCHE'S

    arrival in the French Quarter in New Orleans. This scene was interesting as it

    engaged with a common theme of sisterhood, rivalry, envy, misunderstanding

    – this appealed to me as a rich world with which to engage. Furthermore, the

    meeting is an important event in BLANCHE'S fight for survival.

3. BLANCHE **and** STANLEY**.** (Act One, Scene One, Page 17)

    BLANCHE meets STANLEY, STELLA'S husband, for the first time.

    This is the primary dramatic event in *Streetcar*. The tension of the play is

    drawn in the battle between STANLEY KOWALSKI and BLANCHE DUBOIS.

4. STELLA **and** STANLEY. (Act One, Scene Two, Pages 21–23)

STELLA informs STANLEY they have lost *Belle Reve*, their childhood estate.

In this scene BLANCHE's character and motives are being questioned by STANLEY. It depicts a world in which a person (BLANCHE) overhears a couple (STANLEY and STELLA) talking about her.

5. BLANCHE **and** STANLEY**.** (Act One, Scene Two, Pages 24–29)

STANLEY confronts BLANCHE about the loss of *Belle Reve.*

This is the first battle between STANLEY and BLANCHE.

6. BLANCHE **and** MITCH**.** (Act One, Scene Three, Pages 36–40)

BLANCHE is introduced to MITCH, a friend of STANLEY'S, and in him finds hope for a better future and for her survival.

7. BLANCHE **and** STELLA**.** (Act One, Scene Three, Pages 50–51)

BLANCHE fights back, badmouthing STANLEY to STELLA.

8. STANLEY **and** BLANCHE**.** (Act Two, Scene One, Pages 54–55)

STANLEY confronts BLANCHE about her life prior to her arrival in New Orleans. BLANCHE's past has caught up with her.

9. BLANCHE **and the** YOUNG MAN. (Act Two, Scene One, Pages 58–59)

BLANCHE's seduction of a young man.

The pressure and tension have escalated for BLANCHE throughout the first eight scenes, with BLANCHE unable to control the narrative. This scene shows

Blanche taking great risks by creating an environment, she can control – the seduction of a young man.

10. Blanche **and** Mitch. (Act Two, Scene One, Page 60 and Act Two, Scene Two, Pages 66–68)

    Blanche seduces Mitch. There is a significant difference in Blanche's seduction of the young man, and her seduction of Mitch. The seduction of the young man was based on desire and power whereas the seduction of Mitch is more constructed, performing a womanhood she assumed Mitch was looking for – pure and wholesome.

11. Stanley **and** Stella. (Act Three, Scene One, Pages 70–74)

    Stanley informs Stella of Blanche's past.

    Most of Blanche's past is revealed in this scene.

12. Blanche **and** Mitch. (Act Three, Scene Three, Pages 81–87)

    Stanley has told Mitch about Blanche's past. Mitch breaks up with Blanche.

    If it were not for Stanley, Blanche could have married Mitch, been someone's wife, had a home and dignity but all is lost.

13. Blanche **and** Stanley. (Act Three, Scene Four, Pages 88–94)

    Stanley assaults Blanche.

STANLEY not only destroys BLANCHE'S chance of a better future, a better life, he annihilates her.

14. BLANCHE **and the** DOCTOR. (Act Three, Scene Five, Pages 97–103)

BLANCHE has a breakdown and is taken to an asylum by the doctor.

15. BLANCHE.

Like the first scene, this scene is alluded to in Williams' play text but not shown. The original last scene in the play text is the previous scene where the doctor and the matron take BLANCHE away to the asylum. The scene represents BLANCHE sitting on her bed at the asylum.

Appendix B:

Listed below are all the selected pose worlds and templates used for S*ensing*

Blanche.

1. BLANCHE**.** Introduction to BLANCHE and the playing world.

   The first scene starts with BLANCHE sitting at the Tarantula Arms having been told by

   management to leave.

(Above) St Jerome in Meditation (1605), Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

2. BLANCHE **and** STELLA. (Act One, Scene One, Page 9)

The sisters BLANCHE and STELLA see each other for the first time since BLANCHE's arrival in

the French Quarter in New Orleans. This scene was interesting because it engaged with

familiar themes of sisterhood, such as rivalry, envy, misunderstanding.

(Above) The denial of St Peter (1610), Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

3. BLANCHE **and** STANLEY**. (Act One, Scene One, Page 17)**

    BLANCHE meets STANLEY, Stella's husband, for the first time.

    This is the primary dramatic event in *Streetcar*.

(Above) detail of Death of the virgin (1601-3), Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

4. BLANCHE **and** STANLEY**. (Act One, Scene Two, Pages 24–29)**

    STANLEY confronts BLANCHE about the loss of *Belle Reve.*

(Above) detail, The Resurrection of Lazarus (1609), Michaelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

Reaction pose[16] (below):

(Above) The Martyrdom of St Ursula (1610), Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

5. BLANCHE **and** MITCH**.** (Act One, Scene Three, Pages 36–40)

BLANCHE is introduced to MITCH, a friend of Stanley's, and in him finds hope for a better future. Then STANLEY causes havoc, throwing the radio through the window as all hell breaks loose.

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[16] The two reaction pose moments are exemptions in that they represent external states, when Blanche reacts to how the previous pose moment has affected her. During these reaction poses, I performed a monologue.

(Above) The Martyrdom of St Matthew, (1599-1600), Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

6. BLANCHE **and** the YOUNG COLLECTOR. (Act Two, Scene One, Pages 58–59)

    The pressure and tension had escalated up to this moment. In order to feel powerful

    and desired Blanche seduces a young collector.

Boy Bitten by a Lizard (1593–1594), Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio.

7. BLANCHE **and** MITCH. (Act Two, Scene One, Page 60 and Act Two, Scene Two, Pages 67–

    68)

    BLANCHE opens up to MITCH about the death of her husband, his homosexuality, and her

    guilt for possibly causing his death.

The Crowning with Thorns (1603), Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

8. STANLEY **and** STELLA. (Act Three, Scene One, Pages 70–74)

STANLEY informs STELLA of Blanche's past. BLANCHE has been living in a seedy hotel, has

had many intimacies with strangers, and has been fired from her job at the school

where she worked because of an affair with a young student.

9. BLANCHE **and** MITCH**.** (Act Three, Scene Three, Pages 81–87)

STANLEY has told MITCH about Blanche's past. MITCH enters to break up with BLANCHE.

Reaction pose[17] (below):

Blanche makes a confession to Mitch about her life prior to her arrival in New Orleans hoping for Mitch to show pity and understanding. Mitch, unable to forgive Blanche's deceit, breaks up with her.

(Above) The deposition (1600-1604) Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

10. Blanche **and** Stanley. (Act Three, Scene Four, Pages 88–94)

Stella is in the hospital about to give birth to her child. Stanley and Blanche are alone in the apartment. Stanley assaults Blanche.
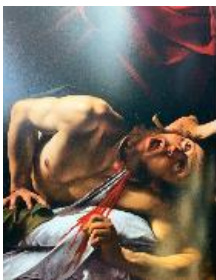
(Above) Judith beheading Holofernes (1599), Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

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[17] The two reaction pose moments are exemptions in that they represent external states, when Blanche reacts to how the previous pose moment has affected her. During these reaction poses, I performed a monologue during the pose.

Blanche is pleading for forgiveness from Mitch.

11. BLANCHE **and the** DOCTOR. (Act Three, Scene Five, Pages 97–103)

After the assault BLANCHE has a breakdown. She is removed from Stella and Stanley's apartment and is taken to an asylum by a doctor.

(Above) The beheading of St John the Baptist (1608) Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio.

12. BLANCHE.

As in the first pose, this pose is alluded to in Williams' play text but not written as a scene in the play. Williams' original last scene in the play text is where the doctor and the matron arrive to take Blanche away. The pose I have added represents BLANCHE sitting on her bed at the asylum. The scene also represents the beginning, the first scene, signifying that the whole performance represents an act of memory. BLANCHE'S memory.

(Above) St Jerome in Meditation

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Appendix C:

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Figures C1–12 Photo credit: N. Kovacs.

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