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Literature in Motion: Mary Anthony's use of Shakespearean and Biblical Themes in Modern Dance

Gwendolyn Lee Jensen

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Literature in Motion:
Mary Anthony’s use of Shakespearean and Biblical Themes in Modern Dance

BY

Gwendolyn Jensen

B.A., Dance and English, Southern Utah University, 2008

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts
Theatre and Dance

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May, 2010
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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I analyze the life and work of Mary Anthony in my exploration of modern dance with literary influence. I approach Anthony’s use of Shakespearean and Biblical themes as dramatic and timeless literary stimuli for portraying morality, mortality, and humanity as important to the American modern dance style established by her predecessors. I discuss how her lifelong interest in theatre led to her use of dramatic literary sources as a way of producing dance with theatrical elements, or what she calls “total theatre” rather than dance alone; the clear conception inherent in written works, as well as the lasting status of Shakespeare and the Bible in America, allowed her to create dances with clarity of ideas, plot, and character. I explore how Anthony’s influences, styles, and methods allowed her to portray such well-known written themes without the words that would normally drive and transmit them.

Here I specifically analyze Anthony’s dances Lady Macbeth (1949), based on Shakespeare’s Macbeth, and In the Beginning (Adam and Eve) (1970), and Cain and Abel (1972), both based on the Biblical stories in Genesis, in order to explore the differences in her use of each literary source in choreography. I discuss biographical information regarding influence and experience, her views and teaching methods, and her use of specific themes for dance. I explore the connection between Anthony’s idea of total theatre, her use of dramatic literary themes, and her ability to use Shakespeare and the Bible in the creation of choreography within the established American style of an art form.
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Introduction

“The simplest mind unconsciously admits that it is not enough to be able to speak”
Doris Humphrey

Modern dance uses the body to speak in ways that reach beyond words and verbal communication; using written themes to shape this wordless portrayal of ideas and emotions creates a bridge between literature and dance. The above quote suggests that physical movement, gesture, and expression support language when words feel inadequate in description or communication. At the same time, literary influence can provide thematic clarity in other arts. Written word and physical movement differ in portrayal of emotion, the tangibility of surviving artwork, and the ability to express universal themes. Literature and dance have worked in symbiotic relationships which grow from one artist’s effect on another, producing new and influenced art. As an example, for the poet William Butler Yeats the dancer “possesses what the poet lacks: a freedom from quotidian time and space and an ability to express concrete images without recourse to language’s abstract sign system” (Mester 27-28). The themes and emotions of a written work can similarly influence choreographers when they wish to use it as ideational stimulus for dance. While language consists of a codified sign system capable of creating and describing, the reader must imagine the content in visual form in order to fully understand and appreciate a written work. Also, some emotion and meaning is lost through translation across different languages. Dance is more fleeting than the written word; one must experience it through time, and it cannot be reproduced as easily as other arts. Literature is solid and accessible in the form of the written word, while dance is flexible and fragile in its lack of permanence. There is a powerful difference between writers relying on the sign system of language for literature and choreographers breaking away from the system while still using the signs as influence for choreography in modern dance.

Mary Anthony, a modern dancer, teacher, and choreographer who began her career in the early 1940s, exemplified a fusion of dance and literature in choreography throughout her career. The use of literary influence by modern dancers in America is a noteworthy topic, as it reflects some of the ideals and standards of an artistic movement and of the country in which it thrived. The popularity and stature of dramatic literature combined
with the mood set by war and social change to create a uniquely American voice in modern dance during the early to middle twentieth-century. The wider conversation of the relationship between literature and dance deserves attention, as does the refined, but still expansive subject of American modern dance with literary influence. However, these topics are far too large for my current scope of study. In this thesis, I approach Mary Anthony and closely analyze three of her works: Lady Macbeth (1949), influenced by Shakespeare’s Macbeth, and In the Beginning (Adam and Eve) (1970) and Cain and Abel (1972), both inspired by the Bible (Genesis 2-4). Through these specific dances, I address what the use of each literary source reveals about the choreographer, the aesthetics of modern dance, and the role of Shakespeare and the Bible in early twentieth-century America. How did the influence of written texts which originated elsewhere add relevant themes and emotion to the quality and style of modern dance in America? To support the individual analysis and the comparison of each dance to the others, I will also look at them in the larger scope of Anthony’s methods of teaching and choreographing, her placement in the dance and social worlds, and her relationship with each type of literature throughout her life.

In the early twentieth-century, the first generation of modern dance choreographers continued the goals of Isadora Duncan to have a free, natural dance style which defied the aesthetics of nineteenth-century Romantic and Classical ballet. Anthony was in the second generation, which consisted of students who studied with one of the original modern dance pioneers of the first generation. The first generation, also known as the Big Four, included Martha Graham, Hanya Holm, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman. It is important to note that ballet also had innovative choreographers who diverted from the specific themes and ideals of nineteenth-century ballet while still adhering to ballet technique during the early to middle twentieth-century. Antony Tudor, for example, similarly expressed emotion through the use of literary themes in his contemporary ballet choreography in the same generation as Anthony. Here, however, I am solely concerned with modern dance in America, and specifically Anthony’s choreography with Shakespearean and Biblical influence. While the Big Four rebelled against what they saw as restrictive costumes and technique in ballet, Anthony’s generation recognized the value of ballet technique to the training of one’s body for modern dance. Ballet therefore
held a place in Anthony’s choreographic style, which used a variety of techniques to portray her themes in dance. The second generation tended to carry on the themes and ideals of the first generation of modern dance in America, including the use of mythological, literary, psychological, and social themes to reveal humanity and emotion. Interest in literature and other arts was certainly something that many in the second generation adhered to, even after leaving their mentors (McDonough 157).

Anthony’s choreography fit into this era of dance with its specific ideals, and yet differed in style and approach from works by other choreographers. Some modern dances with literary influence combined psychological themes to encourage more connotations than there were in the written work, as with several of Martha Graham’s dances, while others required the verbal accompaniment of poems, such as Pearl Primus’ *Strange Fruit*. Anthony’s *Lady Macbeth* and both *Cain and Abel* and *In the Beginning (Adam and Eve)* specifically used Shakespearean and Biblical sources, respectively, to portray the attention to emotion and the human condition that Anthony inherited from her predecessors. Many of her dances which were inspired by literature use only visceral movement to emit emotional depth, and not verbal readings; I posit that this stems from the works’ clear conception of timeless themes, from Anthony’s unique experiences, and from her intense interest in theatre and dramatic literature.

While *Lady Macbeth* (1949) was Anthony’s first dance as an independent choreographer, her dances with Biblical influence came later, when she had a strong company of dancers. *In the Beginning (Adam and Eve)* premiered in 1970 and *Cain and Abel* premiered in 1972. Other works influenced by dramatic literature also appeared in Anthony’s choreographic career between, as well as after, these dances. Despite the different placement of each piece in the timeline of Anthony’s career, I approach all three dances as emerging from the style she established in her early training and continued to use throughout her career. All three dances fit among an array of timeless themes in her body of choreography, many of which were influenced by dramatic literature. *Lady Macbeth* and *Cain and Abel* both have a core theme of tragic death derived from the threat of mortality present in the very existence of every living person’s being, while *In the Beginning (Adam and Eve)* approaches the theme at the root of death: an explanation for why humans die. I question how Anthony’s personal views of death and interest in
tragedy led her to dramatic literary sources, and I specifically address how she chose Shakespearean and Biblical themes. Were Shakespeare and the Bible simply obvious choices due to Anthony’s sophistication, emotional depth, and desire to portray ideas through gesture? Were such sources able to provide powerful influence to her choreography because their magnitude and intensity fit her personality, choreographic style, and teaching methods?

These literary sources and the themes that they contain are still applicable and influential in society today because they point to the simultaneous hopefulness and hopelessness of the human condition. William Shakespeare’s writing is renowned in Europe and America, and is well-known and praised in both society and academia. For these reasons, the universal themes he utilizes are “timeless” in the sense of their popularity being unaffected by time and their relevance applying to past, present, and future generations. The Bible undoubtedly holds a strong place in Western society as the guide for the faith and inspiration of the Judeo-Christian religion, as well as for its historical and literary importance in academia. The Bible has been put under closer and more prolonged study, and has also been circulated and translated more than nearly any other book in the Western world (Rowley 11). Shakespeare and the Bible are timeless in their use and portrayal of universal themes, such as death, betrayal, jealousy, and greed, which are still applicable today, and likely always will be for as long as humans exist. In using these themes to depict the emotion-driven modern dance style developed by the Big Four, Anthony showed an understanding of the literature, as well as of the desired catharsis of both the American dancer experiencing the growth of a new style and the American citizen experiencing the hardships of poverty, war, and change in the early to middle twentieth-century.  

Anthony, her predecessors, and her contemporaries created dance inspired by the turbulence and change in the world. I explore the origins of literary influences in Anthony’s choreography from the late 1940s to the early 1970s and what she hoped to achieve by using them. Anthony faced challenges as a single, working-class American woman pursuing a dance career, performing, and starting her own studio and company in the 1950s. Although more women were independent in this time period than in previous decades, young housewives were still the standard (Ware 206). Anthony used specific
ideas and characters in some of her choreography to add strength to her image as an independent female artist. She made choreographic choices in restructuring Shakespearean and Biblical themes into dances; these choices benefited her creative means and her placement in society. Her choreography showed emotion through movement while making connections to the larger groupings of audience and society. Analyzing a specific choreographer and her use of literary themes in dance will shed more light on the topic of modern dance with literary influence, as well as on the climate of the dance and social worlds that contributed to this artistic practice of drawing influence from elsewhere for dance. This type of influence and the choreography it inspired exemplifies the mood, tone, and methods of early-modern dance, especially for those artists developing and thriving in the 1930s -1950s.

My primary focus is a discussion of Anthony’s placement in history. At the time of this thesis (2010), she is ninety-four years old and continues to teach dance at her studio, which she has kept open for fifty-six years. At this point, she no longer choreographs new dances (the most recent were *The Magdalene* (1998) and *Tabula Rasa* (1999)). However, she continues to reconstruct dances from earlier in her career, in many cases setting them on dancers that have trained with her and have been in her company. The dancers understand her movement quality and she can set the movement from her memory on their bodies. While I acknowledge that she still teaches today, I address her choreography and her artistic development in the past tense as I situate her overall career in historical context and discuss choreography that she created forty to sixty years ago.

I believe that exploring a specific choreographer who created modern dance with literary influence is a focused beginning to a discussion of the wider topic of literature and dance and all of the various dance styles, writers, and theories it could encompass. I chose Anthony as my current focus because she is a potentially lost figure in dance history. While her career has been long and successful, she does not hold as strong of a position in dance writings as other dancers and choreographers. I hope that the conversation about Anthony’s life and legacy will continue and deepen with the critical viewpoints of further scholarship.
Topic Development

When continuing my education after high school, I could not decide between Literature and Dance, and so I majored in both. My own interest in modern dance with literary influence began when I first viewed José Limón’s *The Moor’s Pavane* (1949) in an undergraduate Dance History class required for my Dance major.\(^8\) I had just taken a Shakespeare survey course the previous semester for a literature requirement. *Othello* was the last play that we studied, and was also the topic of my final paper. As a result, I felt that I was more fascinated with, and had a stronger connection to, the themes and influences of the dance than other dance students in the classroom. While some students recognized the tragedy within the dance, others expressed boredom, as they were either not familiar with the story or simply not interested in literature. Whatever the response, the gap between Limón’s generation and mine made clear that there was a different value placed upon the literature when Limón created the piece than there is today. Having just thoroughly studied the play, I was intrigued at how clearly Limón portrayed the relationships of the play, which drive the tragedy through the dialogues between each of the main characters, by using gesture, space, and facial expression.

When I became a graduate student in Dance History and Criticism, I was introduced to Mary Anthony’s *Lady Macbeth*. I wondered about the time period in which these dances were created, how the choreographers chose literature to create powerful dances, and how those themes and inspirations differed from the life, inspiration, and choreography of today’s generation. The more I learned about Mary Anthony, and the more dances I discovered by her with literary influence, the stronger I felt that I needed to write about her choreography and her use of the written word as inspiration for dance. I also knew that there was a possibility of speaking with her, and that I would need to have an interview in order to complete such a project. This was largely because there was limited information available about her, as opposed to many other choreographers and dancers of her generation. She kindly allowed me to interview her. Our conversation, as well as the research I completed in the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts on the same trip, shaped my thesis as I refined my topic and discovered new things about Anthony’s life and views.
My own love of both literature and dance led me to the exploration of this topic. Because of this duality, I feel that I understand the use of literary influence by modern dancers in a way that current scholars from each field alone may not. The students in my class could not fully appreciate *The Moor’s Pavane* because they did not understand Shakespeare the way that Limón’s generations did, or the emotions and themes he sought to portray in the dance. However, even without knowledge of the play it seemed that the students could understand the basic choreography, drama, and emotion of the dance. Modern dance with literary influence makes an important connection between two fields that are seemingly so different. There is something to discover about why modern choreographers in early twentieth-century America turned to literary themes as influence for dance, as well as what those dances added to or pointed out about the original written texts.

**Survey of Literature**

To my knowledge, there has not been research or writing to explore an in-depth analysis and comparison of Anthony’s choreography with dramatic literary influence. In embarking on this topic, I researched a variety of fields, as the nature of Anthony’s multifaceted career and interests required. Although there is limited biographical information available about Anthony, I used nearly every article, review, interview, and documentary available in the attempt to provide a rounded view of her life and work. To better understand her choreographic career, we must look at dance history for context, of course, but it is also important to understand the placement of Shakespeare and the Bible in American society to consider Anthony’s use of such themes as part of her voice as an American choreographer. I also address some performance and literary theory as I analyze her choreography in order to more fully connect the ideas of literature and dance and to compare the different literary sources in her dances.

In Fred Timm’s article about Anthony entitled “Mary Anthony at 80: A Celebration of Life and Dance” (1996), he describes his experience in her dance classes and refers to the interview he had with her near the time of her eightieth birthday and the performance marking her company’s fortieth anniversary. He adds description and biographical information to Anthony’s statements, making this a credible source about her life. Donna Nowak’s “One National Treasure: Mary Anthony” (1999) is an interview with Anthony
that discusses her methods of teaching and choreographing. This, too, is a useful article for its combination of biographical facts, critical insight, and Anthony’s words. In his article, “The Mary Anthony Approach” (1980), Jack Anderson gives a thorough description of her early influences, as well as her teaching and dance methods. Johanna Kirk gives insight into Anthony’s integration of theatre and dance in her article “Mary Anthony: Bringing Theater Back into the Art of Dance” (2008).

No Fixed Points: Dance in the Twentieth Century (2003), by dance historians Nancy Reynolds and Malcolm McCormick, is a thorough and frequently-quoted dance history compilation which gives an in-depth look at first and second generation modern dance in America. The first generation consisted of the Big Four, or the founding creators of modern dance, which included Martha Graham, Hanya Holm, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman. Although the authors only mention Anthony briefly as a student of Hanya Holm, their detailed description of the second generation of modern dancers in America applies to Anthony’s placement in the modern dance world. Don McDonough also analyzes the second generation in his The Complete Guide to Modern Dance (1976), which dance scholars frequently cite. He actually gives Anthony a place in his chapter of second generation artists, in which he talks briefly about her training and dance career before describing one of her dances and giving a chronology of her choreography. This is noteworthy and useful, as the massive No Fixed Points does not give her such attention. Reynolds and McCormick refer to the Big Four as the “heroic generation” and McDonough calls them the “historic generation.” I will use each term when quoting its respective author(s), and will use “Big Four” or “first generation” when making my own statements. I address the views of Hanya Holm and Pauline Koner from The Modern Dance (1965), edited by Selma Jeanne Cohen. They supplement Anthony’s views by providing insight from a predecessor and a contemporary, respectively.

In describing specific dances choreographed by Anthony, I combine opinions and descriptions from other authors with my description and analysis of each piece, from the versions of each dance that I viewed. I use Jack Anderson’s 1999 review and Alastair Macaulay’s 2007 review of performances of the reconstruction of Lady Macbeth for critical voices about the dance. There is short mention of Cain and Abel in Muriel Topaz’s 1997 review of the Mary Anthony Dance Theatre, and Timm discusses both this
piece and *In the Beginning (Adam and Eve)* in his article. Don McDonough thoroughly describes *In the Beginning (Adam and Eve)* in his section about Mary Anthony. Tonia Shimin gives tremendous insight into the life, choreography, and teaching methods of Anthony in her documentary *Mary Anthony: A Life in Modern Dance* (2004). Its extra features contain biographical and career timelines, as well as detailed information about her choreography, that were not available elsewhere. This documentary provides very thorough information about Anthony and is the only existing complete biography about her. However, Mary Price Boday is currently writing a book about Anthony’s life and work as a modern dance pioneer.

*Images and Reflections: Mary Anthony’s Lady Macbeth* (2002), a video produced by the American Dance Legacy Institute, contains Anthony’s reconstruction of *Lady Macbeth* with Mary Ford. It also provides Anthony’s words and instructions as she sets the piece on Bonnie Oda Homsey. With Homsey walking through the choreography, Anthony quotes the specific lines which inspired movement, and also gives information concerning the performance of the piece, such as facial expression and emotional difficulty, through her memories of performing it. Anthony’s own words about the process of creating and performing the dance make this a credible and useful source for my research.

The last and perhaps most valuable source on Anthony is my interview with her on January 7, 2010, just a couple of months after her ninety-fourth birthday. I knew that I needed more of her perspective about particular dances, as well as to hear what she thought about some of the statements and comparisons I make concerning her use of Shakespearean and Biblical influence in dance. Gaining her voice and opinions was crucial, as I needed to learn more about her history, her purposes in creating dances, and her views of the era in which she created them, in order to complete my research. The dances with which I am concerned for this thesis are not her most famous, and as a result, other scholars often mention them only in passing. Thus, an interview in which I asked about specific dances and methods allowed me to achieve a more thorough understanding of them.

There are a vast number of books about Shakespeare, including many that concern his status in America and various critical approaches to his plays. Here I closely examine his
acceptance as “American” and the shift in his popularity that led to a different societal view of his work in each generation from the nineteenth-century to the present. I address books that scholars cite and that are descriptive and thorough.

Kim Sturgess’s *Shakespeare and the American Nation* (2004) addresses America’s relationship with Shakespeare, including the paradox of our nation having a European writer as a hero after rejecting the British monarchy in the revolution. Sturgess discusses how America made Shakespeare a part of its culture. He gives a thorough historical account of the simultaneous anti-English sentiment and love of Shakespeare in America from the eighteenth to nineteenth-century. In *High Brow/Low Brow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (1988), Lawrence Levine covers changes in cultural views of entertainment during twentieth-century America. This includes definitions and explorations of “high brow” and “low brow” and how these terms changed in meaning around mid-century. He discusses the shift from Shakespeare’s popularity of the nineteenth-century to his status in the early twentieth-century and the reasons behind it. The overview of American taste and popular entertainment will be useful to my exploration of the social context in which Anthony created dances. It is important to my argument to know the placement of Shakespeare in society in order to understand why Anthony was drawn to his plays and why using his work still allowed her to contribute to the American style of modern dance. In *Shakespeare as a Political Thinker* (2000), John E. Alvis and Thomas G. West discuss the placement of Shakespeare in politics, which is critical to understanding his relationship in America.

For the actual text of *Macbeth*, I use *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (1930), edited by W.G. Clark and W. Aldis Wright, because it has clear and useful introductions before each play, including history and dates. I address Sarah Siddon’s “Remarks on the Character of Lady Macbeth” as supplementary material of a female performer’s perspective of being Lady Macbeth on stage. As one of the first female celebrity performers of Shakespeare, Siddons discusses her personal opinions of and insight into the depth of Lady Macbeth’s character. This article was first published in 1843, and gives insight to views about *Macbeth* during the time. It is interesting to compare Siddon’s opinions with Anthony’s reflections of performing *Lady Macbeth* as a dance.
Philip Freund’s *Dramatis Personae* (2006) gives an expansive and detailed survey of dramatic history, including biographical information about Shakespeare and a close analysis of *Macbeth*.

The Bible is also the subject of endless study, proving that both sources are indeed popular and well-known forms of literature that have withstood the test of time. For my discussion of Genesis for the stories Anthony used as influence for dance I address *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* for its suitable translations and extensive footnotes. James L. Kugel’s *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now* gives thorough explanations of ancient and recent scholarly interpretations, which I use in comparison to Anthony’s interpretations. *The Historian’s History of the United States*, edited by Andrew S. Berky and James P. Shenton, gives overall historical context, but also discusses a shift in the placement of the Bible in society from the nineteenth to the twentieth-century. Philip Freund’s *Dramatis Personae* (2006) also discusses Biblical drama, providing thorough accounts of religious drama, including Mystery, Miracle, and Morality plays. *The Bible in American Law, Politics, and Political Rhetoric* (1985), edited by James Turner Johnson, discusses the political use of the Bible throughout American history. *The Bible and Bibles in America* (1988), edited by Ernest S. Frerichs, gives further context with specific essays surrounding the placement of the Bible in American society. *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible and Culture* (2006) gives an extensive and thorough history of the Bible, its transfer to America, and the variety of fields of study in which it has a place, including Gender, Literature, and Nationalism, among others.

I support my critical comparison of Anthony’s dances inspired by Biblical and Shakespearean themes with Jonathan Culler’s voice of literary theory in *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (1981). Culler discusses literary theory and particularities of structuralism. He describes the difference between *story*, which is an overall narration of events, and *discourse*, which is the specific dialogue within the text. As I compare Biblical and Shakespearean influence for modern dance, I address the difference between using the well-known story outline from the Bible, versus using specific dialogue from Shakespearean tragedies to create gesture and dance. Culler’s strong theory creates and supports this comparison.
What is Dance?, edited by Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen, provides an array of useful articles for approaching dance historical context and an analysis of performance. From this book, I specifically use Susan Langer’s “Feeling and Form” (1953) and Paul Valéry’s “Philosophy of the Dance” (1936). Langer covers different types of gesture and various intentions of artists concerning emotion and performance, and Valéry discusses human nature, communication, and the function of dance in human life. Both arguments are useful discussions of gesture in performance as I approach the portrayal of emotion and written themes through movement. Both texts are quoted by scholars and give unique viewpoints on the subject. In his book The Modern Dance (1936), John Martin provides information about modern dance that was groundbreaking in its time. He discusses the function of modern dance and how it portrays emotion through gesture.

Within this thesis, I explore the ways in which Anthony exemplified the modern dance methods of portraying emotion in dance through her use of Shakespearean and Biblical themes. Before addressing specific dances with such influence in Chapter 2, I cover biographical information, including Anthony’s childhood influences and her dance training, in Chapter 1. My goal is to provide a contextual understanding of Anthony and her placement in the dance world before delving into an analysis of choreography and dramatic literature. Chapter 3 will support the previous chapters with Anthony’s words and insight, as it will focus on my interview with her.
Chapter 1: Mary Anthony and Modern Dance

Mary Anthony

Mary Anthony was born in Newport, Kentucky in 1916. She was a sickly child, and her parents enrolled her in a gymnasium to give her something to which she could look forward. She hated it, but there she learned of a folk dancing group, joined it, and discovered her love of dancing and performing for an audience (Mary Anthony). When she was a junior in high school, she went on a field trip with a school teacher to see Martha Graham dance, and knew from that moment that this was the kind of dance she wanted to do (Timm 60). Anthony was exposed to a lot of theatre by both her family and school throughout her childhood. Her family traveled to see a theatrical performance every week in Cincinnati. The principal of Anthony’s school was interested in the students experiencing the performing arts and she brought theatrical performances to the school, also insisting that each student “do a poem, a play, or some kind of theatrical activity every Friday afternoon” (Anthony). In addition to theatre, Anthony also experienced the Bible as a child, through organized religion. Her father was Catholic and her mother was Presbyterian. Of these two choices of religion, she preferred her father’s Catholicism, and went to mass with him. She enjoyed how ritualistic and dramatic it was (Anthony).

The idyll of Anthony’s early childhood ceased when her parents were no longer happy and her mother took another lover. The man was initially a boarder in the extra room Anthony’s mother rented out, but he eventually remained in their home, producing tense situations between him and Anthony’s parents. The day that Anthony’s father announced that he had purchased a gun and planned to kill the lover, she ran away (Mary Anthony). This dark moment of threatened violence and the prematurely-ended relationship with her parents contributed to her fascination with the miracle of the human life and the constant possibility of death (Anthony). Anthony’s early experiences with theatre, religion, and the threat of mortality were all prominent features of her youth.

After she ran away from home at age sixteen, Anthony went to New York, but soon went to Grinnell College in Iowa, where she studied Literature and Theatre (Dancing Rebels 63). When she graduated, Anthony returned to New York City with very little
money and worked as a maid in an 11th Street rooming house while she began to pursue a
dance career (63).

Anthony is from the second generation of modern dancers, which followed the
generation of founding creators of modern dance in America. The first generation, also
called the Big Four, consisted of Hanya Holm, Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and
Charles Weidman. They were powerfully innovative choreographers, and were
responsible for developing modern dance and for raising and teaching the next
generation. In New York in 1940, Anthony searched for scholarship opportunities at the
Graham School, then at the Humphrey-Weidman School. She was turned away from
both, but Weidman informed her of an upcoming audition for the Holm School (*Mary
Anthony*). She went to the audition, and was extremely surprised when she learned that
she had received the three-year scholarship to study with Hanya Holm (*Dance On*). She
has said that there are two factors that were on her side that day. The first is that she only
had one record with her and so when she was asked to do a second solo she did it in
silence. As a student of German modern dancers who believed that dance was an
autonomous art that could function without dependence on music, Holm was impressed
and thought Anthony’s silent solo was sophisticated (Anderson 17). The second reason is
that she felt that they were looking for an untrained body to shape rather than someone
with training from elsewhere that would have to be undone (*Dance On*). Anthony joined
the company on January 6, 1943, and was Holm’s assistant from 1944-1949 (*Mary
Anthony*). Anthony worked closely with Holm, and stayed with her through difficult
times. 9 When Anthony left to embark on her own career as an independent dancer and
choreographer, she did so in a letter (only after she was confident that there was a faithful
assistant to replace her) because Holm would not willingly let her go (*Dance On*).

After Anthony left Holm, she was invited to join the New Dance Group, which was
one of several groups that developed in the 1930s to perform at worker rallies and bring
dance to the masses. Debora Friedes, Mary Anne Santos Newhall, and Kyle Shepard, the
writers and researchers for *Dancing Rebels*, discuss the New Dance Group. They explain
that this particular group had two rules: “that one must make and perform dances about
subjects that mattered to them personally and that these dances must be crafted in a way
that could be clearly understood by the masses” (6). The New Dance Group “was an
extraordinary experiment in cooperation and remained vital for years” (3). It was a rich and friendly environment for the development of individual artists. Anthony taught Holm technique at the New Dance Group for one year before receiving permission to teach “Mary Anthony technique” (63). After meeting Joseph Gifford in 1944 when they were both involved in the Broadway musical Stovepipe Hat, she had a dance partnership with him that lasted until 1950 (64). While in the New Dance Group, Anthony studied Graham technique with two Graham dancers, Sophie Maslow and Jane Dudley. Anthony worked her way up to the point of taking advanced classes, which were taught by Graham herself (63).

Anthony soon became more involved in Broadway shows. In 1949, she performed in Touch & Go, and in 1950 she was sent to London to stage and perform it there (Mary Anthony). While in London, she was recruited for musicals in Italy, and she choreographed the first Italian musical with modern dance, called Votate per Venere, in 1950. From 1952 to 1954, she returned to Italy to choreograph more musicals. With the money she earned doing such work, Anthony opened the Mary Anthony Dance Studio in 1954, then founded the Mary Anthony Dance Theatre in 1956 (Mary Anthony). From 1957-59 she choreographed more than 20 episodes for Look Up and Live and Lamp Unto My Feet, two religious television series for CBS Television. In 1970 she took part in the Artists in Movement in the Schools program, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities (Mary Anthony). Anthony taught movement for actors for twenty years, from 1986 to 2006, at the Herbert Berghof Studio of Acting in New York City (Mary Anthony). She has taught and choreographed in Israel, Taiwan, Belgium, France, Mexico, and Italy, among other countries (Mary Anthony). Although infinitely more words could be said about her life and career, the modest amount of her history I have given here demonstrates the multi-faceted nature of her personal and professional experiences.

The First Generation

Anthony studied with artists from the first generation, eventually adapting many of their ideals and methods as her own when she developed her style. It is therefore important to understand the goals and struggles of her predecessors. In No Fixed Points: Dance in the Twentieth-Century, Nancy Reynolds and Malcolm McCormick discuss the
“heroic age” of modern dance, in which the founding creators of modern dance, or the Big Four, developed and thrived. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, “when most Americans were still uneasy in the presence of progressive art movements that were largely European in origin, they were at the same time unaware of the richness of their own culture as a source for artistic expression” (141). The authors point out that society associated dance with “the decorativeness and aristocratic implications of the ballet” and the consensus was that “it seemed unlikely that it could ever mirror the robustness of the American scene” (141-142). Understandably, Anthony and her contemporaries in the second generation felt a reverence for the first generation, and there was not quite enough reason to break away, as the ideals were still relatively new. In the heroic age, “American modernist dancers were forced to develop groundbreaking tactics for survival” as they made new artistic developments during a difficult time for the nation, and “Modern dance was thus a state of mind as much as it was an art of expressive movement” (142). There were many important themes for this generation, with which the choreographers and their choreography were concerned, such as “the play of natural forces, myth and religious ecstasy, basic traits of human nature, and questions of morality and mortality” (142).

Their overall goals and ideals supplemented the topics of their choreography: “The manner in which they urged reform always implied acceptance of struggle as the norm—struggle to achieve a more just social order, based on an optimistic faith in basic human decency” (142).

**American Voice in Dance**

One of the artistic purposes for modern dance choreographers in the early to middle twentieth-century was to create an American dance style. Anthony inherited this purpose from her predecessors and from the overall qualities of the dance style of which she became a part. While ballet came from Europe, and Denishawn (the school that produced Graham, Humphrey, and Weidman) focused on spectacle and portrayed dance from other nations, such as India and Egypt, this new generation of dancers and its students strove to create something new and American. However, Holm did bring Mary Wigman’s influence from Germany, and other European artists, such as Harold Kreutzberg, influenced American choreographers. Technical influence from elsewhere still contributed to the development of a new style which was different from ballet, and it was
the exploration of American themes which added a unique style to modern dance in the United States. Reynolds and McCormick state that the Big Four “proceeded along lines already suggested by German Ausdruckstanz but consciously avoided imitation, and in the same decade (the 1930s) in which German taste fell back on traditional operatic dancing, Americans began to claim modern dance as their own invention” (142).

Part of the American voice in modern dance portrayed emotion through psychological and literary themes. Although contemporary literature and poetry were occasionally used as influence, I believe that older, more well-known sources such as Shakespeare, the Bible, and Greek dramatic literature, were more useful in choreography because of their past popularity, their elevation to high culture, and how renowned they were as classics. I suggest that both Shakespeare and the Bible were accepted as American themes for the importance both held in the early development of the nation. Thus, Anthony used literature which was not originally American, but which America adopted as its own, and, as a result, she contributed to the voice of American modern choreography in the mid-twentieth-century. I will explore in detail the placement of both sources in America in Chapter 2.

The Second Generation

The second generation of modern dancers faced the challenge of creating a dance identity for themselves after working with one of the Big Four. While some of the Big Four allowed more freedom of their students than others, all of them encouraged their students to have a strong connection their mentor’s style, and there was an expectation for the student to be true to it. Nancy Reynolds and Malcolm McCormick state in No Fixed Points: Dance in the Twentieth Century that, “Throughout the 1940s, the Big Four … remained ideologically in command” and established schools to produce students and company members in each of their own dance styles (319). They go on to describe the resulting dilemma of those students: “many students found it difficult to escape that heady influence, the combination of personal adulation and physical imprinting that their training characteristically entailed” (319). However, the Big Four also encouraged choreography from their students, as “a basic tenet of the entire modern-dance movement was the discovery of personal vocabularies” (319). This explains the second generation’s simultaneous adherence to and departure from its predecessors. Reynolds and
McCormick continue with the context of Anthony’s generation, supporting Anthony’s position as a choreographer from the early modern dance style that successfully passed on her own style throughout many changes of aesthetics in the dance world. They say that “the second generation of modern dancers … took on the difficult task of preserving the substance of early reforms in a highly altered milieu of the post-World War II era” (352). These dancers “remained committed to the ideologies and working methods of their teachers,” even “in the face of some outspoken criticism and new points of view that from the later 1940s onward began to undermine the essential narrative and emotional impetus of the heroic era” (352-353). Although this generation faced the dilemma of using “received methods in a field defined by originality,” it also retained a “determination to preserve the humanistic ethos of the early modern dance in works engaging both heart and mind” (353). Anthony and her generation found their own choreographic and pedagogical voices while continuing the ideals of an established style and striving to protect artistic beliefs in the face of change.

Don McDonough also discusses the second generation of American modern dancers in The Complete Guide to Modern Dance. He states that “The period of the 1930s was marked by doctrinaire stridency, struggle, and great accomplishment,” and the young choreographers of the 1940s and 1950s alternated “between the desire to consolidate the artistic victories won by the previous generation” and “the urge to strike out in creative directions that were particularly their own” (157). McDonough says that “There was a great optimistic turbulence created by World War II, when much of the rigidity of the previous decade was broken” (157). He discusses how the newer dancers were not aware of the struggle that their predecessors went through for modern dance in the 1930s, and as a result they had to fight for artistic respect (157). Just as there is a vast generational gap between Anthony and her students now (a gap that has increased each decade of her more than sixty years teaching), there was a gap between the Big Four and their students in the 1940s and 1950s. Additionally, due to the foundation of modern dance already being established, the second generation did not have the same hostility toward ballet that their predecessors had (157). As a result, ballet had its place in Anthony’s technique and training, among a variety of other styles and inspirations. McDonough discusses some of the qualities that the second generation retained from its training, such as “the idea of
linear development, i.e. that dances had a beginning, developed a clear, frequently psychological theme and came to a conclusion in an unambiguous sequential way and that the body should stress the emotional and dramatic in movement” (158). The second generation was not in the constant state of revolt that defined the historic generation or the Big Four, as the younger dancers “did not want to discard totally the styles of movement which they had inherited; they thought highly of them and wished to extend their expressive possibilities a little bit further than they were when they first began to work” (159). Both analyses of the second generation aid an understanding of Anthony in the dance world, as she fits into this category with her training, her resulting style, and the views and methods apparent throughout her career.

Anthony’s Dance Style

As a second generation dancer and choreographer, Anthony adhered to many of the qualities and ideals of her first generation influences, including Holm and Graham, and yet successfully began her own company and studio in the 1950s and has maintained them to the present. Despite her relationship with Holm, and her continuation of many ideals and qualities from Holm and the rest of the first generation, Anthony also desired an individual choreographic voice and style. It seems that drawing from literary sources was an ideal manner of approaching this dilemma; themes of tragedy and humanity suited the movement and thinking influenced by Anthony’s teachers and by the historical and dance era in which she created her early choreography, but they also allowed her to draw from personal experiences and interests.

Some of the qualities that she retained from her training and carried on in her choreography include the dramatic, the powerful portrayal of emotion, and the use of literary themes in dance. Her movement and choreographic styles are unique combinations of her various training, influences, and experiences from throughout her life. She used theatre to complete her styles of teaching, dancing, and choreographing. This use of theatre also allowed theatrical experience into her career, from staging musicals, to choreographing dance and theatre for religious television series, to teaching movement for actors. An overview of her dance style, including movement, teaching, its emphasis on theatre and emotion, and its status today, will give important context to my later discussion of specific dances.
In his article “The Mary Anthony Approach,” Jack Anderson states that “Much of Miss Anthony’s own choreography is a personal response to music that she has felt deeply. She has also based dances upon literary or dramatic themes” (22). In her work, I also see a relationship between powerful orchestral music and the dramatic literary themes matched to it in dance. Anderson mentions her method of translating Konstantin Stanislavski’s theories of acting to movement (17). Supporting the theatrical quality of Anthony’s movement, McDonough says that “Her work is meticulously crafted with strong dramatic accent” (172). In her article “Mary Anthony: ‘Dances Old and New’,” Madeleine L. Dale points out that Hanya Holm’s “dramatic, theatrical, and operatic sense of ambiance using costume, lighting, and props, is effectively transmitted” in Anthony’s work (58). Anthony states her movement inspirations at length in Johanna Kirk’s article. When she first saw Martha Graham, she knew she wanted to dance like her, and only needed to get to New York eventually to do so. However, she says that “there is only one Martha Graham, and people are still making the mistake of trying to be Martha. I was very glad to have studied with Hanya because I became me” (“Mary Anthony: Bringing Theatre Back into the Art of Dance”). Anthony also studied with the Kirov Ballet’s Julia Barashkova, and incorporates Vaganova technique into her work. In addition to ballet, Graham, and Holm, she mentions the influence of theatre: “When I saw the Greek National Theater, I thought, ‘That’s the kind of theater I have to have!’…What I was aiming for then, and still am, is total theater, not just dance” (“Mary Anthony: Bringing Theatre Back into the Art of Dance”). In addition to the variety of strong dance influences in her movement style, she incorporated theatre into her style of performance early in her career.

In her article “An Anthony Celebration,” Jennifer Dunning speaks of Mary Anthony’s teaching methods and her status in the dance world. She says that Anthony is famous for her “killer classes,” which combine “a high-energy workout with elements of Greek theater and the modern-dance and teaching techniques of Martha Graham, Hanya Holm, and Louise Kloepper.” Anthony credits part of her use of Graham to the fact that “the contraction can’t be ignored” (Anderson 17). It is perhaps as fundamental to modern dance as fifth position is to ballet. She also says that a major part of her style is focus: “You know, you can change the entire quality of a movement simply by changing the
focus of your eyes” (Anderson 17-22). Such control over quality of movement connects to an ability to act, or to portray emotion and intention, in addition to performing choreographed movement.

Fred Timm says that, in composition classes, “Mary teaches through structured improvisation, setting the students free to find their own ways of moving” (62). Timm continues to describe Anthony’s teaching methods, and her manner of giving constructive criticism reveals her seriousness about her job as a teacher and her compassion for her students:

Correcting a dancer or criticizing choreography, she is a hawk, seeing with predatory incisiveness. There is no mercy—the insight is given like a swift, just kill. If you can’t take it, you’re not serious or tough enough to be an artist. Mary knows only too well that the way for her brood to survive and for their poetry to survive the banality of this world is to challenge their strength and dedication here and now, in the safe nest of the studio (62-63).

In her interview with Johanna Kirk, Anthony’s advice to dancers is to “Hang on to the art of dance, but supplement it with museums, concerts, reading poetry, reading literature, reading plays … You have to water the flower of the dancer with all the other arts.” Timm confirms Anthony’s encouragement for students to experience the other arts, and also ties in her interest in humanity, when he quotes Anthony as telling him and fellow students: “A dancer must know other art forms—music, plays—and appreciate nature, and most importantly, a dancer must know human nature” (62). These examples show that she taught what she practiced in her own choreography, which included literary influence and attention to human nature and the flaws of humanity.

In “One National Treasure: Mary Anthony,” Anthony tells Donna Nowak about dancing with emotion. She refers to Isadora Duncan’s idea of moving from the center of the body, and explains why that is important to her own movement: “This is where you feel anger, this is where you feel pain, this is where you feel sorrow, and movement comes from there to the periphery” (4). Anthony stresses this when teaching her students, because she feels that “today there’s so much emphasis on technique and not enough on soul, on feeling, on emotion, and I’m hoping that the pendulum will swing back to the point where those things become important again” (4). Anthony’s practice of portraying emotion through dance was not just a fad in modern dance as her career began to thrive, and not just something for her to take or leave from her dance training, but it became a
part of her calling as an artist. Anthony never felt the need to use mirrors while choreographing, and although her students want to use mirrors she tells them, “Don’t create from the outside in, create from the inside out” (Nowak 5). Anthony also tells Kirk that she feels strongly against using mirrors, and for “letting everything that you do come from the inside. That’s where we come to the truth. If you look in the mirror, you’re coming to a reflection; you’re not coming to the base of you” (Kirk). These examples epitomize her ideals of moving with true feeling and from the inside out. The use of mirrors is a prominent factor in dance that derives movement from external force and technique, rather than from inner feeling and intention. The mirror is a way to see how one looks when creating movement rather than feel it. Anthony’s personal stance against using mirrors exemplifies her choreographic purpose in creating movement.

Dunning states that Anthony has “withstood changes in dance styles and the dying out of private dance studios, continuing on her quiet way as one of the city’s most cherished modern dance teachers.” Madeleine Dale also says that “Mary Anthony’s work has withstood the test of time” (58). Anthony finds it important to expose students to reconstructions of her dances in their true forms rather than adapting them to contemporary dance and to the younger dancers; this allows them to experience a small part of an entire generation and a specific style of modern dance (Mary Anthony). Muriel Topaz ends her 1997 review of the Mary Anthony Dance Theatre by mentioning that “The requisite angst of early modern dance, as well as its shaped, well-defined movement” is present in Anthony’s choreography: “It is a posture that nowadays is out of favor; in its place we have substituted untrammeled energy and unending, unfocused movement. While Anthony’s aesthetic is no longer in the forefront of today’s dance, such purposeful vision and unambiguous exposition will always be welcome” (Topaz).

**Hanya Holm**

While Anthony created her technique out of a combination of interests and influences she found useful, it is also clear that she absorbed many methods of movement and education from Hanya Holm. It is important to look at Holm’s theories, as she was responsible for Anthony’s early years of formal dance training in New York. Anthony’s choreographic and teaching methods combined Holm, Graham, a little ballet, and other movement styles (Anthony). Her early study with Holm shaped her style as a dancer and
teacher, and allowed her to find her individual voice, as the Holm style is more open to the development of unique dancers and choreographers than Graham or Humphrey, which both stress adherence to more codified dance techniques. Walter Sorell gives an in-depth discussion of her teaching methods in *Hanya Holm: The Biography of an Artist*. Holm approached being a teacher as an important part of being an artist. It did not come second to being a dancer or choreographer. As a teacher, her main goal was “to impart the essence and the spirit of dancing” (167). Sorell mentions that, for Holm, it was not the number of students that is important, “but how far beyond the familiar she can reach and how much she can give, because she has always realized that in helping to form others you are forming yourself” (167-168). About the actual nature of the movement, Sorell goes on to say “Hanya stresses natural movement based on what the human body is structurally capable of doing” (168). This statement reflects the organic development of movement out of gestures derived from real life and emotion, something Anthony portrayed in her choreography influenced by dramatic literature.

Sorell says that, “While other teachers may give their pupils something personalized, her ideas are based on universal facts, on the intrinsic nature of movement” (168). Holm’s key task as a teacher was “the opening of many new vistas; she tries to assist the student in finding the full realization of his self, in developing into whatever direction his own impulse, his own creative energy leads” (168). The technical demands she made of students was still strict, and she was able to ask for such hard work from students and fellow artists because of the “rigorous requirements she had always imposed upon herself: no mechanization, no superimposed feelings, but a oneness in the performer and accuracy and precision in movement” (169). Sorell describes Holm’s technique as “basically oriented into space and direction, and it makes a clean, pure, and clearly analyzed impression. It covers a huge range of movement experience, including almost anything the body is capable of doing without being forced into any formal codification” (169-170). Sorell discusses Holm’s views and use of space in one location: “When the figure is standing still, the body and its parts have all kinds of directional relationships in depth, width, and height to the space surrounding it,” and in travel: “When the figure travels in space, the directional relationships of the body and its parts are compounded by the body’s directional path in space” (170). He posits that her use of space and direction
are what make her technique original: “What sets her theory apart from all other techniques is the expansiveness she achieves with the outward direction of the body” (170). About Holm’s teaching, Anthony says that it was “experiment, experiment, experiment, experiment … then you have a dancer” (Kirk). While Holm technique was not Anthony’s only training, it allowed her to develop into the multi-faceted artist she became.

**Anthony, Koner, and Holm**

Voices of a contemporary and a mentor lend insight and context to Anthony’s styles and views, as well as to the ways in which modern dance changed from the reign of Holm’s generation in the 1930s and the second generation in the 1940s and 1950s to today. It is important to approach the differences between the dance style in Anthony’s early training and what it has become today. These differences will lend to an understanding of how her choreography is different, as well as of the unique way that she maintained her style in the face of different generational views and resulting versions of modern dance. Anthony reflects that modern dance today is not the same as the modern dance in which she trained and in whose ideals she created her own choreography (Anthony). Pauline Koner is from the same generation as Anthony. She worked closely with Doris Humphrey and José Limón (a student of Humphrey and a powerful dancer and choreographer), but also had a successful independent career. Koner makes similar reflections as to how dance and dancers have changed since her early career in her essay “Intrinsic Dance.” She thinks of modern dance as “intrinsic dance—basic, essential, organic, internal—as opposed to extrinsic, the kind of dance that is composed from the outside, not motivated by the inner necessity of the creator’s being” (77). These qualities were more than fickle aspects of a passing generation and style. They were part of a lifestyle for choreographers and were applicable to their purpose as artists and their relation to the world. It seems a sort of divine need, a purpose to portray these qualities in dance. Anthony says that some people are just born artists, and their profession chooses them, that it is not a whimsical choice but a necessity (*Images and Reflections*). This notion of an artistic destiny connects with Koner’s idea of the “inner necessity” of a choreographer. In her interview with Billie Mahoney, Anthony states that her generation moved from the inside, with emotion, while the focus today is on technical accuracy, on
all kicks being the same height, for example (*Dance On*). She says that when Limón turned he took the whole world with him, and it wasn’t about the highest number of turns or most technical accuracy while turning (*Dance On*). Aside from actual technique and movement style, Anthony also sees a lack of theme and concept in the choreography of today’s dance. There is not a clear conception in the choreography, and so the movement comes from a certain technique rather than having a strong connection to a theme and the emotions or thoughts which it encourages (Anthony). One can trace a lineage from some of Anthony’s ideas to Holm. In “Hanya Speaks,” Holm states that “it is meaningless to count the amount of jumps you can do, because one small gesture which is right and proves the oneness of purpose in what is being done will far outweigh everything else” (72). Holm goes on to say that one’s excitement should come from “inner focus” rather than from an external influence: “You need an enormous amount of inspiration within yourself” (“Hanya Speaks” 72). Another of Anthony’s views is that one must experience the extreme emotions of life, such as joy, anger, sorrow, in order to achieve real artistry (Nowak 4). Anthony, Koner, and Holm are just three examples of the voiced ideals of modern dance, and they all stress that movement and feeling come from within to project ideas and emotions outward.

**Anthony and Dramatic Literature**

Theatre is also about portraying human emotion through performance, lending to the ease of using dramatic literature as influence for dance. In addition to her affinities to theatre, Anthony held an intense interest in literature; this drove her desire to portray dramatic literary themes through her unique voice and methods. For Anthony, Shakespeare was a natural choice for choreography, as she was exposed to theatre as a child and her love for literature increased into her young adulthood and early independence. She had an intimate friendship with a poet, Richard Price, soon after she moved to New York to dance. She remembers this time as when she really began to love poetry (*Mary Anthony*). She was also in a relationship with a playwright when she first mentioned wanting to create a dance based on John Millington Synge’s one-act play *Rider’s to the Sea*, and he said “you can’t touch that, that’s one of the most perfect one-act plays in the English language!” (*Mary Anthony*). However, she continued to think about creating a dance based on the play and the resultant piece, *Threnody* (1956),
became her signature dance (*Mary Anthony*). Anthony quotes poetry for imagery in
dance, in the same way that she refers to nature while teaching. At the very beginning of
the documentary, *Mary Anthony: A Life in Modern Dance*, she quotes T.S. Eliot while
teaching a dance class: “At the still point of the turning world, there the dance is.”
Drawing from literary themes in her teaching, especially poetry and dramatic literature, is
a part of Anthony’s encouragement for her students to experience other arts and nature
everyday to contribute to their lives as dancers and choreographers (*Dance On*). Such
exposure to the themes within art and literature is important to achieving the emotional
conveyance of early modern dance. Her love for literature and drama naturally led to an
interest in the use of such resources as influence for dance. Anthony also has the
pedagogical ideology of producing “total theatre” rather than solely dance (Anthony).
When she teaches choreography students, she asks the questions Stanislavsky requires
actors to consider: “Who are you? Where are you? When in time is it? Is it today? Is it
the future? What are you doing? Why? And if you can answer those questions, your
dance has a purpose” (Nowak 5). Using literary influence answers these questions of
context, character, identity, and environment, so only the creation of movement to
coincide with the themes remains.

**Historical Context in America**

Anthony experienced decades of conflict and change in the world, and much of this
change occurred throughout her dance career. However, there were also some important
events before her choreographic prime that set the atmosphere of the world in the
twentieth-century. A small overview of the context surrounding American society lends
an understanding of the environment in which Anthony lived and worked. World War I
occurred from 1914-1918, during which America finalized its shift to industrialization in
1916, the same year as Anthony’s birth. The stock market crashed in 1929, causing the
Great Depression. The economy was near full recovery when the United States entered
World War II in 1941. Although the economy received a boost at that point, the war
brought with it fear for safety and the ominous threat of nuclear attack. This fear created
an unsettling mood of not knowing what the future held. The century’s social and
technological advancements occurred quickly and changed life. Andrew S. Berky and
James P. Shenton, the editors of *The Historians’ History of The United States*, say of
post-World War II in America, “The pace of change has made some Americans fearful that perhaps we move too fast into tomorrow losing along the way the older virtues” (1346). In the decades following the end of World War II in 1945, the world lived “betwixt war and peace” within the Cold War (1344). Hugh Brogan expands upon the topic of the Cold War in *The Penguin History of the USA*, stating that it “dominated diplomacy” by 1948 (584). Brogan continues: “Thenceforward all countries made their calculations, whether economic, military or political, from the basic assumption that the USA and the USSR were now enemies and might at any moment start to fight” (584).

During this period, “Wherever communism raised its head, American power moved to close its path (Berky and Shenton 1345). In *The American Dream: The 50’s*, Loretta Britten and Sarah Brash say that the dawn of the 1950s was not very hopeful: “The escalating Cold War with the Soviet Union cast such deep shadows that some Americans considered 1950 the darkest time since World War II” (24). The Red Scare, or strong movement of anti-communism, lasted from 1947-1957. There were also other forms of change in America. Berky and Shenton elaborate: “As the unnatural power balance left in the wake of World War II began to rectify itself, and as the Russians joined us in the thermonuclear club, the change was equated by some Americans as treason”(1346). Americans experienced fear and change in the world, in their own country, and within the United States Government.

Anthony witnessed the building movements for change with women’s rights and civil rights. These movements for change concerning gender and race often joined forces out of necessity. In *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women*, Estelle B. Freedman discusses this collaboration, stating that, “After 1930, both interracial and interfaith cooperation found a foothold within the U.S. women’s movement” (83). Demographics in the workforce changed and the expectations for women to be in the household held less weight as more and more women chose different paths (Ware 206-207). Although it seems that times are never easy economically for artists, these times of difficulty and change affected them as much as anyone else, and were also reflected in their art. Anthony said that the world was in “a churning state” throughout her career, and that it affected her choreography (Anthony).
The context I have covered up to this point is the foundation for a discussion of literature and dance supported by specific analysis of Anthony’s choreography with Shakespearean and Biblical influence to follow. I will also provide context surrounding each literary source. I will study comparisons between the literary sources and the dances based upon them, and will make connections to surrounding historical and social context.
Chapter 2: The Written Word in Motion

Gesture

For Mary Anthony, as well as other choreographers and dancers of the modern dance era, there was something pure, natural, and universal about movement. In “Feeling and Form,” philosopher of art Susanne Langer discusses gesture:

In actual life gestures function as signals or symptoms of our desires, intentions, expectations, demands, and feelings. Because they can be consciously controlled, they may also be elaborated, just like vocal sounds, into a system of assigned and combinable symbols, a genuine discursive language (29).

In the same way that a writer combines words to create ideas in sentences, then coordinates those sentences to build paragraphs, the choreographer organizes gesture to create movement which communicates ideas. Gesture is “vital movement,” and that is what dance consists of (28). Philosopher Paul Valéry also posits gesture as coming from real movement: “For the dance is an art derived from life itself, since it is nothing more or less than the action of the whole human body” (“Philosophy of the Dance” 55). Langer goes on to discuss artists inventing emotion versus artists actually experiencing the emotion portrayed in their artwork as they create it (29). Anthony held a deep understanding for the themes and emotions, as well as a connection with and sympathy for the characters of her subject matter. Langer’s views of gesture coming from real feelings and needs connect with Anthony’s idea of an artist needing to experience the full range of the human emotions in order to create truthful movement (Timm 61). In many ways, gesture is a universal form of communication. It is what we resort to when confronted with a lack of comprehension across languages, or between hearing and non-hearing people. By putting dramatic literature into movement, Anthony portrayed the same emotions and themes within the texts without relying on the sign system of language. I suggest that Anthony combined both of Langer’s types of emotion (invented and real) rather than keeping them separate. She felt emotion in memory of life experience, in consciousness of her own diversity in society, and in the experienced understanding of the century’s American reality. At the same time, however, she held the artistic purpose of portraying meaningful emotion through her grounded, visceral movement style. Gesture added organic quality to Anthony’s choreography. The dramatic
and timeless themes within her choreography encouraged literal gesture, or gesture inspired by certain imagery derived from words, lines, dialogue, and story.

**Tragic Empathy in Dance**

Anthony’s use of Shakespeare and the Bible as influence for choreography not only fit into the modern dance ideal of expressing human emotions, but it also reflected Aristotle’s theory of tragedy. By using tragic literary works, Anthony made a connection with the audience in which a lesson could be learned and emotions experienced without the viewer actually suffering a loss. The specific dances with which I am concerned for this thesis contained themes that encouraged empathy for tragic characters and for the flaws of humanity as revealed in theatre. Whereas Plato deems poets and theatre untrustworthy for being two steps removed from ultimate reality, Aristotle finds tragedy useful for purging base emotions so that the viewer remains unharmed by them and stays a rational being in everyday life (Bressler 19). Aristotle’s audience achieves this catharsis through the pity and fear inspired by tragedy. He also contends that the poet should stress the universal rather than historical, as tragedy deals with what could happen rather than what does happen (Bressler 19). Anthony also increased the cathartic power of written tragedies and morality parables by making them purely visual (though strongly supplemented with intense music). In further removing the dialogue, she required the audience to focus more intently with the eyes, amplifying one sense rather than requiring the viewer to also focus on what was being said, as in a theatrical performance of the text. With Shakespearean and Biblical dance influence, she justified this shift with her intricate use of lines and narrative, respectively, to create movement, rather than producing abstract movement based upon the written sources. Although Anthony did not use the spoken word in her performances, which was important in the original communication of both Shakespeare and the Bible, she ensured that the words were present in gesture, facial expression, and the real and implied character relationships (in space, dynamics, and energy) within *Lady Macbeth, In the Beginning (Adam and Eve)*, and *Cain and Abel*.

Aristotle’s theory of catharsis connects with John Martin’s theory of metakinesis to make a more direct link between the ideals and purposes of theatre and modern dance. Martin, who was the original journalistic dance critic in America, discusses the
communication of emotion in dance, which he terms “metakinesis,” in *The Modern Dance*. He says that “the dancer’s ability or inclination to use the overtone of movements to convey his intention determines to a very large extent—indeed, almost entirely—his type of dancing” (59). This theory coincides with Langer’s discussion of gesture being derived from an intention and a need to communicate. Gesture is a purer form of communication, as it can communicate simple emotions and needs. This idea is reminiscent of communication in pre-verbal and pre-language cultures of the past, or of infants communicating before the ability to speak and master language. Martin goes on to suggest that “The basis of each composition in this medium lies in a vision of something in the human experience which touches the sublime” (59). There is a connection between the ability to portray ideas from the human condition, and the ability to portray emotion through gesture. Both aspects combined to create the modern dance of early to middle twentieth-century America. This particular era and style of dance communicated themes and emotions of the human experience in a visual, physical medium. Martin continues the discussion of metakinesis: “Movement, then, in and of itself is a medium for the transference of an aesthetic and emotional concept from the consciousness of one individual to that of another” (13). When an audience perceives the emotions which modern dance attempts to portray, there is the potential for catharsis in the same manner as that derived from Aristotle’s tragedy. The use of tragic literary themes increases the possibility of such emotional transference, as the clear theme from a written work is applied to dance so that gesture and emotion may emerge from the ideational stimulus. Martin pins a close relationship between “movement and personal experience, temperament, and mental and emotional equipment” (15), mirroring the factors that Anthony combined with dramatic literary influence in the creation of specific dances.

Erving Goffman also discusses the importance of gesture and what it can convey in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. He says that there are two types of individual expression, that of verbal symbols and that consisting of a wide range of actions (4). His book covers the latter, “the more theatrical and contextual kind, the non-verbal, presumably unintentional kind, whether this communication be purposely engineered or not” (4). In that statement, Goffman establishes verbal communication as consisting of symbols, as more intentional, and as more frequently “purposely
engineered” than non-verbal communication, which can be natural or fabricated. He discusses how gesture in dramatic realization infuses one’s activity with signs that dramatically highlight facts, “For if the individual’s activity is to become significant to others, he must mobilize his activity so that it will express during the interaction what he wishes to convey” (30). This idea supports Anthony’s duality of intending to portray emotion in dance per her training and the goals of her generation, as well as her natural tendencies and interests and the dramatic qualities and emotional conveyance that came naturally to her. Goffman states that performers “often foster the impression that they had ideal motives for acquiring the role in which they are performing” (46). It seems that, by portraying real themes and emotions in movement, Anthony did have ideal motives for performing about specific ideas, adding a kind of validity to the performance as she used literary themes. Performing real emotions in dance by adding a theatrical element caused an ownership of the themes, as many of the themes and emotions found in Shakespeare and the Bible can and do occur every day and in every generation. This ownership and Anthony’s lifelong relationships with both literary sources gave her credibility in performance that might have been absent in a dance with a theme of no relation or importance to the artist, such as aliens on a different planet. Anthony’s themes derived from literary influence were tangible and related to real life.

**Threnody and Death**

Although I am primarily concerned with Anthony’s use of Shakespearean and Biblical themes here, it is important to mention that her most famous piece, entitled *Threnody* (1956), was also based on a literary source—the one-act play *Riders to the Sea* by John Millington Singe. Similar to the original *Lady Macbeth*, *Threnody* is a dramatic tragedy in movement and includes theatrical sets and props. This theme deals with death, as the mother in the play faces the possibility and reality of her last living son dying at sea after dealing with the consecutive deaths of her husband and other sons. Anthony has said that she lost three male dancers around the time that she created this piece, due to financial difficulties and her resulting inability to pay them (*Mary Anthony*). *Threnody* developed from the influence of the play and specific lines and dialogue within it, as well as from her personal feelings of loss which paralleled the mood of the play. Anthony lost the dancers so unfairly—she did not want them to go and they did not want to go, which is
similar to the case of the mother and the manner in which the men of her family died. Her piece *Tabula Rasa* (1999) also deals with death. In it, she approaches the question (from Euripides) of whether life is actually death and death actually life. She has said that death troubles her for the way that one person can die peacefully while another might suffer endlessly before finally dying. She also marvels at the fact that the human life is a miracle, and often approached the miracle of life and its sometimes requisite suffering in her choreography (Anthony). The fragility of this miracle combines with the politics of the world and society to create an environment for tragedy, whether death occurs at the hand of people or nature. The larger group of modern dance choreographers of the early twentieth-century was preoccupied with creating an American style, and did so through a focus on such strong themes as morality and mortality (*No Fixed Points* 142). I will now discuss Anthony’s dances inspired by Shakespearean and Biblical themes in detail, covering the social contexts surrounding their influence, the circumstances allowing European or non-American themes to be used in an American dance style, and the presence of mortality, morality, and humanity in the themes and choreography. First I explore Shakespeare and *Lady Macbeth*, followed by the Bible and both *In the Beginning (Adam and Eve)* and *Cain and Abel*. 
A: Shakespearean Influence in *Lady Macbeth*

In 1949, Anthony created a resonant solo based on Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, portraying tragic emotion through a combination of intense inner feeling and choreographed gesture. This dance was the first to show her ability to combine gesture and literary theme to portray an idea and a story. Before giving in-depth description and analysis of the actual dance, I would like to discuss the placement of Shakespeare in twentieth-century American society, what was going on for women before and during the creation of *Lady Macbeth*, and some insight to the dance’s subject.

A Single Woman in America

Anthony’s choice of a powerful female character as the subject for her first solo provided a strong image for herself, of which other themes may have fallen short. Anthony faced the struggle of being a single, working-class woman in the public sphere of society. However, while it may have seemed more socially acceptable for a woman to be a housewife, more and more women were living independent lives in the early to middle twentieth-century in America. In *Modern American Women: A Documentary History*, historian Susan Ware discusses the juxtaposition of housewives and working women: “After two decades of dislocation from depression and war, traditional family values looked fairly appealing to the younger generation coming of age in the 1940s” (206). While the average age of marriage was 20 for women, and most women had about four children, the number of young women in the workforce also steadily increased, and many women chose to never marry (206). “So despite the prescriptive ideology telling women to stay home, many women found sufficient reasons to make different choices” (207). Mary Anthony told Fred Timm about her life as a single woman, including her possession of three rings from suitors that she turned down, but with whom she remained friends. She was engaged to one of them when he asked if she would still rehearse after dinner once they were married and she said yes. The engagement was off after that—she knew that she could not give all her attention to her career if she also had a husband and children (64). She says that, “This was in the fifties when it was very difficult to be a single woman, analogous to being gay” (64). She goes on to claim that “An artist accesses both male and female energy and it makes us complete in a way. The marriage is within for an artist” (64). By honing the play down to the complexity of its infamous
heroine, and by removing the importance of the spoken text for her purposes, Anthony made a powerful statement for the women in society and in performance. She showed that this female character could stand alone, and that her character’s qualities and faults were tragic and representative of the human condition in Shakespeare’s time period, in the beginning of Anthony’s choreographic career, and today.

**Shakespeare in America**

It is intriguing that Anthony, as well as other choreographers, used literature from other countries as inspiration in dances seeking to be purely American. Shakespeare’s writings in American modern dance are particularly a conundrum, due to the anti-English sentiment on which this country was founded. In his book, *Shakespeare and the American Nation*, Kim Sturgess discusses “the full extent to which this strong anti-English sentiment became institutionalised and an expression of American nationalism while simultaneously Shakespeare gradually became subsumed into national consciousness” (24). He mentions there was an understandable hostility toward England and the English following America’s independence and during its early years as a republic (24). There were many occasions which strengthened England’s placement as the enemy, and caused American hostility toward its people, such as “trade disputes, the 1812-1814 war, territorial conflicts over Oregon and Maine in the 1840s and the Lincoln administration’s fear of England’s intervention on the side of the South in the war of secession” (25). Throughout the nineteenth-century, while audiences expected some sort of patriotic display when they went to the theater, Shakespeare plays frequently appeared during the same shows with no problems (38). Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, “it would appear that, other than Shakespeare and his plays, anything associated with England was considered a legitimate target for nationalistic zeal” (39).

Shakespeare also held a place in politics, and greatly assisted in American orations, which were a celebration of the nation’s achievements (30). “Shakespeare provided convenient texts that clearly demonstrated the art of rhetoric and public speaking” (31). Not only was Shakespeare accepted as entertainment despite his English origins, but his writings were used alongside patriotic speeches. This early acceptance of Shakespeare as American later allowed Anthony to use his writing in her generation to support the ideals of modern dance.
In *Shakespeare as a Political Thinker*, editors John E. Alvis and Thomas G. West state that “Shakespeare owes his pre-eminence among poets to the power that allows his art to charm spectators but equally to the comprehensiveness of his wisdom regarding human things” (1). Robert B. Heilman suggests that “it is clear that in *Macbeth* Shakespeare is more than usually fascinated by the devices that men—men of punitive, revengeful, or ambitious violence—use to think well of themselves or present themselves as worthy of respect or sympathy from observers” (“Shakespearean Comedy and Tragedy: Implicit Political Analogies” 388). Heilman continues, discussing the importance of characters’ emotions: “The devices are not conscious tricks; rather they represent an instinctive working of emotions” (388). These descriptions of tragic characters, emotion as instinct, and the relationship between tragic character and audience that demands sympathy, all connect to aspects and functions of Anthony’s *Lady Macbeth*.

While the context surrounding Shakespeare’s acceptance as American is key to my argument, it is important to discuss a continuation of his status in America into the twentieth-century. A shift occurred at the end of the nineteenth-century which seemed to prove a change in audience or popularity. Lawrence W. Levine explains the fluctuation of Shakespeare’s popularity in his book *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. He discusses the reasons that Shakespeare was so popular in America during the nineteenth-century. For one, instructors taught his work “in schools and colleges as declamation or rhetoric, not literature” (37). Also, students memorized and recited his words, and as a result his “language helped shaped American speech” and was such a part of the “imagination” during that period that “it is a futile exercise to separate American’s love of Shakespeare’s oratory from their appreciation for his subtle use of language” (37-38). Shakespeare’s language, themes, and the style of his plays, which lent themselves to the popular style of melodrama, made him accessible to America in this time period. Levine writes, “Whatever Shakespeare’s own designs, philosophy, and concept of humanity were, his plays had meaning to a nation that placed the individual at the center of the universe and personalized the large questions of the day” (40). He then states that the drama of Shakespeare did not hold the same place by the middle of the twentieth-century that it had in the nineteenth-century (31). He says that while “in the mid-twentieth century there was no more widely known, respected,
quoted dramatist in our culture than Shakespeare,” the relationship between his work and the American people was different: “he was no longer their familiar, no longer part of their culture, no longer at home in their theaters or on the movie and television screens that had become the twentieth-century equivalents of the stage” (31). This change of popular interests in society marks the shift of Shakespeare’s placement from entertainment and leisure to classic literature required in school rather than appreciated in several parts of life. He was now seen “as a respite from—not as a normal part of—their usual cultural diet” (31). His work became “the possession of the educated portions of society who disseminated his plays for the enlightenment of the average folk who were to swallow him not for their entertainment but for their education” (31). Levine discusses twentieth-century views of Shakespeare:

So completely have twentieth-century Americans learned to accept as natural and timeless Shakespeare’s status as an elite, classic dramatist, to whose plays the bulk of the populace do not or cannot relate, that we have found it difficult to comprehend nineteenth-century conceptions of Shakespeare (34).

Thus, while Shakespeare held an important place in American society, surviving a journey from England and the anti-English settlement to follow, his shift from popular to sophisticated is important to understanding Anthony’s work. While she grew up with exposure to theatre and had artistic parents, not everyone in her generation loved literature and theatre as much as she did. As a result, she reminded audiences of Shakespeare and perhaps inspired them to read Macbeth, this time for enjoyment rather than education, instead of simply providing a different version of something audiences saw every weekend. While I would say that Shakespeare’s writing was still more well-known in the 1940s and 1950s than it is today, it still has a place in education so that people are very much aware of his types of plays and the themes within them.

**Lady Macbeth**

Despite the English origins of Shakespeare and his plays, he was adopted as American within entertainment and politics. Macbeth was therefore as American a source for Anthony as the American frontier was for Graham in Appalachian Spring (1944) or as the Shaker religion was for Humphrey’s piece The Shakers (1930). The Americanization of Shakespeare is important to the use of his writing in modern dance because the overall
point, as established by the Big Four, was to create a style not only American, but also anti-European in its departure from the themes and qualities in ballet.

Although Anthony focused on the character of Lady Macbeth in her solo, she implied the broader social themes and other characters through her actions and reactions. War is the prominent social setting of *Macbeth*, and it also plays a role in initiating the plot of the tragedy. When Macbeth does well in battle, he receives a fateful promotion, and then he becomes the king via assassination rather than waiting to let it happen naturally. War and deceit in politics are usual, and common people cannot control what happens in these situations but must often deal with the repercussions. Whereas Anthony could not control what was going on in the world, she could control how she portrayed the war and politics of *Macbeth* as she put the play into a dance. She focused upon one character, showing Lady Macbeth’s complexity and humanity, rather than creating a dance about war or about the male political aspirations within the play to create a piece about politics in general. In this way, she shed light on humanity and emotion rather than the political conflict surrounding it.

Anthony’s *Lady Macbeth* premiered at the 92nd Street Y in New York, on March 6, 1949. She used period clothing—a velvet gown of green and maroon with gold roping in the first half, and a long yellow nightgown in the sleepwalking scene—and powerful orchestral music to support the theme and tone of the dance. The original score by Alfred Brooks was lost, and the revival of *Lady Macbeth* was set to *Fratres* by Arvo Pärt. Anthony thought the new music suited the dance better anyway (Anthony). She reconstructed the piece for Mary Ford in 1999. The set for the reconstruction consisted of considerably less than that for the 1949 version, as much of it was also lost after so many years. The original piece had an elaborate set with props, but this did not work well for touring so it was later minimized (Anthony). Anthony credits part of the dramatic inspiration in the piece to the fact that she was in a relationship with a playwright when she created it (Anthony). The following description is from Anthony’s 1999 reconstruction of *Lady Macbeth* for Mary Ford, recorded in *Images and Reflections: Mary Anthony’s Lady Macbeth*.

Mary Ford as Lady Macbeth enters to alternate steadiness, shrillness, and silence in the music. Her arms are stretched forward and her focus is resolute as she enters. This
action marks her reading of Macbeth’s letter, which introduces her character in the play. Ambition and desire build along with effort as she strives steadily toward the throne, and sharp movement motifs carry her along the way. She executes attitude turns off-axis with her arms held open, shoulders raised, elbows slightly bent, and foot flexed. The tension and carriage of her body, along with her downward gaze, suggest a desired power that only a ruler can possess. Other movements include a sharp striking at her breasts and emotive gestures to the body. A motion toward the chest precedes a violently dismissive slicing of the arms away from each other and down toward the floor. Sharp gestures, including several separate moments of her tensely open hand with spread fingers behind her head, mirror accents in the music.

Immediately after Lady Macbeth sits triumphantly on the throne, she begins to focus intently on her hands, with a sharp rubbing motion as though to get something off of them. Her body shudders as effort builds and her dancing becomes acute in its chaos and inward focus. Contractions and shaking reveal the effort and inner struggle of the infamously tragic character. Eccentric motions, such as one hand gliding across her back to the other side of her body in a contorted fashion, mark the decline of any previous rationality as she sleepwalks across the floor holding a candle. Her inward focus becomes more tangible through a mad, glazed-over look in her eyes as she pauses between skitters across the floor or shudders in place, seeming to focus on the void in front of or above her. The dance winds down as Lady Macbeth’s sanity slips further away from her. She slowly makes her way to the floor and finally collapses into stillness.

The dance uses space to define Lady Macbeth’s intentions and her relationships to other characters and aspects of the play. In the beginning, Mary Ford focuses with forward intention as she moves toward the throne. Her eyes are piercing as she moves in strong motifs, revealing ambition and strength. She exudes confidence, which Ford shows in juxtaposition to the lack of clarity and focus of her facial expression in the sleepwalking scene. Ford shows a loss of purpose in her movement and she no longer clearly defines space with motivated pathways framing sharp gestures. She implies the presence of Macbeth through movement and focus, pausing in inquiry or disappointment, bowing in subservience, and reacting to betrayal with energetic confrontation. Ford also reveals her intentions with long, well-placed looks toward the empty throne on the
opposite side of the stage. There are also moments in which she stares ahead, as though actually looking into another person’s eyes to imply relationship and conversation.

In *Images and Reflections*, Anthony speaks of the emotional difficulty of *Lady Macbeth*, which adds to the physical difficulty of performing the movement. It requires a building of intensity and emotion before a peak and decline. Shakespeare’s character declines from confident ambition into guilt with a mad, inward focus; both facets reflect the depth of the subject. The glazed-over look of the dancer during the sleep-walking scene of *Lady Macbeth* is important to the overall character and performance. Rather than putting on certain facial expressions, it is a natural continuation of the inner feeling which drives her movement and gestures. Anthony discusses this feeling and expression, saying that Al Pacino in the film *Scent of a Woman* showed a similar look as a blind character, reflecting the same inward focus or the loss of focus in madness. The expression of emotion in this dance is important for revealing the complexities of its subject.

Another viewpoint concerning the actual performance of Lady Macbeth as a character adds further insight to the dance. In her “Remarks on the Character of Lady Macbeth,” British tragedienne Sarah Siddons (1755-1831) discusses the complex and unique nature of Lady Macbeth. She states that, “In this astonishing creature one sees a woman in whose bosom the passion of ambition has almost obliterated all the characteristics of human nature,” and that Lady Macbeth consists of “all the subjugating powers of intellect and all the charms and graces of personal beauty” (142). She goes on to credit Lady Macbeth’s feminine qualities with the ability to influence her husband:

> Such a combination only, respectable in energy and strength of mind, and captivating in feminine loveliness, could have composed a charm of such potency as to fascinate the mind of a hero so dauntless, a character so amiable, so honorable as Macbeth, to seduce him to brave all the dangers of the present and all the terrors of a future world (142).

Siddons also discusses Lady Macbeth’s behavior and actions before, during, and after the murder of King Duncan. She points out the importance of Lady Macbeth’s kindness to and understanding of Macbeth, despite the fragility of her own well-being as guilt slowly drives her mad. Lady Macbeth is tender and sympathetic, listening to his woes, but does not burden him with her own feelings and worries (143). Looking after her husband adds to the Queen’s own burden, causing her to suffer in silence while also attempting to sooth
Macbeth and to cover for his behavior at the banquet. This detail in the play accounts for the inward shift and loss of focus in Lady Macbeth’s character. She loses sight of reality and vents her problems in obsessive mutterings and motions during sleep, marking a key point in the downhill progression toward her end.

Anthony similarly vocalizes the desire to portray Lady Macbeth’s power as well as her beauty. The character must also be beautiful and feminine or Macbeth would not have married her (Anthony). Part of the difficulty of performing the character lies in the need to portray such a range of qualities; the character is ambitious and powerful while also remaining the delicate and beautiful woman that Macbeth married. Lady Macbeth’s power in influencing Macbeth is this duality of fragile beauty and ambitious cunning.

Anthony also says that her goal in her original creation and performance of *Lady Macbeth* was to encourage the audience to “go back and read Macbeth again, this time focusing on Lady Macbeth’s character” (Anthony). In narrowing an entire play down to its one driving female character, Anthony drew attention to Lady Macbeth while also making a powerful statement for women.

**Lines and Analysis**

In reworking tragic themes into movement, Anthony made changes from the plot, incorporating parts of the story with her means of choreography and portrayal. To create a modern solo piece, she translated the theme into movement by following the rise and fall, including ambition, emotion, and guilt, of Lady Macbeth, rather than recreating the entire plot with all of its characters. Anthony implied other characters and key aspects of the plot through focus of the eyes and the body, patterns in space, and through Lady Macbeth’s actions. As Anthony honed the plot down to one tragic character, we see Lady Macbeth as simultaneously powerful and very *human* for her susceptibility to failure. Specific lines influenced intense emotion through movement. Anthony speaks of these in *Images and Reflections*. Examining the actual lines supports her interpretation of them, and larger themes and aspects show through in the performance. Ford executes tilted attitude turns, with open, bent arms. This position reflects the line about the raven, and of Lady Macbeth soaring above all that will be hers when she becomes the queen (*Images and Reflections*):

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty! (I.V)

Tense gestures portray other lines from the play: a sharp striking at her breasts and emotive gestures to the body reflect Lady Macbeth as she considers that she would be more capable of committing the murder if she were not a woman. Another gesture toward the chest, and then a violently dismissive slicing of the arms away from each other and down toward the floor reflect the following line concerning Macbeth’s betrayal of his word and what she would do to keep hers:

I have given suck, and know
How tender ‘tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums
And dash’d the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this. (I.VII)

The entire sleepwalking scene reflects Lady Macbeth’s descent into madness. Sharp gestures of rubbing her hands together and striking them apart, as though in an attempt to end it all, echo the line: “Out, damned spot! out, I say!—/One : two: why, then ‘tis time to do’t. /—Hell Is murky!” (V.I). Certain lines clearly stood out to Anthony as she chose to reflect the narrative and character in her piece. I will discuss this use of lines in the creation of movement further when I compare Shakespearean and Biblical themes to one another later in this chapter.

The intense ambition followed by the guilt and downfall of Lady Macbeth’s character are rich inspiration for a themed portrayal of emotions through visceral, powerful dancing. The emotional journey of such a character is ideal for this type of movement. Anthony initially drew attention to the complexities of Lady Macbeth by narrowing the plot down to her part of the story, to the pure tragedy inherent in her shift from ambition to madness.
B: Biblical Influence within In the Beginning (Adam and Eve) and Cain and Abel

Similar to her dances inspired by plays, Anthony’s choreography influenced by the Bible appears throughout her long history as a choreographer. Anthony read the Bible cover to cover twice throughout her life (Timm 63). She also had to do extended research in preparation for her choreographic and theatrical work on the two religious television series Look Up and Live and Lamp Unto my Feet; she did twenty telecasts for the CBS shows from 1957-1959 (Mary Anthony). These performances required her to know as much as possible about the subject matter, and the research she did opened her eyes to the dramatic possibilities of the Bible (Anthony). Turning to similar themes of betrayal and tragedy in the Bible took a different path to the same kind of powerful artistic statement as using Shakespearean influence for dance. With Biblical influence, Anthony used well-known stories, rather than specific lines and dialogue, to create emotion and movement which could be understood by the dancers and audience. She took the well-known religious and historical accounts of Adam and Eve and of Cain and Abel from the written and spoken word and put them into modern dance. This new dynamic contained different opportunities to purge emotions through a changed sensory experience of an already known work. This time the movement was based upon the overall story and Anthony’s personal interpretation of it rather than specific dialogue, as it was based on in Lady Macbeth.

The Bible in America

It is important to discuss historical context concerning the Bible in America before analyzing both In the Beginning (Adam and Eve) and Cain and Abel. The Bible came to America with Puritan settlers from England and was made a part of the community, even as the Bible remained in the nation they left to begin anew. Both the Geneva Bible and the King James Version were preferred within various colonies (Alden 11-12). The Bible was even more important in early American identity; whereas Shakespeare’s writing had its place in politics and entertainment, the Bible was the core of the community’s being and survival for the Puritans that came to America to have their own religion, based on their own interpretations of the Bible. The Bible’s placement and function in the developing United States established it as American in a similar manner as Shakespeare.
In *The Relevance of the Bible*, H.H. Rowley states that “it is commonplace that no book in all the world has been subjected to such close and prolonged study as the Bible” (11). While other influential religious texts have been frequently studied “their study has never been undertaken on the scale of Biblical study. Nor has any other book been so widely circulated or translated into so many different tongues” (11). In their essay “Scripture and Society: From Reform in the Old World to Revival in the New,” Mark Valeri and John F. Wilson trace the journey and placement of the Bible in American society: “In this English setting an identification of the national community with the scriptural narrative was further specified by concentration on the apocalyptic sections of the Bible” (13). They mention that this use of the Bible was “the special legacy brought to the New World by the Puritans, and it set the fundamental terms for political appropriation of the Bible within American culture” (13). In “The Bible as Printed Word” John Alden says that “of no nation can it be as aptly said as of the United States that, in its settlement and development, the Bible has played a major role” (9). He explains why the Bible played a more important role in the lives of the Puritan settlers than those that came earlier: “Christian though the Spaniards were, it was the church rather than the Bible that inspired and accompanied them, in the person of the secular clergy or religious orders” (9). Referring to the Colonial period, Alden quotes Carl Bridenbaugh as calling the Bible the “greatest piece of promotional literature of the era of the Great Migration” (9). However, it is important to note that having their own beliefs about the Bible and religion was not the only reason to leave for America, and the Bible was not their only form of hope. There were also political and economic reasons for the move, such as population growth and its consequences, “from which the vast if unknown area of North America offered a refuge” (9).

Andrew Tate discusses the placement of the Bible in society and performance today in his chapter “Postmodernism” in *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible and Culture*. He refers to the Bible as a “dizzingly plural book” which “figures so heavily in our shared past, that it demands constant reappraisal” (516). I have discussed the placement of the Bible in early America, and it is clear that it doesn’t hold the same place in society that it did in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries:
Today relatively few people readily refer to this most commonplace and mysterious of texts as a guide in matters either of morality or political conduct. Yet the Bible is quoted, deconstructed, appealed to, denounced and appropriated almost relentlessly in our perplexing, detraditionalized world: faith, past or present, is no prerequisite for access to this legacy (517).

Tate goes on to say that “Fragments of biblical quotation continue to litter the transactions of contemporary life: half-remembered parables and scriptural figures shadow dance in our shared but near amnesiac cultural consciousness” (517).

Henry Steele Commager addresses the placement of the Bible in twentieth-century America in his essay “The American Mind,” within The Historian’s History of the United States. At this point, the majority of Americans were Christian, but “few admitted any categorical connection between religion, church, and morals” (1350). Although the Bible and church were a large part of society in the nineteenth-century, “A century later the church, no longer able to satisfy the spiritual needs of the community, had largely forfeited its moral function and assumed, instead, a secular one—that of serving as a social organization” (1351). Anthony reinterpreted Biblical themes into concert dance after there was already a change in society concerning the Bible: “the moral instructors of the new generation were the movies, the radio, and the press, and while they recognized their responsibility…their values were meretricious and shabby” (1351). Thus, Anthony’s dances were not just new versions of Biblical stories, but also a way to bring the Bible back into society.

**In the Beginning (Adam and Eve)**

In 1969, Anthony created *In the Beginning (Adam)* for Ross Parks. She wanted to add Eve but could not think of anyone for the role; Parks suggested Yuriko Kimura and Anthony created the duet for the two of them. *In the Beginning (Adam and Eve)* is set to music by Peter Sculthorpe. The costumes were by Leor C. Warner II (*Mary Anthony*).15

It is a powerful statement to create a dance about the first man and then follow it with a piece about the first man and his partnership with the first woman. It brings us back to the beginning of humanity as it is today, and to the very first betrayal (by Adam and Eve of God), as well as the first quest for knowledge and independence. In *Mary Anthony: A Life in Modern Dance*, Anthony says she believes that Adam and Eve consciously chose to leave the garden together, that they knew it would be difficult but wanted to face the
world together and to leave their paradise in order to gain the knowledge of which the serpent informed them. Anthony’s is a powerful claim for the beginning of humanity and for women, as Eve is usually blamed for the fall from innocence.

In his book *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now*, James L. Kugel posits that any idea of a “fall” from innocence originated with ancient scholarly interpretations and is not actually present in the Bible (51). Coordinating with Anthony’s view of Adam and Eve leaving together, the story in Genesis simply says that they were both there and both ate the fruit, not that Eve duped Adam:

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate (Genesis 3.6).

Genesis does not divulge the conversation that Adam and Eve had before eating the fruit, so they very well could have decided to eat the fruit and face the repercussions of God in order to know what the world had to offer and to gain the freedom to make their own choices, this being the first.

Anthony’s piece about Adam and Eve has this powerful new claim as the foundation for movement, and as a result is an emotional rendering of equality and cooperation existing between the very first man and woman. The costumes are skin colored unitards with vine-like embellishment so that the dancers are covered but still very natural and organic to the environment. The movement in the dance reflects the storyline in Genesis, but it also uses the relationship in space and energy between Adam and Eve to reflect the support, equality, and mutuality of Anthony’s interpretation of the story. In Don McDonough’s *The Complete Guide to Modern Dance*, he discusses the topic of Adam and Eve and their initial awareness of one another: “It is the story of the most fascinating adventure that any individual can have, the discovery of someone like himself and yet provocatively different” (172). The dance begins on a tilted silver disc, which seems to be the place where Adam and Eve were created, since they branch out away from it in exploration and movement. Adam and Eve dance lyrically together, reflecting the discovery of one another and the building of a relationship through weight-bearing shapes and balancing poses. One example of such shapes is when Adam and Eve face each other, clasping one another’s wrists, and with knees bent and hips touching, as they lean
their upper bodies and heads backward until their bodies are nearly parallel to the ground. McDonough sums up the dance: “In a short space of time the dance encompasses self discovery, aroused physical passion, remorse, and acceptance of mutual dependence” (173). He says that the dance is most effective when it has “performers of great emotional intensity to bring out the full pungency of the work,” and describes the entire dance as “a miniature saga of the human race being played out by two individuals” (173). Just based upon the story of Adam and Eve in the Bible, including their creation to their departure from paradise, Anthony’s dance portrays the relationship and emotions of the first two human beings.

**Cain and Abel**

Anthony choreographed *Cain and Abel* in 1972, to music by Peter Sculthorpe (Irkanda IV).16 *Cain and Abel* begins with two men on stage. One is on the floor, on his stomach, and the other begins to walk around him, attempting to waken or revive him, but he does not move. From the title one can assume that the moving man is Cain and the other Abel, and that the former has just killed the latter. There is then a flashback, as though showing what occurred for them to be in such a situation. Their parents, Adam and Eve, appear and there is a smooth transition into movement in a spatial dynamic which reveals the relationships within this family. The prominent structure in the dance is of Adam, Eve, and Abel dancing together, sometimes even creating a circle from which Cain is excluded, while Cain is on his own but clearly wishing to be a part of their group. He is frequently in the shadows of the stage while the group is well-lit. The three of them dance in and out of unison and canon, showing a kind of harmonious relationship. The piece winds down to a duet between the two young men, when Cain confronts Abel. He hugs him and they cartwheel together, arms around waists and one of them upside down, then Cain seemingly hugs him to death, and Abel is back to his beginning position, sprawled motionless on the ground.

Anthony portrayed Cain as accidentally killing Abel because his parents did not love him enough or show him how to love (Timm 64). He wanted to be accepted and loved by his parents and brother, but they already had an exclusive relationship, which is made apparent in the dance. Anthony showed Cain as excluded and Abel as loved through the juxtaposition of the former as separate in space, dancing alone and in different
vocabularies, while the latter dances with their parents. The three of them appear to be happy and complete without Cain. Here the movement stemmed from Anthony’s creative exploration of the story’s theme and narration. She changed the common images of Cain’s personality and intentions, which are usually that he is evil and that he purposely killed Abel out of jealousy and rage. For an artist interested in mortality and the human condition, these sources and the themes within them are very powerful and also become relevant to what is going on in the world. *Cain and Abel* depicts the first human death, and what we know as the first human murder. However, in telling the story in this manner, with Cain accidentally killing Abel, out of love and a need for love, Anthony puts a new spin on the origins of murder altogether. Not only is Cain responsible for Abel’s death here, but Adam and Eve are responsible for not loving both sons equally and for leaving Cain out of their harmonious and loving trio of a family relationship. Similar to *In the Beginning (Adam and Eve)*, Anthony created movement based on her unique dramatic views and personal interpretations of the Bible in *Cain and Abel*.

**Biblical Interpretation and Reputation**

Anthony similarly chose powerful Biblical themes which uniquely supported the underdog, or the person of the story who is normally criticized, just like Lady Macbeth. With *In the Beginning (Adam and Eve)*, she removed the blame usually placed on Eve for the fall from paradise and resulting human condition by suggesting that they decided together to eat of the fruit and gain knowledge (*Mary Anthony*). In *Cain and Abel*, she attempted to recast the bad reputation which Cain has always held for killing his brother Abel. She filled in the parts of the story which are left out of the Bible, including why Cain feels inferior to Abel and why he feels left out and wishes to earn recognition. Anthony’s dance shows the family situation which has led up to his jealous behavior, namely the favoritism that Adam and Eve show Abel over Cain. Her theory explains why Cain reacted the way he did when God preferred his brother’s offering. Perhaps if he were loved and accepted at home and knew Abel loved him, then he would have been more accepting of God’s preference, as he would still have familial support and would not have deep, pre-existing feelings of jealousy. Anthony wanted to rectify Cain’s reputation by adding new insight to his character, intentions, and worth, which is similar to the aims of the ongoing women’s movement to change the views and treatment of
women in the early twentieth-century. By using such creative license in her interpretations and the dances to develop from them, Anthony acknowledged that many details in Genesis are open to interpretation.
Dramatic Literature

Shakespeare’s plays are undoubtedly dramatic literature, as they are studied as theatre, literature, and entertainment. They can be read, performed, seen, and heard. The Bible is also versatile in how people perceive and approach it. It has a place as a religious, historical, and literary text, and although people may read it today, the masses originally listened to readings by clergy, and even watched performances. We know that Shakespearean drama was performed as entertainment for both common people and royalty. However, it is important to realize that the Bible was also a script for dramatic performance in medieval times, not only read to people when they attended church. Religious drama in this time period was meant to be both entertaining and informational.

After the thirteenth-century there was a shift in Biblical drama as it became more elaborate and needed more space. Productions moved from within churches to outside, and the priesthood passed the responsibility for creating the Biblical sketches to the groups of tradesmen and craftsmen which kept medieval towns functioning (Freund 36). These initial Biblical sketches were called Mysteries: “They grew into great cycles of short plays, deriving from the Old and New Testaments and dramatizing the Scriptural story from the Day of Creation to the fearful, unsparing Last Judgment” (Freund 36). Another form of religious theatre was soon added to supplement the Mysteries, which only occurred annually. Miracle Plays extended “such dramatizations by telling about the extraordinary lives, miraculous acts and martyrdoms of the saints” (Freund 59). There was a third type of play, as “The often eloquent Mysteries and always ingenious Miracle Plays did not exhaust the creative imaginations of pious authors of this God-possessed epoch” (Freund 69). In Morality Plays, which were unique and had strong appeal, “abstract forces and ideas—Evil, Good, Faith, Doubt, Chastity, Lust—are embodied in symbolic or allegorical figures” (69). While Miracle Plays portrayed religious figures that were important to people’s faith but were not connected with the Bible, the other two types of plays hold a stronger connection with the type of performance that Anthony’s choreography derived from the Bible. In a way, she portrayed strong themes and ideals, such as those found in Morality Plays, through the presentation of Biblical narratives, which are dramatizations of Scripture in the same medium as Mysteries. These types of
religious drama all occurred naturally as entertainment derived from what people knew and loved. In the same way, Anthony created dances influenced by Shakespeare and the Bible because they inspired her and held influential places in her life. Thus, putting the Bible into performance is not new or out of the ordinary. However, it is a shift from these original types of religious drama to subtract language from the performance and to portray Biblical themes in modern dance.

Whether originally heard or read (or both), neither dramatic literary source was ever meant to be only seen. Anthony derived movement from gesture, which has the ability to portray human emotion and need as it is the purest form of expression, predating systems and schools of language and communication. Anthony says that dance is a unique art form because the dancer’s trained body is the instrument (Mary Anthony). No objects come between the portrayal and the reception of ideas; communication does not require writing utensils, paper, or language. Anthony’s methods of reinterpreting the written tragedies and tales of morality are important to her overall views of modern dance. Anthony’s experience teaching movement for actors for twenty years came after some of her key dances based on dramatic literature, including Lady Macbeth (1949) and Threnody (1956), which shows that she already developed clear conceptions of acting and movement and translated those ideas into teaching actors how to say more with their bodies, in addition to actual words. This idea that actors need an understanding of movement in order to make their performance more successful hints at her ideas of exploring written themes through movement: what can the body reveal about the emotion and themes of the play or story that words alone cannot express? Since we see actors, in addition to hearing them, how can movement add to the audience’s experience of a character’s personal situations and emotions?

**Tragic Death in Dance**

In both Lady Macbeth and Cain and Abel there are themes of death and murder. The dances involve the threat of mortality and the issue of one person stepping outside of their personal rights and powers to take the life of another person. Anthony’s viewpoint is unique for focusing on the more infamous character of each theme and attempting to reveal a humanity that is often overlooked. Whereas Macbeth is often viewed as a tragic hero more than for his wrong deeds, Lady Macbeth is pinned with encouraging him to
commit the crime, initiating his downfall. Lady Macbeth lets her ambition get the best of her, and she soon realizes that she cannot bear the resultant guilt of the murder (Freund 727). Anthony hoped to draw readers and viewers to the complexity of Lady Macbeth’s character, knowing that there was more to her than greed and ambition. She says the difficulty of performing such a character, and of narrowing a dance down to just one life, is to show her power while still showing the beautiful woman that Macbeth married, that her femininity and fragility were just as important as her powerful ambition in persuading Macbeth because she is still his wife and not a colleague or fellow soldier (Anthony). In *Cain and Abel*, Anthony focuses upon the circumstances that led Cain to kill his brother, an action she interprets as accidental. She portrays him as a more tragic character than the evil one he is usually accused of being; in her dance he kills Abel by loving him too much and by hugging him too hard while trying to get Abel to love him back. Both Lady Macbeth and Cain make a mistake, in a sense, as Lady Macbeth regrets her actions and Cain kills accidentally by trying to receive the love and recognition he wants. Both characters are responsible for the death of another person, and they receive a bad reputation as a result. Anthony attempts to reveal more about each character; she focuses on the former, revealing intricate details which are usually overlooked in the larger context of the entire play, and she tells the rest of the story for the latter, explaining his reasoning and actions. She similarly eases the bad reputation of Eve in *In the Beginning* (*Adam and Eve*) by giving her own insight to the well-known depiction of the fall from Eden.

**Story and Discourse**

There are different connections established with an audience through the use of various timeless literary texts as influence for modern dance choreography. In *The Pursuit of Signs, Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, Jonathan Culler analyzes structuralism’s study of the narrative, providing useful terms for comparing different types of literary influence in dance. This theory, including the distinction of “story” and “discourse,” applies to the comparison of Biblically and Shakespearean influenced modern dance. For Culler, story is the “sequence of actions or events, conceived as independent of their manifestations in discourse” and discourse is “the discursive presentation or narration of events” (169-170). I suggest that modern dance influenced by
Biblical themes is usually more reliant on the story that is familiar enough to a broad range of society to create an effective connection with the audience while portraying the theme in a new context and in a new dynamic. What is lost in poetic encouragement, however, is gained in a depth of inspiration and understanding which may come from the Bible; life emotion and experience add to the actual Biblical text in creating dance based upon it. Choreography in *Cain and Abel* and *In the Beginning* (*Adam and Eve*) is not necessarily influenced by specific lines from the Bible, and the storyline allows for creative flexibility in its gestural portrayal. While both the Bible and Shakespeare are effective as influence for dance, there is certainly a difference between a story influencing a dance and specific lines encouraging the movement in a dance. In Anthony’s use of Shakespeare as influence for *Lady Macbeth*, it is not only the tragic storyline of the play but also (very importantly) the poetic language with which certain themes and emotions are portrayed by the writer. Anthony uses specific lines of dialogue as inspiration for movement, with gesture emanating from the words and the emotions they entail. The use of specific lines as influence for movement is a clear example of discourse. Shakespearean lines connect in a different way than Biblical works used as influence, although both use universal themes of jealousy, betrayal, and tragedy to act as a moral example so that the audience does not have to experience it in reality. The audience may experience the emotion of Lady Macbeth and Cain, and even pity them, without actually experiencing guilt after murder. The transference of emotion is one aspect of modern dance as described by Koner, Martin, Valéry, and Langer.

**Complexity and Simplicity**

There is another connection between the Bible and Shakespeare, which lends to the different ways of using each as influence for choreography. Shakespeare’s plays are complex; the characters, plots, and themes have a deep and complicated nature that has led to the endless study of them, with scholars taking diverse approaches and interpretations. However, while the content is complex and detailed, the works are so well put together that the audience or reader is not left wondering about any aspect. We know nearly everything about the characters and what happens to them. Everything is already resolved and almost all questions are answered. On the other hand, many stories in the Bible are seemingly very simple, such as those of Adam and Eve and Cain and
Abel (Genesis 2-4). The stories are straightforward—they are in narrative form instead of poetry, and the people within the Biblical stories do not have a lot of complexity of character. Although there is a little dialogue between God and the main characters of each story, there is no conversation between the other characters, which would be helpful for explaining the reasons for their actions, as well as their thoughts and feelings. Whereas these stories are straightforward and simple, so much is left for us to wonder about that they become difficult, due to the need to decipher what is missing and to fill in the rest of the story.

Anthony seemed to recognize this difference between the sources, as she approached them differently according to the simplicity and complexity of each. Her methods reflect the structure of each, as well as the purposes and creative means of her own style. With *Lady Macbeth*, we see little change from the actual text, as movement and characteristics in the dance are drawn from the actual monologues, dialogues, and scene descriptions in *Macbeth*. However, Anthony created something new from the well-known source simply by putting all of the aspects of Lady Macbeth and the narrative of her character’s rise and fall into the medium of dance. Anthony communicated the same themes, emotions, and character relationships (implied in the solo) through pure gesture and movement instead of words. She honed the play down to the character of Lady Macbeth for reasons already discussed, but the dance remained true to all the complexities of her character planned by Shakespeare. Alastair Macaulay reviewed a performance of Anthony’s reconstruction of *Lady Macbeth* in 2007. He says that “Shakespeare’s character is made entirely recognizable. But not very remarkable.” He cites other performances of Lady Macbeth which have “branded audiences with new insights into this character” but deems Anthony’s “merely a good study along previously established Martha Graham-type lines: a strong woman recycling a few strong gestures in her psychological fixation” (“Shakespeare’s Scottish Dame”). While Anthony’s style does contain some Graham influence, it is a combination of many other influences, and she is open to all movement (*Mary Anthony*). I find it an incomplete argument to try to prove a claim that Anthony did nothing new with the character of Lady Macbeth by pointing out small aspects of the actual movement in the dance. I disagree, as putting the character into movement and portraying the play’s poetry so clearly through gesture is a prominent way to say
something new. Anthony put the character in an entirely different dynamic and still portrayed the complexities of Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth. The dance provides new insight simply with its focus on one character and its portrayal of themes without words. Jack Anderson says that the reconstruction of Lady Macbeth “remains a persuasive character sketch” that shows the character’s ambition (“Choreographic Tales of Ambition, Guilt, Struggle, and Survival”).

With her Biblically-inspired dances on the other hand, we see further artistic license in developing the already established themes of written works as she translated them into movement. Here she did not narrow them down, but instead expanded the themes to make them more specific, filling in the parts of the Biblical stories that are left vague. Of Anthony’s interpretation in 

*Cain and Abel*, Fred Timm writes that “This seemed an ominous portrait of our own times and of our often violent, misguided children” (64). In “An Anthony Celebration,” Jennifer Dunning calls the same dance “decidedly offbeat,” perhaps for how the storyline of the dance does not conform to conventional views and interpretations of the Biblical story. The review in *The New York Times* entitled “Mary Anthony Troupe Offers Wide Range” calls *In the Beginning (Adam and Eve)* “a psychologically nuanced due that created its effect through suggestion rather than statement.” The movement reflects the suggestion of Anthony’s interpretation, creating a unique dynamic in the duet. All three dances reflect an understanding of the inherent complexities and simplicities of both Shakespeare and the Bible.

**Reviving Dances with Literary Influence**

Anthony discusses the revival of her earlier choreography in *Mary Anthony: A Life in Modern Dance*. She finds it important to keep the original choreography rather than modifying the work to fit the current style and the new dancers performing it. She prefers to leave it as historical work, so that the students may see choreography from a particular past generation. This method teaches young students and dancers about the origins of modern dance in America, the era of their teacher’s development, and the time period in which each piece was created. Anthony also enjoys the reactions of dancers seeing some of the older work for the first time (Anthony). She revived many dances, and some of those with literary influence that have been revived and/or set upon other companies include *Threnody*, as well as the dances I’ve discussed here: *Lady Macbeth, Cain and
Abel, and In the Beginning (Adam and Eve). Not only do such dances encourage young dancers to keep past eras in mind, but the literary influence is important to keep alive in a world obsessed with technology, with smart phones and videogames that simulate real activities, such as playing musical instruments or sports. Perhaps Anthony’s purpose in creating Lady Macbeth, In the Beginning (Adam and Eve), and Cain and Abel was to encourage the audience to return to the written text, this time reconsidering specific characters or themes. In a world where literature is not read or plays watched for entertainment as much or as often as in the early twentieth-century, I think the revival of such choreography reminds the society of different social values as much as it reminds young dancers of past dance eras.
Chapter 3: Interview with Mary Anthony

On a late afternoon in the beginning of January, 2010, soon after her ninety-fourth birthday, I met with Mary Anthony for an interview in her Greenwich Village loft. The first thing I saw when I entered the loft was the reception desk to the immediate left and a variety of framed photographs and awards on the wall to the right. At eye level and in the center of this wall was an elaborately framed still-shot from *The Moor’s Pavane*, with a placard indicating it as a gift from Anthony’s friends at the Limón Company. The walls and shelves of the room were filled with photographs, artwork, plants, and keepsakes. Voices, music, and sounds of movement emanated from her studio, and the two costumes from *Lady Macbeth* lay across a table in the far corner of the room. Viewing the tangible reality of her living and work environment added a new element to my understanding of Anthony’s life as a teacher and an artist.

My interview with Anthony ranged from the overall topic of her use of literary themes in dances to her specific personal memories. We covered details about *Lady Macbeth* and other dances, her teaching methods, her views of modern dance today, and interesting facts about her childhood, dance training, and the early years of her career. She was personable, as well as clearly experienced in speaking about her life and career for how open and descriptive, yet precise and concise, her responses were.

When I asked what she usually looks for in finding a new theme for a dance, Anthony said “I usually take the dramatic, like *Macbeth* is out of Shakespeare, I’ve used Biblical themes... so I try to find, you know, a literary, dramatic theme that will fit into dance.” She mentioned *Threnody* as an example of this. She said that she is specifically drawn to theatrical themes, and pointed out that, in accordance with her interest in theatre, her company is called the Mary Anthony Dance Theatre, instead of Dance Company. She told me that she has consistently used theatrical themes and dramatic literary influence in her dances, with the exception of *Songs*, which she created as purely lyrical and was inspired by the music to which it was set, Debussy’s only string quartet.

I then asked her what the climate was in the world and if it contributed to her use of such dramatic themes in her choreography, or if it was solely personal interests that inspired her work. She answered that the world definitely had a part in it, and when I asked about that connection she answered: “Well, I feel that—and it’s still going on, you
know—that the world is in a churning state all the time. It’s getting worse instead of better.” This notion connects with and explains how she was consistently drawn to a variety of tragic and dramatic literary themes throughout her career, as the world changed but continued to be in “a churning state.” I also wondered if the timeless themes connect to such a state in the world where similar emotions and problems are always present. She said that yes, she agrees that the Shakespearean and Biblical themes are timeless in a sense, as the subject matter—the problems and emotions—are still applicable today. She then discussed one of the reasons for using Biblical themes a little later in her choreographic career, which was that she had to do a lot of research in order to choreograph programs for the religious television programs *Look Up and Live* and *Lamp Unto My Feet* (1957-1959). As a result of her work on these shows, she had a performance relationship with the Bible that she did not have at the earliest point in her independent choreographic career, when she created *Lady Macbeth*.

I then asked what her earliest connection to dramatic literature was before she moved to New York. She responded with a recount of the environment of her school:

Okay, in other words, I lived in a tiny little town in Kentucky called Newport, but culturally it was very, very rich. The teachers there, the principal of the school, if there was an acting company anywhere within fifty miles she would bring them in to the school to let us see it. Every Friday afternoon we had to do a poem, a play, or some kind of theatrical activity. She was way ahead of her time.

When I asked her to speak more about her connection to literature and theatre, she discussed her family’s recreational interest in theatre which supplemented her exposure to literature and performance in school: “My family used to take us to a theatrical performance once a week—not in Newport Kentucky, but in Cincinnati Ohio, which was just across the river, so that I was exposed to a great deal of theatre, and I think that that had an influence on me.”

I asked Anthony about her process of deriving gesture and movement from words. She responded that she taught movement for actors in the Herbert Berghof studio for twenty years, and that part of her work was “to reveal to an actor how much you could do with body movement or gesture, rather than words. The words were there but you increased the value of them if you add telling movement.” She then demonstrated her point: “There once was a play at Berghof where there were two actresses—one was a
younger actress and the other was Uta Hagen. And I used as an illustration to my students that the young actress was *acting* and Uta was *being.* She confirmed that Uta was able to *be* instead of just *act* because of her use of movement, and that movement training adds to the actors’ awareness in space. Also, she said that Uta “insisted that the actors take dance classes, because she said that the discipline that a dancer has is so superior to that of actors, which is true.” These are powerful ideas about what movement can add to theatre, and while theatre contributes to the thematic wholeness and range of emotion in her dances through their dramatic literary influence, she provides something beyond words to the written themes by reimagining them in dance.

We then shifted to a discussion of her relationship with the Bible, both while growing up and throughout her life. She talked about her childhood experience with religion:

My father was Catholic, and my mother was Presbyterian, so there was a war going on all the time, but I preferred the drama of my father’s Catholicism. I used to go to mass with him, and that was at a time where it was really very ritualistic. The priest had his back to you, there was a great deal of movement, and incense, and drama going on, and you know, which I think has changed now, for the worse—they face the audience, and they were much better with their back turned.

She then said that reading the Bible a little later in life contributed to her interest in using it as influence for dance: “I also taught at the University of California, and it was so hard to get in to Los Angeles, and my hotel room had a Bible, so I read the whole thing. And then I found, you know, that there is so much dramatic material there, oh wow!” While she experienced the dramatic spectacle of a Catholic service as a child, it was reading the morality narratives as an adult immersed in her dance career that allowed her to see them as dramatic literature that could inspire dance.

I asked Anthony why she thinks that literature in particular can be useful inspiration for choreography, and she replied “Because your conception is already formed.” When I asked how she holds Shakespeare and the Bible differently, regarding her use of each as influence for dance, she said “I think that you just said it, the difference in *speaking* Shakespeare, and *speaking* the Bible are two entirely different worlds.” This statement fits into what I have said about the difference in choreography inspired by Shakespeare and the Bible stemming from the differences in the written works themselves. The dialogue of Shakespeare is important for driving the narrative and revealing character traits and relationships, while it is the general narrative of stories in the Bible, and the
way in which they leave many gaps in the story and lack detail of environment, situation, and character up to the reader’s interpretation which shape the narratives of morality. I asked about this, and Anthony agreed that, for her choreography, it was Shakespearean lines—monologues and dialogues—that led to the movement in *Lady Macbeth*, while it was the overall narratives and her interpretations of vague aspects of them which led to the movement and character relationships in *Cain and Abel* and *In the Beginning* (*Adam and Eve)*.

She mentioned *Images and Reflections*: “I have a video of me teaching Macbeth … up in Saratoga Springs, where I explained what the lines were and where the movement comes from.” She then discussed more of her process in creating *Lady Macbeth* and the context surrounding it:

Well, at that time I was going with a playwright, and the initial production had scenery. It had a castle wall, it had a bench on which I read the letter and the letter was really a scroll, so there were all kinds of theatrical elements in the production, and then in reality, you can’t tour that type of thing, so out the window went the castle [laughter] but it was very interesting.

Anthony spoke more about her process of creating *Lady Macbeth*: “I think she fascinated me as a character. She was stronger than Macbeth, and how to show that and still keep her as the beautiful woman he was in love with, so that you didn’t overstep the boundary and become too strong. You had to remember that—you were the wife of Macbeth.” I asked if *Lady Macbeth* was a powerful role for her, as a dancer and as a woman. She said yes and then told me an early story about the dance:

This is a side story, but it’s an interesting one. You had to audition performances for the 92nd Street Y if you were trying to get on the program there, and I auditioned *Lady Macbeth*, but at that time I had a real dagger, and I put it in my hair, to go on with the rest of the dance, and Louis Horst, when he criticized the dance—first of all he said “You should be dancing with Martha Graham,” [Laughter] But he said “I didn’t like the realness of the blood” and I said “that was an accident!” I didn’t mean to stab myself! I didn’t know I had done it…there was all this real blood going down my back!

She laughed and said that she didn’t use a real dagger in future performances of the dance. When I asked if there was anything in particular that she had hoped to achieve by creating *Lady Macbeth*, she said: “I think just to stimulate the audience into re-reading the play, and this time around, focusing on Lady Macbeth instead of Macbeth.”
I asked Anthony to talk about *Cain and Abel* and *In the Beginning (Adam and Eve)*, starting with her reasons in choosing those themes. About *Cain and Abel* she said:

I felt that Cain was always being the one that was, you know, people were against him, and no one ever looked into the possible emotional reasons why he was the way he was, and he was that way because he was neglected, and Abel was a favorite, you know, and that’s what I play up in the dance.

When I asked about *In the Beginning (Adam and Eve)* she laughed and talked about the origins of the dance:

When I auditioned at the Hanya Holm studio a hundred years ago, you had to do two solos, I only had a Debussy, and I did a solo which eventually became Adam in *In the Beginning*, in silence, and because they were from the Wigman, the German school, they were so impressed that I did a dance in silence, they just didn’t know that I didn’t have two records [laughter].

When I asked if she ever told Holm that the solo to silence was not on purpose, she laughed and said that she never did tell her. We then shifted the conversation to what other choreographers were doing at the same time as her early choreography: I asked what her relationship to José Limón was, and specifically if she was aware of what he was doing in his own work at the time, in the 1940s and 1950s:

I… what shall I say. I loved the Limón technique. I knew Carla Maxwell, and had gotten to know her more and more over the years. I watched José teach, and saw how he himself was so dramatic when he was teaching, that it inspired me, that you get more from your students when you are dramatic about what you are doing instead of just telling, you know, technique.

When I asked if she could think of any particular pieces that she has choreographed with political undertones, she said “*The Devil in Massachusetts*, the one that I just reconstructed. It is very specific politically.” Shifting back to *In the Beginning*, I told Anthony that I knew her ideas behind the dance and asked if she felt that it was a political statement, to take the blame away from Eve by saying that they chose to leave together—and if she would say it was a statement for women and she said yes.

I then mentioned the topics of spirituality and death as they come up in tragedy, and asked where those kinds of themes came from for her. She responded:

Well, I still have a very difficult time with death, I do. Where some people, like Merce went in his sleep! Anna Sokolow suffered endlessly for three months before she died. And I haven’t been able to reconcile that in my mind, where one person dies without pain and another dies in enormous pain.\(^17\)
Anthony said that out of the variety of themes in her dramatically influenced dances, mortality has been the most important to her. She agreed that the threat of death she experienced and fled from in her home as a young woman resonated with her as the presence of mortality in life which carried over into her choreography. I then asked her to tell me about her interest in the human condition. She said, “Well, I just feel that the human body and life are both miracles, and again, some people are given an easy miracle, and some are given a very difficult life.” She mentioned that both Bertram Ross and Matt Turney had Parkinson’s disease, and said “I’m having a hard time figuring out why these two great people had such debilitating diseases. Those are the kind of questions that have not been answered in all my life.” I find these musings very powerful, and they must contribute to a new view and understanding of her pieces dealing with death from her early career that she has reconstructed in the past ten years. Although she didn’t exactly say that she wondered if she will one day suffer in the same way, it is clear that she fears that possibility and hopes otherwise, and elsewhere she has said “I’m not afraid to die. I just don’t want to suffer” (Timm 64). This is a basic, human sentiment. Anthony combines her choreographic themes with her experiences witnessing the various deaths of friends and colleagues, factoring those images in with her thoughts about life and death.

I asked what she thought about literary influence in dance today, if it is present in the same way that it was for modern dancers developing in the 1940s and 1950s, and she responded “I don’t think it is today.” When I asked more about literary themes in general, she agreed that literary themes are a good outlet for the emotion and the visceral movement of modern dance.

Anthony then spoke a little bit about The New Dance Group, including her experiences there, both taking and teaching dance classes:

The New Dance Group was a very, very special place, where I learned Graham, which I wanted to know, from Jane Dudley and Sophie Maslow, they took my class and I took theirs, and um, there was African dance, ballet, and, it was just a wonderful, rich environment, where everybody shared their knowledge.

She said it was when she was at New Dance Group that she created The Devil in Massachusetts (1952), based on the Salem witch trials, and that the group was still very much political in addition to being a rich learning environment when she was there. We
shifted to what was going on when she left Hanya Holm’s studio that made her feel that she could forge ahead on her own. She discussed the dancers who all left at once, while Anthony stayed by Holm’s side as her assistant during this time: “I was very lucky that—the very first time that I took class with Hanya, all the old company was there. It was such a challenge—Kloeppe, all these great dancers were there, and at a certain point, they all walked out.” She said that before a performance there was a problem with the costumes, “and I didn’t know this but they were each looking for an excuse to leave and they all used that as the excuse to walk out, except Louise, who stayed.” This exodus had already happened by the time she left to be on her own, and it was at the New Dance Group that she first taught on her own: “I first taught [Hanya Holm technique] at The New Dance Group, and then after a year I said can I teach my own technique, and they said yes. And that was the opening of a great door.” She continued on to discuss some of the influences in her own technique when she became an independent teacher and choreographer:

There were still hangovers from Graham, hangovers from Holm, hangovers from ballet and then gradually, you know, I tried to find the best of all that, which is what is in my teaching today. Like the contraction and release is a wonderful way of moving, it just is. Fifth position is a very interesting and rewarding position. This statement reflects the value she places on ballet training for the development of a rounded modern dancer. I then added to her earlier comment about dance today not using literary themes and asked about her views in general about modern dance today: “In general, I don’t like it.” She said that it is partly that they combine other styles with modern and “partly that they don’t have clear conceptions of what they’re trying to say—what are they doing? You know, and I find that boring.” I asked if, along those lines, she felt that using literary themes in modern dance creates a strong concept of what one is saying and she nodded, saying “Yeah, yeah.”

She said that she has not created new dances lately and that she has mainly been reconstructing: “That’s funny. I have an idea, and Merce oddly enough had the same idea, about growing old, so…there’s a wonderful picture out by the piano, go look, where the old lady is looking up at death, and I would use that as my inspiration…if I could do it.” If it were easier to choreograph at the age of ninety-four, the theme she would choose is this painting that reflects the awareness of approaching death that comes with age.
me, the referral to such a picture suggests a number of things: First, the thought of death looming over seems reflective of her lifelong awareness of and wonderment at mortality, and there is a question of what she will leave behind, as well as if she will suffer as much as the colleagues that she has seen do so. Second, I must make a connection with her use of the Euripides quote in the creation of her dance *Tabula Rasa*: “For who knows if the thing that we call death is our life, and our life, dying” (Topaz). Perhaps leaving behind a legacy in choreography is one more step in her career before a new beginning. The picture of death looming over the old woman becomes a promise of hope, of change in the case of extreme suffering at the end of life.

The last question I asked was about her use of reconstructions to allow her students to get a feeling of what was going on when she created those pieces: “I find their reactions, they are thrilled with some of the things, in other words, I forget how many years ago—two or three years ago—The New Dance Group was up at Saratoga Springs and we gave a concert of our old works, and the kids were blown away, absolutely blown away.” Young students would not have the opportunity to be blown away by the works of their teachers and predecessors if not for reconstructions, as there is not footage accessible of their original dances from the early to middle twentieth-century.

On my way out, I again noticed the still-shot from *The Moor’s Pavane*. It captures the moment in which Lucas Hoving, as the Moor’s Friend (Iago), looms over the shoulder of the Moor (Othello), “whispering pestilence” in his ear, initiating Othello’s gradual distrust of Desdemona and his resulting mad jealousy. To me this picture symbolizes Anthony’s interests, as well as her methods in creating gesture from dramatic literature. This picture is a defining moment in the play and the dance, and Limón intricately created the movement from dialogue in the play to reveal emotions and traits of the characters, as well as the relationships between them which drive the plot. I remember being intrigued by this moment in the dance for how Limón so clearly revealed aspects of *Othello* without words, and also without being heavily pantomimic, but by transforming written themes into movement through a real portrayal of human emotion in gesture. As *The Moor’s Pavane* was a stepping stone to writing about Mary Anthony, I was thrilled to see a relic of her recognition of the dance, proving that she saw and appreciated the same interests and dramatic qualities in an American modern dance contemporary. This
picture also reflects her placement in the dance world, confirming that she was a part of a community in which artists expressed similar ideas and emotions while simultaneously reacting to the contemporary world through their own creative styles.
Conclusion and Further Scholarship

I have discussed how Anthony combined life experiences and influences with her artistic purposes to create dances applicable to her generation. The connections between her choreography and the social context surrounding her dance generation, the literary sources she used for dance, and twentieth-century America all reveal how intricately she is woven into both dance history and American history. Such placement is due to how many fields she and her work encompassed. She was prominent throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries as a dancer, choreographer, and educator. However, in her dance career Anthony also traveled to other countries, brought theatrical dance to television and in doing so helped bring the Bible to people as entertainment, choreographed and staged Broadway musicals, taught movement for actors, and brought theatre into her style of concert dance, among other cross-disciplinary achievements. Within her dance career she encouraged inspiration from art, poetry, and nature among other influences for choreography and qualities of movement in herself and her students. While her dance style is clearly autonomous art, it is inspired art, and is rich with imagery. Just as poetry crystallizes language, making a precise, rhythmic art form out of words, so choreography refines and clarifies movement. Anthony’s use of dramatic literature clarifies the concept of each dance, allowing the movement to drive the plot, whether it closely translates the poetry of Shakespeare or expands the story by filling in detail within Biblical narrative.

In response to my initial questions concerning Anthony’s use of Shakespeare and the Bible as influence for modern dance, I suggest that both sources were indeed compatible to her personality and her movement style. This compatibility was due to her upbringing, her dance training, and the era of America in which she grew up and worked as an artist. Her use of dramatic literature as the foundations for choreography reflects her early exposure to and lifelong interest in theatre. Also, examples of life choices, career experience, and teaching and movement styles reveal that she has a dramatic personality, and perhaps the great literary sources to which she was drawn are a reflection of her own magnitude and integrity as an artist.

In addition to dance with literary themes, and beyond my specific topic of Shakespearean and Biblical influence in Anthony’s choreography, another topic emerged
in the process of completing this thesis. As an artist reconstructing dances from earlier in her career and representing the ideals of her generation in the face of new ideals and new generations, Anthony’s current position in the dance world exemplifies the generational difference in dance and society from early in her career to now. Simultaneous shifts in cultural views of literature and in the artistic goals of dance have led to the generational differences and to certain forms of art and entertainment no longer having the same popularity they did nearly a century ago. Literature is not used in the same way by choreographers because most people do not turn to these dramatic literary sources for entertainment or examples of morality they way that they used to. At the same time, many choreographers do not strive to portray emotion, and thus are not led to tragic and dramatic literary sources for supportive themes. Understanding the differences between each generation allows us to know more about the artistic ideals and the social context surrounding each era.

In Chapter 1, I discussed Anthony’s life experiences and training in order to explore the history behind her orientation toward dramatic literature and the theatrical, as well as her specific relationships with both Shakespeare and the Bible. I also depicted the movement style of her first generation mentors, the overall ideals of modern dance, and Anthony’s unique dance style that resulted from all of these influences. In Chapter 2, I closely analyzed the context surrounding both Shakespeare and the Bible, in dance and in America. I discussed Lady Macbeth, In the Beginning (Adam and Eve), and Cain and Abel, covering movement, methods, interpretations, and intentions. In Chapter 3, I rounded the thesis and supported specific arguments with Anthony’s words and reflections within the outline of our interview. Her current thoughts of life and death highlight the themes of mortality and tragedy within the dances we discussed, which she created as long as sixty years ago. In portraying literary works without verbal accompaniment of lines from the play or words from the Biblical narratives, Anthony adopted and adapted written themes. She reshaped the literature to fit her purposes, and portrayed meaning through her own choreographic styles and means. This is just the beginning to what I hope becomes a long and fruitful conversation, with Anthony in a rooted position as a key player. She remains an innovative artist who spanned art forms
and fields of study when she created dances inspired by dramatic literature. Such choreography survives today as both influenced art and as a relic of generations past.

As I said at the beginning of this thesis, I wish it were possible to cover a variety of expanded versions of this topic, but that would require infinitely more pages than I have here. It would take a book just to cover Anthony’s dances with Biblical influence, and another for those influenced by plays and poetry. In addition to what I have covered here are her dances *In the Beginning: Part I (Adam)* (1969), *Genesis XIV* (1949), and *The Magdalene* (1998) influenced by the Bible. Other dances inspired by plays and poems are *The Wind* (1949), based on e.e. Cummings’ Poem #170, *The Purification* based on Tennessee Williams’ play, *Blood Wedding* (1958) based on the Federico Garcia Lorca play, *At the Hawk’s Well* (1958) based on the play by W.B. Yeats, and *Action Without Words* (1958) based on the play by Samuel Becket. It would be insightful in further research to analyze Anthony’s work in comparison to another artist from her era with similarities in life experience and stylistic ideals. José Limón also choreographed many dances based upon literary sources, including key choreographies based on Shakespeare and the Bible. He too was in the second generation of modern dance, working closely with Doris Humphrey in the same way that Anthony worked with Holm. Limón held similar ideals of approaching the human condition and portraying emotion through gesture. I would say that his Biblically influenced dances differed from those influenced by plays in the same way that Anthony’s did. Although Limón’s life experiences and dance training differed from Anthony’s, he too had a soft spot for the human condition and for portraying human emotion. His dances *The Moor’s Pavane* (1949), based on Shakespeare’s *Othello*, and *The Traitor* (1954), based on Judas’ betrayal of Jesus in the Bible, similarly portray the jealousy, betrayal, and tragic death of the written works to comment on morality and mortality. In the former, he derived gesture for the dance, as well as the relationships between the four dancers on the stage, from dialogue in the play. In the latter, he created movement to reflect the Biblical narrative, but also to make unique political connections to the contemporary world. I would say that each piece provided a powerful image for his minority positions as a Mexican-American and as a male dancer in a female-dominated field—a field not deemed career-worthy for men.
For the time being, however, I am pleased with having focused upon Mary Anthony. I have fulfilled my research of a renowned figure that deserves more attention in the field of dance history, as well as in the countless other fields that she and her work entered throughout her expansive career. I see Anthony as a uniquely dramatic and perceptive artist who seemed to predict the importance of preserving literature in her own powerful dance dynamic. Just as Mary Anthony is a potentially lost figure who deserves stronger placement in Dance, American, and Women’s History, the topic of modern dance with literary influence needs more attention before it falls to the wayside of the new topics to emerge from each new generation with its artists and themes.
Notes

Introduction

1 Doris Humphrey (1895-1958), was one of the Big Four in modern dance. This quote is on page 58 in “What a Dancer Thinks About,” from The Vision of Modern Dance.

2 Jacqueline M. Smith-Autard discusses ideational stimulus used in dance choreography in her book Dance Composition. It is “perhaps the most popular for dances. Here the movement is stimulated and formed with intention to convey an idea or unfold a story” (22).

3 Isadora Duncan (1877-1927), was one of the original barefoot aesthetic dancer to dance without shoes and costumes of ballet. The Romantic ballet, focused in Paris, stressed ethereal qualities, exotic and fantastic themes, and femininity. The Classical Ballet, which grew and thrived in Russia, consisted of the strict technique, clear form, virtuosity, and spectacle still popular in ballet today. See sections of Duncan and the Romantic and Classical Ballet in No Fixed Points: Dance in the Twentieth Century.

4 Antony Tudor (1908-1987), was an English ballet choreographer who fulfilled a choreographic career in the United States. For further reading, see Shadowplay: The Life of Anthony Tudor, by Donna Perlmutter.

5 I will discuss Anthony’s dance style in Chapter 1.

6 Martha Graham choreographed several dances based on Greek dramatic literature, often exploring psychological themes. Cave of the Heart (1946) was based on Medea, and Night Journey (1947) was based on the character of Jocasta from Oedipus. Others include Errand into the Maze and Clytemnestra (Reynolds and McCormick 154-155). Pearl Primus’s Strange Fruit, based on and danced to the reading of the poem by Lewis Allen (Reynolds and McCormick 344)

7 I will discuss historical context surrounding Anthony’s career in America in Chapter 1.

8 José Limón was a second generation dancer who studied with Charles Weidman and Doris Humphrey. He was a minority both as a Mexican American and as a male dancer in a field dominated by women and a profession considered unmanly. He choreographed The Moor’s Pavane (1949), based on Shakespeare’s Othello. It featured himself as The Moor (Othello), Betty Jones as The Moor’s Wife (Desdemona), Lucas Hoving as His Friend (Iago), and Pauline Koner as His Friend’s Wife (Emilia). To view the piece, see
José Limón: Three Modern Dance Classics (video recording). For further reading see Dunbar, June, ed. José Limón: An Artist Re-viewed and Limón, José. José Limón: an unfinished memoir.

Chapter 1

9 In 1947, the owners of Holm’s studio reclaimed the space and she had to teach at various studios (Liebe Hanya: Mary Wigman’s Letters to Hanya Holm 78), and at one point many company members left all at once (Anthony).

10 Pauline Koner (1912-2001) danced in the José Limón Dance Company from 1946-1960, and helped create the role of The Friend’s Wife in The Moor’s Pavane. She worked closely with Limón and Humphrey, but also had earlier training with Michel Fokine, Michio Ito, and Angel Cansino in the 1920s (International Encyclopedia of Dance, Vol. 4 38-39).

11 Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin: see further in The Historian’s History of the United States (1346).

Chapter 2

12 For more theory on the philosophy of dance and movement, see Francis Sparshott’s Off the Ground: First Steps to a Philosophical Consideration of the Dance.

13 William Shakespeare (1564-1616), English poet and playwright, and one of his tragedies, Macbeth (1606). Macbeth is about a thane who hears a prediction of a promotion from witches, and it comes true. This leads him to believe that their second prediction—that he will become king—is also true. His wife, Lady Macbeth, convinces him to murder the king in order to rush the process. Both ambitious characters only enjoy power for a short while before the guilt from their misdeeds drives them mad and causes their deaths.

14 For more information about Sarah Siddons, see Thomas Campbell’s Life of Mrs. Siddons and Joseph Roach’s It.

15 In the Beginning (Adam and Eve). This description is from a 2001 performance, featuring Ruping Wang and Chi-Tsung Kuo.

16 Cain and Abel. This description is from a 1974 performance, featuring Ross Parkes and Michael Bruce (the brothers), and Tonia Shimin and Daniel Maloney (the parents).
Chapter 3

17 Merce Cunningham (1919-2009) was a key American avant garde choreographer. Anna Sokolow (1910-2000) was a modern dancer known for her experience in both the Martha Graham Company and the New Dance Group, as well as for her independent career as a choreographer and an educator. Her dances focused on society and the human experience.

18 Mathew Turney (1925-2009) was a longtime dancer with the Martha Graham Company. Bertram Ross (1920-2003) danced and taught at the Graham Company and School.
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