

TO THE MOON AND BACK: DEVISING THEATRE WITH GEORGE

MÉLIÈS *A TRIP TO THE MOON*

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

To the Moon and Back: Devising Theatre with George Méliès *A Trip to the Moon*

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Georges Méliès' 1902 film *Le Voyage dans la Lune (A Trip to the Moon)* has endured as a fascination of popular culture and media. Considered one of the first narrative films, science fiction films, and to apply several innovative editing techniques, the film is a technical marvel for its time that contemporary academics consider a simple fairy film. The film's academic or artistic merit is less relevant to this project; the focus is on audience reactions, the film's content, and the film's legacy. This project deconstructed and developed Méliès' film into a work of devised theatre that investigates, converses with, and intervenes in the original work.

The goal is not to exactly replicate the film or simply adapt it for the stage, but to understand what the film and its creator are saying and craft a response using some of the same aesthetic and contextual language. What does the film articulate now, two-hundred years after its release? Combining biographical, autobiographical, historical, and generic elements, the resulting performance piece explores questions of identity, exploration, memory, the medium of film itself and our relationship to it.

DEDICATION

To my parents for always believing in me, my friends for their support, and the many passionate dance, music, and theatre educators without whom I wouldn't be the person or artist I am today.

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Contributors

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Thank you to my parents for believing in me even when I don't, supporting my artistic pursuits throughout my life, and always making me smile. From you, I learned how to love others. To my friends, your support meant the world. Thank you for hugs, proofreading, and reminding me that my work is worth doing.

Components of my creative work were crafted with assistance from:

- Grace Harmon (Actor, devising collaborator, costume production)
- Harrison Daniels (Actor, devising collaborator)
- Dr. John Moeller (Audio and visual technologies advisor)
- Dr. Michelle Simms (Documentary advisor)

All other work conducted for the thesis was completed by the student independently.

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1. AESTHETIC MOTIVATION AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Scheduling film class screenings during the COVID-19 pandemic called for creative problem solving, which is how my two-hundred-person film class ended up sitting in a theater that seats twenty-five hundred. Instead of a lecture hall with desks built into the seats and a projector that may malfunction at any time, my class got to sprawl out in a huge space that swallowed any sound we made. Walking in, it's cool and quiet and even through my face mask it smelled like freshly vacuumed carpet. The students sat anywhere from six seats to six rows apart. Microphone in hand, my professor spoke briefly about the film we were about to watch, waved to someone in the back to press play, and introduced the group to *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902).

While I found myself laughing quietly beneath my mask at some of the onscreen adventure, the theatre was stiflingly silent. The discussion after felt formal, focusing on the history of the film and how the technical aspects like special effects were accomplished. In the class group chat however, memes were being fired off left and right. Screenshots of the actors had been zoomed in on and captioned with mildly pithy commentary describing what they were reacting to, "that moment when your umbrella becomes a mushroom," (an actual occurrence in the film. The contrast between the formal class discussion and the seemingly lower level 'popular discussion' on the group chat felt like something to remember because of the apparent conflict. The consensus of both discussions was that the film is a little bit odd, and mostly noteworthy because it was the first to accomplish a handful of advancements in film like narrative and some editing techniques. The content of the film was deemed amusing, but mostly irrelevant, which did not sit well with me.

I was immediately fascinated by George Méliès's film. The fact that the version we watched was hand colored in 1902, frame by frame, was captivating. Brightly colored coats, aliens, mushrooms, and other significant objects make the film vibrant and intriguing. The story of the film reminded me of other odyssey stories I've seen and aligned well with my interest in alternate worlds. The whimsical design and underlying sense of humor was attractive, but most fascinating of all, I felt connected to *A Trip to the Moon* without being able to articulate why. Why was this work from two-hundred and twenty years ago resonating so strongly with me? The best way to figure out how something works is to take it apart and put it back together, which is what I set out to do by drawing on the devising techniques outlined in *The Viewpoints Book* (Bogart, Landau), moment work exercises from Tectonic Theatre, and approaches to the process used by Goat Island.

First, the film must be picked apart at the seams. How and why was it made? What work inspired it? What work was inspired by it? Who made it, and how does that impact the content of the work? The information is gathered and compiled to make a profile of the background of the work. Next, the essential elements need to be deconstructed. What happens in the film? What is significant to the plot? What emotions does it evoke? What changes between the beginning of the film and the end of the film? What is the on-screen aesthetic? Does the aesthetic support the narrative? Background information and essential elements gathered, the significant components are translated into devising exercises. With a small group of collaborators, the devising exercises are completed and a performance is generated. Because this new performance grew out of the original film, it will contain the essence of the original through the lens of the devisors. The important and essential elements of what makes the film tick will be highlighted, and after reflection, I will know why I felt connected to *Le Voyage dans la Lune (1902)*.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT, DISCIPLINARY PARADIGMS, AND AESTHETIC STANDARDS

Marie-Georges-Jean Méliès was born in Paris in 1861, received his baccalauréat in 1880, and after a year of serving in the military, wanted to be a painter. A compromise was reached with his father (who wanted him to be involved with the family business: Méliès would take private art lessons and spend several hours overseeing production at the family boot factory. In 1884, he went to London to learn English and handle opening a new branch of the family business. It was here that he became involved in theatre. “His limited command of English, especially at the beginning of his stay, steered him toward the kinds of productions that relied largely on visual spectacle: pantomime and magic acts.” (Ezra, 7)

In 1885, Méliès returned to Paris where he performs as an illusionist. He acquires the Robert-Houdin theatre in 1888. It isn't until 1895 that Méliès is invited to see a presentation of the Lumière cinematograph. (thegeorgemeliesproject.org). While the Lumière brothers do not want to sell him the invention, Méliès travels to London to acquire the necessary equipment from Robert W. Paul and starts to study and make films. By reverse engineering an *Animatographe* projector, Méliès and mechanic Lucien Koreston built a camera called the *Kinétograph*. From 1897 to 1912, Méliès's Star Film Company creates over five-hundred films across several genres, including trick films, historical dramas, cowboy films, advertising films, sci-fi and fantasy films, stag films, and *actualités* reconstituées. (thegeorgemeliesproject.org). Star Film's slogan is “The Whole World Within Reach.”

Méliès work is at times-dismissed-due to its fantastic subject matter, focus on special effects and editing, and theatrical elements. Scholars will simultaneously recognize that Méliès

advanced narrative in film while putting his work into that category of ‘primitive’ due to its theatricality; “the film-maker’s use of distanced long shots, theatrical sets, entrances and exits on stage right and stage left, etc...” (Gaudreault, 112). While the Lumière brothers focused on documentary cinema (realistic narrative), Méliès focused on unrealistic narrative, however, both participated the spectacle that was early cinema in a way that impacted audiences. The illusionary aspect was noted by Méliès at his viewing of the Lumière’s invention as “an extraordinary trick” (Gunning 4), and is featured heavily in his early ‘trick films’ in which editing is used to achieve the impossible.

When *A Trip to the Moon* premiered in 1902, the moving image was still novel and exciting. Only a few years prior had Louis Lumière’s *Arrival of the Train* (1895) thrust audiences into an exciting perceptual experience and spawned all manner of myths about the audience’s reaction to footage of a train coming towards them. While most of the ‘panic’ that the film caused was a publicity stunt, there is an element of truth to the legends of fainting audience members. Being presented with a still image that suddenly moved when someone began to crank the projector would be startling, especially when the persistence of movement effect hits you for the very first time and you are suddenly watching everyday life on a train platform. The interesting part about viewing the film was not the fact that you were seeing a train platform, it was that you were seeing an image of a train platform:

French philosopher Edgar Morin speaks of the ‘charm of the cinematographic image’ and remarks with regard to audience motives: “What attracted the first crowds was not the change of shift in front of the factory, not the arrival of the train at the station (to see this, it would have sufficed to go to the station or the factory), but an image of the train, an image of the factory gate. It was not because of the real, but because of the image of the real that people crowded before the doors of the Salon Indien.” Paradoxical as it may appear today, the audience’s interest in the projected *documentary* images of the Cinématographe Lumière was of a primarily *fantastic* nature. (Loiperdinger)

This feeling of wonder is what Méliès found attractive about film as a medium and is what separates his films generically from the work of those working in ‘realism’ like the Lumière brothers or the later work of D.W. Griffith.

A Trip to the Moon was created after Méliès’ trick films but utilizes many of the techniques he had learned to make it effective and features an emphasis on spectacle over narrative. For example, *The Vanishing Lady* (1896) uses a jump cut to make its titular character disappear. While there the bare bones of a narrative are present in the film, what Méliès prioritized in his art practice was the fantastic,

This narrative element, however, was seen as entirely secondary to the magical effects; thus, Méliès did not consider himself a story-teller. Indeed, here are his own words on the matter (written in 1932): “In this type of film (fantasy films, flights of imagination, artistic, diabolical, fantastical or magical films), the most important thing lies in the ingeniousness and unexpectedness of the tricks, in the picturesque nature of the decors, in the artistic lay out of the characters and also in the main ‘hook’ and the grand finale. Contrary to what is usually done, my procedure for constructing this sort of film consisted in coming up with the details before the whole; the whole being nothing other than the ‘scenario.’” (Gaudreault, 118)

Gaudreault emphasizes that Méliès does view narrative as having a function, it will always be secondary to spectacle in his work. Méliès himself said,

...My main preoccupation was always to find for each film a new trick, a big main effect and a final apotheosis. Afterwards, I would try to select the best period for costumes in which to dress my characters...and once all that had been settled, I would then draw the backgrounds for the action according to the era and the costumes that I had chosen. As for the scenario, the “fable,” the “story,” I only worried about it at the very end. I can assert that the scenario so executed was of *no importance whatsoever* because my sole aim was to use it as a “pretext” for the “staging,” for the “tricks,” or for picturesque tableaux. (Gaudreault, 118)

A Trip to the Moon's narrative structure reflects its mentality. The events of the film are linearly daisy-chained together. The philosophers decide to go to the moon, a rocket is built and fired at the moon, the moon's eye is put out, the philosophers turned scientist/adventurers land on the moon, sleep under the stars, find a mushroom land, fight an alien, get captured, meet the alien king, *kill* the alien king, escape the moon, land in Earth's ocean, get towed back to land, and given medals. The story's quest is resolved quickly. The men want to go to the moon, and in the span of three shots that occupy less than a minute, they reach the moon. Without narrative suspense, the audience is simply along for the ride and asked to sit while a parade of attractions flickers across the screen for them. The presence of loose narrative elements (the danger of being attacked, the uncertainty of escape) connect the moments of spectacle to keep them engaging. Narrative is being used as a tool here. It is not being neglected, Méliès simply had other priorities.

Méliès' illusions in the film borrow heavily from the world of the stage but are made possible through his advancements in editing techniques and film technology. The jump cut in *The Vanishing Lady* appears several times *A Trip to the Moon*. The umbrella that turns into a mushroom, the infamous shot of going into the moon's eye, and the destruction of several aliens into puffs of smoke are all impossibilities that are only possible through editing. The use of a jump cut, along with superimposition and animation are the best argument for the cinematic quality of Méliès' work.

The major qualities of Méliès' work *A Trip to the Moon* that are being carried into this project are; the overall narrative structure of going to the Moon and returning, elements of visual spectacle, a strong interest in creating wonder, a prioritization of visual and perceptive experience over narrative—while still utilizing narrative as a tool to engage the audience, and the

translation or representation of particular editing techniques from two-dimensional world of film to the three-dimensional temporal world of theatre.

3. EXPLANATION OF EXHIBIT

3.1 Goal of Exhibit

While a significant portion of the research findings will be generated during the devising process, specific experiences can only occur in a performance setting. It is important to take the theatrical work and present it to an audience for certain effects to occur for the viewer and performer(s). Taking the work from a closed rehearsal to the stage creates opportunities for audience/performer feedback loops to form, forces the creators to consider the audience's experience of the piece and ensure that there is overall cohesion and clarity to the narrative. As a performer, I feel a distinct change in the piece when an audience is present. Not only are the stakes higher with less room for error, my experience of time changes, emotions feel heightened, and I experience a heightened awareness of my body.

3.2 Devising Exercises

The exercises used to develop the content of the live performance were written and grouped into manageable thematic sections that were intended to be done in a single devising day. The following are the supplies, steps, and considerations for each section.

3.2.1 Materials Day

3.2.1.1 Exercise 1: Watch the Film

Supplies:

1. Projector
2. Notebooks
3. Pens

Steps:

1. Watch the film once to watch it
2. Watch again to note anything of interest
3. Compare notes

3.2.1.2 Exercise 2: Score the Film

Steps:

1. Go to the shop and borrow ways of making noise
2. Play the film and make all of the sound effects necessary
 - a. Refrain from adding dialogue. Vocalizations are permissible.

3.2.2 *Cardboard Day*

3.2.2.1 Exercise 1: Cardboard Moment

Based on Tectonic Theatre's Moment Work.

Supplies:

1. Cardboard strip (unfolded box, cut open along one seam)

Steps:

1. Consider your cardboard on the floor
2. Pick up the cardboard
3. Move over, around, and through the cardboard
4. Explore until something happens
5. Present moment to collaborators by saying "I begin," showing the moment, then saying "I end."

3.2.2.2 Exercise 2: Cardboard Transportation

Modification of Tectonic Theatre's Moment Work.

Steps:

1. Move with the cardboard
2. Go somewhere with the cardboard
3. Come back from somewhere with the cardboard
4. Show your journey to your collaborators by saying "I'm leaving" before setting out and "I'm back" when you've returned.

3.2.2.3 Exercise 3. Transform the Cardboard

Steps:

1. Select a cardboard shape
2. Change the cardboard in a significant way
3. Share your transformation with your collaborators

3.2.2.4 Exercise 4. Build with Cardboard

Steps:

1. Take your transformed cardboard and combine it with the other cardboard pieces to make a transportation vehicle.

3.2.3 *Contact Day*

3.2.3.1 Exercise 1: First Contact

Steps:

1. Find a partner
2. Turn towards the wall, or into a corner (preferred)
3. Close your eyes and take three deep breaths. Open your eyes

4. Decide on a movement
5. Approach your partner and wait
6. Without speaking, decide who will make their movement first
7. Execute your movements
8. Notice your reaction
9. Switch partners and repeat steps 5-8.

3.2.3.2 Exercise 2: Not Quite Contact

Steps:

1. Find a partner
2. Hold out your hands
3. Don't let your hands touch. Move hands about an inch apart.
4. Move through the space, connected by the space between your hands
5. Pick a new body part to connect via, and repeat

3.2.4 *Celebration Day*

3.2.4.1 Exercise 1: Create a Ritual to Celebrate Leaving

Steps:

1. Someone volunteers to leave
2. As a group, choose a phrase they should carry with them for their journey
3. Follow the departer around the room
4. Wave when they leave

3.2.4.2 Exercise 2: Create a Ritual to Celebrate a Return

Steps:

1. Send someone out of the room with only a timer, notebook and a pen. They are to note anything useful while they wait.
2. Set a five minute timer
3. Create a short ritual for their return it must include:
 - a. At least one geometric formation
 - b. Three claps
 - c. Intertwined arms
4. When they return, perform the ritual.

3.3 The Story

The story, as I explained it to my collaborators, is about three people who go to the moon and return. That was how I was viewing the project before making my scene breakdown and closely taking notes on the events of the film. The following is a transcription of my notes from January 9th:

Scenes

- Wizards in a class room, deciding to leave. They take their robes off and put on suits.
- Workmen building a rocket in a workshop.
- Loading the rocket/bullet into a cannon, women with rifles stand guard
- The wizards are sent off with pomp and circumstance, with trumpets, flags, and excited townspeople, the rocket is fired.
- A POV shot from the front of the rocket shows the moon getting closer and closer, it lands in the moon's eye.

- The wizards step out of the rocket onto the moon's surface.
- Earth rises in the distance, the wizards decide to lay out bedrolls and go to sleep. Stars (women) and Saturn appear in the sky and make it snow.
- The snow wakes the wizards up and they seek shelter underground to a mushroom kingdom.
- An alien finds them, and the wizards kill it. More and more aliens appear and capture the wizards.
- The wizards are taken to a throne room and meet the alien king, who they kill moments later as they escape.
- The wizards run to find their rocket and push it off the moon.
- The rocket splashes down into the ocean and there is a n underwater shot with jellyfish.
- A towboat appears and pulls the wreckage towards the harbor.
- A celebration occurs in the town square, where a captured alien is forced to dance. All of the wizards receive a medal.

3.4 Devising Process and Building a Collective

The first day of rehearsal presents certain unique challenges. I knew I wanted to be cautious with my collaborators to avoid any sense of false hierarchy. While this is my project their experiences of the film, and science fiction as a genre, are just as valuable as my own. It is not uncommon in devised theater companies for one person to take the lead, however I want to avoid stepping into that role whenever possible. For the most part, my job was to be the administrative and to participate as a member of the collective. The expectation I had for my collaborators was to participate fully in the devising exercises and use the research I have done and our various experiences watching the film to create a piece of theatre.

A major factor in how a collective works together is the way that members respond to one another's work. To that end, we will utilize Liz Lerman's critical response process. When someone presents work to the collective (usually the product of a devising process), we will follow this procedure:

1. **Statements of Meaning:** Respondents state what was meaningful, evocative, interesting, exciting, striking in the work they have just witnessed.
2. **Artist as Questioner:** The artist asks questions about the work. After each question, the responders answer. Responders may express opinion if they are in direct response to the question asked and do not contain suggestions for changes.
3. **Neutral Questions:** Responders ask neutral questions about the work. The artist responds. Questions are neutral when they do not have an opinion couched in them. For example, if you are discussing the lighting of a scene, "Why was it so dark" is not a neutral question. "What ideas guided your choices about lighting?" is.
4. **Opinion Time:** Responders state opinions, subject to permission from the artist. The usual form is "I have an opinion about _____, would you like to hear it?" The artist has the option to say no. (Lerman)

My intention at the outset of the project was to meet multiple times a week to rehearse, ask my collaborators to keep a journal of their experience doing the project, and build in multiple checkpoints to stop and reflect on the work we made. As is often the case when doing creative work, the plan morphed due to the group's creative whims, schedule restraints, and occasional interpersonal conflicts.

3.5 The Work

We began our devising work at the very beginning of the story, deciding to embody the wizards deciding to leave their previous work behind, choose science, and go to the moon. My main request was that the pieces demonstrate a clear moment of change or realization. Each person chose a different aspect to explore. I went more literal, using my hands to measure the space between imaginary stars, transcribing that information on the ground, then seeing the moon and staring at it. I sat down, laid down, then moved along the floor to grab a stool. Using

my hands, I made a small rocket and landed on the elevated surface of the stool—treating it as the surface of the moon. The tiny version of me bounded across the stool, then moonwalked. Grace used David Bowie’s “Space Oddity” to score her movement and started with rhythmic movements. Also using the floor, her piece followed a more emotional journey, imagining what it would feel like to go from the rhythms of daily life to the excitement of taking off, and the weightlessness of space. Harrison’s piece, set to Frank Sinatra’s “Fly Me to the Moon” was character based and followed a person doing a repetitive motion, then banging his head against the wall until he became inspired by instrumental accents in the music and cut loose with sweeping gestures and slides. The three pieces are performed simultaneously, everyone’s floor path combining to mimic an armillary sphere or other model of astrological bodies moving in their own orbits.

Separate movement pieces built; it was time to look for a way to connect them. We needed to find a moment of agreement where the characters we were building decide to go to the moon together. What evolved over a few devising sessions was a moment where Harrison mimicked my hand movements (the tiny person walking on the moon, then moonwalking), crossed the space to come interact with the tiny hand person, then scoop them up and put them in his shirt pocket. In the earliest version, he helped me to my feet and shook my hand. Later versions of the moment of agreement saw slight changes that reflected thematic and character developments from elsewhere in the piece. The movement piece section ends with a clear break in action as the actors drop any character physicality they may have developed and move to a line upstage.

The devising exercises designed to create the rituals for leaving and returning were done, and from them emerged a kind of send-off/receiving line. The pattern is as follows: Harrison

shakes Grace's hand while Grace is playing Character A, he then steps down the line to shake my hand as I play character B. While Harrison shakes my hand, Grace steps behind me to become Character C. The pattern continues all the way across the stage until Harrison makes his final goodbye and steps out of the playing area. Grace and I run back to the start of the line. I shake Grace's hand while she plays Character A, then we both take a step down the line, and I shake her hand as she plays a new Character. The cycle repeats until I make my final goodbye. Finally, Grace runs back to the start and shakes her own hand—all the way down the line as she switches between characters and participates in both sides of the conversations. While this section serves a narrative function of giving the astronaut characters a send-off before they embark on their journey, it also highlights the kind of fame that an explorer might enjoy before they leave.

A change from the planning phase to the devising phase was the switch from using a ladder as the rocket, to using a stool. The switch happened naturally, as I used a stool in my movement piece, and it was still in the room with us when it came time to devise the moment of the rocket going to the moon. In a moment of experimentation, Grace instructed Harrison to grab the other side of the stool while I was sitting on it and whisk me around the room. Once I got over the initial shock, I made rocket ship noises. A significant portion of the content in the performance came from these collective "aha" moments.

Throughout the planning process I had been avoiding discussing or attempting to figure out how to represent a particular section. In the film, the initial contact between the aliens and the explorers quickly turns violent and results in the death of several of the moon's residents. Even once the explorers have been captured, they find a way to kill the alien's leader and escape. The alien that hangs on to the outside of the rocket falls with the explorers to Earth and is made

to dance for the vaguely European-styled guests at a parade. Thinking of how to represent this made my stomach turn. Violence in any form is unpleasant to me, but this went beyond unpleasant. I spoke with my faculty advisor about it, and eventually we determined that the colonialist themes within the film could not be separated from the film without changing its identity. A new question emerged. What would it mean for me, a student with First American heritage, a member of the Chickasaw Nation, to engage with that part of the film? The approach developed by me, my faculty advisor and collaborators was to highlight the excessive violence in the film by stripping back the fantasy elements of smoke and explosions to show the essential action: a newcomer to a foreign land uses a weaponized object to kill a stranger, over and over. While we never arrived at a strong answer, I valued the opportunity to explore and express an element of my identity and join an ever-relevant conversation about land rights and violence.

One of the many exciting things about the devising process is that it allows the creators to slow down. An opportunity to pick apart elements of someone else's work or your own, can allow you to wrestle with the impact concepts have on your life and the world. Devising gives you a chance to take a collection of elements like a film, your identity, your collaborators' identities, new ideas, significant objects, and cultural references to combine them into a creative work that generates knowledge in its own terms.

4. REFLECTION

My target audience for my project was limited to the Department of Performance Studies. I wanted feedback from fellow students invested in becoming scholar/artists. I sent out personal invitations using my poster, using this description of the work:

To the Moon and Back: A Theatrical Conversation with "Le Voyage dans la Lune"

Over a century after its creation, "*Le Voyage dans la Lune*" (1902) continues to hold audiences' imaginations, popular culture's fascination, and academic weight. Out of the hundreds of films Georges Méliès created between 1899 and 1912, why has this particular flight of fantasy remained relevant? What meanings does the film articulate in the context of 2022? To answer these questions, the film was picked apart and distilled into its essential plot points and artistic elements. These essentials were translated into devising exercises, and used to create a piece of theatre grounded in the world of the film and enhanced by the experiences and observations brought to the table by the collective. Two women and one man play multiple characters, celestial bodies, natural forces, and other objects. The new piece uses Méliès story to explore our historical and modern relationship to space travel, gender politics, colonialism, identity, and human curiosity. In taking a closer look at the themes and ideas expressed in *Le Voyage dans la Lune*, cracks begin to form through which we can take a deeper look at the society it reflects and learn more about ourselves.

If doing another project, I would most likely expand my target audience to include the College of Liberal Arts to increase the chances of filling seats and getting more diverse perspectives on my work. Using posters to advertise tends not to work well for on-campus performances and can be time consuming with little payoff. A social media marketing strategy that includes posting photo and video clips of the project is more likely to attract students. Still, it is difficult to entice people to see original work. There is risk for the audience that they may be wasting their time or that they will not like the content. Appropriate marketing materials should demonstrate the tone and major themes of the work, and content warnings should be used as necessary for projects with

potentially triggering content. Though the turnout to my performance was small, it was a useful experiment in how to market and invite others to see my work. I tried something, it didn't particularly work, and now I know to try something else for next time.

Learning by doing is a key element in Performance as Research. Performance as Research (also termed Practice as Research) is by nature, an ever changing and difficult to define field. Personally, I view my piece as Performance as Research in a few aspects. First, the initial literature review of Méliès' work and academic responses of it most resembles a traditional humanities research model of going out and seeing what the critical conversation is surrounding a topic. Then during the work (picking the piece apart and beginning to devise), I learned more about the artistic process and how I operate in a collective, as a leader, and a performer. Common utterances in the rehearsal room were, "This feels bad" and "I don't think I like how that felt" or "That feels better." The insights available to a creator when engaging with content by doing can be highly emotional or based on reactions in the body. Performance as Research privileges these insights and acknowledges that they are also valuable information worth seeking, that they do something useful, and often point towards a bigger observation, issue, or truth.

Usually, when I engage with Performance as Research, most of my observations come from the performance. When I am in costume, there is an audience to interact with, and the stakes are higher, I pay more attention to my thoughts, my body, and the bodies around me. This time, the majority of my observations came from the rehearsal process and weekly meetings with my advisor. Pages and pages of journal and discussion notes, video diaries of me verbally processing and of conversations with my collaborators all display the amount of thought that went into dismantling and reassembling *A Trip to the Moon*. Having time to work through the

content while thinking back on the week's progress allowed for observations and connections to appear that I not experienced before. The intense self-reflection and reflection on the film required by the academic research process, Performance as Research, and my own expectations of my work are at the core of the theatrical piece.

As I move into the next phase of my artistic and academic career, I hope to continue working with the piece and expand upon it. There are ideas, motifs, and arcs that were cut for time that I think are worth exploring. I view my creative artifact as a workshop performance of something that could develop into a full-length piece. When I pick it up again, I would ask my collaborators for more time. Meeting once a week or so was not enough time to accomplish all of the things I wanted. I would be clearer about my expectations and ideas, communicating more effectively about the things of the most importance. I would start dealing with the most difficult parts of the piece first instead of moving from the very beginning of the piece to the end. There is no reason that we had to devise the sections in order. Above all, I would work more confidently, with the knowledge that what I am making and the conversations I am having are important, generative, and will, no matter to what degree, alter the world around me.

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APPENDIX: CREATIVE ARTIFACT



Figure A.1: Photo from final performance.

My creative artifact is a video of the final devised piece (uploaded separately), *To the Moon and Back*. The piece runs approximately eighteen minutes. The video is filmed from only two angles, a wide shot showing what the audience would see, and a side angle to give the viewer a chance to certain moments and facial expressions more clearly (Figure A.1). I designed the lighting create strong differences between each location and segment the scenes.

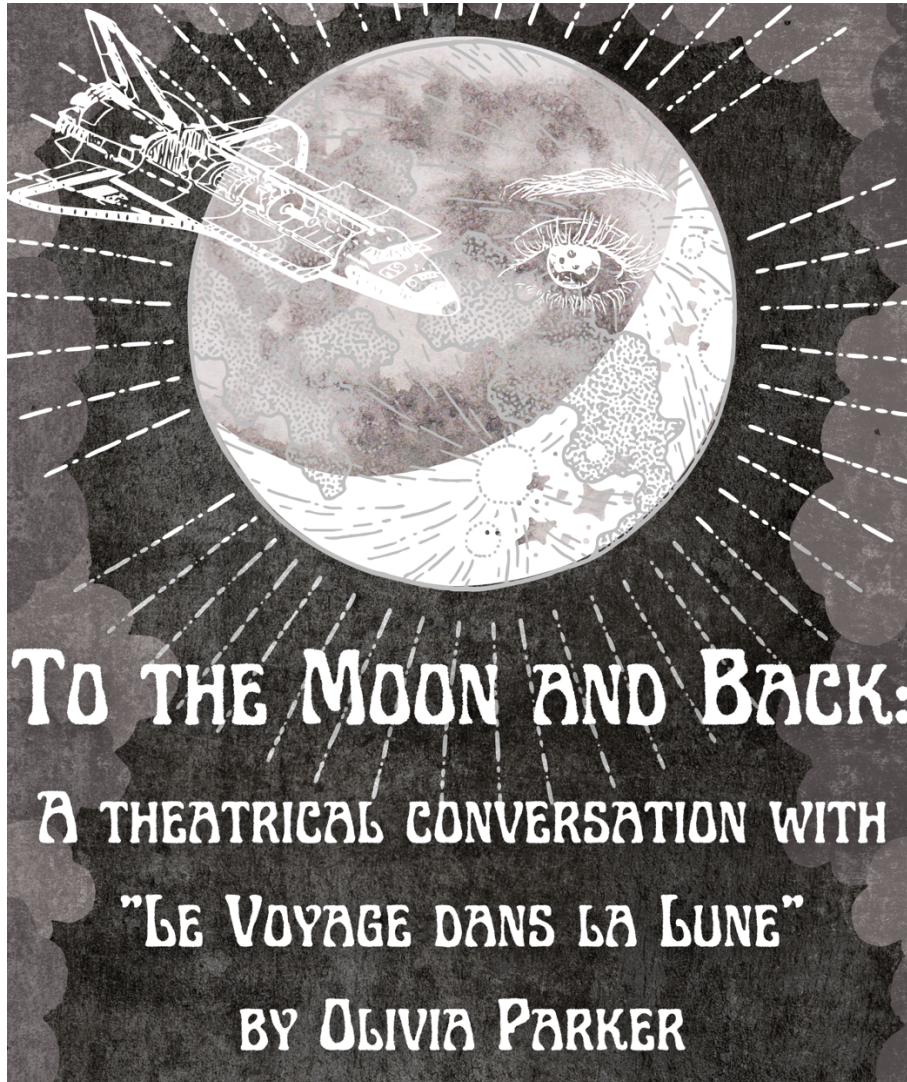


Figure A.2: Poster made to promote the public presentation.



Figure A.3: A frame from "A Trip to the Moon."

When designing the poster (Figure A.2) to promote my public presentation, I wanted to capture the essential elements of Méliès' film and my perspective on his work that emerges in the performance. Most posters for *A Trip to the Moon* include the rocket piercing the moon's eye. (Figure A.3) So, I took that moment and translated it into the visual and contextual terms used in my performance. The bullet was replaced with a space shuttle, more like the type audiences associate with modern space travel. The moon's eye is feminine, and instead of closing tightly in pain, looks at the viewer with an indiscernible expression. The moon's mouth is gone in my version of the poster, indicating that the piece is mostly movement based. The grayscale color pallet of the poster is drawn from the black and white version of the film, and the font is pulled from early 1900s posters and typography. One of the major challenges in designing the poster was figuring out how to properly represent the tone of my piece, which is begins playfully then veers into a darker conversation about space travel and politics, gender, colonialism and imperialism.



Figure A.4: Top view of stool used in performance.



Figure A.5: Stool used in performance.

During rehearsals, we used a plain wooden stool. The changes in paint job on the stool (Figure A.4 and A.5) were inspired by how the piece developed. The white body resembles the

white, segmented body of a space shuttle. The gray mottled top is the surface of the moon that tiny versions of the actors walk and dance on.