

University of Surrey

Department of Theatre and Performance Studies

School of Performing Arts

Sense and Self: Towards an Embodied Epistemology of Acting

by Martin Welton

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Abstract

This thesis advances an embodied theory of performance which is neither concerned with its function as a system of signification, nor with it as a cultural 'artefact', but rather seeks to understand it as a process. By focusing on a necessary pragmatism of language relative to performance, and by considering it on *all* levels to be a lived process rather than a sign system (whether linguistic, visual, or otherwise), the thesis focuses on sensory experience. In this it seeks to overcome the reductive tendencies of analytical or textual approaches, and to allow it an epistemology in its own right, by postulating that the actor and the quality of his or her 'sense of self' is the necessary locus of performance. Far from taking a solipsistic view of the performance event, the thesis seeks to extend the conception of 'self' beyond that of either an hermetic ego, or an autonomous body. The dynamic interplay between environment, culture, physiology and action is discussed as an act of imagination. Imagination, it is suggested, is both embodied, and crucial to the actor's sense of self. It is in this that the thesis seeks to suggest that acting entails a system of knowledge which provides the basis for a wider epistemology of performance. This is not so much a suggestion that acting provides knowledge 'about' itself (or indeed anything else), but that knowledge is engaged in and during its process, which is particular to it. This not only marks acting as a unique epistemological system, but also involves a reconfiguring of the constitution of 'knowledge' *per se*. Consequently the thesis argues for a shift in emphasis away from representation with its attendant concerns over interpretation, towards a focus on the 'feeling' of what happens during the performance event.

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Introduction

The central suggestion of this thesis is that it is the experience of *being* an actor or spectator which is the substance of the theatrical, and thus of performance generally. Where it seeks to differ itself from much of existing performance theory is not only that it seeks to make the theatrical central to (rather than an aspect of) an understanding of performance, but that it also seeks to discuss it less in terms of signification, than of process. Rather than regard 'theatre' as a fixed definition of particular kind of activity, text, or building, I propose to regard it rather as a metaphor which allows us to conceptualise a wide variety of behaviours and interactions as specialised, and in which, 'performers and spectators alike could be described as 'materializing (sub)culture/context specific ways of experiencing the performative moment' [Zarrilli 1998:6].

As Richard Schechner observes, acting performance is 'twice behaved' behaviour, and as such it never occurs 'for the first time' [1985:36]. Whilst the appearance of seeming that this is the case (that it is occurring for the first time) might be the stylistic goal of certain genres, as Schechner rightly suggests, it is an ontological feature of acting that this is not the case, even if the grounds on which one might assert this have become blurred somewhat:

So Olivier is not Hamlet and also not not Hamlet. The reverse is also true: in this production of the play Hamlet is not Olivier, but he is also not not Olivier. Within this field or frame of double negativity choice and virtuality remain activated. [1985:110]

The actor can thus *seem* to be that which he is not. This is crucially different from *being* that which he is not; as Hamlet elucidates as he ponders over the ability of the Player to reproduce a convincing show of emotion at will: 'What would he do had he the motive and the cue for passion that I have?', concluding that he would 'drown the stage with tears' [*Hamlet* II ii]. How is it that this actor can weep for Hecuba, a woman he has never known, and (if Hamlet surmises correctly) if he has never felt such grief in his life, how is his performance lifted above simply 'going through the motions'? If, as Schechner suggests, what is to be performed starts off as being fundamentally *not me*, and through the process of training, workshop and rehearsal is brought to the 'subjunctive' point of being 'not not me', where might the actor's self be thought of as

being initially, and then partially located? Where might Hamlet's Player find the motive and the cue for passion?

The four chapters of this thesis discuss various possibilities for the locus of this; however, as I will suggest, the range of ideas presented must be considered as a 'complex'. The thesis is intended to offer a multitude of standpoints, to allow several points of entry into the process of being and seeming 'not not me'. Further than that, it also suggests that the experience it describes, and the 'sense' of it is similarly complex. If acting (and by implication theatre and performance as a more general whole) is to be understood as 'intelligent', not simply valued for its 'intelligence' or otherwise as interpretation, but as a *human* endeavour, then it is vital to examine the ways in which its practitioners understand themselves in relation to their task. If it can be shown to produce consistent results, then having a 'sense' that what one is doing is correct, is as important an analytical tool as any other. Indeed 'sense' ('making sense', 'common sense', 'having a sense') is central to the thesis, which does not present itself as a linear structure, or shift from one chapter to the next on the basis of causality, but like sense, works more as a gestalt.

Each chapter of the thesis discusses the 'sense of self' involved in being either an actor or spectator. I do not pretend to offer up any definition of 'self', either as part of a philosophical discourse, or as a lexical statement. Rather, it is the pragmatic application of the word, the immediate and practical implications for the participants of performance with which I am concerned. The phrase 'sense of self' thus refers less to an intellectual concept, than to lived experience which is understood tacitly - a state of 'being'. How this state of being is distinguished from any other is thus a key question. The suggestion of the thesis is that performance is in and of itself an epistemology which allows for the knowledge of this difference within its sensory experience. That said, it is necessary to delineate in more detail exactly what is understood by 'performance' within the context of the discussion of this thesis. Before continuing the introduction therefore, what follows is a prolegomenon, which offers a meta-theory of performance, parallel to the ensuing discussion, but crucially informing of it. A further section of meta-theory also precedes Chapter One.

Meta-theory – A Prolegomenon

This thesis is full of quotation marks. This implies, perhaps, a lack of certainty on my part concerning the use of particular words, but this apparent insecurity with use of language is, I would suggest, inevitable in a field such as theatre and performance studies where post-structuralist discourse has become so prevalent, and where many cultural and historical styles and forms are studied - often together. This means that language is a problem - why?

The problem has three levels:

1. The slipperiness of the subject matter;
2. Ideological differences over the use of language;
3. The lack of a shared or common vocabulary;

Given this tripartite problem of language, this meta-theory is in many ways intractable; however, it is central to my concerns, and the thesis as a whole is intended to both draw from and strengthen it. It involves an assertion and a syllogism:

The assertion:

- Performance is a process, not a 'thing' or a 'system'

The syllogism:

- As a process, performance is understood through the theatrical;
- The theatrical is understood through actors;
- Therefore, performance is to be understood through actors.

This is, of course, deliberately contentious. However, if both I, and my reader, are to avoid dilettantism, then it is necessary for me to account for what I mean, particularly with reference to words such as 'theatre', 'performance', and 'acting', which are germane to my discussion. I am not suggesting that my definitions are exhaustive, simply that if the discussion is to extend beyond a superficial understanding, then it must articulate its intent, at least with reference to such 'keywords',¹ which tend to invite a broad palette of possible meanings. As Bert States, following Raymond Williams, points out:

Find a word that is suddenly emerging from normal semantic practice (a word you are hearing, say, a dozen times a week), and you can bet that it is a proto-keyword spreading on the winds of metaphor. And in this process the word's standard dictionary meanings seem to fall into a dormancy while the new "key" meaning, not yet clear, gets tested and extended far and wide, revised, qualified, and finally settles into the vocabulary as if it had always meant what it now means. [1996:1]

As States suggests later in his essay, it is not worth complaining about this situation; however, an understanding of such 'key' meanings must be articulated not simply from the point of 'where they are now', but also 'where they have come from'.

Eugenio Barba notes that performers themselves tend towards the use of a naturalised or working language, which 'can often tend towards extreme concision' [1995:59]. This concise working language is often difficult to translate outside of the immediate working environment or situation in which performers find themselves, and may also alter from production to production. As a result, there is often a fear in writing about performance that either the language being used is too imprecise and informal, or that a tendency towards greater precision and formality will undermine the unique and special circumstances which gave rise to it in the first place.

There are good reasons for both of these points and at first they appear to provide strong empirical arguments for suggesting either that performance inherently resists interpretation, or that it requires a 'science' with its own formal language and methodology to provide any sort of rigorous account of it.

The need for a formal language is perhaps driven by a fear of being 'unscientific'; that science, with its systematic rigour is able to describe and somehow 'set' reality as being 'just so'. Science is serious. Science is funded. This is not a critique of science - which is serious and important - but it is a serious epistemological error to assume either that science has all the answers and/or that it is methodologically capable of doing so. Kuhn's insights into the historical construction of scientific paradigms [1996] demonstrate not only that the scientific worldview is as culturally mediated as any other, but also that its formal language is formal primarily for and of itself:

Scientific knowledge, like language, is intrinsically the common property of a group or nothing else at all. To understand it we shall need to know the special characteristics of the groups that create and use it. [1996:210]

Bearing this in mind, it is now not quite so difficult to understand why some performers and performance theorists might cling to a naturalised language. Analysis

inevitably involves reflection, which (under the common understanding of the word) is a luxury not afforded to a performer at the point of performance, which constantly extends away from itself. An analytic approach to theory attempts to fragment and compartmentalise that which is a whole, and in the sense in which it is experienced as such, must be regarded as being so. This situation is increasingly being discussed, even within a discipline like cognitive science:

In a dynamic context such as cinema, theatre, or even everyday conversation, serious time constraints are placed on the operation of those cognitive faculties that employ structure-mapping. While one is free to reconsider and elaborate the full meaning of a metaphor or analogy at a later time, a relatively immediate interpretation of reasonable quality must be produced in time-limited contexts in which the agent is pressured to react and move on to new issues. [Veale 1998]

A naturalised language attempts to resist this compartmentalisation through concision, and also attempts to focus the practitioner on doing, rather than the level of reflection required for analysis. A director's suggestion to an actor that she try a section of a play again but 'with more feeling', whilst maddeningly obfuscating on the one hand, is also a multi-levelled direction on the other - a plea for greater engagement, a suggestion that greater display of emotion may be necessary, and so on. In giving such a note, a director may be trying to engage a wealth of processes in the actor, all of which need to be attempted simultaneously, and which therefore resist individual analysis.

A naturalised language then, relates to the actuality of doing. This requires a pragmatic approach, which both recognises the validity of naturalised language as relating to the experience for those involved, and yet also subjects it to rigorous criticism. As John Dewey writes at the beginning of *Art and Experience*:

When artistic objects are separated from both conditions of origin and operation within experience, a wall is built around them that renders almost opaque their general significance, with which aesthetic theory deals. Art is remitted to a separate realm, where it is cut off from that association with the materials and aims of every other form of human effort, undergoing and achievement. A primary task is thus imposed upon one who undertakes to write upon the philosophy of the fine arts. This task is to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience. [1958:3]

In order to accomplish the task set by Dewey it is necessary to articulate a theory which is not susceptible to the excesses of the overly 'subjective' or 'objective'

standpoints which might be taken by applying oneself too slavishly to either a naturalised or a formal language. The assertion given earlier, that performance is a process, is an attempt to begin this.

Process implies an inevitable 'doing'. It is not, of itself, 'fixed', and although it may be understood in terms of constituent parts and patterns, these can by no means provide an exhaustive description. With reference to 'theatre' and 'performance', the 'doing' that is implied by process is unavoidably a bodily one. It is this embodied notion of process which connects the meta-theory to the thesis as a whole.

Meta-theoretically, the notion of embodied process which I shall extend and explore in the ensuing chapters can be used to articulate an 'idea' of performance (I say 'idea' as it is not intended to be exhaustive), which relies on a particular conception of theatre which is in turn intimately connected to an 'idea' of the actor. As a result, in returning to the syllogism stated earlier, it is perhaps better to rearrange the order of its propositions:

- The theatrical is understood through actors;
- As a process, performance is understood through the theatrical;
- Therefore, performance is to be understood through actors.

As Bert States again points out, the assumption that 'theatre' has become subsumed by a wider and more general concept of performance, has become part of theoretical orthodoxy:

Under the "genus" of performance the term theatre gradually underwent a loss in validity [from the 1960's onwards]. It was seen as being at least temporarily worn out; it carried with it too many traditional and overfamiliar institutional trappings. Theatre meant: a text performed "up there" by actors, with emphasis on the thing performed ("the play's the thing"), paid admission, a "general" audience, in short, a timeless roar-of-the-grease-paint aura that obscured the real nature of performance--the act of performing itself. Just as "the world worlds" in Heidegger's phenomenology, so performance performs. [1996:8]

To accept theatre as 'institutional' and 'traditional', is to view it only in (post)structural terms however - as a 'building', 'text', or kind of 'behaviour' - and to ignore how events are shaped and constituted by the experiences of their participants, their interrelationships, understandings and obfuscations. How one gains a 'sense' of an event or events as theatre is therefore crucially important. Certainly the type of

building one finds oneself in, the unique ways in which time and space are structured, the particular texts employed, are important as well, but no more so than what actually happens, and how both spectators and actors relate to this. Since the spectator is in any event the 'receiver' of the theatrical event, what the actor does must be seen as primarily constitutive of the process I am suggesting theatre is.

This doing must be understood from an experiential, bodily perspective; 'what I do', and 'what it is like', become indistinguishable propositions. The main body of the thesis will provide specific examples of the means by which the actor's experience of 'doing' is constitutive of theatre; the purpose of the meta-theory here is a statement of intent for the forthcoming discussion. What will receive less explicit discussions in the thesis, and deserves further elaboration here, are the second and third propositions of the reformed syllogism. This requires an acceptance of the first, as yet un-discussed proposition, and so I must temporarily crave the reader's indulgence.

States notes the weakening of 'theatre' as a descriptive term 'under the genus of performance'. It is difficult, if not impossible, to apply the term performance as a specific meaning, but as it relates to performers, it can be seen that it is descriptive of a series of metaphors used to discuss certain behaviours and experiences. The language used in describing 'performance' in relation to performers, is an important clue to understanding the embodied experiences which have allowed these metaphors employed to arise; as Lakoff and Johnson note:

In most of the little things we do every day, we simply think and act more or less automatically along certain lines. Just what these lines are is by no means obvious. One way to find out is by looking at language. Since communication is based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking and acting, language is an important source of evidence for what that system is like. [1981:3]

The relatively recent global phenomenon of 'performance', which can cover a bewildering range of experiences from an RSC production at Stratford, to Trinidadian carnival, to management training and onwards, must be understood as drawing on linguistic and cultural descriptive precedents. The apparent ability to see performance everywhere, must firstly be understood as being facilitated by certain trends within Western culture, notably the shift in linguistic philosophy from understanding language as simply saying something, to regarding it as doing something:

As a certain stress has been lifted momentarily from the issues that surround being something, an excitingly charged and spacious stage seems to open up for explorations of that older, even newer question, of how saying something can be doing something. [Parker and Kosofsky Sedgewick 1995:16]

Secondly, as 'theatre' performances burst out of the institutions and buildings which had come to be regarded as theatre itself, the term no longer seemed to provide an adequate description of the reworked activities, and as it pushed further and further out of the buildings it seemed, in many cases, more and more to resemble and merge with activities formerly only described as 'everyday life'. In both cases, however, the language employed to describe these apparently 'new' modes, has borrowed heavily from the old and despised institution. Certainly the new use of language is so re-directed as to imply a new meaning altogether, but, as I shall discuss, any level of performance is so caught up in a paradox of being and seeming, that the use of descriptive terms is overwhelmingly metaphorical. As George Lakoff argues however, 'metaphors are not mere words' [1992], they have their basis in embodied experience. In the case of performance, which draws conceptually on theatre, these must be seen as having their basis in the embodied experience of the actor.

It is my contention that the 'idea' of theatre is vital to the wider conception of performance, which relies on metaphorical extension of the theatrical to assert itself, even as it denies its existence as 'theatre' per se; and similarly 'acting' to 'theatre'. In 'Performance Epistemology' George asserts that: 'performance was and is primary: before there was writing, before there was theatre, there were surely performances' [1996:19]. Performance may have existed – people may well have faked appearance, performed rituals and so on – before the establishment of any of the activities loosely gathered under the umbrella of 'theatre'. However, as we shall see, it is only through the employment of theatrical metaphors which draw on the embodied experience of being an 'actor' or a 'spectator', that 'performance' is able to exist conceptually. The idea of the theatrical is the metaphor underpinning performance, as Herbert Blau writes: 'the substance of the theatrical in the idea of performance is the critical question in the act of performance' [1990:254].

Erving Goffman's influential *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* uses theatre and the theatrical as a means of examining social behaviour; particularly what happens when individuals 'play parts' for the benefit of others. Goffman extends such

behaviour out of specialised theatre environments and into the realms of what Eugenio Barba has termed 'daily behaviour'. Such behaviour is now no longer solely the preserve of a specialist, but rather, what the specialist does can be seen as an abstraction or development of events occurring in 'daily life'. 'Performance' can no longer be seen as the preserve of specialist 'performers' only; it is an activity in which we are all engaged:

The irony is, that whilst philosophy has begun to shed some of its anti-theatrical prejudices, theater studies have been attempting meanwhile, to take themselves out of (the) theater. Reimagining itself over the course of the past decade as the wider field of performance studies, the discipline has moved well beyond the classical ontology of the black box model to embrace a myriad of performance practices, ranging from stage to festival and everything in between: film, photography, television, computer simulation, music, "performance art," political demonstrations, health care, cooking, fashion, shamanistic ritual. [Parker and Kosofsky Sedgewick 1995:2]

Richard Schechner has been at the forefront of developing 'performance theory' since the nineteen seventies, seeing 'performance' as meaning 'never for the first time. It means: for the second to the nth time. Performance is "twice behaved behaviour"' [1989:36]. The doubling of this 'behaviour' suggests such, even if this is only the performer's own perceiving consciousness 'acting as' an observer. As Goffman has it: 'When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them' [1971:28]. When he refers to 'playing a part', Goffman is employing a theatrical metaphor, central to which is the actor. Certainly the presence of the spectator is necessary to the social significance of 'playing a part', whether in theatre or daily life, but the locus of knowledge about 'playing a part' is the actor.

A metaphor is, as Lakoff and Johnson point out, partial: 'If it were total, one concept would actually be the other, not merely understood in terms of it' [1981:3]. I am not suggesting that performance is theatre, nor even attempting to understand how performance is like theatre, but am rather attempting to understand what it is about acting that allows for a certain kind of knowledge. It is only when acting is allowed a specialised function, to be 'extra-daily'² - to be constitutive of theatre - that we can draw its 'epistemological map',³ and only then after having allowed for a non-exhaustive, complex version of that map which allows for considerable movement between 'theatre' and 'performance' but does not attempt an intertheoretic reduction of one by the other.

Since it provides the key metaphorical constructs for performance generally, acting requires substantive discussion. Henceforth, acting will refer to the specific tasks carried out by the actor within specialised time and place - theatre - and performance to the event which these tasks form part of. Since performance refers to the more total event we are still free to make comparison to other extra-daily events (rituals, festivals, carnivals, and so on), without collapsing what makes this theatre event special (acting) into a generalised whole.

To summarise, given a) the slipperiness of the subject matter, b) ideological differences over the use of language, and c) the lack of a shared or common vocabulary, the concern of the meta-theory is to articulate a particular standpoint. Not a methodology exactly, but rather a set of guiding ideas – principles perhaps. In one sense this makes the meta-theory sound somewhat like an ethics. In a curious way I suppose that it is, although not in a moral sense (there is no suggestion of ‘good’ or ‘bad’). In any case, a moral theory of theatre would seem to be almost oxymoronic; as David Mamet suggests:

Acting is not a genteel profession. Actors used to be buried at a crossroads with a stake through the heart. Those people’s performances so troubled the onlookers that they feared their ghosts. An awesome compliment. [1997:6]

The ethics of this meta-theoretical standpoint are that the embodied experiences of acting (both of the actor and the spectator) are constitutive of what we may understand as ‘theatre’ and that it is through this that the wider metaphors of performance are provided. These metaphors are, of course, also used in discussion of theatre and acting, and it is their embodied processes which are the focus of the thesis itself.

Towards a ‘Complex’ Epistemology

An epistemology is a theory of knowledge, which is to say, a theory of how it is acquired and possessed as well as an enquiry into its nature and possibility.⁴ Conventionally an epistemology of performance might tell us *about it*; my suggestion however, is that performance is itself an epistemology. To perform or attend at a performance is thus not merely to acquire and possess a certain kind of knowledge, but, since this knowledge is inextricable from the *act* itself, knowledge is located within this acquisition and possession. ‘Knowing’ in this instance, must be understood as necessarily active. In addition, it is necessary to remember that performance is processual; this means that it is constantly under negotiation, and is not ‘fixed’. As a

result of this, performance resists interpretation. This means that theory is ultimately unable to systematically pin it down and say 'this is it, here are its workings laid bare'. Any theory of performance is therefore either necessarily partial, or must acknowledge the very slipperiness of its subject matter.

Bearing this in mind I am attempting to develop what I am calling a 'complex' theory of performance as an epistemology – that is to say, a theory that is a complex, rather than a complicated theory. This was suggested by (and I must stress suggested rather than being actively developed from) the 'complexity theory' advanced in the fields of biology and physics over the last thirty years. I don't wish to dwell on this for too long, but hopefully by introducing it I can make the kind of theory I am aiming for a little clearer.

The biologist Edward Wilson defines complexity theory as:

The search for algorithms used in nature that display common features across many levels of organization. At the very least, according to the proponents of complexity theory, the commonalities can be expected to provide an explorer's guide for quicker movement when passing from simple to more complex systems through the real-world labyrinth. [1998:94].

Let me stress that I am not interested in discovering 'algorithms' or 'common features' of disparate performances. Rather, it is the type of theory suggested here that interests me; a type of theory which is necessarily 'open'; which offers a multitude of standpoints; which does not move from suggestion to conclusion; which sees any 'answers' in the movements between its standpoints; which does not offer up binary distinctions such as 'right-wrong', 'subjective-objective'; and which sees such distinctions as part of a continuum, as *aspects* rather than opposites.

In 'Performance Epistemology', David George writes that:

What kind of a reality or knowledge performance is and what sorts of truths it provides remain to be fully analysed. Some epistemology and ontology are implicit, but enquiry into their being remains dispersed. Whilst there have been statements about performance, and these have noted its liminality, contingency and ephemerality, to my knowledge there has been no attempt to frame performance as a system or as an epistemological 'map'. That is what now needed: an attempt to identify how the elements of performance form an internal system, constructing a unique reality and providing a unique form of experience. [George 1996:18]

What George is asking in effect is: 'how do we gain knowledge about performance, and importantly, what is the nature of this knowledge?' If we are to avoid accepting the field of enquiry as a given, and therefore be in danger of offering essentialist answers, it is necessary to question how we construct/negotiate its subjects. The danger of offering up essentialist answers is not simply that one becomes yet another claimant on an ever elusive truth, but that (as I will explore in greater detail below), the knowledge in question may not be 'fixed', and therefore not open to interpretation, or claims about its 'truth' or otherwise. It is my intention to attempt to avoid any reductionist tendency to condense various processes to a single set of functions.

It may be useful to proffer a brief example of a reductionist tendency in theatre and performance studies. In his book *Reinventing Drama: Acting, Iconicity and Performance*, Bruce Shapiro seeks to uncover certain underlying processes involved in performance, and draws on recent developments in the neurosciences to develop a theory of what he terms 'iconicity': 'the presence of imagery in a work of art, in the mind of the artist who creates or created the work, and in the minds of the spectators who dwell upon and so recognize the work.' [1999:1-2]. In Chapters One and Four in particular I will seek to challenge the grounds on which Shapiro's theory is based, although for now, his reductionist tendency can be deduced from the title of his book, with its emphasis on 'drama'. For Shapiro, acting is inextricable from, and is defined in terms of its service to, drama. The upshot of this reduction is that he is able to maintain his discussion within a traditional Aristotelian frame, and to ignore any related activity. This is in contrast to other theorists such as Stanton Garner, who, although examining 'drama' exclusively in *Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama*, nevertheless acknowledges the specificity of his chosen subject area and the texts and performances which he chooses to explore; unlike Shapiro, he does not see the discussion of drama as exhaustive of all that there might be to say about 'acting'.

Rather than trying to localise or reduce processes and phenomena to particular functions (whether neurological, psychological, cultural or literary), my emphasis is much more upon dynamism, development and openness. It is my intention to attempt to place a theory of acting *between* ideas in an ongoing dialogical relationship, which is not 'fixed' spatio-temporally, but rather takes its state of flux as vital. In this situation, the areas of disagreement between ideas are as important as those where they complement one another. This may be seen in the structure of the

thesis in that the different chapters do not follow one another in a strict 'through-line' of thought, but rather slide over one another like a series of lenses, offering differing degrees and levels of refraction.

In his essay, George argues that 'the term "performance" is still often confused with "theatre"...task-based performance, actionism and performance art have not only broken ranks with "theatre" but generally work without any prior text, locating performance not as the execution of some other construct but as a reality in its own right' [George 1996:16]. Whilst I would (meta-theoretically) contest his absolutist separation of 'theatre' and 'performance', his beginning point of orientation with which to chart the 'epistemological map' suggests how we might construct a complex-theory with relation to acting performance. As George has it, performance has, or rather *is*, a 'reality in its own right'. This points towards the importance, not only of a processual understanding of acting/performance *per se*, but also to an understanding of what constitutes the actor's 'self' in this state. That is to say, that, following Heidegger, it is possible – necessary even – to explore the 'nature' of that self within acting without actually having to fully define it as a particular concept firstly:

One can determine the nature of entities in their Being without necessarily having the explicit concept of the meaning of Being at one's disposal.
[1967:27]

This means that the enquiry is shifted from an interpretative discourse in which the shape and dynamic of meaning are elucidated, to a non-linear enquiry in which the state of meaning is recognised as being essentially one of flux. This does not imply any nihilism on my part, but represents an attempt to place any understanding of meaning within the processes by which it is made 'meaning-full'. There is no separation between the meaning and the event itself, the participants of the event being equally constitutive of it as any other factor. As I shall argue in all four chapters the 'sense' of what this self is, which the actor both experiences and works towards experiencing in performance, cannot be extricated from the actuality of the theatrical event. What is of concern to this dissertation is this 'sense of self', as both an aspect of experience, and a means of it. 'Meaning' in terms of performance therefore, must be seen as crucially tied to its experience. This is far from a universally held opinion however. For Shapiro, for example, the meaning of the dramas he discusses exists *a priori* to any performances of them:

The dramatist has established the relevant emotional states as a facet of thought before an actor ever becomes involved with the mimesis. The structure and content of the drama's medium carries this information. Therefore, actors must have an understanding about what emotion is, how it is recognized, and how to perform it. [Shapiro 1999:71]

Whilst this is, admittedly, a somewhat superficial reading of one of the central tenets of his theory, it nevertheless represents an idea that the meaning-content of performance has an existence independent of those involved in it. For Shapiro, there are emotional meanings *inherent* in any given drama, which the actor must learn to understand before she can even contemplate the psycho-physical mechanics of quite *how* to perform them. What is interesting about Shapiro's theory of iconicity is that it attempts to endorse an essentially Aristotelian model of theatre with the tools of contemporary science; expressly the neurosciences. The concept of 'theatre' he proposes is one in which 'drama' (along the lines of the model Aristotle proposed for tragedy – unity of plot, character, action etc.) is not only the single legitimate mode of expression within that structure, but also exhaustive of what we might understand as constitutive of theatre (and therefore acting), thereby excluding any other phenomena from the discussion.

In taking on an Aristotelian, dramatic view, Shapiro is effectively following what might be construed as the 'traditional line' of Western academic enquiry, now so widely disseminated as to lead George to argue for a distinction between 'theatre' and 'performance'. What is particularly interesting about Shapiro's theory however, is his use of contemporary science to attempt to provide 'hard' evidence for his thesis on acting. This is a thesis which links the literary imagination to the performative, and sees them both governed by a series of neurological processes he terms 'iconicity'. In order to demonstrate the worthiness of his subject for investigation by neuroscientific methodology, it is necessary for him to place it within the paradigm offered by that field, namely, that scientific investigation of biological functions which cause and/or relate to cognitive operations will reveal the systemic means by which they perform. In order to fit within this paradigm, Shapiro argues for performance as 'innate', hardwired into each individual's biology by evolution, and therefore open to investigation by scientific method. Such a view is not without precedent; Jean-Marie Pradier's 'Towards a Biological Theory of the Body in Performance' proffers the view that:

The performing arts correspond to an instinctive magnification of biological motions. The codes which underlie the actor's activity tend to restore the organization of the bodily micro-rhythms which are analogous to the

appropriate behaviours as they appear in the animal world...From this perspective, the so called 'presence' of an actor is underlined by a specific organization of these biological motions. [1990:89]

It is surely important to question why a theorist investigating acting and theatre should seek a model in the paradigm offered by subjects which would apparently seek to reduce processes of 'creativity' from a quasi-mystical 'inspiration' to a series of neuro-biological functions. The answer lies, perhaps, in Thomas Kuhn's concept of paradigms of ideas, which has had a profound influence not only on the sciences, but on the arts as well, revealing scientific investigation, as it does, to be subject to exactly the non-linear processes and creative leaps commonly thought solely to characterise the arts. This then apparently legitimises the application of scientific method and theory to the processes of 'art'. As Kuhn has it: 'acquisition of a paradigm and of the more esoteric type of research it permits is a sign of maturity in the development of any given scientific field' [Kuhn 1996:11]. The esoteric edges of the scientific paradigm are often fuzzy enough to considerably blur the edges between artistic and scientific practice, allowing artists and scientists alike to make claims for their particular projects from the other's perspective. Shapiro is surely not alone in feeling that the establishment of more scientifically rigorous 'grounds' for the study of theatre and performance is vital for the continued health, not only of its academic study, but also of acting/performance itself: 'no process or system of acting can survive without accounting for the continually evolving scientific understanding of humanity' [1999:13]. Certainly there are valuable insights to be gained from the comparative study of sciences and arts, but do the arts really suffer from such a paucity of critical insight from their own perspective that they are somehow to be regarded as not being 'serious' without endorsement by 'hard' empiricism?

That there is a relationship between scientific theory and the development of acting techniques and theories about acting has been explored at length by Joseph Roach in his seminal study *The Player's Passion*. There can be no question that, just as Stanislavski was influenced a century ago by the emergent science of psychology (particularly where it concerned spontaneous reflex actions), so are practices and theories emerging today overtly or covertly influenced by the paradigms offered by contemporary science. As Kuhn and other philosophers of science such as Paul Feyerabend have argued however, scientific knowledge is not cumulative, does not develop in linear fashion, with each new discovery simply expanding knowledge. Rather, paradigms offer frameworks for knowledge within which inquiry takes place,

its nature defined by the limits of the paradigm. Eventually these limits may become questionable, and a new paradigm becomes adopted or constructed.

The apparently inexorable shift of paradigms is not of immediate interest here, although I shall return to it later, if only to suggest one myself. To summarise, the desire to adopt new paradigms is unquestionably attractive, since as Kuhn notes, it allows more esoteric research, and represents the maturity of the given field. As Marco de Marinis suggests:

Limiting myself to the sociobiological approach, I would say that my interest is twofold. In the first place, an inquiry of this nature can illuminate structural invariables and signifying conventions even at very “deep” levels of performance that are difficult to reach in textual analysis. Moreover, the eventual discovery of biological “universals” in the theatrical event – *beyond all reductive tendencies* – could work as a useful antidote to all kinds of rigidly relativist assumptions about its culturally determined and socially conventionalized nature. [1993:8]

It could be argued that the postulation of biological ‘universals’ in the theatrical event is in fact in itself a reductionist tendency, and De Marinis does not make clear how this might be otherwise, other than to suggest it as a counter argument to cultural determinism. However, his suggestion that there may be a middle ground, underpinned by a certain ‘biological’ understanding is a useful point of focus for a complex-theory, since it allows cultural factors to remain important, but crucially fluid rather than strictly deterministic. It is not my intention to attempt to either wholly discredit or wholly endorse any of a range of theories drawn upon. Rather what I wish to offer is a variety of descriptions and strategies which operate as a complex. The task then, is to lay the grounds by which they may then negotiate with one another. This represents an attempt to use theory, not as a limited description, nor as an overarching catch-all, but rather attempts to locate and discuss points at which various theories interconnect. By forming a complex, the differing aspects do not simply compliment one another, but create oppositional tensions, and it is these ‘tensions’ which are of specific interest to this study.

What now follows is a more systematic introduction to its structure which also unavoidably begins the discussions which will be taken up in later chapters. Whilst they do not address semiotics directly, each chapter offers a slightly different alternative to the linguistic turn in an understanding of performance. The unavoidably binary distinction of signifier and signified is something the thesis seeks to avoid as yet another reinforcement of the age old dualism by which ‘objectivity’ seeks to

bifurcate experience. Certainly there is a place for signs somewhere in this, but the epistemology of the experience within which they take place demands exploration *before*, rather than afterwards. All four chapters are more concerned with the processual nature of the inter-relationships of both sets of participants involved in theatre than with the establishment and manipulation of 'codes'.

It is important to sound a caveat at this early stage concerning the discussion of performance throughout the thesis. Overwhelmingly, my concern is with 'successful' – or to be more precise – *optimal* performance. Since I am arguing for knowledge *in* and *of* the experience, then it is in optimal acting that this knowledge is most fully realised. Optimal acting carries with it a necessary corollary of failure, and it may be that in examining its failure much may be revealed about it. However (as I shall argue) it is a tendency towards an optimal state which marks any level of the actor's sense of self. This requires not only asking questions of the processes of actors, but also of what the implications of these are for spectators, whose experiences, I shall suggest, are inextricably connected to those of the actor.

Chapter One

How then is performance, as experience, structured to allow for knowledge of it in terms of optimal experience? As Marco de Marinis notes, this requires theatrical hypotheses with relevant empirical proofs, which examine, not simply the 'stage' side of the performance, but also the means by which 'stage' events are determined as being such, and understood as being meaningful by spectators.

We must elaborate theatrical hypotheses (with relative empirical proofs) that would allow us to understand and to categorize appropriately the rules underlying the processes of understanding theatrical performance. In particular we must observe the spectators ability to distinguish the occurrence in question (on the basis of elements that are explicit or implicit in the text), and to relate it to the relevant genre in order to arrive at a correct interpretation of the performance. [1993:6]

There are, of course, serious ideological problems raised by this analysis. Issues of 'who' is gazing at 'whom' for instance, are certainly important, particularly from feminist or intercultural perspective. Quite apart from the difficulties raised by such inquiries, I am concerned not to attempt to view performance as if it were (or indeed, actually were) a text. As Stanton Garner notes this can otherwise tend to create 'a "scriptocentrism" that, deriving from deconstruction's linguistic and textual interests, may also condition and limit its field of enquiry' [1994:25-26]. The danger is that

'reading' becomes a limited critical starting point by straitjacketing performance within the discursive confines of an inadequate metaphor.

Not only will the thesis in general argue against a 'scriptocentric' understanding of performance, but also against the visual cultural bias of which this is a corollary. This is an especial concern of Chapter One in which a case study of Sound and Fury Theatre Company's 'theatre in the dark' performance - *War Music* - facilitates a discussion of the limitations of 'seeing' as a means of understanding theatre. This chapter will seek to demonstrate that it is the experience of 'being' an actor or a spectator, which is the substance of the theatrical, and thus of performance more generally. It will suggest that the body is thus central to any understanding of theatre or performance, and especially to an understanding of this particular performance. The suggestion of the chapter is that it is important to recognise the perceptual aspects of 'sense' not only as a means of understanding in their own right, but also as a foundation of *any* understanding. The many levels of meaning of 'sense' are therefore deliberately maintained; that is to say, events and objects as 'sensed' rather than 'reasoned', the particular modalities of sense employed (sight, smell, kinaesthesia etc.), 'getting a sense' rather than representation as a means of understanding, and so on.

Chapter Two

The actor's creative process is frequently held to involve the 'interpretation' of situations in which certain 'emotions' are played out. It has long been suspected that in order to have the necessary knowledge to carry out these interpretations, actors must necessarily experience these same emotions. However, as I shall discuss in Chapter Two, given the lack of consistency in 'expert' opinion as to what emotion is, is it reasonable to expect that actors should be able to have some sort of intuitive handle on it? Certainly there will be claims that actors, as artists, are especially sensitive creatures, more prone to passionate experience than the average human being. Quite apart from the patronising stance inherent in such claims (surely a hangover from Romantic images of the tortured artist, and Enlightenment speculation on the workings of 'sensibility') they presuppose the existence of some psychological constant - 'emotion' - which does not vary with shifts in time and culture, let alone from individual to individual.

The actor, I suggest, knows no better than the next person 'what' an emotion is, and, in addition, is no more susceptible to 'emotion' as it is commonly understood than the

next person. Debate about this has raged however, in the two centuries since Diderot suggested that it is precisely because actors are less susceptible to (and, therefore, less knowing of) emotion than the average person that they are effective as artists.⁵ I do not expressly seek to validate or repudiate Diderot's claim directly, but it is surely important for the health of the profession, and its relationship with its public, that we begin to move from the perception of the theatre actor as a swooning 'luvvie', whose fragile disposition is played upon by a mysterious muse. In re-casting actors as far more 'normal' than current public opinion is currently prepared to entertain, would it not be possible to re-awaken the sense of wonder invoked by Hamlet:

Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all his visage wann'd
Tears from his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing! [Act II Scene ii]

This sense of wonder, I suggest, demands a re-direction of attention from interpretation to the quality of the act itself.

'Sense', 'feeling' and 'emotion' are not only linguistic correlatives, describing certain aspects of experience, but also point to particularly personal levels of it. Central to any examination of acting as a system of knowledge must be an investigation of how an actor recognises its occurrence. Whilst signification is certainly important (i.e. 'I am making a sign which I know to be meaningful'), by what means does the actor recognise his/her acting as 'different' from everyday life? Chapter Two questions the common-sense explanations underlying an idea of 'emotion' as it relates to acting performance, but seeks to explore and retain the necessary pragmatism which underpins them.

Chapter Three

'Practice' or 'practise'? The dictionary offers two slightly different definitions for each word, both suggesting repetition of an activity in order to gain skill or mastery. Throughout the thesis I refer to 'practice'. Although I could just have easily have used the alternative spelling, the former is more commonly used in the academic literature to which I refer - particularly the work of Pierre Bourdieu - and so for the sake of consistency, as well as affiliation with such work, I have adopted this spelling. This level of concern over the relationship between theory and practice is important to

Chapters Three and Four, but especially to Chapter Three. This describes my own long-term performance process, and my concurrent exploration of this process in terms of theory; in this, the chapter explicitly discusses my own 'sense of self'. Again, this is not part of an attempt to provide a precise definition of 'self', whether in empirical or personal terms. Rather, I want to draw the reader's attention to my use of the phrase 'sense of self' as a pragmatic one, which, certainly in the case of Chapter Three, does not seek to find any closure for the term, but instead seeks to point towards the necessity of its understanding relative to practice. 'Sense of self' must therefore be understood as relating to the knowledge/s inherent within the 'feel' of practice.

In October 2000, following 20 months of training in *kalaripayattu*,⁶ *yoga*, and *t'ai chi ch'uan* (Wu style), I carried out a research project which sought to use some of the principles inherent in such techniques within a performance context – a period of rehearsal, followed by a performance of Pinter's short play *Monologue*. I was concerned with empirically exploring the epistemological condition of acting performance, and especially with what the condition of the actor's knowledge is when his/her attention is drawn more towards task than to character. The chapter not only describes this process and the reasoning behind it, but also suggests how such a shift in attention may resolve certain aspects of the problem of seeming by focusing acting precisely upon basic conditions such as breathing, moving and looking.

The reasoning behind my use of non-theatrical practices as paradigms for actor training is explored in detail in Chapter Three, but does require a personal narrative to frame it. The focus of my discussion in all four chapters is on the actor's self and the interpenetration of the conditions of the performance and this self. Any observations about 'self' are inextricable from what I understand *my* self to be. A discussion of 'self' in practice cannot therefore be easily separated from a need to at least speculate about the condition of *my* self in practice. Chapters Three and Four are therefore quite explicit in their discussion of *my* practice.

As Bourdieu, following Marcel Mauss, describes it, the body has various 'techniques', in which knowledge is incorporated, made flesh. This has important implications for the substance and quality of that knowledge, and also to its relationship to memory and its recall:

What is 'learned by body' is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is. This is particularly clear in non-literate societies, where inherited knowledge can only survive in the incorporated state. It is never detached from the body that bears it and can be reconstituted only by means of a kind of gymnastics designed to evoke it...the body is thus constantly mingled with all the knowledge it reproduces, and this knowledge never has the objectivity it derives from objectification in writing and the consequent freedom with respect to the body. [1990:73]

Subsequently the theoretical investigations I have made over the course of my academic studies have been balanced with a practical exploration of various 'techniques of the body' in order to parallel a theoretical investigation with a practical one. The long-term process described in Chapter Three is thus an attempt to explore, through the use of practises such as *t'ai chi* and *kalarippayattu*, a different kind of relationship to 'techniques of the body'. Such trainings certainly offer a 'virtuoso' level of control over the body in some respects, but sublimate the acquisition and 'brandishing' of 'techniques of the body' to a level of 'practical mastery'. In this techniques of the body are a means of directing the practitioner's attention to 'the moment' he is in. Chapter Three is thus an attempt not only to seek out the theoretical tools to identify what might be thought of as 'the moment', but also a discussion of the practical skills needed to access it. By placing myself on both sides of the subjective-objective divide, as both practitioner and critic, I will demonstrate not only that theory and practice are inter-penetrative, but also that the 'divide' is at best an illusion. The discussion will not only seek to explore the means by which the two aspects of process are mutually supportive, but also the means by which one allows for the other, and how acting, as a paradigm, exemplifies this.

Chapter Four

Antonio Damasio has begun to suggest that the 'feeling of what happens'⁷ is at the core of what we might understand by 'consciousness'. Following the previous chapter, Chapter Four will continue to examine acting as a system of knowledge, with specific focus given to how an actor recognises its occurrence. Leaving to one side for the moment arguments over whether one can actually have a self one is not conscious of, the condition of consciousness of self is the *sine qua non* of the epistemology of performance. However, I have tried to keep explicit discussion of consciousness to a minimum, not merely because of the number of 'folk theories'⁸ surrounding it, but also because of the co-option of the word to cover a broad range of experiences and occurrences.

Contemporary discussions of consciousness also seem to be overwhelmingly concerned with providing an objective exposition of what seems, necessarily, to be a subjective condition. Chapter Four will seek to further explode such distinctions, and embraces neither an objectivist stance, nor the radical subjectivism so often placed in opposition to it.⁹ Rather, it is concerned precisely with the sense of self of the actor, as a form of knowledge which is able to be both cogent and cohesive because of the 'natural structure' of the body; what we perceive about the body is shaped by it. The chapter returns to the example of *Monologue*, and the practice of *kalarippayattu* to examine how the particular, and thus crucially *specialised* decisions I make about the use of my body (position, timing of movement and so on), create a 'feeling of what happens', or affect, which is both a consequence of what I do, and which allows me in turn to regulate it.

Considering acting in terms of an optimal state is important in this regard. Whilst it may not be achieved by all actors at all times, it is a state to which all acting is ultimately directed. To be performing to the best of one's abilities is important not only for the actor's own sense of self-worth, but also because acting occurs within a public economy of value which demands the highest possible levels of performance. A potential problem arises for this analysis, in that it might be objected that acting is ultimately directed towards creating a pleasing experience for the spectator, by achieving certain aesthetic ends, in which case his/her personal sense of self-worth is not strictly relevant. There is certainly a degree of truth to this; however, not only are these aesthetic ends vital to the optimal state which the actor is concerned with achieving, but this state has an effect on what those ends are and how they are perceived. In rising towards the challenges set by what I am loosely terming 'aesthetic ends' and achieving what the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihaly has termed a 'flow state', the actor tacitly examines what is possible within the terms of those ends. This in turn has a concomitant effect on what those ends are. As Csikszentmihaly writes:

In everyday life, challenges and skills are rarely balanced. Either there are too many things to do, clamoring for attention, in which case we tend to be worried or anxious; or there seems to be nothing to do, in which case we end up feeling bored. This is why flow typically occurs in clearly structured activities in which the level of challenges and skills can be varied and controlled, such as ritual events, games, sports, or artistic performances. [1988:30-1].

If this 'flow' concerns the relationship between the actor's immediate sense of self and the aesthetic demands placed upon him/her, can this relationship be

characterised without recourse to consideration of representation and the concomitant demands of interpretation? The discussion in Chapter Four seeks to draw further on the paradigm provided by the examples of *kalarippayattu* training and the performance of *Monologue* given in Chapter Three in order to not only further characterise the actor's sense of self, but also to redirect any understanding of it towards practical ends.

In this I hope to also redirect theoretical concerns regarding performance away from the interpretative, and to demonstrate that theory and practice can, and do, have a necessary integration, without trying to carry out an intertheoretic reduction of one by the other.

Notes

¹ Williams, Raymond, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.

² Cf. Barba, 1995.

³ Cf. George, 1996.

⁴ *Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*, London: Penguin, 1997.

⁵ Cf. Roach, 1985.

⁶ See Appendix for further discussion.

⁷ Antonio Damasio *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*; London: Vintage, 1999.

⁸ Cf. Churchland, 1988.

⁹ 'What objectivism misses is the fact that understanding, and therefore truth, is necessarily relative to our cultural conceptual systems and that it cannot be framed in any neutral conceptual system. Objectivism also misses the fact that human conceptual systems are metaphorical in nature and involve and imaginative understanding of one kind of thing in terms of another. What subjectivism specifically misses is that our understanding, even our most imaginative understanding, is given in terms of a conceptual system that is grounded in our successful functioning in our physical and cultural environments. It also misses the fact that metaphorical understanding involves metaphorical entailment, which is an imaginative form of rationality' [Lakoff and Johnson 1981:194].

'Now Hear This...' Against Representation

Meta-theory – A Return

I am suggesting only that any specialized vocabulary or set of terms does not exhaust the phenomenon it is intended to describe (performance, theatre, art), but simply "fixes" it from one possible angle of intentionality or expressiveness; for the phenomenon is always nameless and multiform before a vocabulary traps it in one of its manifestations. [States 1996:20]

...vision, the visual, visualising, image, sight, seeing, looking, gazing, viewing, spectating, watching, regarding, glancing, glimpsing, eyeing, observing, beholding...

The appearance of things before us, and the manner in which we direct our attention towards them with our eyes, has given rise to a huge vocabulary of words and phrases with many subtle variations and explanatory aims and origins. They are frequently used interchangeably (with or without poetic licence), as much in an effort to do justice to the complexity of the phenomenon they describe, as any degree of laziness or lack of rigorous vocabulary. As States points out, choosing to use a particular word is not to suggest that it exhausts the meaning of that which it describes, but that this choice reflects the particular 'point of view' from which it is being described. Choosing words to describe the action of, and action on, the senses, is particularly difficult in this since the importance of the empirical knowledge of what sensation feels like *to me* (i.e. personally, subjectively) seems to be central to any understanding of it. The senses, however (as Descartes observed) can often fool us. This can lead not only to interesting optical illusions and narcotic pleasures, but can also present us with life or death situations. For example, Stein and Meredith note of pilots and astronauts that they:

...regularly experience major shifts in the gravitational-inertial field during take-offs, landings, changes in acceleration, and space flight. For them an appreciation of the effect of conflicting information from internal receptors (i.e. proprioceptive cues) and visual cues is critical for survival. For example, in a zero-gravity environment the eyes shift upwards, and objects appear to be lower than they actually are. [1993:5]

Whilst the senses themselves play tricks on us, the words used to describe them too, can present a confusion of meanings. As I have begun to suggest, in English, where sight has for so long been used as a metaphor for understanding and perspicuity, it should hardly be surprising that a cluster of terms exists. I do not intend to offer firm

definitions of any of them, as I suspect that none exists; to do so would be, in any case, to be in denial of the fluidity of language. Instead I shall lay out here a working definition of the terms which I use, and thus suggest the point of view from which they should be understood as I employ them.

1. Sight. This is intended to be a description of an 'enactive' process; enaction is described by Varela *et al* as involving two key points:

(1) perception consists in perceptually guided action, and (2) cognitive structures emerge from the recurrent sensorimotor patterns that enable action to be perceptually guided. [1991:73]

This view, heavily influenced by the work of Merleau-Ponty, suggests the act of perceiving itself, rather than pre-given properties of a perceiver-independent world should be the proper focus of any attempt to understand perception. 'Sight' must therefore be understood as information about the world, but also *the* world to some extent. How you see an object has some effect upon how it is. As Merleau-Ponty writes of perspective:

Perception is here understood as a reference to a whole which can be grasped, in principle, only through certain of its parts or aspects. The perceived thing is not an ideal unity in the possession of the intellect, like a geometrical notion, for example; it is rather a totality open to a horizon of an indefinite number of perspectival views which blend with one another according to a given style, which defines the object in question. [1964:16]

1.1 Seeing. If 'sight' is a description of an enactive process, then its cognate 'seeing' describes the occurrence of that process. If sight is the concept of the process, then seeing is the phenomenon the concept seeks to characterise.

2. Vision. If sight is thought of as an enactive process ('seeing'), then 'vision' is the system which underpins this. That is to say, the focusing of the lens and iris upon a given object, the reaction of rods and cones within the eye to light of a particular frequency, the action of this change upon the optic nerve, and the neurological and mental activity which accompanies this. As a system, vision is both hereditary in evolutionary terms, and a culturally determined act. For example, Varela *et al's* discussion of colour categories [1991], drawing on a range of studies, demonstrates that although the perception of colour is not pre-given and is determined by cultural and linguistic factors, this is not to say that it does not also exhibit universals.

They draw on a range of studies which show that whilst the languages of some cultures have a remarkably restricted number of categories for colour (the Dani of Papua New Guinea having only two basic colour terms ‘white-warm’ and ‘dark-cool’), this restriction in vocabulary does not necessarily prevent the recognition of differences of ‘focal’ colours (red, green, blue, yellow, black, and white). As a result of this, Varela *et al* conclude that:

Color categorization in its entirety depends upon a tangled hierarchy of perceptual and cognitive processes, some species specific and others culture specific....color categories are not to be found in some pre-given world that is independent of our perceptual and cognitive capacities. The categories red, green, yellow, blue, purple, orange – as well as light/warm, dark/cool, yellow-with-green, etc. – are experiential, consensual, and embodied: they depend on our biological and cultural history of structural coupling. [1994:171]

Similarly, ‘Vision’ in this instance refers to a process which is biologically determined in some degree (humans having two eyes on the front of their heads for example), but a process in which these biological determinants are made sense of by their cultural contexts, explanations, vocabularies and uses.

2.1. The Visual; my use of this word refers to all that is open and available to this system of vision. This is complicated, but by this I mean those aspects of the world that are apparent to vision. Thus, movement, contrasts of colours, angles, and depth are all aspects of the visual.

3. Look. There is a double meaning to this word, inferring both an action (to look *at* something), and an appearance (the ‘look’ of something). Certainly the *act* of looking can carry a certain amount of meaning as it appears to carry with it a certain amount (or kind of) expression. However, it is the first meaning in which I am principally interested and which relates to the manner in which I use it. Particularly in Chapter Three, where there is discussion of looking as a deliberate on-stage action, it is the use of those physical aspects of the visual system which allow a person to direct vision in a particular direction towards objects, which may be understood by my use of the word.

4. Image. In *The Feeling of What Happens* Antonio Damasio qualifies his use of ‘image’, suggesting, in his discussion of the neurology of consciousness and emotion, that ‘the word image does not refer to “visual” image alone, and there is nothing static about images either’ [1999:318]. This is certainly convenient in so far

as his discussion goes, but in my argument 'image' does infer both the visual and the static. As Walter Ong notes, vision favours surfaces, particularly still surfaces on which it can get a 'fix':

A source of light, such as a fire, may be intriguing but it is optically baffling: the eye cannot get a 'fix' on anything within the fire. Similarly, a translucent object, such as alabaster, is intriguing because, although it is not a source of light, the eye cannot get a 'fix' on it either. Depth can be perceived by the eye, but most satisfactorily as a series of surfaces: the trunks of trees in a grove, for example, or chairs in an auditorium. The eye does not perceive an interior strictly as an interior: inside a room, the walls it perceives are still surfaces, outsides. [1982:71]

'Image', as I am using it in this argument infers a fixed surface, an exterior, that offers no immediately apparent connection to an interior.

5. Representation. The following chapters will discuss representation in detail, and I do not wish to pre-figure too much of that here discussion here. However, given the introduction of image given above, it is perhaps important to 'flag-up' my use and understanding of 'representation'. Generally speaking, I take 'representation' to be the instance of one thing standing for another. This includes both the system in which this occurs, and also the act itself. The connection with 'image' lies principally in the concern with surface which both infer, and the necessary distance, so characteristic of the visual, which is necessitated by this consideration.

Representation, in the concerns of surface, fixity, and distance which it shares with image, imposes a uniquely visual interpretation (which itself includes cultural assumptions about vision) of sensory experience, when it is offered as an explanation, or, in the case of theatre (or the wider concept of performance), as the *sine qua non* of the production of that experience.

6. Spectator. In the light of the vocabulary given above, and the critique of the notion of theatrical experience as essentially visual which will follow, it may seem odd (if not a little fatuous), to continue to refer to and discuss the 'spectator'. The etymology of spectator stems from the Latin *spectare*: to watch, inferring the dominance of the visual, and this is certainly problematic. The alternative usually given of 'audience', (from the Latin *audire*: to hear) not only implies the dominance of another modality – hearing – but also, in its plurality carries with it a necessary sense of collective experience. The discussion of the thesis however, and in particular

Chapter One, in that it relates to the personal, requires a terminology which infers the particularity, rather than the collectivity, of experience.

In addition to this, it is my intention that the tension between the use of a visual word and its cognates (spectator, spectating, spectatorship and so on), in the description of non-visual experience, in itself demonstrates the intersensory process of understanding, and its lack of conceptual fixity.

7. The Gaze. The development of critical theory over the last thirty years or so, particularly in relation to film, has seen considerable discussion of the politics and structure of 'the gaze'. Whilst clearly related to the act of looking (as outlined above) the gaze has become a far more pervasive concept, making social the function of looking, and entering politics - especially those of gender - into the equation as a necessary pre-condition of whatever meaning is gained from the visual process.

In the context of this chapter the use of 'gaze' or 'the gaze', whilst not in denial of the important socio-political implications of who is looking at whom, is intended more to refer to the immediate direction of the actor or spectator's looking during a performance. Thus, whilst I would broadly confer with E. A. Kaplan that 'the gaze is not necessarily male, but to own and to activate the gaze, given our language and the structure of the unconscious, is to be in the "masculine" position' [1983:30] (particularly given the cultural connection between vision, objectivity and the masculine), my use of it does not explicitly make this connection. As I suggest, 'the gaze', in the context of this discussion, refers to a deliberately directed use of vision on the part of an actor or spectator.

Theatre in the Dark

In 'On Acting and Not-Acting' Michael Kirby states that: 'In most cases, acting and not-acting are relatively easy to recognize and identify' [1995:43]. In the dark, however, deprived of vision, how are we to do so? The etymological root of the word 'theatre' comes from the Greek 'theatron', or 'place of seeing' - hence 'spectator', one who sees or looks. The 1998 - 2000 production of *War Music* by Sound and Fury Theatre Company, performed entirely in darkness, with an utter lack of any visual reference in its proceedings undermined one of the central means by which 'theatre' is most often defined.

War Music was adapted from the poet Christopher Logue's 'account' of books 16 to 19 of Homer's *Iliad*. The cast, a mixture of professional and student actors (including one actor blind from birth) moved around and through the audience, each variously taking up the narration, as well as the characters which people the epic. A quadraphonic system allowed recorded sound to move in all directions throughout the performance space.

The space at Multi-A in Bristol which I attended in October 1998 following the premier at BAC in London as part of a 'theatre in the dark' season, was effectively just a large room. By completely enclosing a space within this room with blacking cloths *War Music* brought some of the atmosphere of a more conventional theatre production to bear upon it, since this blacking is commonly found within modern theatres. Any familiarity brought by this was soon ruptured by the seating arrangement, two banks facing one another which dominated the space, creating the impression that although there was a degree of familiarity in the surroundings and proceedings, something 'different' was about to happen.

Special licence had been obtained to extinguish even the emergency safety lighting, and the resulting effect was quite unsettling. The darkness also meant that the familiar visual cues, which would have allowed an audience to remind themselves that they were attending theatre were withdrawn. Above and around the seating a figure-eight of guide ropes was suspended, with which the actors found their way around the space in the dark. To one side, behind a blackout curtain, the production team cued music and special effects live. Having taken their seats and received a short list of instructions on safety procedures from the stage-manager, the audience was gradually submerged into darkness.

War Music

I'm sat in the far right hand corner, at the back. The stage manager gives instructions about what to do if you need to get out: call the nearest stage assistant's name, and they come over with a torch. The lights go out, then the safety signs at the exits too. The actors are holding candles. Each speaks an individual line, setting the scene of what had happened up to this point in the Trojan War. As each comes to the end of his or her

line, they blow their candle out. Christopher Logue's adaptation of Homer's *Iliad*, *War Music*, begins:

Now hear this;

and we are plunged into darkness, A great clap, a rumble of thunder, and Patroclus comes crying to Achilles' tent.

There is no light, none at all. I wave my hand in front of my face just to check, but there is nothing. Only my sensation of my own movement confirms it is there. Soon the darkness seems very thick, tangible almost. After a while I have given up keeping my eyes closed, it seems pointless with all the sound going on, and all the voices.

The story unfolds: Patroclus persuades sulking Achilles to lend him his armour and his army of Myrmidons to rout the Trojans attacking the Greek ships.

Cut to the fleet.

The narrative makes jump cuts; moves from close up to long shots, transports us to a bird's eye-view of the battle plain. Vengeful gods confuse the mêlée further: flesh rips, bones snap; Akafact's death brings gasps from the darkened room:

God blew the javelin straight; and thus
Mid-air, the cold bronze apex sank
Between his teeth and tongue, parted his brain,
Pressed on, and stapled him against the upturned
hull.
His dead jaw gaped. His soul
Crawled off his tongue and vanished into sunlight.
[Logue 1984: 22]

As a voice somewhere to my left describes the spear's flight and grisly arrival, a sound of speed and purpose begins on the other side of the room and rushes through the space towards me, and over my head, to finish with a ugly 'thock' somewhere in the corner behind me. The

stapling of Akafact. In the darkness the sound seems 'solid' somehow. And yet this 'solidity' is ambiguous - it is 'as if' in the absence of sight hearing has rushed in to take over this function. Certainly 'seeing' is 'believing' to some extent, but now, as hearing replaces sight as the primary sense there's a struggle to endow what I hear with the same concreteness as the seen. Words and sound are more 'concrete' than is ordinarily the case, but this 'concreteness' also retains a certain ambiguity. A flight of arrows which whizzes overhead has the individual hiss of each shaft, but is hyper-real, it leaves room for the imagination. It could be a volley of twenty, each pointed barb and feathered flight clear to the mind's eye, or a blur of a hundred thousand performing a perfect parabola from bow to target. This is contrasted by other sounds in the room which remind us of the very realness of flesh, and heighten the horrors of battle. There is the sound of one's own breathing, the gentle rustling of clothes, confirming that you are still here even in the darkness; and there are performed sounds, matching the actions of the story. As Achilles washes his hands and prepares to pray there is the sound of water being poured into a bowl, and gentle splashing. There is the sound of the actors moving around us, reaffirming that this is a play (of sorts), that Sarpedon, Achilles and Agamemnon all require their human transports who share our space and time.

The actors' voices, four male, and one female, each pick up the narrative, interchange characters. The voices move about the room; now behind me, now beside me, now down low, now raised up somehow on the far side of the room. The voices move us from Achilles' tent to the walls of Troy and back, offering aerial descriptions, flashbacks, interludes. At times I stop following the story; although I know it, it is not for that reason. It is for the cadences of sound, the subtle shifts of pitch and rhythm. There is 'meaning' here, but not in a lexical matching of words to memory. The spoken words become 'things' in their own right, no longer yoked to, and defined by that which they describe. 'APOLLO', the word describes the god, of course, but in the dark it takes on a musculature all its own, it exists in the space.

The actors move about us. At some point I feel someone brush my shoulder, and the effect is chilling. Far from feeling safe, cocooned in the darkness, I suddenly feel afraid. I am now conscious not just of the soundscape, or the unfolding story, but also of the extent to which we are surrounded by the action. I know that the actors are moving around us; I can hear and feel them, but can only speculate as to what they do as they move. Sometimes I find myself projecting them into filmic landscapes in which they play out the actions described, but most often they retain the reality of here and now, dark and unseeable.

My senses are thrown; I am not used to hearing on its own. It's not like lying in bed, eyes closed, listening to the radio. I am aware of my clothes on my skin, of my bum on my seat. Although I can't see or feel them, I'm also intensely aware of the woman to my left, and the couple sat in front of us. The blackness is so strange, so unpredictable, that at times I almost want to touch them, to gain through feeling some kind of recognition that others are here, that I haven't hallucinated the whole thing.

Saying these things Patroclus died.
And as his soul went through the sand
Hector withdrew his spear and said:
"Perhaps." [1984:39]

When the lights come up, it's over, and we are applauding, I feel a strange relief, and a pleasure in having shared all this with strangers, knowing that we will leave as strangers, but knowing that we take a little something in common away with us.

What I have just described is my experience of 'theatre in the dark'. Following this, the question I now wish to ask is, can theatre really be best described as a 'place of seeing', is *seeing* believing?

More than any other sense, it is through vision that we are mostly aware of the materiality of the world around us, and the objects within it. Certainly touch offers the ultimate confirmation of material quality (hard-soft, hot-cold, rough-smooth etc.), but the sheer range of the visual field at any given moment, and a general confidence that what we see conforms to a materially knowable (i.e. touchable) world means that

we can rely on vision to offer a fairly dependable idea of the objects and activities around us. This dependable idea is not, however, by any means perfect; indeed, as Peggy Phelan has put it:

When Newton discovered the prismatic properties of light the human eye became a poor creature, an organ whose limitations define its properties more precisely than its powers. (Aristotelian philosophy is undone by Newton. Vision cannot be the guarantee of knowing once one knows that vision is never complete.) Unable to perceive the full range of color inherent in light, the human eye is physiologically falsifying. [1993:14]

In the total blackness of *War Music*, one was left with a sensual experience as disturbing as it was exhilarating. Under such circumstances how is one to bring into play those casual conventions by which we so often judge performance? Unsighted, off balance, surrounded by very real actors and sound effects, how does one construct meaning, make sense of what's going on?

How to See

Before exploring *War Music* itself, it is perhaps necessary to consider vision since it would seem that it is through this sense that theatre is apparent to us.

The optic nerve contains more than half the afferent nerve fibres which serve the brain; the cerebral cortex itself is, in large part, dominated by the visual system. These are the brute neurological facts of 'seeing' as we currently understand them. The brain seems to be irreducible from knowledge – never more so than in contemporary neuroscience – and, in so far as the senses are connected to this, knowledge seems to be dominated by vision. Given the contemporary vogue for suggesting evolutionary answers to everything, this has led to many interesting hypotheses, extending from vision's importance to our survival as a species, to our development of language, art, and so on. Quite apart from vision seeming to dominate the means by which we understand on a neurological level, and in spite of the attacks of Derrida and others,¹ it also remains the dominant sense culturally. I will return to the relation between vision and cultural practice later; for now, however, since science is the means by which contemporary culture infers meaning to be at its most absolute, I offer a brief 'scientific' description of vision, and attempt to place this within an historical context.

In his classic study of perception *Eye and Brain*, Richard Gregory does not discuss vision as a single 'thing', but divides it into different aspects spanning several

chapters. As Descartes pointed out, the veridicality of the senses is questionable; before beginning to discuss the means by which vision creates knowing, or attempting to come to terms with the level of scepticism invoked by Descartes, an examination of the constituent parts and ‘mechanics’ of seeing does not seem so unreasonable. Gregory begins with a discussion of light, commencing thus: ‘to see, we need light’ [1990:15]. The statement seems almost fatuously obvious, but at the same time, the presence or absence of light seems to strike closely at the heart of embodied human experience. Indeed, it seems to conjure up profound intimations – from passing into light, to passing from it, from waking to sleep, from birth to death. Lest we presume that this suggests some essential quality of being, as Gregory is quick to point out, the necessity of this situation has not always been taken for granted. The causal connection between light and seeing is a relatively recent discovery. This is due in part to the development of sophisticated theories of what light itself is, and concurrent discoveries concerning the microscopic make-up of the eye.

In the *Timaeus* Plato describes light as being a property of various kinds of fire - the sun and moon, lamps, hearths, and a ‘visual ray’ which the eyes give out. This ‘visual ray’ joins with the light of other ‘fires’ (the sun or a lamp) to:

...form a substance, perhaps something like a thread, which projects straight in front of the eye until it meets a surface. There it detects a radiation from the surface that reports its *chroma*, its entire condition, color, and texture, and conveys their qualities back to the observer’s body (the whole body, not just the eyes), through which they reach the mind. At night the visual ray enters an alien environment. It is quenched, and we cannot see. [Park 1997:39]

Although Aristotle, significantly, was unhappy with Plato’s explanation of light as substantial, the tendency to describe it as if it were a ‘thing’ amongst other ‘things’ (although it is not something we can grasp) has proved to be incredibly enduring, as David Park makes clear in *The Fire in the Eye*. Even with the alarming discoveries about the make up of the universe made since Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg, and their colleagues began their uncertain theories of quantum mechanics, light, in the Western world, still demands a paradigm in which it too is a ‘thing’.

Whilst some explanations of seeing have made a connection between light and what we see, none have made the direct connection that exists in contemporary accounts. Generally speaking, before the discovery of the electromagnetic spectrum, light, no

matter how it was explained, was understood to illuminate what we see, rather than actually being *what* we see itself. This has rather profound epistemological implications which I shall discuss later in relation to *War Music*, suffice to say at this stage that when viewed through the lens of history, Gregory's short sentence no longer seems so glib. The understanding of light that held sway, largely un-argued up until the beginning of the Twentieth Century, was offered in large part by Newton. Having succeeded in splitting 'white' light into a spectrum of colours with a prism, Newton concluded that light *must* be a thing, as it now appeared to have constituent properties.

Subsequent discoveries of x-rays, radio-waves and so on, have revealed that the spectrum discovered by Newton is itself only part of a larger spectrum of electromagnetic radiation. Light, like the other parts of this spectrum, consists of quanta of energy travelling at various wavelengths. The frequency of these wavelengths determines what we see as 'light', since it is only wavelengths of certain frequencies which are perceivable to the human eye. The different colours of the visible spectrum can thus be understood in terms of variations in the frequency of these wavelengths. 'Seeing' then, is a particular kind of sensitivity to light of certain wavelengths as it is reflected off a variety of surfaces. How though, do we get from this physical explanation of light, to what we *see*? Gregory's answer is overwhelmingly a natural one – there are facts that explain the phenomena, facts that can be demonstrated repeatedly in experiment. The retinas, he suggests, are 'essentially outgrowths of the brain' [1990:44]. These outgrowths are particularly sensitive to light that is bent through the cornea and the lens. At the back of the eye proper, the retina is a thin sheet of nerve cells, including, most important as far as 'seeing' is concerned, light sensitive rod and cone cells. These cells convert the light reflected through the lens and onto the retina, via a photo-chemical process, into electrical signals which pass into the optic nerve and from there to the visual areas of the brain.

Quite how the brain either then 'converts' them into what we see, or how their representation as electrical organisation in the visual cortex *is* what we see, is the subject of considerable (and very often conflicting) research, and which Gregory's analysis does not fully answer. Certainly, as Descartes' scepticism rightly suggested, what we see is not necessarily 'the truth'. The wealth of optical illusions employed in studies of perception, the impossible drawings of Escher, drug induced hallucinations, and other findings suggest that the eye 'fills in' certain aspects of the

visual field, inferring that what we 'see' (in a physical sense) and what we understand (whilst closely related to, and to some extent explained by, a physiological model), are not quite the same thing.

Problems With Seeing: Representation

Peggy Phelan suggests that the certainty of vision was crippled by Newton's optical experiments. Whilst this may or may not be the case, the desire for visual (and more generally perceptual) certainty does not quite seem to have gone away. Thus, even if it is accepted that vision has apparent deficiencies, the ongoing attempts at *explanation*² suggest a desire that they will somehow lead to a new clarity; somehow we will be able to *see through* these quirks. It is almost as if we need to restore to vision the certainty of the *camera-obscura* model which Newton's discoveries so undermined:

A model of vision in terms of a geometric optics, that is, a model of an incorporeal relationship between the perceiver and the object of perception, a process undertaken by a free, sovereign, but isolated individual with clear boundaries between inside and outside, observer and observed, existing within a stable space and continuous time. [Lury 1998:158]

Once vision had been shown to be uncertain, the grounds of knowledge itself appeared to be equally shaky. Indeed, the more vision was revealed to be a bodily process, the more unreliable it seemed. The body is all too mortal, and knowledge - 'the truth' - has long been presumed to be lasting, constant.

As Constance Classen notes, sight is '*the* sense of science' [1993:6]. That scientists are so concerned to attempt to explain sight (in spite of its faulty optics) should hardly be surprising therefore, since, as she goes on to suggest: 'the detachment of sight, distancing spectator from spectacle, makes the cherished objectivity of the scientist possible' [1996:6]. If it were possible, through sophisticated understanding of its 'defects' to return to vision the unmediated characteristics of the *camera-obscura*, then 'seeing is believing' could once again be a reasonable truth claim. Indeed, the very language of understanding itself is at stake; as David Levin writes:

The word [vision] can refer not only to sight, to visual perception, but also to a certain moral capacity; a vivid, articulate, imaginative understanding of the world, of life, of reality; a deep sense of what really matters; a clear realization of ultimate concerns, and of how our world must be related to these concerns; the capacity to think about things with a sense of how they all hang together, how everything comes together to form a whole; and the capacity to imagine a different and better world. [1999:20]

Whether as *camera-obscura*, or as bio-physics, vision seems to need light. Without light 'seeing' becomes irrelevant; or does it? This is certainly true if we only characterise it in terms of an *inner* representation of the world *out there*, and confine ourselves to the means by which 'out there' gets 'in here'. The containment body schema discussed by Lakoff and Johnson suggests that there are embodied empirical reasons for humans characterising themselves as an 'in here' in relation to an 'out there':

We are physical beings, bounded and set off from the rest of the world by the surface of our skins, and we experience the rest of the world as outside us. Each of us is a container, with a bounding surface and an in-out orientation. We project our in-out orientation onto other physical objects that are bounded by surfaces. [1981:29]

If 'out there' is wholly separate from me however, then how it gets 'into' me becomes a considerable problem. If I am to remain objective, then what is out there, and what I 'see' cannot strictly be the same thing. What I see must be some version of the object.

We take our environment to be a three-dimensional space filled with objects, sound and light which evolves continuously through time. We conceive of ourselves as located within that space, as capable of moving around in it, and as subject to stimulus from surrounding objects. *Our problem is to explain how we recover from the stimulus an accurate representation of our environment at a time and through time.* [Ludwig 1996:19. My italics]

Contemporary cognitive science uses the word 'representation' to cover an extraordinary number of concepts and categories, which, as Susana Millar notes are 'particularly open to misinterpretation when they are assumed to imply each other' [2000:105]. I do not wish to provide a critique of the persistence of the term 'representation' within cognitive science, having neither the space, nor the expertise (or the inclination!) to do so. However, since even as an umbrella term cognitive science arguably provides the most persuasive and complex of contemporary accounts and explanations of the senses – and thus of how we 'make sense' of things and events (and since this is the discussion at hand) - it would be foolish to ignore it.

A representational view holds that there is an inner system which corresponds to the external things being thought about. This suggests some process of ongoing translation between the external world and the inner system. Steven Pinker (probably

the most famous proponent of this view) reasons that the mind 'thinks' (or rather 'operates' in the terms of the cognitive scientist) in a language all its own – 'mentalese' - so that knowing a language, for example, 'is knowing how to translate mentalese into strings of words and vice versa' [1994:82]. A spectator in the theatre will, therefore, have to translate what she sees into 'mentalese' and back again in order to understand it. The problem with this argument is not just that it assumes thought (and therefore experience) to be necessarily linguistic, but that it creates a problem of mind even as it seeks to solve one. If the mind does indeed operate in 'mentalese', who, or what does the translation? As Owen Flanagan puts it: 'It looks like we need a bilingual homunculus who translates messages between neuronese [mentalese] and English' [1992:176].

Issues concerning representation remain inevitably tied to questions of its *interpretation* which considerably problematises a discussion of artistic practice. Many working within the field of cognitive science would have us believe that (in cognitive terms at least), *a representation is its own interpretation*; but this doesn't seem to move the debate very much further from the *camera-obscura* model. The problem with representation is not so much the confusion of its many levels of description, as Susanna Millar suggests, but with the *interpretation* of it. This is a serious epistemological problem. As Varela *et al* point out in *The Embodied Mind*, cognitive science takes a realist view of the world reflected by (and, indeed, also reflecting) contemporary common sense. Because common sense allows us to go about our daily lives without questioning every aspect of existence, it should not perhaps be so surprising that the necessity of a theory of representation goes largely unquestioned, because of this realist view of the world:

Although everyone agrees that representation is a complex process, it is nonetheless conceived to be one of recovering or reconstructing extrinsic environmental features. Thus in vision research, for example, one speaks of 'recovering shape from shading' or 'color from brightness'. [Varela *et al.* 1991:136]

As George Lakoff points out in *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, this is usually presented as part of an 'objectivist' view of the world. This view holds that perception is the means by which an external reality, independent of the subject, finds correspondence with abstract symbols, or 'internal representations' within the subject's mind. When 'mind' is reduced to 'brain', these 'abstract symbols' can be seen as a particular kind of brain activity - observable, objectified. Although this reduction seeks to place mind firmly within the body - indeed, to be nothing more

than the body - quite what it means to have this *mind* as part of a *body*, is rarely explored. In the current trend for computational analogy, the brain/body is simply the 'hardware', running the 'software' of the mind.

What the human body does not do, on the objectivist account, is add anything essential to concepts that do not correspond to what is objectively present in the structure of the world. The body does not play an essential role in giving concepts meaning. And the body plays no role in characterizing the nature of reason. [Lakoff 1987:174]

If the body is to play any part in characterising 'the nature of reason', then the means by which perception is delivered to the (apparently) interpreting brain become elevated from being merely functional instruments to being loci of meaning themselves. In addition, their immediate relation to the world around them takes on a vital importance in determining meaning. In *The Mystery of the Eye and the Shadow of Blindness*, Ron Michalko, himself blind, discusses reading as a sensual activity, suggesting the importance, not only of how one interprets what one reads, but also of the activity itself:

Reading is a visual event steeped in the sensuality of the 'look' of reading materials, in particular, the look of print, its organization, its size, its design, and the rest, and it is also the look of a book jacket, of its cover design, of its size and shape, and the like. Together with this 'look' comes the tactile sense of reading materials, the feel of the book, the turning of pages. [Michalko 1998:146]

It is not only that what the words *represent* provides meaning, but that the whole situation in which they are couched effects meaning for the reader. This must include not only the environment and social situation in which they are read, but also the eye which reads them, how it moves, how it *feels* as it reads, how it feels to read *within* this given situation, and to be reading this particular text.

As well as creating problems for a philosophy of mind, the translation metaphor also creates problems concerning spectating, suggesting that in 'seeing' something on stage a spectator then has to 'translate' this information into mentalese, or whatever, and back again, ruling out the act of 'seeing' itself as meaningful. 'Seeing' however, is an on-going process, and not a discernible 'thing' translatable into something else. As Merleau-Ponty has it:

The enigma is that my body simultaneously sees and is seen. That which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognize, in what it sees, the "other side" of its power of looking. It sees itself seeing; it touches itself touching; it is visible and sensitive for itself. [1964:162-63]

The eye then, must be thought of as embodied, not simply a window on the world for a mysterious 'mind'. In making this claim for seeing as an embodied act, it is important to question whether 'seeing' is itself fully descriptive of the *process* of spectating.

Problems with Seeing: Blindness

It is worth noting that in 1966 the World Health Organisation listed 65 different definitions of blindness and visual impairment throughout the world. Because there is no universally accepted definition of blindness, cross-cultural comparisons of development in blind children, as well as more general epidemiological studies are not reliable. [Dunlea 1989:8]

Performed almost entirely in the dark (with the exception of the opening moments of candlelight) *War Music* is perhaps the closest many of its sighted participants (spectators and actors alike) will ever get to the experience of blindness. Closing your eyes, or wearing a blindfold, cannot offer the same queering of vision as that of opening one's eyes in total darkness and seeing *nothing*. It is tempting to describe this in negative terms, but it is my suggestion that seeing *nothing* is still to some extent *seeing*, albeit seeing which is not characterised by light. Similarly, blindness need not be thought of simply as a 'lack' of vision, and indeed, given the absence of a firm definition of blindness, it is difficult to state what that 'lack' might actually entail.

Blindness is frequently characterised by the sighted as a 'lack' or as a 'disability' - a dysfunction - and thus a source of pity. As both Ron Michalko and Constance Classen point out however,³ for many blind individuals, the other sensory means by which they engage with the world, whilst different, are nonetheless full and rich. Indeed the exclusion of these other sensory experiences within a hyper-visual culture is lamented by both authors.

That we live in a visually dominated culture is attested to not only by the profusion of visual metaphors in language, but also by the proliferation of the symbol. Indeed, much of the visual wealth surrounding us, on which we have come to rely so heavily, passes almost un-noticed, so it should hardly be surprising that the dominance of the visual passes with little question in everyday life:

Consider a driver on a typical North American highway. The progress of the vehicle is dependent on a series of visual judgements made by the driver concerning the relative speed of other vehicles, and any maneuvers necessary to complete the journey. At the same time, he or she is

bombarded with other information: traffic lights, road signs, turn signals, advertising hoardings, petrol prices, shop signs, local time and temperature and so on. Yet most people consider the process so routine that they play music to keep from getting bored. [Mirzoeff 1999:5]

The 'dominance' of vision, its range over a given situation, has long been linked to characterisations of male power and agency, to the power of the male gaze to see and command. The dominating power of male sight has also contributed to the characterisation of reason as being essentially 'masculine': it is necessary to maintain a certain distance from an object in order to focus on it; thus, the distance associated with objective reason has become correlated with the distance necessary for 'seeing clearly', 'gaining perspective', 'seeing through', and so on. Whilst there have been concerted efforts to un-pick the narratives of this link between masculinity, power, dominance, and sight, the visual remains as the chief mode of explanation, as Classen notes:

In many contemporary academic works sight is so endlessly analyzed, and the other senses so consistently ignored, that the five senses would seem to consist of the colonial/patriarchal gaze, the scientific gaze, the erotic gaze, the capitalist gaze, and the subversive glance. [1998:143]

Such is the pervasiveness of the visual, that to recast a deconstructed world in its terms seems irresistible. Indeed the concomitant temptation to present these links in terms of a traceable 'narrative' further suggests the dominance of the visual. As Walter Ong points out,⁴ the rise of visual culture is concomitant with development and spread of writing and (in particular) print. As words become considerable in terms of symbols, thought and occurrences too become conceived in textual – visually conceivable – terms. Thought becomes not only linked to language, but language which is cast in visual terms, leaving a definite trace as writing or print.

Try to imagine a culture where no one has ever 'looked up' anything. In a primary oral culture, the expression 'to look up something' is an empty phrase: it would have no conceivable meaning. Without writing, words as such have no conceivable visual presence, even when the objects they represent are visual. They are sounds. You might 'call' them back – 'recall' them. But there is nowhere to 'look' for them. They have no focus and no trace (a visual metaphor, showing dependency on writing), not even a trajectory. They are occurrences, events. [1982:31]

In *An Introduction to Visual Culture* Nicholas Mirzoeff notes that: 'visual culture does not depend on pictures themselves but the modern tendency to picture or visualize existence' [1999:5]. It is my suggestion that *War Music* restricted the tendency towards the visualisation of experience; it had to be approached in its own way. The

visualisation of experience extends into the conception of the imagination as a 'picture/film-in-the-head'. I do not want to suggest that this is a wholly false account; rather I hope to suggest that imagination can not only employ and draw on the full range of human sensation, on our sensory relationships with the world, but also that the realm of imagination is as much one of immediate experience as it is of the distanced contemplation suggested by a 'picture-in-the-head' model. In order to do this it is necessary to understand the cultural and historical underpinnings of this metaphor, and of visual culture, to suggest how this is challenged by blindness, and how, in the light of this, *War Music* began to offer an unusual immediacy of imagination for both actor and spectator. This will mean questioning firstly, whether the (sighted) actors' and spectators' inability to 'see' was akin to the experience of blindness; secondly, what this experience was 'like' (can it only be understood in comparison to sight, or does it have a phenomenology of its own?); and finally what the 'blind state' of *War Music* tells us more generally about performance, particularly in relation to acting. In doing so I hope to challenge the predominance of vision in the criticism and discussion of performance, and to seek to offer a more intersensory, embodied model of acting as it affects both the actor and the spectator.

Spectating in the Dark: Blindness and Representation?

In *War Music*, in pitch blackness, and unattached to any perceivable symbol, gesture, motif or facial expression, the words of Logue's text were afforded no permanence. In the darkness they could only come into being in the actor's mouths, in the spectator's ears, and disappear. Not only was the occurrent nature of performance underlined, but also its transience, since there were no remaining traces to seize upon, nothing to backloop, to re-read. Doubtless, many spectators (and indeed, as I shall discuss the actors themselves) made concerted efforts to construct a 'picture-/film-in-the-head'; maybe they actually managed to do so. Even if this were the case, is it legitimate to describe their experience as an attempt to reconstruct the visual as if it might be something we could understand if taken out of their head?

At its most blatant, the 'picture-in-the-head' idea is that the outcome of vision is a picture inside a system somewhere, and the problem with this approach is that pictures are for looking at. Replacing the picture with an image of its edges is no different. It is generally accepted that some form of description of the things in the scene has to be invoked to avoid the 'picture-in-the-head' problem. Each thing in the scene is then represented by an item of information. It is then usual to suppose that there is a spatial structure inside the system, rather like a blackboard, on which items of information are recorded at the appropriate positions. This blackboard implicitly represents the spatial relations between different parts of the image or scene and these

relations can be measured of it if needed...however, this just makes the blackboard a screen to be examined like the picture. [Watt 1990:270]

A considerable amount of research into perception has been concerned with 'mental imagery'. Blindness is of considerable interest in this regard. As the psychologist Morton Heller points out, the basic problem concerning perception is: 'the relationship between the image, a brain state, and an object in the world' [2000:192]; if brain states (or, indeed, thought itself) can be characterised in visual terms even for the blind, then the relationship between vision and knowledge seems a little more certain. The puzzle posed by blindness in this regard is the motivation behind the philosopher John Locke's famous 'Molyneux's question': if a blind man, on gaining the use of his sight were to be presented with a cube and a globe, would he be able to name them correctly? Would the experience gained by touching these objects enable him to name them when they were placed before his eyes?⁵ The implications of the question go far beyond concerns for an adequate theory of perception, as Michael Morgan points out:

Locke replied 'Not' to Molyneux's question to avoid postulating a common representational schema for the different senses, because such a schema implies an innate supra-sensible structure to the mind. An innate supra-sensible schema downgrades the role of observation through the senses and, ultimately strengthens the case for authoritarian philosophical systems at the expense of free enquiry. [1977:14]

The 'picture-in-the-head' model creates a problem of infinite regress. Put simplistically, you look at something, which becomes a picture-in-your-head, which you look at, which becomes a picture-in-your-head, which you look at, and so on *ad infinitum*. In addition, and without wishing to push the political implications too far, attempts to make the experiences of the blind 'common' run a serious risk of suppressing or ignoring what is unique about them, and, further than that, of overlooking the varied nature of experience more generally. An attempt to understand the experience of *War Music* on the basis of its relationship to everyday 'seeing' runs the same risk.

In interview the blind *War Music* actor Ryan Kelly, made striking by use of the metaphor 'I see' (i.e. 'I understand'), although he has never actually seen anything. Although he also referred to the audience 'listening' to the performance, he was quick to qualify this, saying that 'I'm not too fussy about words, because I use them anyway' [Personal Interview May 2000]. Ron Michalko notes that many phrases connected to sightedness are employed by the blind, partially to facilitate 'fitting in'

(what he terms 'passing'), and partially because they are the most direct and descriptive terms available within the language. To say 'I hear' or 'I feel' does not always offer the same direct communication of understanding as 'I see'. He (Michalko) is critical of the tendency to attempt to restrict language use only to those situations relating to one's own direct experience. That the blind in some sense 'see' is not the point that both he and Kelly are making. Firstly he is suggesting that the blind not be denied the use of language which is descriptive of acts and events beyond their direct experience; after all, we are each at the very least able to *imagine* that which we have not actually done. Additionally, he is suggesting that they are capable of experience which is 'like' sight - which 'passes' for it - in that vision is able to provide a rapid and relatively consistent evaluation of the world around us in a way that other sensory modalities are not:

Consider for a moment the nature of vision. It is the form of information input that allows the easy summation of simultaneous spatial reality independent of time. Vision, then, enables us to establish and maintain a coherent concept of the environment and our existence in it without struggling with memory and information retrieval. Quite simply, the blind must remember what the sighted can effortlessly reconstruct with a single look. Above all, vision has the outstanding and unique quality of simultaneity. In the absence of vision, all the other modalities put a tremendous burden on the mind's ability to synthesize a coherent sense of the objective environment and one's position in it. [Dunlea 1989:10]

This directness of vision as an experience described offers a means for understanding the power of this metaphorical use of 'I see', and why it has been co-opted into situations which do not necessarily have anything directly to do with visual experience. Lakoff and Johnson put forward a powerful argument in *Metaphors We Live By* for conceiving of even abstract thought as being physically mediated. Our thoughts and our language, they suggest, are rooted in the physical. Thinking in physical terms allows us to 'make sense' of the abstract, as well as providing the bases for its suggestion: 'we typically conceptualize the nonphysical in terms of the physical - that is, we conceptualize the less clearly delineated in terms of the more clearly delineated' [1981:58]. For the blind to discuss concepts in terms of 'I see', is as much a confirmation that they have taken in (to the body) simultaneously varied ideas of complexity and abstraction, as it is for the sighted person.

Was the experience of *War Music* like blindness then? Given the sheer diversity of descriptions of blindness this is difficult to assert definitively. Perhaps forms of blindness where there is absolutely no retinal sensitivity to light come close. However, the shock of the new undergone by the spectators and actors alike when

confronted with the darkness, and the temporary duration of this condition suggests that it was partial at best. More than anything perhaps, the participants *seemed* to be blind, without actually being so. Characterising the experience in terms of seeming (that is to say temporary and partial) is important. For the blind, blindness is total, an inescapable part of who you are. If we are to overcome the omniscience conventionally ascribed to vision, then whatever 'insight' was gained by the sighted participants of *War Music* must be seen as partial and fleeting. Indeed, given the transience of theatrical experience, this could also be said of more conventional performance.

Discussing rehearsals for *War Music* Ryan Kelly described difficulties in preparing the other cast members for the experience of being unable to see:

I was trying to get them to do stuff like 'walk across this room totally confidently with your eyes shut, or blindfolded', or whatever, and they lost their tempers with one another, and all sorts; they didn't understand what they were handling. Because it's something I handle all the time, I learned not to [impose the experience on others]. They had to deal with it in their own way. If people go blind through life, then they've got to deal with it, it's as simple as that. [Personal Interview May 2000]

His desire to allow them to come to cope on their own terms suggests that it is important to consider blindness and the absence of sight in the performance on a personal level. Kelly's experience of attempting to prepare his fellow actors, suggests that this is in no sense easy. This was the case for actors and spectators alike; for the spectators, with no previous experience of negotiating this environment, the absence of vision created a tremendous strain in regards to one's objective awareness of it. My personal experience of the three performances I have attended was consistently of a heightened awareness of there being other spectators in the room with me, probably induced by my lack of ability to see them, so that my desire for other sensory confirmation, coupled with the certainty of memory of what I had seen in the space previous to the darkness, and vague traces of sound, amounted to an experience of their 'presence'. Anecdotally however, the actors involved in *War Music* informed me that they were frequently told by spectators that they had felt themselves to be very alone, in contrast to the more marked sense of community which otherwise characterises the experience of theatrical performance.

Even when 'blind', as in this situation, 'vision' remains important. As Ron Michalko relates, for the Roman statesman and philosopher Cicero, Homer's descriptive power was caused by the prevention of sight enacted by his blindness.⁶ It was not merely

(or even), Cicero suggests, that Homer imagined himself seeing, and then described this imaginary act, but that, because his imagination was so qualitatively different as a result of this prevention, his descriptions became extra-ordinary. However, it is not because blindness is a *disability* that it is pertinent here, but because the removal of a sense most of us take for granted causes us to consider the means by which all of our senses co-operate (and as Thorne Shipley suggests *conflict*)⁷ in order to constitute our particular experiences of our environments and allow us to act upon and within them. What do we learn of *ability* in the absence of sight?

It is important to stress at this point that I am not writing from an anti-visual standpoint, attempting to denigrate the visual in favour of other senses. Rather, following David Howes' critiques of the pervasiveness of the textual (and thus also of the visual) in ethnography [1990, 1991], I am concerned that theatre - and performance more generally - attempt to 'return to the senses'. As Howes observes of ethnographic writing (and I suggest that the same is true of theatre and performance studies):

What is involved in 'sensing the world' is experiencing the cosmos through the mold of a particular sense ratio, and at the same time making sense of that experience. [1991:70]

Whilst writing and representation are inevitably extensions of the visual they are not all that there is to say about it. *War Music* allows us to consider vision in terms of an altered sense ratio from within a visual culture. In so doing, I hope to begin to 'make sense' of theatrical vision afresh, to reclaim the visual in the theatre for the realm of the senses. The importance of representation, interpretation, the symbol and the text will doubtless remain, but with their place within the theatrical sense ratio altered. Sitting in the dark, the eyes cast about for some - any - source of light. The eyeballs roll in their fleshy cavities, muscles squeeze and pull, the pupils expand to their limits. It is not only that the darkness makes you *feel* something. To be looking out at this apparent nothing has a sensation all its own; one's awareness of sight as engagement is piqued. This awareness is there, also, in the 'lit' world, albeit subdued. In down-playing this engagement we either take the visual for granted, or we enter into a discourse of power and reason which vision has not, of itself, created.

It is important to remember that the eyes alone are not responsible for 'seeing', that they are part of a widely distributed system. Further than that, for all the specialisation evident within neuronal functioning (which has led some to argue for

the 'modularity of mind'),⁸ the different areas of the brain, together with the central nervous and limbic systems (and subsequently the body itself), work together during experience.⁹ As Shipley argues, there is 'complex interaction of all of them, at virtually all times' [1995:35]. The obvious temptation to isolate individual areas or functions of the brain during scientific research obscures the significance of this interplay.

There is no getting around the fact that well over 80 per cent of the neural afferentation of the cerebral cortex derives from the visual system; none the less, the tactile modality is a much more widely distributed spatio-modality, and the auditory modality is a much more rapid one; and these differences are crucial not only in evolutionary terms but in ontological terms as well. [Shipley 1995:13]

Neurologically, it seems that vision is implicated in the other sensory modalities through the dominance of the visual system in the cortex. *How* we see then, seems to have very important implications for how we hear, touch and so on. However, the very difference between these modalities' operations (to say nothing of the differences in how they *feel*) suggests that attempting to characterise them in terms of vision is to ignore not only their particular qualities, but the very nature of their interplay with it. Thus, whilst the senses of sight and touch may well be closely related neurologically, to describe touch in the terms of sight (image, representation, and so on) fails to capture the possibility that touch also influences the quality of vision; the roll of the eyeball following the speeding car contributes to awareness of that speed for example. The complex interplay of vision with the other senses reveals experience to be characterised by intersensory activity. This intersensory activity is more dynamic and cosmopolitan than strictly visual levels of description suggest.

Such complex interplay is crucially important to consideration of *War Music*. Whilst the performance was played in total darkness, the visual cortex of spectator and actor alike was still operative. As suggested earlier, seeing *nothing*, is still to some extent seeing. Equally, the interplay of the other senses with this 'blinded' visual cortex must be regarded as being as important to the experience as any other individual modality such as hearing.

Hearing *War Music*

In *The Empty Space* Peter Brook states that: 'a man walks across [an] empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and that is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged' [1990:1]. *War Music* disrupted the usual relationship between

the watching and the walking, although it was still apparent that the walking was taking place. Even if any 'watching' had been possible in a conventional sense, it would not have been in the usual 'face-front' manner. The physical arrangement of the seating suggested to the spectators as they arrived in the space that something different to the usual experience of being in front of the action was about to happen. Placing them in two groups opposite one another perhaps suggested an idea of two sides in the sense of the warfare described in the narrative. Rob Vesty explained that the decision to have the two banks of facing seats came precisely from the opposition of the two sides within the text, but that the interweaving of the narrative between the two, together with the supra-narrative of divine intervention, meant that the action was situated around the spectators, and also *through* them, via the middle channel of the figure of eight:

Because it's about a battle, naturally, you want two sides. You want to be able to pitch in the audience's imagination that on one side you've got the Trojan's, and on one side you've got the Greeks; so that automatically made the decision. The space that the performers move in had to be on both sides. It couldn't be that you had the audience on one side and us on the other.
[Personal Interview May 2000]

The effect of the darkness on this seating arrangement was significant. Unlike vision, the senses of touch or hearing do not offer continuity. Things and events have little duration ontologically; they come into being as sounds or feelings, and disappear just as quickly. There is little stability of scene; instead, the world is grasped only in a state of constant engagement.

Seated in the darkness, although the memory of the seating arrangement must have been in the spectator's minds to some extent, their inability to see it denied them easy reference to it. The memory of this collective physical reality must have been particularly brought home during the passages of battle in which the Trojans and Greeks approach one another from either side of the field of battle. Whether Patroclus, Hector, Panotis or Ajax, the actors began these passages from behind either section of the audience, so that they were placed directly opposite one another literally as well as figuratively. Their being slightly behind the audience was also important; by enclosing them in an auditory manner the performance situated them *within* the action. This would have been much harder to achieve in a lit space since the constant differences between the seated spectator and the standing and moving actor would have been far more apparent. In the dark the spectator's position in relation to the action took on a very fluid quality. With no obvious physical boundary

between themselves and the action, it was defined instead by the proxemics of the sounds within the space and by the narrative itself.

By collapsing the typical face-front actor-audience relationship, and placing the spectator within the physical action in the space, the production also sought to place them within the narrative action:

I think that we were trying to make it [the performance] as accessible as possible, because at the end of the day you're dealing with poetry which isn't very accessible and a story which is kind of alien as well – it's thousands of years old. Automatically that puts a barrier to an audience – that we're dealing with Greeks and Trojans. So you have to make it easy, take away as much that might get in the way as possible. [Tom Espiner Personal Interview May 2000]

As a poetic text, *War Music* moves freely between the camps of the Greeks and Troy itself, from the battle to more mundane scenes, from the mortal realms of death and suffering, to the mischievous dabblings of the gods in the affairs of men, and includes the head-on collision of the human with cosmic forces. To contemporary Western culture where the scope of theatrical presentation is all too often defined by domestic concerns this broad sweep may seem rash if not impossible. The strength of Logue's poetic structuring lies in his stripping away of the delineative layers of narrative so that what remains are concise moments of thought or conversation and a succession of vignettes in which he swings from moment to moment, finding each one a unique language. As each passage shifts in tone from the personal to the detached, and from discourse to description, we are provided with a variety of perspectives, both mortal and immortal. The spoken word not only amplifies the dexterity of these shifts, but in the darkness with no visible reference of set, staging, or physical motif to indicate location or even type, the different characters and events mushroom into the mind as realisation dawns of where we are, who is speaking and so on. The rapid shifts which occur sometimes even change the tense of the narrative:

The left goes down.
In the half-light Hector's blood turns milky
And he runs for Troy...

And God turned to Apollo, saying:
"Mousegod, take my Sarpedon out of range
And clarify his wounds with mountain water." [1984:33]

Hearing Voices

It is clear that the structure of the narrative itself had a considerable effect on perception. Establishing *who* is speaking, became one of the primary tasks for the spectator. Bound up with this were problems of determining where they were speaking from, whether the volume of their voice was due to distance or control, whether this was a new voice, and whether it was static or moving. This was as (if not actually more) important than establishing *why* a particular person was speaking, and whether they were speaking narrative or dialogue.

Whilst much of the discussion thus far has been given to the sensory constitution of the spectator's experience, the meta-theoretical assertion of the thesis has been that *acting* is central to the theatrical event. I shall now turn my attention to the performance as a theatrical event, and to the sensory processes of acting it involved. Since spectator experience is in a large part created by the actor as the locus of their attention, it is important to consider the means by which the actor's process affects performance and, therefore, the embodied experience of the spectator.

When asked about his approach to acting in the dark, the *War Music* actor Rob Vesty told me that:

You kind of assume 'well its in the dark, no-one sees what we're doing'. I think the physicality of the piece took us all by surprise...It was a physical piece; you really used space. You couldn't be seen, but it just proves that you need the physical expression to give way to the vocal expression...I almost felt like a conductor at times, the weight of the language, the poetry, and the rhythm of the thing...What I really loved was the alliteration or the rhythm of the speech, and I was really moving with it, really finding the weight of it, and that really manifested itself in me. [Personal Interview 2000]

'Manifested itself in me' is a key statement in this interview, which took place eighteen months after the original 1998 performance. It articulates a feeling that although *War Music* seemed for the spectator (theatrically speaking) to have existed as words in space, it nevertheless required a very physical involvement on the part of the actors for this to take place. In this, the spectator's experience and the actor's process are closely connected. Certainly there is an aspect of the theatrical in which the actor's understanding is in some sense mirrored by the spectator's. However, it should not be assumed that this is necessarily to do with achieving some shared and abstract interpretation. In using his/her perceptual faculties to shape a particular engagement with the material aspects of performance (the text, space, objects, participants and so on) the actor invites a concurrent engagement from the spectator.

Of course performance inevitably demands interpretation in some form, but it is my suggestion, following Susan Sontag,¹⁰ that it is the hegemony of a critical orthodoxy extending from the ancient Greeks which places greater value on interpretation than on the immediate (and thus impermanent) sensory response. Indeed, there is almost a touch of the perverse in continued attempts to privilege interpretation at the expense of sensation, to view performance as representation over experience. However, as Stanton Garner has it:

As long as theater stages the perceiving body before other perceiving bodies, it will stage its modes of subjectivity and offer up the phenomenal realm as a constitutive dimension of its spectacle [1994:230].

The cast of *War Music's* first experience of full darkness was not until the dress rehearsal, which makes Rob's expression of surprise at the physicality this drew out of them all the more interesting, and offers an insight into the process of embodiment involved. His surprise suggests a challenge to a belief that, firstly, the physical only has 'meaning' if it can be seen, and secondly that the relationship between this physicality and the actor is not necessarily a mutual one, that this 'physicality' is somehow an 'effect', rather than a process.

How then, did the process of acting involved in *War Music* challenge such beliefs? Since there was nothing to see, all attention had to be given to speech. In *The Shifting Point* Peter Brook asks: 'What happens when gesture and sound turn into word? What is the exact place of the word in theatrical expression? As vibration? Concept? Music?' [1988:110]. Similarly, in *The First Manifesto of The Theatre of Cruelty*, Artaud called for 'a unique language somewhere in between gesture and thought' [1989:68]. Can the spoken word be more than a medium, a transmission of meaning from one consciousness to another? Can its resonance in the body of the speaker, in the air, and in the ear of the listener, provide it further layers of meaning which escape the lexical confines of the enunciation as text? To consider the spoken word simply as a carrier of meaning, rather than also as a creator of it, not only reduces its complexity but also represents human communication, and indeed humans themselves, in systematic terms as Walter Ong explains:

Thinking of a 'medium' of communication or of 'media' of communication suggests that communication is a pipeline transfer of material called 'information' from one place to another. My mind is a box. I take a unit of 'information' out of it, encode the unit (that is, fit it to the size and shape of the pipe it will go through), and put it into one end of the pipe (the medium, something in the middle between two other things). From the one end of the

pipe the 'information' proceeds to the other end, where someone decodes it (restores its proper size and shape) and puts it in his or her own box-like container called a mind. This model obviously has something to do with human communication, but on close inspection, very little, and it distorts the act of communication beyond recognition. [1982:176]

The spoken word is rich with possibilities for meaning (as vibration, concept, music, etc.), but far from existing *a priori*, it is in the acts of speaking and of hearing that they are born.

One of *Sound and Fury*'s major concerns was to get away from 'nicely spoken English', which might very well have carried the narrative of the text, but would not have provided the aural texture they were seeking. From the outset there was a concern with finding and using voices for their textural qualities rather than simply because the actors enunciated clearly, with *telling* rather than with *reading*. This distinction is an important one. Whilst it could be argued that this is so much semantic juggling, nevertheless, the didactic undercurrent which follows *telling*, suggests that the *use* of words, just as much as the *words used* are important in this instance. The 'use' of words refers not only to grammar and to composition, but also to tone, timing, volume, proximity, duration and breath.

This use of language as *sound* was intrinsic to a production which utilised a live and recorded soundscape not only to conjure abstract and imaginary 'scenes', but also a very physical 'world' of sound, in which the heard, rather than the seen was the means by which theatrical reality was established and maintained. This placed an onus onto the actors to find ways to 'get under the text' and find ways of speaking which retained the narrative, drama, and characterisation of the poem, but which also developed language as sound with its own particular aesthetic qualities. Speaking then, became a means of performance in its own right.

Throughout the performance, Ryan Kelly was the only cast member to remain in one location. At first this seems like an odd choice, since as the only blind cast member he was perfectly used to moving through space without sight, and moving amongst the sighted. As both he and other cast members have asserted in interview however, this situation arose out of the fact that the majority of rehearsals took place in the light. The difficulty of finding rehearsal spaces which they could fully black out was combined with the directors' difficulties in negotiating rehearsals in the darkness – they needed to be able to see what they were doing in order to set the performance, and assist the actors. The ability of the sighted actors to move about more quickly in

the light, and the limited amount of rehearsal time the cast were afforded together also played an important part in this. Additionally, the parity between Kelly's lack of sight and the legend of Homer's blindness particularly struck the company as they toyed with the idea of having a central narrative voice upon which everyone/everything else could hinge:

We wanted a kind of anchored centre point that people could return to. We felt that there needed to be at least one voice which was central, that was a kind of a storyteller voice, and would never move. Funnily enough, in the dark, it was Ryan, the blind guy, who was the only person who stayed still.
[Tom Espiner Personal Interview May 2000]

As suggested earlier, Kelly was concerned that the other performers 'find their way' through the unusual environment, and so perhaps his static position in this situation required as much of a radical shift in perception on his part as it did for the others. Like Kelly, each actor had at least one major role as well as taking up at least some of the narrative. This meant that there was a constant swirl of voices around the room. I want to explore the role of sound and hearing in more detail later, but in an assessment of acting it is important to stress at this stage that because of the darkness, their own and the spectator's seeming blindness, the performer's were able to shift their attentions from *appearance* to *sensation*. This is a key consideration, as it undermines notions of acting being strictly concerned with representation (of behaviour or aesthetic) and also suppositions that imagination is removed from one's immediate situation. In this respect the performer's seeming blindness must be regarded as an *ability*, a liberation.

The quality and timbre of Kelly's voice also played an important part in the decision to cast him as the central narrator figure. The directors, Dan Jones and brothers Tom and Mark Espiner, were keen to use actors who did not necessarily have the 'received pronunciation' accent so characteristic of performers trained in British theatre schools. Whilst they were obviously concerned that the actors be able to enunciate clearly enough to deliver the text, they did not want the tone and quality of each individual's voice to be subjugated by this. In interview Tom, who has a background in foley (post-production) sound for television and radio, was at pains to stress the importance of the sound of the actor's voices as being as least as relevant as the words they were saying:

What we had to do, was to have actors who would have the sensitivity, and the sensibility, not to just fall back on a lovely sounding voice, but that they

would be able to have a kind of rawness in their voice. It's often the case when you're doing classical, or poetry - or with people particularly used to doing radio drama - that there is a certain kind of technique, and you have this nice RP voice...but we wanted a bit more experimentation, a willingness to be able to free the voice. We were also interested in dialects, again, perhaps to get a kind of harshness; obviously being in the dark, you need variety of voices. [Personal Interview May 2000]

Ryan Kelly is possessed of a rich Glaswegian burr, deep tones coming up through his vowels which round off in the consonants. The first blind actor to train at Bristol's prestigious Old Vic Theatre School, he was as much trained in the use of an 'RP' accent as any other, particularly, as Tom Espiner suggested, in approaching classical or poetic texts. His Glaswegian accent was able to make him distinct from the other players however, particularly as he always maintained his position, which gave the spectators some sense of permanent location.

His voice attracted the directors for additional reasons. In the performance script, the narrator figure, is also crossed with the voice of God (both Zeus and Apollo). As Patroclus attempts to storm the walls of Troy, against his lover's wishes, Apollo strikes him down. Logue uses a massive font and bold typeface in his text to suggest the god's voice, demanding a powerful delivery in performance. Not only that, but the same power used in this brutal delivery would be needed to be maintained across more restrained passages of Apollo's speech. For the directors, Kelly's familiarity with the use of a commanding voice in instructing his guide dog prepared him perfectly for this part.

Ryan's experimented with his voice a lot in his time; his main companion is his guide dog and he had a particularly interesting voice when he would be commanding him, so we'd use this as a frame of reference for him. [Tom Espiner, Personal Interview May 2000]

The concern with vocal tone extended beyond Ryan Kelly alone; Tom Espiner it was felt, had a 'vulnerable' quality to his voice, and so was cast as Patroclus, whose mixture of vanity and love for Achilles eventually brings about his downfall. Similarly Rob Vesty's Lancashire roots were perceived to give an edge to his voice in the swirling battle scene as Sarpedon he turns back his fleeing Trojan comrades to face Patroclus and the Greek army:

“Well run my soldiers, but from what:” –
Selecting two light javelins – “Who will wait
To see their known Prince spit
Once and for all this big anonymous Greek” –
And vaulted off his chariot plate –

“That makes you sweat?” [1984:27]

The hard northern edge in Vesty’s voice as he mockingly questioned the fleeing soldiers stood in contrast to the warm burr of Kelly and the solo female voice of Lucy Curtin as they inserted the narrative description around speech.

The male to female ratio of actors was the same in both casts, and used to great effect in each. With the exception of the goddess Hera, and some of the narrative, the characters and voices involved in *War Music* are male, involved in that peculiarly male pursuit – warfare. The voices of Curtin in the original production and Osnat Schmool in the second, allowed a much more varied soundscape than would have been possible had they had a solely male cast. Not only was the female voice used ironically as a contrast to the male dominated action, but the difference in vocal tone lent the cast of voices a broader range, increasing the scope of musical possibilities offered by the speaking voice. The female voice was also used to lend the narrative a different quality. Certainly, the violence inherent in the male dominated action might have been transferred to the narrative had the same voices picked it up; however, as the cast members were keen to point out in interview, there is an almost melancholic sadness in much of it. When this was set in a soft female voice a counterpoint to the violence was provided, which lent the production a deeper sense of the effects of the war – not only on its participants, but also on those left at home. The sympathy for the victims, dead or doomed, inherent in many of these ‘feminine’ passages was given a distinctly maternal air by the use of a woman’s voice. Whilst the production unquestionably used the female voice to draw out qualities such as ‘sympathy’ or ‘maternalism’, this also allowed them to play with using it in a variety of less sympathetic ways. These included the Goddess Hera’s blood-thirsty machinations (‘King Human. Menalaos. If you stick/ *Him, him* and *him*, I promise you will get your Helen back” [1984:31]), but it was also used almost as a *verfremdungseffekt* at certain key points, in which softer female tones contrasted with the harsher masculine ones. It is important to think even of such distancing techniques in sensual, rather than conceptual terms however.

Touching *War Music*

‘Sensation’ allows us to think in terms of what is immediately apparent, to place our attention within the moment of experiencing: ‘in such an approach...perception is not simply embedded within and constrained by the surrounding world; it also contributes to the enactment of this surrounding world’ [Varela *et al* 1991:174]. By shifting its

participants' focus from interpretation to the immediacy of sensation *War Music* not only emphasised the means by which sensory stimulation offers information and *affirmation* about the environment, but also the importance of sensory interplay in the creation of meaning. It is often easy to overlook the importance of this interplay within an everyday situation – especially a sighted situation. However, the presence or absence of stimuli, and their introduction to either a range of senses or to a single sense has an important part to play in determining what a given situation will mean. Indeed, it is a pre-requisite of meaning, as Merleau-Ponty has it: 'We never cease living in the world of perception, but we go beyond it in critical thought' [1964:3].

What we refer to in common language simply as touch is actually a complex set of associated sensations. Whilst it is convenient in thinking in the reductive framework of the five senses to consider 'touch' as referring to a single form of sensory perception, 'it has long been known that touch involves a number of different skin sensations, such as light touch, pressure, temperature, and pain' [Millar 2000:104]. 'Touch', is not only a passive response to external stimuli however, it also has active elements. 'Haptics' (from the Greek *haptain* - to touch), is often used to describe this active or movement reliant sense of touch. However, given the complexity of the range of sensation (proprio- and exteroception, skin tactility, skin pressure, and so on) which characterises this active state, 'haptics' can be thought of as an umbrella term for a variety of related sensory perceptions. In *The Unity of the Senses* Lawrence Marks writes of haptic touch that:

The manipulation of objects leads to a perceptual unity of the tactile, kinesthetic, and proprioceptive, of pressure, movement, resistance and position. Simple pressure on the skin alone provides scant information about objects in the environment. We have little capacity to identify shapes of objects when they are impressed on the skin...Much of the time we are hardly aware of the clothes we wear. [1978:15]

Haptics are the building blocks of a sense of self. Whilst it is certainly the case that (in Anglo-American culture at least) haptic sense is subjugated by vision [Marks 1978:18-19], the former is a far more constant supplier of environmental information; haptics are the building blocks of a sense of being. Whilst touch seems to offer the ultimate confirmation of the materiality of objects, in determining spatial relations, or categories of objects, haptics (including proprioception and kinaesthesia with skin and pressure sensitivity) generally submit to vision. In the apparent absence of anything to *see*, the haptic senses are piqued; not necessarily any more sensitive, but forming a more important part of awareness. Concurrent to this, one's awareness

of what is close to the body (especially that which is touching it directly), is also raised. What constitutes the world in this situation takes on a far more temporary nature - move away from a stimulus so that it is no longer apparent to touch, and it no longer exists for you outside of memory. In the performance of *War Music* this was coupled with the predominance of sound in the construction of a theatrical environment. I am not suggesting a division of reality between haptics (the everyday), and sound (the theatrical) – what was heard was as real an experience as any other. Rather, as has been meta-theoretically suggested, the theatrical is constituted by actors acting, and this was manifested for the spectators as sound. From the spectator's position, haptics were the means by which they defined and experienced their role as spectators, and in hearing sound they experienced the acting. I wish to give greater discussion to sound and to hearing in *War Music* later, and also to the actors modulation of their own haptic senses to achieve certain states. Firstly however, I want to further explore the spectator's haptic engagement in an effort to come to understand the experience as involving more than simply passive listening.

For the sighted spectator, the constant sensation of being seated occurred in relation to the memory of having *seen* where one was seated and where one was in relation to whom and to what; each person must have carried the visual memory of the appearance of the space with him/her throughout the performance. Morton Heller [2000] reports that recent research findings suggest that haptic space is 'non-Euclidean'; that is to say, that whilst the world apparent to vision seems broadly to conform to certain geometric principles,¹¹ the world that is actively apparent through touch and movement presents no such uniform consistency. Coupled with the notion that imagination and memory may not be *a priori* visually based activities, this has important ramifications for an epistemology of theatrical performance as it pertains to the processes of both actors and spectators. In most sighted experience, as suggested, touch is subjugated by sight. However, was touch really subjugated by visual memory during the performance? I suggest not. This has serious implications for the consideration of memory and imagination as being recourse to visual or 'visual-like' experience.¹²

As Diane Ackerman suggests in *A Natural History of the Senses*¹³ haptics contribute in large part to our sense of self at any given time:

What is a sense of oneself? To a large extent it has to do with touch, with how we feel. Our *proprioceptors* (from Latin for 'one's own' receptors) keep

us informed about where we are in space, if our stomachs are busy, whether or not we are defecating, where our legs, arms, head are, how we're moving, what we feel like from moment to moment. [1990:95]

The haptic senses tell us both *how* we are being, and *where* we are being, to the extent that the two are irreducible. Haptic sense provides an experiential base for a wider sense of *being*. In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, it is on the basis of a shared sensory world of feeling - touch - that Shylock pleads for clemency from the Venetian gentiles: 'If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh?' [III, i]. The haptic senses can only perceive that which is immediate to (e.g. skin tactility), or within the body (e.g. proprioception), and as such they are a means by which the environment directly impacts upon our sense of self. As Heidegger noted: 'the world itself is not an entity within the world' [1967:102]; it is only by our *being* in the world that it can at all be constituted. The body schemata outlined by Lakoff and Johnson underline Heidegger's assertion by suggesting that the experience of being in the world is necessarily active.¹⁴ 'Understanding' thus relies on an active relation to space – and of conceiving things as being as much part of space as contained within it.

Since haptic perception is non-Euclidean, and relies on the direct stimulation of the body, the sense of space which it gives is far more malleable, 'fluid' even, than the consistent world of surfaces and relative motion offered by sight.¹⁵ The spectators' imaginations in *War Music* engaged most directly and consistently, not with a stable world of vision (although there must undoubtedly have been visual memory involved), but with the fluctuating world of touch. (Indeed the only consistency available to them was provided by touch - the need to maintain the security of your behind on the seat, a sensation you could be sure of, given also that there was silence as well as sound). Mark Johnson writes that imagination is 'central to human meaning and rationality for the simple reason that what we can experience and cognize as meaningful, and how we reason about it, are both dependent on structures of imagination that make our experience what it is' [1987:172]. Imagination, under the terms of Johnson's thesis, is determined by the experience of being a body in the world. When (as in *War Music*) this experience is (in part at least) haptically determined, it demands that we conceive of the involvement of the imagination concurrently.

Whilst it is certainly the case that *War Music* involved the creation of a sound 'world',¹⁶ and that, theatrically speaking, this 'sound world' was the object and focus of both spectators' and actors' attentions, it inevitably also involved silence (or at

least the possibility of silence). In the absence of sight, and the potential absence of sound, it is only through the haptic senses that the participants could afford any sense of 'being in the world'. 'Haptics', as discussed earlier, refers to a dynamic sense of touch and movement. How then does this relate to a seated spectator? Imagination, as Johnson argues, is not separate from sensation. Seated in the darkness one is aware of the pulsing of one's own heart, of the in-and-out flow of breath. The movement of the outside (air) to the inside (the lungs) and back out again is a basic kinaesthetic sensation,¹⁷ as is the simple rhythm of the heart. In becoming aware of these usually autonomic functions, one increasingly also becomes aware that they are far from passive. Similarly, sitting on a chair, whilst not demanding a great deal of ostensive movement, still requires active elements (fidgeting even) which are brought into awareness during extra-ordinary sensory moments such as performance – in particular a performance in the dark. Simply to point this out is not enough however; what is the connection, it must be asked, between such apparently mundane acts (if indeed they can be thought of as acts) and the imagination?

Imaginative activity is the means by which an organism constructs an ordering of its perceptions, motor skills, and reflective acts, as it seeks to accommodate itself to its environment [...] We much creatively and imaginatively engage our environment every second of our lives, for no situation is ever exactly the same, and we cannot extricate ourselves from temporal and spatial *process*. What we regard as our prototypical examples of imaginative creativity in art and science differ only in degree and importance from the mundane modification and modulation that is our everyday experience. [Johnson 1991:79-80]

If imagination becomes grounded in the mundane (in the sense of relating to worldly matters), rather than some lofty realm quite apart from worldly concerns, it is not reduced in its possibilities but brought within the same sphere as direct experience – to the extent that the two are inextricable. How we imagine the world to be has an effect on how it actually is, and vice versa. How we move within the world affects how the world *moves* us, and subsequently how we use our imaginations to explore its possibilities and limits. Little is written beyond the speculative on the spectator's imagination in the canon of Western theatre criticism.¹⁸ David Cole in *Acting as Reading* argues that the actor-audience relationship is essentially one of reader and read-to, albeit in a fashion more akin to the story-telling traditions of oral culture. Whilst he goes to some length to suggest that the actor can in some sense be understood as a 'reader', he cannot seem to provide a satisfactory account of the

implications of this position for the spectator's imagination, even as he acknowledges its importance to the theatrical event:

At theater, as in reading, we sit immobilized – itself an encouragement to fantasizing – before a stage that, no less than the printed page (or movie screen or picture tube), constitutes a 'dream screen,' which, as the latest site of fantasy experience neither clearly 'in us' nor 'out there,' reinstates the original site of all such boundary-blurring oral encounters: the breast...The conclusion to be drawn from this, however – and, indeed from *all* the theatergoing-orality links we have noted – is not that theatergoing equals reading, but, rather, that theatergoing and reading share a common substratum. [1992:203]

The passivity which Cole suggests encourages 'fantasizing' is in conflict with the active imagination argued for by Johnson. Cole does not account for what he means by 'fantasizing', implying that it is at best an ambiguous process involving the involvement of the 'unconscious', as his psychoanalytic allusions to orality and 'the breast' suggest. If the imagination is bound up with embodied experience, it no longer needs to be thought of as detached from ordinary consciousness by involving the 'unconscious' or occupying some detached Platonic realm. In Chapter Four I will discuss consciousness as a continuum of awareness; without wishing to presage that discussion it is necessary to state that the thrust of my argument here – and indeed of the thesis generally - is that imagination, consciousness, and embodiment are inextricably bound up together. This is not to suggest that they are reducible, but that they cannot be considered in strict isolation. To discuss imagination as divorced from mundane experience is thus to somewhat miss the point. Whilst imagination may (quite correctly) be conceived as allowing projection into experiences other than those currently or usually engaged in, even the most extended fantasy not only happens because of embodied processes, but is, in itself, an embodied process.

Whilst I shall pay more attention to the importance of sound and hearing later, the increased haptic awareness of *War Music's* spectators gave rise to a particular kind of imaginative experience. As suggested earlier, the increased awareness of one's own respiratory functions, together with the sense of isolation brought about by the inability to see others, increased the spectator's awareness of him/herself as being somehow at the centre of the action both dramatically and performatively. The imaginative process thus involved an extension 'outwards' from this centre. Both actors and spectators frequently discussed the experience of the performance in filmic terms, describing jump-cuts, long shots, sweeps, and so on. This may seem to greatly undermine my earlier arguments against the conception of imagination as a

'picture/film-in-the-head'. However, given the extent to which the spectator experience of *War Music* created a heightened feeling of being at the *centre* of the action, and so also, in some sense, of being the focus of it, these descriptions should not be so surprising. The use of filmic language suggests a particular kind of control in which rapid changes in thought are possible, allowing one to *feel* either remote from the action (long-shot), or moving rapidly close to it (jump-cut). Certainly this was also suggested by the narrative changes of the poem, but in performance it pertains very much to the person seated, at that particular moment, on that particular chair, in that particular room, in that particular time.

Constance Classen writes that 'we not only think *about* our senses, we think *through* them' [1993:9]. We are continually involved in a temporal and spatial process, as Mark Johnson has observed. This process is not only defined by the extent and limit of the senses, it is of the senses. The importance of the haptic senses and their reflexivity can thus be understood as playing an important role in determining not only what 'information' was available to the spectators (as if experience could really be so reduced!), but also the imaginative means by which they made this information meaningful. As suggested, the necessary reliance on haptic senses created a feeling that the action was centred solely around each individual. This has an analogue in the experience of watching cinema even though this is a visual experience. As the camera follows and frames the action 'on the viewer's behalf' as it were, a spectator seated in a darkened cinema is given the impression that to some extent the camera has acted as an eye. Because the film is something that 'I' am seeing, it thus seems centred around this I/eye. The sighted spectators of *War Music* must undoubtedly have had experience of cinema, a highly pervasive cultural experience. As Classen suggests, we think *through* our senses, seek to find sensory analogues in our experience – hence things taste 'like' something else, a friend looks 'like' somebody else. Thorne Shipley and Lawrence Marks suggest that not only does this ability to 'make sense' of one situation in terms of another, or in contrast to it, have sound biological underpinnings, but that it is also at the root of the creative instinct:

Metaphoric expressions of the unity of the senses evolved in part from fundamental synesthetic relationships, but owe their creative impulse to the mind's ability to transcend these intrinsic correspondences and forge new multisensory meanings. [Marks 1978:103]

The spectator's imagination becomes a particularly *practical* kind of knowledge, very much occupying, rather than abstracted from, the here and now. As Bourdieu has it:

‘the body is...constantly mingled with all the knowledge it reproduces’ [1990:73]. Even if imagination is viewed as an elaboration on experience, it can only be so as part of experience, something which the body cannot be abstracted from. The earlier emphasis on what the spectator *feels* is important; it is not that it appears that the scene is being viewed from particular angles, but that the shift of awareness to the haptic senses allows an imaginary process which draws on this.

Given the sensation of centring, it should not be so surprising that it was to the sensually similar experience of cinema that many turned imaginatively in attempting to ‘make sense’ of it. In most respects, the experience of *War Music* was not at all like cinema, and yet the transcendence of this initial difference to draw an analogy with another sensory experience, suggests the importance of the sensual means by which experience is embodied. This embodiment is not passive however, it cannot simply be willed into being.

This is not solely inference on my part as a result of my own experience as a spectator. As suggested earlier, seated in the dark, kinaesthetic awareness of one’s own respiration is heightened. Concurrent with this, proprioception generally becomes raised within the sensory ratio; that is to say that one’s awareness of the state of one’s physical being is increased. Not only do each of one’s movements take on significance, but so also does one’s skin temperature, the touch of clothes and seat against the skin during stillness and movement, and the eddies in the air caused by your own movements, the other spectators next to you, or the invisibly moving actors.

The performance made you *feel* in a particular way. Rather than this feeling being a minor by-product of circumstance, subservient to visually or aurally perceived events, how the environment actually *felt* to spectators played an important part in determining the experience. Touch is a highly reflexive sense; in touching something, one is also touched. All of the touch related haptic senses, in providing information about environment and objects, also give the perceiving subject information about themselves. This is also true of the other senses, but arguably to a lesser degree.

Embodying the Breach

Given that *War Music* established a highly reflexive affective state for the spectator through increased haptic awareness (and, as I shall argue, through the incorporating quality of the auditory sense), how did the production substantiate itself as theatre

performance in terms of acting? Herbert Blau reminds us that the 'breach' between actor and spectator is crucial to the establishment of the theatrical event: 'The condition of theatre is an *initiatory breach*' [1990:261].¹⁹ In *War Music*, the breach was made initially obvious by the division of the space between actors and spectators. In the dark however, the terms of this division became unstable; as suggested earlier, the spectator felt increasingly, and highly personally, that she or he was the centre of the action, both narratively and theatrically. In addition, the absence of a visual sense which might have lent some permanence to the proceedings meant that the conditions of the necessary breach never seemed fixed. They were, therefore, constantly in the forefront of consciousness, as their instability meant that they could never be simply taken as a given.

As a consequence of this, the locus of this vital division was placed in the condition of the actor's self in the moment of doing. In *War Music* one's inability to *see* the actors made this locus at once disembodied and yet also surprisingly visceral, given that the reconfiguring of the senses gave one a high state of awareness with regards to one's own body and those of others in the space. Indeed, 'visceral' is a word employed by the actors I have interviewed with regards to their own performances, and their experience of the spectators. As Tom Espiner, actor and co-director told me: 'it had a kind of...I mean this is a word that we used a lot – a very visceral effect - and could provoke a lot of fear' [Personal Interview May 2000].

Given that *War Music* was 'theatre in the dark', it may seem odd to regard the body as a locus, and even more than that, to argue for the condition of the theatrical as being located within the sense of self it serves to articulate. Certainly the body provides a semiotic site in more conventional 'sighted' performance, but *War Music* suggests that the 'experience' of performance is at least as important as a 'reading' of it. Equally, if a framework for the discussion of acting is built around *reading* the actor's body in terms of its action *as a text*, isn't this to confuse reality with that which serves as a model of it? As David Howes writes of the textual turn in anthropology:

Obviously a text is a very different 'means of knowing' from the nose or the skin. Equally obvious is the way in which the 'text-organ' (the sense analogue for which is sight) had succeeded in usurping the space which an earlier anthropology had reserved for the 'sense organs' proper – the nose, the palate, the skin. Thus, in a manner of speaking, the image of the text had lost its status for the interpretation of other realities, it had become the model of reality itself. [1991:70]

The idea of text as a model of reality (or indeed as reality) is perhaps the most powerful in contemporary criticism. Clearly it is beyond my resources to attempt a full examination and critique of it here; however, there are two important theses within it. Firstly, it points to a linguistic dominance in the constitution of knowledge, furthered by an enclosure of this knowledge within visually dominated frames of reference (i.e. printed or written texts) – the re-afference inherent within this placing understanding outside of experience itself.²⁰ (I will give further discussion to this in Chapter Four). Secondly, and of particular relevance here, is the bifurcation of reality which the textualising of the actor would seem to impose on the performance event. Texts have existence outside of events. I can read a passage of a book, put it down, and later re-read it, over and over again if necessary. If acting is textual, then what is acted must also then claim an existence external to immediate experience. This seems to be in denial of the all too real experience of acting – for actors and spectators alike. Describing experience in embodied terms prevents Blau’s theatrical breach being one between fiction and reality. Whilst it is certainly the case that much post-structuralist criticism seeks to blur such simple divisions (or even to deny their existence), they remain crucial to the debate, even if only as something to seek to efface.²¹ Since the actor’s body inevitably occupies any level of reality which one might seek to suggest for theatrical performance, his/her phenomenal experience, the body’s sensory engagement with reality, demands that it be taken seriously as an area of investigation; as Stanton Garner suggests:

Reopening phenomenological lines of investigation allows us to redress the current of antitheatricality that runs through much poststructuralist criticism, an attitude symptomatic (like all antitheatricality) of a deeper uneasiness with the body – in this case, with the body as a site of corporeal and subjective elements that always resist reduction to the merely textual. [Garner 1994:25-26]

To argue otherwise is to presume that, as a ‘text’, performance has some existence outside of its own event. In focusing on the actor’s phenomenal experience I propose that it only has any existence as it is bodily negotiated at the point of becoming an event.

In *The Body in the Mind* Mark Johnson writes that: ‘our understanding is our way of “being in the world”’ [1987:102]. This, he suggests is the amalgamation of several factors: ‘our bodily interactions, our cultural institutions, our linguistic tradition, and our historical tradition’ [102]. Without seeking to devalue the importance of the other

three factors highlighted by Johnson it is to the actor's bodily interactions with the world involved in *War Music* that I now wish to turn.

If *embodied* experience is the locus of performance then attention must be paid to how 'doing' enables meaning or knowledge to be formulated. The performance of *War Music* did not simply involve the actors moving around the space and declaiming their lines from various locations. As the performers have told me, they were very interested in accessing a 'visceral' vocal quality. This required them to feel the speaking of the language in a much more heightened way than that employed in normal conversation. The actors I have interviewed have referred to specific moments when they used physical action to alter their relation to the space to create a particular kind of 'feeling', and thus use their physicality to impact upon the quality of their speech. Perhaps the most dramatic example was provided by Tom Espiner who had the part of Achilles' lover Patroclus. In a red rage, Patroclus does not heed his lover's warning not to go too far and attempts to storm the walls of Troy. This enrages the god Apollo who is the Trojan's protector.

Apollo!

(The word in bold takes up two pages in the text).

Who had been patient with you,
Struck.
His hand came from the east,
And in his wrist lay all eternity;
And every atom of His mythic weight
Was poised between his fist and bent left leg. [1984:36-8]

In interview Tom described how the sound designer Dan Jones created a 'sonic boom' of the god's 'mythic weight' striking the Greek; as this rush of sound gathered pace towards him across the room he (Tom) actually struck himself on the back of the head and fell to the floor. This kind of action is redolent of the manner in which the performance was able to 'manifest itself in me' described by Rob Vesty. As Barbara Sellers Young points out:

Focusing an actor's attention to the sensory attributes of any task immerses her in a dialogue with herself and her environment that includes modes of attention, methods of enquiry, and application of information. Somatic explorations rely on an actor's ability to take in, at any given moment, new information through her sensory modalities (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and

skin) and process this information with that taken in simultaneously through the proprioceptor or sensing devices located in the skin, muscles, joints, and inner ear. This combination of sense and proprioceptor information is examined or explored by the memory in order to take action. [Sellers-Young 1999:91]

The level of physical action carried out by Tom not only creates a visceral feedback, but also stimulates the imagination, which, in turn, suggests further levels of physical action, beginning the cycle again.

Following the god's strike, Patroclus is left 'footless...staggering...amazed' [1984:38]; certainly if Tom had struck himself hard enough on the back of the head this might well have been the result for him too. Whilst such extreme efforts to make the action 'manifest in me' may seem to have similarities to the situation described or represented, to presume that they are attempts to achieve direct correspondence with it is again to make errors concerning understanding. In *The Paper Canoe*, Eugenio Barba writes that:

One of the most insidious pitfalls which lie in wait in books dedicated to the procedures of art derives from the radical difference between the tactics which guide conceptual comprehension and those which, on the other hand, guide practical comprehension through experience of action. [1995:66]

Thus, whilst I may conceptually grasp that a strike to the back of the head might be something like Apollo striking Patroclus (and leaving to one side theological arguments concerning divine intervention), I am still lacking the immediacy of knowledge and sensation which the experience itself brings. It is important to recall however, that Tom's actions could not be seen by the (sighted) spectators – they had no force as representation. Even if it was his intention to convince them that what he was undergoing was 'the same' as Patroclus, the nature of his actions was unknowable to them at that moment other than as sound. What mattered was the *quality* of these actions, and their effect on the quality of his speech.

It is important to make two assertions at this point, which are central to the thesis I am trying to advance with this chapter, using *War Music* as my example. The first, as suggested by Barba above, is that there is a knowledge experienced practically during action, which, whilst it may be allied to conceptual comprehension (as with the parallel between Tom and Apollo's strikes), *is*, to some extent, the doing of the action itself. Subsequently the spectator's experience is conjunctive with that of the actor, since they rely on his/her action to shape their own experience even if there is no

direct correspondence between the two. The second assertion is that this act of embodiment does not depend on the internalisation of external information – ideas, the form of objects, and so on – but requires the externalisation of the actor's consciousness in deliberate action, using the sensory modalities to achieve a qualitative modulation. Thus walking or speaking becomes not just a repetition of steps or words, but an enactive use of the senses and intelligence to make those steps or words 'feel' a particular way in relation to an environment the actor is him/herself part of. I will discuss this external idea of consciousness further in Chapter Four. This use of action suggests that the actor's imagination does not necessarily engage with the process of acting at a fictional level, in which he projects him/herself into imaginary circumstances, but is borne out of *doing*.

Certainly many actors would suggest in retort to this that they make decisions about what to do as a result of an imaginary process, and I am not attempting to argue against such claims. Of course actors make decisions about what to do – how to walk, speak, where to look, and so on – before ever doing these things on stage, or even in rehearsal, but I am interested here in how they engage and use their imaginations at the point of performance. Performance, as I have now suggested, has no existence other than as doing. The relationship between this doing and imagination is therefore very important. If the imagination in advance determines, as a doctrine, the criteria of performance, then its mutability (the very mortal state of coming into being and then passing) which Herbert Blau describes, disappears, and the actor is at best, truly only a cipher. I will give further discussion to imagination in Chapters Three and Four.

The links between the senses, imagination, and embodiment come not through the experience of each sense in isolation but through their dynamic interplay, the ways in which they affirm and contest one another.

Performance is Intersensory

Whilst the experience of *War Music* does not at first seem to have been a visual one, it is important to remember that vision is neurologically (and thus, inevitably also phenomenologically) important to other sensory experience. Attempting to understand both spectator and actor processes as involving interplay between the senses must eventually prove to be a far more interesting area of exploration than considering the perceptual modalities in isolated terms, as no real event has the strictures of single sense experiments conducted within the laboratory.

Susan Sontag writes that 'there is no such thing as empty space. As long as a human eye is looking, there is always something to see' [1994:10]. This assertion is borne out by recent research findings. Heller [2000:3-4] suggests that in highly sophisticated uses of touch the visual cortex is engaged. This has been shown by the use of brain-scanning techniques such as MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) and PET (Positron Emission Tomography) on both experienced and inexperienced braille readers, as well as with blind and sighted subjects. Whilst it is tempting to conclude from this that all sensory experiences can thus be described in terms of vision, this is to not only make a category error concerning the senses, but also to confuse neurological importance with sensory value. Further than this, the conflict between vision and 'the other senses' in regards to *War Music* allows a new area of sensory experience to be considered.

Thorne Shipley writes that:

Sensory arguments ('Surely, that mouse did not really roar!') rather than sensory agreements are at issue. Ultimately, what we take for reality is some sort of compromise among the evidence of the senses, as shifted by critical reason. But if the senses had not always agreed as to what is really there, conscious mind would probably not have been found necessary for survival – by nature, or our early ancestors, or by whatever processes there are in nature that may be said to be warranting 'such findings'. [1995:18]

The notion of intersensory argument is important in countering the dominance of concerns over representation in relation to performance. Arguments are on-going; if there are answers offered, then the argument is over, concluded, whether by conquest or by compromise. Representation has a fixity, demands a spatial location and a certain temporal duration also demanded of a 'won' argument. The ongoing argument has no duration beyond its immediate present however, and it struggles for location without necessarily achieving it.

As already noted, theatrical performance is delineated from other forms of experience on account of a fundamental breach between actors and spectators. Generally speaking this breach is visually marked - by a proscenium arch, the actors' spectacular costumes, lighting, seating arrangements, and so on. In *War Music* however, the spectator seemed actually to be located within this breach on account of the enveloping sensations of sound, touch, and darkness. This, I suggest prevented any easy sense of spatial location, and so resisted attempts to

characterise the experience in terms of representation. Coupled to this were temporal problematics; seated in the dark, how is one to be aware of time passing?

Take *time* says the director to the actor in a realistic play being rehearsed under an Equity contract; *take* time, says the therapist to the patient in an analytical session which costs sixty dollars an hour. The protraction of time is in every case, real or illusory, a mode of deconditioning, bringing performance back to "life." The question always remains, however, as to how *much* performance and how *long* and, in performance as in life, how much *life* – and how much apparent or disguised agitation over temporality. If you think for an instance about timing in acting, you will eventually be caught up in a metaphysic. Whether prescribed or felt, the determining of time is a universal of performance. [Blau 1990:252]

Now, if the determining of time is to be understood as a universal of performance, what is the effect of a performance which undermines all usual means for this? Since performance is located in a specified space, the determining of its time must be considered in relation to this space. As suggested earlier in the discussion of haptics, as an experience *War Music* considerably problematised the perception of space by affording it little permanence. Rather than understand this in terms of the *absence* of vision, I am attempting to come to terms with it in terms of the presence of the non-visual.

How does all this then relate to intersensory argument, and what, sensually speaking, was present during the performance? Suppose for a moment that we assume that the senses were working on the basis of correspondence with one another, either by affirming the knowledge offered by a dominant one, or by creating some sort of general agreement. What if we also say that it was characterised by darkness, by *nothing*? Whilst there is, unquestionably, a certain veracity to this claim, did the senses other than vision confirm this nothingness? Certainly not. It is an oft repeated cliché that nature abhors a vacuum, and this, I suggest was true of the sensory experience of *War Music*. Given this it would be easy to assume either a) that hearing and touch 'took over' from sight and created a comparable and corresponding experience to it, or b) that the visual was entirely absent, and that the experience of the other modalities must be considered in isolation from it. As I have endeavoured to point out however, vision is not solely characterised by the passing of light over the retina and nor is it neurologically isolated from the other modalities. Similar claims, I suggest, could also be made for touch or hearing.

Marks [1978] provides an extensive survey of studies concerned with linking sensory attributes and qualities. Broadly speaking, the majority of these studies seek to

endorse an Aristotelian position in which binaries such as sweet-salt, hot-cold, white-black, might be shown to have analogous qualities. As he notes, 'cross-modality equivalences express themselves most forcibly and vibrantly in the phenomenon known as synaesthesia' [1978:83]. Richard Cytowic, one of the most thorough of recent researchers into the phenomenon writes that:

Synesthetic relationships are usually unidirectional [...] meaning that for a particular synesthete sight may induce touch, but touch does not induce visual perceptions. [1995]

We should not assume therefore, that simply because there seems to be a close relationship between two different sensory modalities, that the experience of one can be directly substituted for the other. Synaesthesia (from the Greek; *syn* -together + *aisthesis* – perception) entails the stimulation of one sensory modality involuntarily causing a perception in one or more different senses. Cytowic's work suggests a verifiable neurological basis to this phenomenon, and its implications are far-reaching, not least that, as in this case, it allows us to think of the senses as interrelated. Further than this however, it also allows us to consider the modalities in the ways in which they may be *like* one another without suggesting that they are tantamount to the same thing. As Cytowic suggests, synaesthetic perception is generic:

'Generic' means that while you or I might *imagine* a pastoral landscape while listening to Beethoven, what synesthetes experience is unelaborated: they see blobs, lines, spirals, and lattice shapes; feel smooth or rough textures; taste agreeable or disagreeable tastes such as salty, sweet, or metallic [*sic.*]. Though synesthetes are often carelessly dismissed as being just poetic, it is *we* who must be cautious against unjustifiably interpreting their comments. For example, my index case MW described the shape of mint as "cool glass columns." On analysis, this turned out to be his shorthand way of trying to convey the quality of the tactile experience - "what is it like."...MW tells us that the sensory attributes of *curved + cool + smooth* "are like" rubbing a cool glass column. This is a third-person verbal description of a first-person sensory experience. [1995]

This is an important counter to suggestions that the senses effect 'representations' in two ways; firstly it suggests that the immediate affect associated with the sensory modalities is at least as important in determining meaning as the level of information they provide (what Damasio calls 'the feeling of what happens'),²² and secondly it suggests that inter-sensory correspondences are highly personal, not only in the manner in which they are interpreted by individuals, but also in the very nature of their experience. The links between the senses, imagination, and embodiment comes

not through the experience of each sense in isolation but through their dynamic interplay, the ways in which they affirm and contest one another.

To return to the idea of the intersensory experience of *War Music* in terms of an argument then. It is particularly important to consider this in relation to the notion of a sensory 'vacuum' left by the absence of light, and to the importance of both 'taking time' and the 'breach' suggested by Herbert Blau. I also want to introduce Walter Ong's notion that 'sound incorporates':

Whereas sight situates the observer outside what he views, at a distance, sound pours into the hearer. [1982:72]

Whereas conventionally, the spectator 'looks out' at a performance which is separate to him/her, in *War Music* it 'poured in'. Sound is also, in contrast to vision, multi-directional, and enveloping. If performance is to be understood as being characterised by breach, and thus to require the establishment of some kind of spatial formality, then this, it would seem, is the beginnings of the inter-sensory argument.

That there was 'nothing' to see during the performance of *War Music* was in direct conflict with the haptic and auditory senses of spectators and performers alike which confirmed not only the reality of one's own existence, but also that *something* was happening. In contrast to vision, both the haptic and auditory senses have a phenomenology which seems to relate them directly to the objects which they sense; as I hold the arm of my chair its curves are on and in my body right now; even in listening to the CD playing in my room, recorded in the past and in a distant place, the sounds in my ear are registers of that which made them: as Ong notes of the human voice, it 'comes from inside the human organism which provides the voice's resonances' [1982:72].²³

In opening one's eyes and seeing 'nothing', the usual distance associated with seen objects was collapsed. However, since distance is characteristic of the visual experience there was an inevitable struggle to create or account for this, which was involved in a further conflict with the ways in which the performance constantly directed one's attention 'inwards' via the auditory and haptic senses. The argument therefore, was between the perception of 'in' and 'out', the conflict between these two creating Blau's necessary breach. Rather than existing in terms of representation and

interpretation, *War Music* can be considered as an embodied event played out sensorially rather than conceptually.

This has important ramifications for a wider theory of theatrical performance: it suggests on the one hand that representation is, if not an overemphasised concern in both critical and practical approaches, it too often obscures the necessity of experience, which is always grounded in the sensual,²⁴ is embodied. On the other hand since even in conventional performance actors (and therefore spectators) rarely see themselves directly, performing surely has more to do with sensorially negotiating a process of incorporation than with merely representing.

Susan Sontag suggests that 'in place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art' [1967:14]. An erotics would see no divorce between a thinking brain and a sensual body; it would recognise that experience may well lead to understanding, but that it is an understanding arrived at *through*, rather than an understanding *of*, experience that we should be interested in. An erotics of performance would discuss it as a process of living – breathing, moving, looking, feeling – and so discuss its crucial question: How is it that this apparent unreality, can be so enlivened? Once we stop thinking of it in terms of representation, whether in terms of the actor's task or the spectator's 'picture-in-the-head', and acknowledge that there is more to seeing than just 'looking', then we may at least be able to claim the beginnings of an epistemology.

Performances which block, change, challenge, or extend conventional paradigms of acting or spectatorship demand a similar re-configuring of the critical act, one which does not seek to interpret, but rather seeks to point out the shifts from the normative everyday experience and that encountered during a given performance. In challenging the notion that the theatrical experience is characterised by 'vision from a distance', and in switching attention to other sensory modalities, the critic or theorist enters him or herself explicitly into the debate. The perceptual challenges, environments and activities offered by performance thus become a means of interrogating the sense of self: what it means to be that self, how it relates to others, to the environment, to history, and so on. Performed entirely in darkness, *War Music* begs questions of existing and conventional paradigms for the criticism and discussion of performance on a variety of levels ranging from spectator and performer's processes, to the means by which those processes are both experienced and interpreted. By broadening our understanding of the perception of performance, and the range of strategies which may be employed to facilitate this, the scope of the

knowledge and/or meaning potential in performance is also widened. Whilst sensory perception seems to pertain to me personally (I *smell* particular odours, *hear* particular sounds) the experience of community which pertains to performance seems to suggest that shared sensory experience extends the notion of that Self beyond a hermetic ego.

Notes

¹ For example, David Michael Levin 'Keeping Foucault and Derrida in Sight: Panopticism and the Politics of Subversion':

I think it can be argued that Derrida's critique of the philosophical privileging of *phone*, the immediacy of voice and the presence of speech, is based on his seeing the paradoxical fact that this prioritizing is actually ocularcentric: vision generated and vision motivated, For it is a certain way of seeing, a vision hegemonized by an ocularcentric paradigm of knowledge, truth, and reality, a vision of completeness and permanence, that has (mis)led philosophers to value speech over writing, despite the fact that writing is *for the eyes*. Once the vision of these eyes has been internalized, withdrawn into the inner light of the mind, where it is transformed into the 'I see' of understanding, it is readily confused with the sound of inner speech – and with the truthful voice of reason. [1999:414]

² Coincidentally, the etymology of the word 'explain' originates from the Latin *explanare* – to flatten – suggesting understanding to require the kind of surface favoured by vision.

³ Ron Michalko *The Mystery of the Eye and the Shadow of Blindness*; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998, and Constance Classen *The Color of Angels: Cosmology, Gender, and the Aesthetic Imagination*; London: Routledge, 1998.

⁴ Walter Ong *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*; London: Methuen, 1982.

⁵ Michael J. Morgan *Molyneux's Question: Vision, Touch and the Philosophy of Perception*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

⁶ Cf. Michalko 1998:147.

⁷ Thorne Shipley *Intersensory Origin of Mind: A Revisit to Emergent Evolution*; London: Routledge, 1995.

⁸ Jerry Fodor *The Modularity of Mind*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1983.

⁹ See for example Barry E. Stein and M. Alex Meredith *The Merging of the Senses*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993.

¹⁰ Sontag, Susan *Against Interpretation*; London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1967.

¹¹ Shipley suggests that visual space is not always as Euclidean as is popularly believed and is best understood in a 'more general Riemannian rather than a restricted Euclidean way' [1995:113].

¹² A fine challenge to this notion is presented by David Howes in his paper 'Controlling Textuality: A Call for a Return to the Senses'. Showing a portrait of a bear from a housefront in the North-West Pacific Tsimshian culture, in which the animal appears to have been 'folded out' he notes that:

Because we know that one cannot see an object from all sides at once, we conclude that the artist 'lacked perspective.' But this is too simple. What we ought to be asking ourselves is how the artist's hand might have been guided by the ear rather than by the eye, given that the culture to which he belonged was an oral one...one can hear but not see around corners...the code in which this painting is expressed is auditory rather than visual. [1990:61-62]

¹³ Interestingly, Ackerman does not comment on the arbitrary nature of the division of the senses into the classical 'five', and even in her musings on synaesthesia, or the remarkable writings of Helen Keller, seems to have experienced no temptation to suggest either the unity of the senses, or the diversity of their possibilities. She is also criticised by Classen for failing to address 'how the senses are ordered by culture and express cultural values' [1993:5].

¹⁴ For example, the 'container' schema:

When we actually move from one place to another, we experience ourselves as traversing a path from one bounded area to another...To hold a proposition is to be located in a definite bounded space (the space defined by the proposition). Being in such a bounded (mental) space involves being contained within certain boundaries. To hold the negation of that proposition is thus to be located *outside* that bounded space. In this way the

CONTAINER schema enters into our understanding of reasoning. [Johnson 1987:39]

¹⁵ For example, objects of the same size appear to an observer to have consistent size even when placed at a distance to one another:

These are higher-order patterns which remain constant despite changes in stimulation...consider a situation in which two objects of the same size are different distances from an observer. Clearly, the visual angles subtended by the subjects (and hence the size of their retinal images) will be different. How can we know that the objects are of the same size?...Analysis of the situation described above reveals that there is indeed an invariant property of the stimulus array that could serve as information specifying that the objects are the same size. The invariant is a subtle one: if the objects are in a natural environment, then they will usually be viewed in a scene containing a visible horizon; it can be shown that the *ratio of an object's height to the distance between its base and the horizon is invariant across all distances from the viewer*. Analysis of light with reference to the environment has yielded a possible solution to the problem of size consistency. [Gordon 1997:192]

Of all the senses, only vision it seems is able to relate to space and objects on the basis of such precise and consistent mathematics.

¹⁶ 'When the lights are switched off, people listen much more. That's all they can do, is just listen, they can't see anything. And so many worlds can be created with sound; that was our whole set design basically.' [Tom Espiner Personal Interview May 2000]

¹⁷ According to Lakoff [1987] this gives rise in part to the container schema.

¹⁸ The classical theatrical traditions of South Asia which draw on the Sanskrit text of the *Natyasastra* have long had a theory which places the spectator's imagination as the culmination of the process enacted by the performer. The *rasa* theory of this ancient treatise suggests that theatrical production gives rise to particular sentiments or *rasas* which are 'tasted' by the spectator-connoisseur:

The production of *rasa* is basic to classical Indian theater. The concept is difficult to translate in a single word. Though 'sentiment' and 'mood' the conventional translations, approximate its meaning, *rasa* more literally means the 'flavour' or 'taste' of something. The *rasa* is essentially the flavour that the poet [or in this instance the actor] distills from a given emotional situation in order to present it for aesthetic appreciation. [Chaitanya 1965:3]

¹⁹ Italics in original.

²⁰ 'Thought requires some sort of continuity. Writing establishes in the text a 'line' of continuity outside the mind. If distraction confuses or obliterates from the mind the context out of which emerges the material I am now reading, the context can be retrieved by glancing back over the text selectively.' [Ong 1982:39-40]

²¹ As Christopher Norris provocatively notes of Baudrillard (and of the post-modern generally), in positioning themselves as 'post' something, critics inevitably re-write the previous tendency into their own stance:

So it would seem that there is (or maybe once was a 'reality', a 'truth' to be destabilised or perverted, a meaning that was somehow subject to 'destruction', a 'medium that furthered this process by confusing truth and falsehood to the point of an ultimate undecidability...Baudrillard in effect contrives to have it both ways by playing on these distinctions - without which he could not even begin to articulate his case - while rhetorically denying that they possess any kind of operative force. So long as we do not read too carefully he can thus carry off the performative trick of conjuring away with one hand those same criteria (truth, reality, history, etc.) which he then summons up with the other for the purposes of contrastive definition. This trick is fairly common (maybe universal) among celebrants of the 'postmodern. For the term has no meaning except in relation to those various, supposedly obsolete notions that make up the discourse of modernity. [1990:182]

²² He writes:

Now consider this: Knowing a feeling requires a knower subject. In looking for a good reason for the endurance of consciousness in evolution, one might do worse than say that consciousness endured because organisms so endowed could 'feel' their feelings. I am suggesting that the mechanisms which permit consciousness have prevailed because it was useful for organisms to know of their emotions. And as consciousness prevailed as a biological trait, it became applicable not just to the emotions but to the many stimuli which brought them into action. Eventually consciousness became applicable to the entire range of possible sensory events. [1999:285]

²³ Whilst it may be argued that, given the number of ways in which sound may be technologically manipulated (for example, digitally), and is thus already at several removes; I would suggest that even in hearing electronically produced or manipulated sound, it is to the object of this manipulation one is sensorially responding, as well as, perhaps, to the initial production.

²⁴ This will be given greater discussion in chapters Three and Four.

Getting Emotional? The Problem of Seeming

As discussed in the previous chapter, feeling *something* seems central to the act of creation, whether in terms of a hunch, a desire, or a passionate relation to one's subject. Whilst much of what is classed as 'post-modern' criticism has been concerned with deconstructing such assumptions (with their concomitant narratives of the individual artist with his or her muse, the isolation of the art object and so on), the full-feelingness of creative endeavour does not seem to be ready to go away. If nothing else, creativity seems inexorably linked to pleasure, and surely none but the most frigid would seek to deny the subject-centred-ness and physicality of pleasure. For the actor then, wanting or needing to *feel something* is irreducible from wanting or needing to *create* something.

The acknowledgement of the legitimacy of this desire is thus also to acknowledge the legitimacy of what it leads to creatively, and the importance of the individual/s involved. From the middle of the Eighteenth Century in Western Europe, as Garrick's brilliance captured the public imagination, and demonstrated the legitimacy of the actor's creative potential, the philosopher Diderot and many of his contemporaries began to call for acting to be recognised as a 'liberal art' in much the same way as painting or poetry. An acting performance would thus be recognised as a work of art in its own right, and not simply a matter of 'interpreting' an existing one – the playwright's text.¹ This would make the actor's craft in the performance of a role as important as that involved in the writing of it.

As I suggested in the previous chapter, concerns for representation also carry with them concerns for *interpretation*. In considering performance in terms of representation it is necessary to regard it at one remove visually, to weigh up its value against the thing represented rather than on the basis of any intrinsic properties of its own. Similarly, an interpretation is always an assessment given from outside the event itself. To limit experience to interpretation is to submit it to a kind of aphasia in which the inability to communicate or render it into something else (say, writing, or speech) overwhelms any initial 'emotional' response.² As we shall see, whilst emotion is increasingly regarded as involving some level of reasoning or judgement, in accepting this there is no cause to continue down the well worn path in

which reason must be divorced from immediate sensory experience and/or apparently subjective 'feeling'.

This chapter, like Hamlet, is concerned with the actor's 'seeming' to be that which he is not. Following the problems raised for a visually biased notion of representation, the ensuing discussion questions whether it is in the experience of 'emotion' apparently analogous to the experience/s being represented that the actor achieves successful seeming.

The theatre in the West has long been seen as necessarily involving the display and experience of emotion; indeed it is frequently suggested that the more 'sincere' the experience of emotion by the actor, the more efficacious his/her display and thus the more fulfilling the experience of the spectator. Emotion is key to the argument begun against representation in the last chapter. It is not my suggestion that theatre performance does not, or should not, involve some degree of representation and interpretation of emotion. Rather, I wish to challenge the notion that there is a necessary link between what is presented theatrically as emotion (for example, a facial expression or a tone of voice), and the kind of experience it is supposedly a representation of. The challenge is firstly to the assumption that one can develop an epistemological system which allows for either the retrieval or voluntary stimulation of this experience, and secondly to the presumption of its very necessity in the first place.

Diderot and 'Sensibilité'

Denis Diderot was an 18th Century French materialist philosopher and polymath, a contemporary of Rousseau and Voltaire, a political dissident, a playwright, a novelist, an essayist, and the original encyclopedist, whose many interests included philosophy, biology, fine art, and the theatre. In his polemical essay *Le Paradoxe Sur Le Comédien*³ he controversially suggested that:

Great poets, great actors, and perhaps all the great imitators of nature, whatever they are, gifted as they are with a fine imagination, a delicate touch and sure judgement, are the least emotional of beings. [1994:106]

This necessary lack of emotional engagement is at the heart of Diderot's argument: if actors are to achieve a powerful affect for spectators then they must themselves be necessarily unaffected. A delightfully bellicose suggestion, this was (and still is) the source of some controversy - and not a little emotion. At first glance, given my initial

argument, it also appears to considerably undermine what seems to be an earlier assertion that feeling is central to the creativity he sought to legitimise.

That actors should be possessed of little or no emotion is, under Diderot's reasoning, far from being a negative conclusion. Indeed, in his writings on art in the *Salons* and on craftsmanship in the *Encyclopédie*,⁴ Diderot was concerned that the application of any level of skill in relation to a given task (if it is to be consistent - and thus skill and not mere chance) is the application of an intelligence, of reasoning.

What? People will say, these accents, so plaintive, so full of grief, torn by a mother from the depths of her heart, and which move one's own heart so violently, are they not produced by real emotion, are they not inspired by despair? Not at all; and the proof is that they're spoken in a certain rhythm; that they're part of a system of declamation; that if they go up or down by the twentieth part of a quarter tone they'll ring false; that they're subject to a law of unity...the actor has spent a long time listening to himself; and he's listening to himself at the very moment he moves you, and all his talent consists not in feeling, as you suppose, but in giving such a scrupulous rendering of the outward signs of feeling that you're taken in. His cries of pain are marked out in his ear. [1994:107]

In order to have this capacity to reason out and mark his/her effect, Diderot argued the actor was best unaffected by 'sensibility'.

Joseph Roach has shown how much of the criticism of Diderot's argument fails to grasp the historical context in which he was writing.⁵ In addition to this, the translation from French of the word '*sensibilité*' to the English 'sensibility' and then 'emotion' across cultural as well as historical contexts means that his argument can only really be dealt with, with candour, by taking this into account. Before doing so however, it is perhaps important to outline why Diderot's *Le Paradoxe* is so important to this chapter, and to the thesis as a whole. In the previous chapter I discussed at length problems concerning representation; this is a central concern of Diderot's, borne out in three different strands of his discussion. Each concerns the discrepancy between 'real' and 'aesthetic' (or represented) emotion or sensibility; the first seeks to point out that 'real' and 'artistic' (or represented) emotions are necessarily different; the second suggests that the purpose of performance is to raise emotional or sensible response within the spectator; and the third asserts that this can only be done with a level of control which precludes the involvement of sensibility/emotion.

Diderot's argument is considerably more subtle than he is often given credit for. Whilst it is the case that he argues that the actor have an 'iron will' [1994:113] rather

than be prey to possession by 'sensibility' (which is the major source of the criticism of *Le Paradoxe*), his theory of acting is extremely sophisticated and should not be dismissed out of hand. By severing the necessity of a connection between the 'real' and the 'represented' on the level of sensibility/emotion, he raises the question of what, if anything, might occur instead on an affective level for the actor. If we only accept received wisdoms about the opposition of reason and emotion, then Diderot's argument for actors' 'coldness' does indeed seem to disallow them human qualities which they themselves overwhelmingly testify to experiencing. Perhaps this is indeed what Diderot intended, but whether or not he did is now best left to sophistry since we are not afforded the luxury of asking him in person. If, however, as I began to suggest in the previous chapter, we see the actor's process as being more complex than simply fulfilling one or other binary category, then *Le Paradoxe* in its challenge to supposed ideals, offers a useful means for suggesting an alternative epistemology.

By suggesting that the actor creates affect for the spectator by creating and judging his/her effect Diderot also problematises the commonly held notion that there must be some sort of teleological connection to the actor's affective state if the spectator is at all 'moved'. This is crucial to his elucidation of the 'paradox' of acting. He suggests that the spectator, rather than the performer, is the locus of 'sensibility'.

By placing the affective 'end-product' in the spectator, and by having the actor unaffected by his/her representation *per se*, Diderot shifts attention to the actor's *physical* action. That is physical action, not simply as the means by which codified information (in the form of recognisable, and 'readable' behaviour and gesture) is transmitted, but also as a powerful means for creating an affective response within the spectator. Further than this (and yet more paradoxically), as the actor's attention is turned onto the (physical) means of representation, his/her concern becomes less to do with representation *per se* (ideas extrinsic to his/her immediate existence), and more directly to do with those means.

In *Le Paradoxe Sur Le Comédien* Diderot is particularly mocking of the 'man of sensibility': 'sensibility is hardly ever the quality of a great genius...Sensibility implies a weakness in the system' [1994:106]. Whilst Diderot's use of the word is often equated with 'emotion', 'sensibility' in the Eighteenth century was a complicated term which included many of the meanings currently attached to 'emotion', but also reflected and formed part of the contemporary scientific and medical understanding. 'Sensibility' had far more to do with sentiment which could have duration and pervade

social and environmental contexts than conventional understandings of 'emotion' allow. It also had important moral overtones:

In the course of the [Eighteenth] century, *sentiment* came to be associated with refined feeling, and both *sentiment/sentimental* and *sensibility* were related to immediate moral and aesthetic responsiveness. Both were important in terms of the general shift of the foundation of moral life from reason and judgement to the affections. In an early use of the term, for example, sensibility accounts for an intensely felt humanity or philanthropy; it is an 'inward pain' in response to the suffering of others. [Van Sant 1993:5]

In medical terms, the workings of sensibility were believed to quite literally 'pluck the heart strings' - which accounted for the extremity of 'sensible' response.⁶ Further than this, a 'sensible' response became to be seen as the only one possible or appropriate in particular circumstances – hence the moral dimension of the concept – an idea still persuasive to this day.

Common Sense

The obvious temptation at this point would be to carry out an historical study of theories about emotion, passion, sensibility, and so on, in an attempt to un-pick the threads holding together this entangled terminology. This would clearly need to be a study of some scope, but would surely remain difficult to prove, since the perceived problems concerning actors and emotion rest upon common-sense theories which rarely make explicit their antecedents or their methodologies. 'Common-sense' is usually so, not only because it reflects practice, but because it both enables and is part of it. For example, looking both ways whilst crossing the road can be theorised, placed in social and historical contexts, and perhaps even have its optimal efficiency calculated, but it is also 'just common-sense', and is, by and large, learned tacitly. As Bourdieu writes:

Practical sense, social necessity turned into nature, converted into motor schemes and body automatisms, is what causes practices, in and through what makes them obscure to the eyes of their producers, to be *sensible*, that is, informed by a common sense. It is because agents never know completely what they are doing that what they do has more sense than they know. [1990:69]

We should not be too ready to be too dismissive of common-sense; not only does it keep us alive whilst crossing the road, but it also allows a huge range of ideas and actions to be put into play without the need to follow through complicated sets of arguments and proofs to endorse them. In this, common-sense is worldly and mundane, and this is perhaps why philosophers are often so quick to be dismissive

of it, seeing it only as an explanatory mechanism, and failing to grasp its relation to practice. As Paul Churchland suggests (although he dismissively terms it 'folk-psychology'):

Folk psychology has survived for so very long, presumably, not because it is basically correct in its representations, but because the phenomena addressed are so surpassingly difficult that any useful handle on them, no matter how feeble, is unlikely to be displaced in a hurry. [1984:46]

The point is, however, that folk psychology/common sense has survived so long not simply (or even) because it offers viable 'representations' which explain things, but because it allows an ongoing and satisfactory relationship with the world at large. Whilst there are undoubtedly problems for acting in much of common-sense as it relates to emotion, if we turn our attentions from the means by which it offers an interpretation of the world around us to the practical engagement it allows, we may be better placed not only to understand how it works, but also to develop and use that knowledge in practice, re-informed by questioning the assumptions on which it is based.

It is important to recognise that, in acting, ideas about emotion (common-sense or otherwise) are rarely explicitly articulated. Rather, they fit into what the philosopher John Searle has termed 'the Background'. The Background is similar to Bourdieu's notion of '*habitus*', in that it not only connects thought and language in a raft of relative suppositions, but also joins them to perceptions, feelings and conscious states.

The thesis of the Background is simply this: Intentional phenomena such as meanings, understandings, interpretations, beliefs, desires, and experiences only function within a set of Background capacities that are not of themselves intentional. Another way to state this is to say that all representation, whether in language, thought, or experience, only succeeds in representing a given set of nonrepresentational capacities. [1994:175]

Of course, the Background can allow us to be misled, just as we can be mistaken in any knowledge, but it allows us to see trees as trees without continual indexing of memory, to cross the road without consulting a mental 'how to' handbook, and also to know that we are sad without the need for a lengthy interpretation of the experience.

'In' and 'Out': The Container Schema

To return to emotion then; common-sense typically assumes that 'emotions are first and foremost reactions of individual subjects' [Parkinson 1995:17]. As I discussed in the previous chapter regarding perception, there are embodied underpinnings to the apparently private 'internal' conception of experience. Whilst emotion (regardless of which explanation one chooses), seems to require external stimuli in one way or another, a fundamental premise is that it happens to *me*, and that *I* am somehow 'within', since my body is separated by its skin from other things, and feels different on the outside from the inside.

As much as this appears to be 'fundamental', how culture affects this embodied perception is at least as important as the perception itself. As Lakoff and Johnson note:

What we call 'direct physical experience' is never really a matter of merely having a body of a certain sort; rather, *every* experience takes place within a vast background of cultural presuppositions. It can be misleading, therefore, to speak of direct physical experience as though there were some core of immediate experience which we then 'interpret' in terms of our conceptual system. Cultural assumptions, values, and attitudes are not a conceptual overlay which we may or may not place upon experience as we choose. It would be more correct to say that all experience is cultural through and through, that we experience our 'world' in such a way that our culture is already present in the very experience itself. [1980:57]

The similarity to Searle's description of the Background is irresistible. Cultural assumptions about the nature and structure of our embodied experience (in this case what we call emotion) are inextricable from that embodied experience; the importance of 'in' and 'out' is thus as much a reflection of cultural value as it is of biological fact. Key in the creation and maintenance of the cultural importance of this schema as it relates to emotion, (and whilst it is rarely made explicit), are Descartes' musings on the relationship between mind and body. Certainly as acting functions as a means through which culture reflects and enacts its ideas and values, Descartes' theories still seem to be reflected both by, and within, its practice. Searle writes that:

Along with the Cartesian tradition we have inherited a vocabulary, and with the vocabulary a certain set of categories, within which we are historically conditioned to think about these problems. The vocabulary is not innocent, because implicit in the vocabulary are a surprising number of theoretical claims which are almost certainly false. The vocabulary includes a series of apparent oppositions: 'physical' versus 'mental,' 'body' versus 'mind,' 'materialism' versus 'mentalism,' 'matter' versus 'spirit.' Implicit in these oppositions is the thesis that the same phenomenon under the same aspects cannot literally satisfy both terms. [1994:14]

This polarity finds a paradigm in the 'actors dilemma' in which the actor's sense of self and the character she is portraying are assumed to be opposites which can only be made to seem related by artifice or absorption. I will give further discussion to this dilemma later in the light of the work of the Dutch psychologist Elly Konijn, but for now, having raised the spectre of Descartes, it is perhaps pertinent to discuss what this spectre is, and why it might have proved to be so enduring.

Descartes' maxim 'cogito ergo sum' (I think therefore I am) [1968:103] represents an attempt to posit all understanding within the mind, and at that, a 'mind' which is not actually part of the physical body at all:

There is a great difference between mind and body, in that body, by its nature, is always divisible and that mind is entirely indivisible. For in truth, when I consider my mind, that is to say myself insofar as I am only a thinking thing, I can distinguish no parts but conceive of myself as one single and complete thing. [1968:164]

A Cartesian perspective necessitates the consideration of physical data as being received from the body and the senses, but not by the mind directly; they have to pass through an intermediary level in the brain, a 'smallest part':

The mind does not receive immediately the impression from all parts of the body, but only from the brain, or perhaps even from one of its smallest parts, namely, from the part in which this faculty called common sense is exercised. [1968:164-5]

The smallest part of the brain to which Descartes refers is the pineal gland, which is located within the diencephalon (the central core of the forebrain). Descartes believed this to be the area from which sensual information, processed by the brain, was passed to the metaphysical mind. His reason for this selection seems somewhat arbitrary in the light of modern scientific method, but he was attracted to the slightly detached nature of the gland from the main brain (it is suspended from the roof of the third ventricle within the diencephalon).⁷ Given the unavoidable sensation that thought is located in the head, and by association, therefore, within the brain, this thought-based sense of self or mind had to have its location somewhere within the brain. Descartes' reasoning however, was that the mind is indivisible, and so therefore could not be located precisely within one part of the brain (by then a divisible organ thanks to advancements in anatomy), but nor could it be located within the brain as a whole as this is a divisible part of the larger divisible body. The

pineal gland therefore offered something of a compromise, its suspended nature making it seem somewhat separate from the brain, but its location within the skull could still account for the apparently cranial location of the mind. As a small and mysterious piece of viscera, separate from the larger brain, Descartes reasoned that it therefore allowed an interface between the immaterial mind and the material body.

Whilst Descartes acknowledges the role of the bodily senses in imparting information, his scepticism leads him to assert that: 'Everything I have accepted up to now as being absolutely true and assured, I have learned from or through the senses. But I have sometimes found that these senses played me false, and it is prudent never to trust entirely those who have deceived us' [1968:96]. He does not question that we receive information from the body which is useful to us, but his argument is that this information is only knowable in (or rather by) the mind. The mind is the locus of the sense of self for Descartes, as he sees it as being indivisible in a manner which cannot be said of the body. What we might understand as 'emotion' therefore, is a purely physical reaction to circumstances, a 'feeling' of which the mind/self attempts to make sense, caged as it is, by the fleshy body with its deceptive perceptual faculties. The suggestion is, of course, that we do not wholly understand why we have an emotion, even if we are conscious of it, since emotion is something which happens to the body, a distinct entity from the reasoning mind.

'Passion', or 'emotion', is seen by Descartes as a reflective awareness of the turmoil going on within the physical body transmitted to the mind by 'animal spirits' in the pineal gland. Emotion is thus something to which we are subject. The separation of the immaterial mind as the seat of consciousness (and therefore reason under this analysis), allows for the suggestion that whilst the self is prey to the whim of autonomous bodily emotions, our sense of it is transcendent of them and of the body.

Descartes' pronounced separation of mind and body is now largely dismissed within philosophy and psychology, and its significance as concerns common-sense can hardly be said to be explicit. However, as Searle notes, even if the arguments made by Descartes no longer have currency, his legacy is nevertheless a vocabulary and a set of categories,⁸ which, in their continued usage, still exert the force of his ideas. This is as true of acting as it is of any other activity or enquiry.

To be more specific, the principle legacy of Cartesian philosophy as regards acting (and remembering that acting is both a reflection and development of the wider

culture in which it occurs) is in the objectivist account of experience which it allows. As Mark Johnson notes, Cartesian philosophy is overwhelmingly concerned that, in order to refute scepticism, 'knowledge must rest on something that is certain' [1987:xxvi]. Knowledge is presumed by Descartes to be inextricable from reason. Reason involves the recognition of a formal system which is presumed to exist prior to this act and is therefore timeless (i.e. it is an aspect of God). Knowing something thus gives rise to an ontological problem:

On a Cartesian account, the body does not play a role in human reasoning – rationality is essentially disembodied. Rationality may make use of material presented by the senses, but it is not itself an attribute of bodily substance. This gives rise to a basic ontological gulf between mind and body, reason and sensation. The ontological problem, then, is to find some way to bridge this gap, to connect mind and body. [Johnson 1987:xxvii]

The gap is not only between mind and body as entities, but also between their applications, between thoughts and actions, concepts and practices. What I know, is therefore separated from what this knowledge is about. What I *do* and what I *think*, are thus, also separate. I have discussed above that Descartes proposed that the separation of mind and body was resolved through the intervention of 'animal spirits' in the pineal gland, and if disproving this hypothesis were all that there is to laying his legacy to rest, then the history of Western thought might appear very different from its current aspect. To reiterate Searle's point however, it is not so much the arguments he advanced, but rather his vocabulary, categories and methods which have proved so enduring.

As regards acting, the binary separation of thought and action, mind and body, concept and practice which so underpins Cartesian philosophy is borne out as part of a common-sense theory. For example, if we take character to be a 'concept' and performance to be 'practice' for example, and in doing implicitly accept that there is a division between them (accounted for by the separation of mind from body), then we not only need parallel accounts of their functions, but also a method for implementing them. It is my suggestion that theories of acting have so subsumed such divided categories as an inevitable part of common-sense that they are concerned with developing a similarly Cartesian solution for intervening between them.⁹ (I am not suggesting that actors are deliberately Cartesian, but attempting to demonstrate how such ideas penetrate even apparently unreflective modes of thought such as common-sense).

The need for distinct categories is identified by Johnson [1987] and Lakoff [1987] as a key component of the philosophical project they describe as 'objectivism'. Objectivism, Johnson notes is broadly defined by the following common-sense assumption: '[that] the world consists of objects that have properties and stand in various relationships independent of human understanding' [1987:x]. From an objectivist point of view there must be set categories, since if reality is to be objective, it has to be in direct relation to the formality of sentences which describe it. Since formal categories are taken to exist, then we can also be tempted to say that if they have recognisable features, then 'emotions' exist. If these features can be described, then because of this they can be represented, and once represented they can be understood. Since representation itself is a formal process, understanding is thus a case of achieving a match of like with like – the representation with the thing. The Cartesian problem remains however; how do we get from subject to object, from the thing being represented, to the representation itself? How the 'outside' gets 'in', begins to demand either the perspicacity of the *camera obscura* discussed in the previous chapter, or the creation of some kind of quasi-physical system such as animal spirits.

Objectivism, as discussed above, gives rise to its apparent opposite – subjectivism. At its most extreme a subjectivist doctrine inverts that of objectivism and proposes that meaning is private and unstructured, that imagination occurs quite apart from the physical environment and from culture, and that any level of structure placed upon experience is quite artificial. As Lakoff and Johnson suggest, part of the endurance of the ongoing myths of objectivism and subjectivism has to do with the persistence of the supposition that: 'if you're not being *objective*, you're being *subjective*, and there is no third choice' [1980:185]. I want to give more discussion to the possibility of a third choice later, but for now it is important to recognise that, whilst objectivism and subjectivism appear to be separate (albeit mutually polarised) dogmas, they both maintain a viewpoint that human beings exist somehow separate from their environment.

Antonio Damasio suggests that 'we only know that we feel an emotion when we sense that emotion is sensed as happening in our organism' [1999:279]; that is to say that emotion is sensed as happening *inside* of us. This is important, as this inside is so because it has definable boundaries. Emotions are 'subjective' because they happen to a defined and sensed entity. Because the experience of 'inside' is marked by our being set apart from other people and objects, what occurs 'inside', can be

regarded as unique in some degree, in that, in order for something to occur 'inside', it must be defined as being 'in here' and not anywhere else. What I experience in this way is thus what is unique about me, and appears to account for any sense of individual self that I have.

Paradoxically, the container metaphor also allows us to think of a sense of self in more objective terms; because it is within a physical location, it can be thought of in substantive terms. Much as one can think of a biscuit in a tin, or a foot in a shoe, the self can be ascribed location within the physical body. Whilst Cartesian scepticism seems to do away with the idea of the self *actually* as a physical substance, nonetheless, the experience of thoughts and feelings taking place *within* the physical confines of the body still allows for the metaphor to stand. It might be protested, of course, that this is a metaphor, and not necessarily what *actually* happens. However, the question remains as to why one might be interested in suggesting what *actually* happens, if not for the embodied grounding of this metaphor, and the concurrent tendency to extend it into other areas of experience.

Truth is always given relative to a conceptual system and the metaphors that structure it. Truth is therefore not absolute or objective but is based on understanding. Thus sentences do not have inherent, objectively given meanings, and communications cannot be merely the transmission of such meanings. [Lakoff and Johnson 1980:197]

From an objectivist point of view the container metaphor works as a description of emotions since they can be both caused by and act upon the external world; they can be described in categoric fashion in terms of shared features; they can even be said to operate in terms of reason in that they relate to external events and dictate courses of action. From the subjectivist point of view, emotions involve 'feeling' and are thus ineffable and insubstantial; as feelings they occur within the body; as a result of this they occur to me exclusively. For the actor then, emotion is something which paradoxically both determines the boundaries of self as part of homeostasis, and yet also makes up the particular and special qualities of what is sensed within those boundaries. Homeostasis is the automatic regulation by an organism of itself in relation to its environment – maintaining constant internal body temperature in spite of external changes, for example. Damasio argues that emotions are part of this regulation:

At their most basic, emotions are part of homeostatic regulation and are poised to avoid the loss of integrity that is a harbinger of death or death

itself, as well as to endorse a source of energy, shelter, or sex. And as a result of powerful learning mechanisms such as conditioning, emotions of all shades eventually help connect homeostatic regulation and survival 'values' to numerous events and objects in our autobiographical experience. Emotions are inseparable from the idea of reward or punishment, of pleasure or pain, of approach or avoidance, of personal advantage and disadvantage. Inevitably, emotions are inseparable from the idea of good and evil. [2000:54-55]

Emotion as a Physical Force

As Lakoff and Johnson also point out, there are various other metaphors used to describe emotion. These are generally characterised as derivations of a metaphor that 'emotion is a physical force'. Emotion is thus something that can 'seize', 'possess', 'overwhelm', 'afflict' and so on. The container metaphor allows us to think of the self as a bounded object; the addition of 'emotion is a physical force' metaphors creates a gestalt in which emotion is marked by its effect upon the container's inside and outside, subjectively and objectively. That it is a physical force can also mean that it can be beyond our control – it is both 'mine' and yet something for which 'I' am not directly responsible. Emotion as a physical force is a disturbance of the homeostasis of the container described above, and thus something which demands regulation.

In attempting to understand acting on the basis of this gestalt it is not my intention to solely offer up a criticism of its epistemological basis. As I have suggested, it is used as part of common-sense; it must therefore be seen as having a certain practical logic. Simply delineating this logic is not enough however; if we wish for a truly rich explanation of what and how something is done, the better to *do* it, then these ideas must worked *through* and re-directed in a similarly practical fashion.

David George, in common with many theorists, equates theatre (and thus acting) with drama, or script:

Conventionally, theatre is the translation of a written dramatic text into representation in space and time. A performance is then a one-off version of that transformation, since a dramatic text is 'performed' in and by the theatre. That makes performance, in this definition, a twice-removed 'betrayal' of the original text, the drama'. [1996:18]

Having made this assertion George neglects to qualify his use of 'conventionally' in asserting what theatre '*is*'. Given the avant-garde agenda associated with the separation of theatre from performance one could perhaps feel that it is as much down to 'convenience' as 'convention' that theatre is necessarily the 'translation of a

written dramatic text'. As I have attempted to discuss meta-theoretically, I am not altogether happy with the clumsy assertion that 'acting' equals 'theatre' which equals 'drama' which equals 'text/script', as I neither see the logic of this apparent causality, nor, ultimately find it terribly useful. However, since it is unquestionably a pervasive idea, it is perhaps a useful premise from which to begin. If we reverse the order of the equation (so that script = drama = theatre = acting), we see that in these terms, the origin of emotional information comes from the script, which is then viewed in dramatic terms, then given location, then put in to practice.

A script provides us with something objective, something 'out there', in which meaning/information/knowledge, can ultimately be couched. The script can be seen as an object (paper, print, etc.), the formal arrangement of which is classed as 'drama'. Whilst arguments abound as to what does or does not make a given work 'dramatic' (and I do not intend to indulge any of them here at length), that a 'drama' is a written work intended for presentation in the form of actions and/or words, seems to keep controversy to a minimum. 'Theatre' which (as discussed in the previous chapter) derives its etymology from the Greek *theatron* 'or place of seeing' is, in terms of this equation, a physical location in which the drama will be played out. The physical means by which this is achieved is 'acting', which, as Bruce Shapiro observes, is:

...the manner in which the actor uses the medium of a drama to effect both its appearance and the audience's consequent recognition of it. Thus, in a dramatic performance, actors should not intend for either themselves or the medium to be the object of recognition. [1999:57]

Acting, and theatre itself, are thus subsumed by the drama, which itself, resides principally in the written text of the script. Similarly, if emotion is to be recognised in acting, in the context of this discussion, it originates in, and is first and foremost a property of, the script.

Not only does acting therefore become a question of getting the 'outside' 'in' somehow, but also of getting some resultant emotional product back 'out' again. Quite 'what' should go 'in' and thus come back 'out' from the script is, of course, the beginnings of a concern over interpretation. If we are not to make the literal assumption that the script has some sort of substantial emotional residue which can almost be scrapped off the page and put into the actor in order to be experienced, then some sort of intermediary stage is necessary - interpretation.

Three Emotional 'Styles'

The Dutch psychologist Elly Konijn identifies three different styles of acting each offering a different solution to dealing with this intermediary stage which may be adduced from their use of container schema metaphors: the extent to which they prioritise being 'inside' or 'outside'.¹⁰ In this she gives considerable discussion to 'character emotions' and this is important to her eventual thesis. This is problematic however, in that, in restricting acting to discussion of character, we end up with the split between theatre and performance which I criticised earlier. However, Konijn quite consciously limits her discussion as follows: 'since Diderot's *Paradoxe* is the starting point, the frame of reference is mainly (traditional) character acting' [2000:18]. In employing such a limited frame of reference and (as I shall later discuss) in showing how unstable the apparent stylistic divisions within it are, she also points towards the instability of the distinction between George's conventional 'theatre' and the alternate genre of 'performance'.

Whilst the disparity between the emotions of a character (i.e. those contained within the script) and what she terms 'task emotions' (those relating to immediate action – which I shall discuss later), is central to her discussion, of more immediate interest here is the extent to which the three styles she identifies each 'encounter the problem of the so-called *double consciousness* that the actor should maintain' [2000:36]. In the metaphorical shaping of this double consciousness by embodied schemata, each style (wittingly or unwittingly) forms part of an objectivist discourse of mind and body, thought and feeling.

The double-consciousness of the actor, was alluded to by Henry Irving during his public spat with the French actor Benoit Constant Coquelin over Diderot's *Le Paradoxe* in the late Nineteenth Century:

It is necessary to this art that the mind should have, as it were, a double consciousness, in which all the emotions proper to the occasion may have full swing, while the actor is all the time on the alert for every detail of his method. It may be that his playing will be more spirited one night than another. But the actor who combines the electric force of a strong personality with a mastery of the resources of his art must have a greater power over his audience than the passionless actor who gives a most artistic simulation of the emotions he never experiences. [1974.357]

This intriguing notion was echoed by William Archer in *Masks or Faces?* in which he writes of 'the absolute truth of imitation which is possible to the actor who combines

artistically controlled sensibility with perfect means of physical expression' [1974:369]. The notion of a double consciousness suggests that the actor is simultaneously both separate from and yet part of what he creates – an apparently paradoxical, *impossible*, position. The difference between acting styles thus concerns not only degrees of difference, but also their creative source: whether it is assumed to come from external, reasoned, objective *ideas*, or from internal, felt, subjective *feelings*. The perceived differences between the three styles selected by Konijn demonstrates the pervasiveness of the objectivism highlighted by Lakoff and Johnson, and the extent to which it has permeated common-sense.

The Style of Involvement

The first style discussed by Konijn is 'the style of involvement'. For all three styles she presents a practitioner-theorist as providing a paradigm, and in this case it is Stanislavski. The style is characterised as being one in which the emotion shown on stage 'seems as real as possible'; the actor him/herself should no longer be 'visible in the portrayal of the character' [2000:36]. Whilst Stanislavski was certainly interested in a style of acting in which the actor's sense of self and that of the character she or he is portraying *appears* to be merged, arguments remain as to the extent (and even if), this was what he actually endorsed. Certainly, a cursory examination of the work of the American disciples of Stanislavski who developed the infamous Method as if it were an extension of a plan to merge actor and character would seem to endorse this. However, the facility of this popular analysis does few favours to Stanislavski, or the various Method practitioners.¹¹

As Joseph Roach makes clear, Stanislavski's theories of acting can no more be separated from the prevailing scientific opinions of his time (and of which he informed himself),¹² than they can be from the immediate demands of the productions he directed and which also informed his thinking.

Stanislavski's theories defy tidy summary because they take into account the complexity of higher organisms, including the phenomenon of double or multiple consciousness. As he clarified the implications of contemporary psychophysiological theory in his own mind, Stanislavski adjusted his emphases to suit the emerging facts of life. His System, therefore, cannot be comprehended without his science. [1985:206]

Not only is it important to consider the paradigm that Stanislavski offers to the style of involvement in relation to his historical context, but it must also be considered on the basis of its application as practical common-sense. It is otherwise too easy to dismiss

what were, after all, practical investigations on the basis of their failure to reach some 'intellectual' standard which he played no part in dictating.

Natalie Crohn Schmitt writes that: 'Stanislavski was first of all a man of the theater. His writing, as he himself seems to have sensed, lacks intellectual rigor' [1990:94]. Such criticism is absurd however, since, as Roach has so eloquently shown, for all his apparent lack of 'intellectual rigour' Stanislavski was in fact addressing *at a practical level* some of the most pertinent scientific questions of the day, particularly those concerning reflex action and behaviour.¹³ Not only that, but his 'system' (if indeed it may be understood as such) is an account of a lifetime's *practical* encounter with 'how' to act, rather than a theoretical tilt at it. In addition, it is important not to assume that he, or either of the paradigms offered for the remaining two styles presents a totalised vision of theatre or acting. The particularity of each style is interesting since paradoxically, as Konijn suggests, they each swing around a conceptual axis concerning the possibility of the actor's *double consciousness*, and in so doing provide a practical illustration not only of the problems of objectivist metaphysics suggested by Lakoff and Johnson, but in their collective concerns for practice present the beginnings of an alternative epistemology.

As he suggests in *Building a Character*, Stanislavski was concerned with developing a style and method of acting which was 'based on the laws of nature' [1986:287]. Since it was based on the laws of nature, it would itself *be* nature, would be true, sincere, and unencumbered by artifice. Since nature itself was being revealed to have certain basic principles, then so, reasoned Stanislavski, must acting. It was not only that the emerging science of psychology seemed to be revealing natural principles of behaviour and emotion led him to these conclusions however. The domestic settings and concerns of the plays of the developing naturalistic movement within the theatre, and the emergence of attempts at a concurrently 'real' style of acting unquestionably influenced Stanislavski in his desire to develop a more rigorous and systematised approach to acting. An example of this was provided for him by the Italian Tommaso Salvini, whose acting brought a new sense of psychological realism to the stage in a shift away from the inflated histrionics encouraged by the prevalence of melodrama:

Fifteen minutes before the beginning of the performance, Salvini was quite ready, and he went out on the stage for the last time fully dressed for his part, and indeed, as the character he was acting that night. It was no longer Salvini, but the character of the part who had completely ousted the personality of the great actor. [Stanislavski 1967:210]

Whilst Stanislavski is elsewhere at pains to limit the extent to which the actor's own sense of self is ousted by that of the character, the extremity of this interpretation of Salvini's performance would seem to suggest that in the style of involvement, if the spectator is to believe that the actor *is* the character, it is necessary that (leaving argument to one side temporarily) the actor similarly believe that she or he *is* the character.

The style of involvement seems to seek to create a belief in the parity of what one is seeing to what is 'real' outside of theatrical experience. This need not only mean performances in which the entire *mise en scene* has the appearance of reality, but also those which seek to make the audience believe that the experience of the actors they are watching perform is 'sincere'. What would the grounds for such belief be?

Konijn outlines what we might understand as sincerity in the following terms:

The terms of accord between external behavior and the underlying, inner feeling which as yet can scarcely be measured. Different gradations in the degree of sincerity are described by words like real, trance, played, staged, or fake, which connote an increasing degree of disparity between expression and the underlying 'truthful feeling'. The greater the disparity, the 'phonier' the expression. [2000:95]

Again we see the occurrence of an explanation based upon a container schema; if we accept that the relationship between 'inner' feeling, and 'outward' expression is the basis of sincerity then in doing so we embrace an idea of a paradoxical difference between the two. External behaviour has a relation to inner feeling, but is not the same thing; sincerity however, is relative to the parity between the two.

Stanislavski was developing his ideas about acting at a time in which science seemed to be succeeding in not only describing, but also in controlling, the physical world. This was something of a triumph for objectivism, since it seemed to demonstrate that there was indeed an order to things, which, once described, could be manipulated. This was Progress. Any radical revision of theatre and acting had to attach itself to this, and frequently it did so by adopting the account of reality it claimed.¹⁴

Stanislavski's system sought to make an objective link between the external world and an internal process. If the internal process can be made to be as objective as

that which must exist externally, then 'sincerity' would be achieved. By the end of the Nineteenth Century Darwin was apparently demonstrating that the external manifestation of emotion displayed certain objective features which could be identified across species and cultures.¹⁵ The concurrent rise of reflex psychology appeared to show that emotional responses could be repeatedly induced under specific and controlled conditions. Both of these developments were important as they seemed to give firm epistemological grounds for supposing not only a causal link between emotional experience and expression and the possibility of systematically identifying different emotions, but also that their apparently subjective, private, and internal 'feelings' had objectifiable characteristics.

How though, is this borne out in practice? As Konijn writes, 'in the style of involvement the emphasis is seemingly placed on the private emotions of the actor, but actually the emphasis is placed on the character-emotions' [2000:38]. A style of involvement seeks some kind of parity between the emotions experienced by the actor, and those presumed to belong to the character she is portraying. The chief starting point for determining how the actor's performance will appear to be sincere, is thus in her interpretation of the script.

An objectivist standpoint assumes that the script, as part of an external objective reality, 'contains' certain things. Quite reasonably it can be asserted that there are certain elements which physically make up the script – the pages, print, and so on, it might also be claimed that it possesses two further levels of containment. Firstly the printed words might be said to contain narrative and character. Secondly, it might be said that the characters making up the story themselves contain certain things, histories antecedent to the beginning of the narrative in the script itself, psychological dispositions, particular feelings at a given moment, and so on.

As Walter Ong writes: 'writing establishes in the text a "line" of continuity outside the mind' [1982:39]. So, paradoxically, that which the actor must 'become' begins as an objective fact apart from him/herself. The means by which this paradoxical dilemma is solved therefore, requires interpretative strategies in which the script is afforded a 'line' of continuity. This is not only in terms of narrative, or overall 'sense', but also in terms of a character psychology which the actor either feels she can absorb or possesses already, or can come to understand by trying to recreate the experience which has led to it, either imaginatively or physically. Indeed all three strategies may be attempted in some order.

Another important assumption of the style of involvement is that 'the emotions experienced in the audience should also parallel the emotions on stage'. The actor is thus a conduit between the script and the spectator. The importance of the actor's interpretation may be afforded greater or lesser significance according to the degree of involvement required by a given approach. In addition, its theoretical conception of the overall importance of the actor within theatrical production is dependent on prevailing cultural values, and also the level of personal significance attached to her task. Both of these factors play a part in determining the extent to which she is a 'mere cipher' or not. The significance of this interpretation is often used as a means of increasing the importance of the actor's status within production, so that what she brings to a character by her involvement with it is what ultimately elevates it to the level of 'art'.

Regardless of the overall degree of importance of performance as a work of art in the style of involvement which the actor attaches to him/herself, emotion remains as a means of blurring the distinction between the two containers of self and script. In addition, it is seen as part of a natural order, which (if the actor can achieve correspondence with it), will lend him/her a 'natural' sincerity. Thus, for Stanislavski, as the practitioner-paradigm of this style:

The creative process of living and experiencing a part is an *organic* one, founded on the physical and spiritual laws governing the nature of man, on the truthfulness of his emotions, and on natural beauty. [1981:44]

The Style of Detachment

The next style discussed by Konijn, the 'style of detachment', 'rejects the principle of identification of the actor with the character' [2000:39], apparently placing itself in direct contrast to the stance taken by the style of involvement. However, as she suggests, what the two do share is the concept of acting requiring a 'double consciousness'; further than this, both use a container schema as the basis for understanding the actor's relation to emotion.

The style of detachment suggests that the actor should not, or need not, experience any identity between his own emotions and those of the character he is playing. The emphasis is on demonstration over actual experience. In this Diderot would seem at first to offer a fine example, but Konijn chooses Brecht as her practitioner-theorist paradigm of the style.

The concern for 'sincerity' remains in the style of detachment, but finds its locus in the social situation which leads emotional reaction to seem plausible, and in technical command over that reaction. The style of detachment thus allows for a good deal more abstraction than the style of involvement which privileges verisimilitude. The actor in the style of detachment is thus able to play a variety of roles in quick succession without concerns over the disruption of a necessary belief in the unity of him/herself and the character.

The style of detachment explicitly acknowledges the separateness of the actor and the character, so that in effect they are schematised as two separate containers. How then do they bear relevance to one another if there is no sense of interpenetration as in the style of involvement? As Konijn cleverly points out 'the solution to the actor's dilemma in the style of detachment lies in making the dilemma into a theme' [2000:40]. What the two styles also share (albeit in radically different manifestations), is a concern for interpretation. As John Rouse points out 'Brecht reveals himself as a director who gives the text (or rather...his interpretation of the text) absolute priority' [1995:229].

There is an important caveat which needs to be stated here however; Konijn's selection of her practitioner-theorists (and my adoption and discussion of them) is as much to do with convenience as with the extent to which their practice actively embodied any of the styles. What is of real interest is the extent to which their apparently radically different approaches share a broad range of similarities. These are mostly to do with the practicalities of acting; surprisingly though, they also meet on a philosophical level concerning the ideal state of consciousness necessary for the 'truly great' acting on which Diderot claimed his theories were based and endorsed by. Having stated this caveat, it should be clear that each of the theorist-practitioners is presented as a paradigm for a particular style, not because a slavish adherence to one particular dogma concerning acting and emotion, but because of the way in which their life and work, and the context in which they worked shaped a particular line of approach. This pragmatism is significant, since if we are to avoid essentialising the work of these individuals then it is important to recognise that their theory is not merely some claim to an abstract and constant 'truth' about acting, but testimony to an ongoing engagement with its practice. As Peter Thompson writes of Brecht:

We should note...that Brecht was a compulsive articulator. Much of what he wrote and subsequently published was a response to immediate circumstances. Given his taste for contradiction and his advocacy of dialectics, we should not be surprised by evident contradictions. There is no static, once-and-for-all manifesto. The measure of Brecht's truth is efficacy: what may be thought or half thought expressed through what is done. [2000:102]

Brecht is so often presented as Stanislavski's antithesis, and certainly, much like Stanislavski's errant pupil Meyerhold, he rejected outright the naturalistic level of representation which was the aim of much of the Russian director's work with actors. However, also like Meyerhold, he retained a certain amount of respect for the rigour of his apparent rival's work, grudging as it may seem.¹⁶

Much of the reason for the continuing presentation of the apparent opposition between the approaches of Stanislavski and Brecht, must surely lie in the confusion between the dramaturgical principles laid out by Brecht and his work with actors both in practice and theory. As John Rouse points out, Brecht was first and foremost a playwright, and then a director, for whom the actor was important in the extent to which they realised the director's interpretation of the playwright's text.¹⁷ Brecht was also a pragmatist however, who, through his continued practice developed an increasing appreciation of the actor's art, particularly during the lengthy periods of rehearsal he was afforded with the Berliner Ensemble between 1949 and 1956. His often prescriptive writings on theatre must therefore be balanced by judgements from two fronts: firstly from the extent to which they represent a dramaturgical ideal, and secondly from the relation they bear to the practical necessities of performance encountered by him and his actors.

As Konijn suggests, the style of acting favoured by Brecht makes the actor's dilemma into a virtue. The dilemma, as phrased by Konijn (following Archer) as 'to feel or not to feel', is not merely something which Brecht wanted his actors to reach a decision about, it is what he wanted their *performances* to be about. By making them consider the *social*, and not the merely *personal* circumstances of the roles they were playing, Brecht wanted his actor's performances to be active considerations of *what* to feel, when, and why, not only for the benefit of their own characterisations, but also for the elucidation of the audience.

Brecht's most famous example of this is in his essay 'The Street Scene', in which he likens the actor of his Epic Theatre to a witness of an accident 'demonstrating' to

other bystanders what happened. The demonstrator does not try to show *exactly* what happened by precisely recreating the circumstances and mise-en-scene of the events, but rather attempts to *explain* what happened. In doing so he may exaggerate, repeat, focus only on one moment, slow something down, and so on, in an effort to get the point across. In this, his words and gestures may become, in the words of Walter Benjamin 'quotable' [1998:19], that is to say, repeatable, available for debate, examination, and question – are they really 'truthful'?¹⁸ The dilemma of 'to feel or not to feel' is thus not set in absolute terms – it is not a strict decision the actor must make and stick to – but is dependent on its expediency to the situation:

To the street demonstrator the character of the man being demonstrated remains a quantity that need not be completely defined. Within certain limits he may be like this or like that; it doesn't matter. What the demonstrator is concerned with are his accident-prone and accident-proof qualities. [1976:89]

As much as he was attempting to overthrow Aristotelian notions of formal unity in dramatic terms, Brecht was also concerned with developing a similarly disrupted technique of acting. It was not merely a question of a stylistic approach to making theatre, but a very practical attempt to engage the actor (and thus the spectator) in a dialectical relationship between his/her feelings, and the situation she or he was in. This situation was thus not only the situation being represented – the house of Shen Te in Szechuan, or Mother Courage following behind the armies of the Thirty Years War – but also the theatrical reality which they were in. Since Brecht sought to shatter any trace of the illusion of the 'real' in representational terms, what the actors had to respond to was not a situation which corresponded to the complexities and vicissitudes of 'real-life', but to a theatrical environment, self-conscious and yet also set apart.

That Brecht remains so frequently characterised as the polar opposite to Stanislavski must surely be seen as increasingly bizarre. There is seemingly no end of scholarly appraisals of his writings and legacy which seek to stress not only his pragmatism (and thus permissiveness of any number of approaches by his actors), but also the substantial body of evidence contained both within his own writings and in the testimonies of his actors, which suggest that 'empathy' was an important part of his working method with them.¹⁹

The convenience of distinctions between 'involvement' and 'detachment' does seem somewhat shaky in the light of this. However, as suggested, both broad paradigms

are solely for the sake of convenience, and the distinction is made on the basis that they provide *variations* (rather than strict *differences*) of an idea of the actor and his/her personal 'states' forming part of a larger view which sees a person as a metaphorical container in relation to other containers.

The embodiment of the container metaphor and its concomitant gestalts appears more complex in the case of the style of detachment, since it requires the actor not simply to position him/herself somewhere in relation to 'in' and 'out', but to be in a state of constant transition between the two. The gestalt with the 'emotion as physical force' metaphor is less important in the style of detachment since, unlike the style of involvement it does not assume a necessarily causal relationship between the emotions of the character and the actor, and the actor and the spectator.

In terms of the container metaphor, the chief difference between the two styles discussed thus far lies not so much in one involving the 'inside', and the other the 'outside', as it might be tempting to suggest, but in the manner of the negotiation between these two states. The style of detachment actively seeks to question the very structure of the container on *sociological* grounds. In the style of involvement 'inside' and 'outside' are seen as being part of a 'natural order', as indeed is the 'physical force' which mediates between them. The style of detachment, as characterised by Brecht, accepts the objectivity necessary to identify this 'natural order', but seeks to make acting not simply representative of it, but to actually embody it.

As Lakoff and Johnson suggest, an objectivist stance implicitly assumes (and thus legitimises to some extent) an opposing subjectivist one. Emotion, in the terms of the container schema employed by the style of detachment, is not simply the 'internal' subjective product of objectifiable 'outside' forces, but is also part of the material 'outside' itself. It is not simply a 'hydraulic' counter action to environmental pressure, but is itself a means of action in the world and thus a means towards understanding – it tends towards objectifiable ends. Helene Weigel's silent scream as Courage is thus not simply an affective response to a tragic situation, but as a clearly defined 'gesture' it brings itself into question – why is she screaming? How appropriate is this to the situation and her actions? As Walter Benjamin explains, the 'quotable gesture' creates a perspicacity of action not characteristic of behaviour in the everyday:

The gesture has two advantages over the highly deceptive statements made by people and their many-layered and opaque actions. First, the gesture is falsifiable only up to a point; in fact, the more inconspicuous and habitual it is, the more difficult it is to falsify. Second, unlike people's actions and endeavours, it has a definable beginning and end. Indeed this strict, frame-like, enclosed nature of each moment of an attitude which, after all, is as a whole in a state of living flux, is one of the basic dialectical characteristics of the gesture. This leads one to an important conclusion: the more frequently we interrupt someone engaged in an action, the more gestures we obtain. [1998:3]

The style of detachment seeks to show emotion to be as much a question of will and intellect in response to social forces as an unconscious and inevitable response to those of nature.

The Style of Involvement

The third style outlined by Konijn is not a synthesis of the previous two as might be suspected, but is distinguished by a rejection of the notion of character as an entity 'other' to the actor at any stage, by making the subject of the actor's performance him/herself: 'the emotions characters portray are those of the actors themselves and must be as spontaneous and true as possible' [2000:41]. Whilst Konijn selects the work of Grotowski as paradigmatic of this style, it is perhaps in the visions of Antonin Artaud that it finds its theoretical exemplar. Although his own attempts at establishing a 'Theatre of Cruelty' were ultimately failures,²⁰ Artaud's legacy has remained as an inspiration to countless theatre makers throughout the second-half of the Twentieth Century, and now into the Twenty First. Whilst he is, of course, just one example amongst many who have rejected a dramatic character-led interpretation of the theatrical event, even if only for the sheer violence of his revision he remains a lightning rod for those who would reject the classical tenets of theatre. As Grotowski suggested:

When an eminent creator with an achieved style and personality, like Peter Brook, turns to Artaud, it's not to hide his own weaknesses, or to ape the man. It just happens that at a given point of his development he finds himself in agreement with Artaud, feels the need of a confrontation, **tests** Artaud, and retains whatever stands up to this test. [1981:85]

Much of the appeal of Artaud's vision, lies not only in his rejection of psychology and its lingering whiff of bourgeois culture, but also in the extremity of experience he was seeking: 'the unendingly repeated jading of our organs calls for sudden shocks to revive our understanding' [1989:66]. In order to achieve this Artaud recommended doing away with 'analysible [*sic*] emotional feelings' [1989:66], but was still interested enough in something he termed 'emotion' to include it within his vision for a new

theatre. Rather than the mundane level of the everyday, Artaud was interested in an extremity of feeling such that an actor would need to be an '*athlète affectif*' in order to control it. Not only would the extremity of this experience act as a kind of possession for the actor, but its invocation and management would lead to similarly powerful and direct effect for the spectator.

A gifted actor knows instinctively how to tap and radiate certain powers. But he would be astonished if he were told those powers which make their substantial journey through the senses existed, for he never realised they could actually exist. To use his emotions in the same way as a boxer uses his muscles, he [the actor] must consider a human being almost as a Double, like the Kha of the Egyptian mummies, like a ghost radiating affective energy. [1989:89]

Like the words of all good prophets, Artaud's recommendations are opaque and suggestive rather than offering concrete advice, and this is perhaps why his legacy endures. However, the gestalt view of emotion in his writing remains. As much as he appears to have been opposed to an objectivist stance, even if he is interpreted as embracing a radically subjectivist position, this is nevertheless done in relation to what it opposes.

Whilst Artaud's theatrical visions are often presented as an extreme, viewed in the light of the gestalt discussed above, they can be seen as sharing much in common with other perspectives on acting and emotion, even if (as I suggest) by appearing to be in opposition with them. The gestalt must be understood from the perspective of the objectivist trend within Western culture as it relates to common-sense, and the informing of acting by common-sense.

Given the extremity of Artaud's vision, how might he be thought of as endorsing a 'common-sense' view in regards to emotion? It is important to extract the pejorative from the phrase at this stage which seems to forever link the application of common-sense to a reactionary and conservative level of decision making, to a form of quietism which seems to stand in opposition to the outpouring Artaud's holy vision of the theatre seems to have required. Given that Artaud is so often portrayed (and only half-fairly in this instance) as a visionary madman, it is perhaps now as good a point as any to revisit common-sense in the light of his lunatic extreme. Importantly, it is also necessary to reclaim common-sense from the kind of 'down-home-old-wives-tale' branch of good advice giving which philosophers and scientists are so fond of knocking down. Common-sense as I am claiming it in this instance, is neither

'un-thinking', nor by rote Pavlovian repetition of stock clichés. Common-sense is an accumulation of knowledges and experiences.

John Searle [1994] writes of what he terms the 'Background' that it is not 'propositional' in the manner in which so many analytic philosophers require a truly mental state to be. That is to say, that it is not strictly *about* any one thing, but is rather an accumulation of things. This state is necessary because it allows our accumulated experiences to be more than just a series of formal relations; to simply *be*:

A crucial step in understanding the Background is to see that one can be committed to the truth of a proposition without having any intentional state whatever with that proposition as content. I can, for example, be committed to the proposition that objects are solid, without in any way, implicitly or explicitly, having any belief or conviction to that effect. Well then, what is the sense of commitment involved? At least this: I cannot whilst sitting in this chair, leaning on this desk, and resting my feet on this floor, consistently deny that objects are solid, because my behavior presupposes the solidity of these objects. It is in that sense that my intentional behavior, a manifestation of my Background capacities, commits me to the proposition that objects are solid, even though I have formed no belief that objects are solid. [Searle 1994:185]

The Background, in common with Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* saves much dualistic wrangling over 'unconscious' level's of belief, and indeed any suggestion of a middle ground between belief and disbelief. Common-sense is the Background in practice.

As regards Artaud and his desire for emotional extremity, this is particularly important. In demanding that the actor become an *athlète affectif*, Artaud was drawing a particularly close link between bodily practice and the quality of experience. In particular, he was concerned that bodily practice be both the generator and the regulator of the emotional intensity he desired. The *doing* of emotion in the Artaudian vision of a Theatre of Cruelty thus takes on a paramount importance. How the actor 'does' emotion rather than how she represents it becomes the key question. This is significant, since it not only underlines the break between Artaud's vision and the 'psychological' acting which he so detested, but also because it is the beginnings of an emotional epistemology in which knowledge is an active property, rather than something lodged in a particular 'result'. The state and active condition of the body therefore become as important to knowledge as the awareness and confirmation of any propositional mental state. As Bourdieu makes clear of *habitus*, a theory of representation fails to capture the active nature of knowledge as

it is experienced in the terms of the body, since this knowledge is not merely (or even) relative to time, but, more precisely, concerns time:

The relation to the body is a fundamental dimension of the *habitus* that is inseparable from a relation to language and to time. It cannot be reduced to a 'body image' or even 'body concept'...a subjective representation largely based on the representation of one's own body produced and returned by others. Social psychology is mistaken when it locates the dialectic of incorporation at the level of *representations*, with body image. [1990:72]

The relation to language and time which Bourdieu describes is not to do with the abstract description of time in language, but with the body's determination of that time. It is important to separate an horological 'time-telling' notion here, from that particular kind of reckoning in which we try to give our actions *timing*. I will return to this in greater detail in Chapter Four, but for now it is necessary to suggest that this notion of 'timing' is an application of common-sense.

To return to Artaud then in the light of this; how does it relate, not only to Konijn's category of the style of self-expression, but also to the container-based gestalt of the previous two styles discussed? Konijn describes the style of self-expression as being one in which the actor's emotions are not assumed to match those of the character (as in the style of involvement), but one in which the actor's own emotions are the *subject* of the performance as much as the means of it. Her selection of the work of Jerzy Grotowski as a paradigm for this style makes more sense in the light of this. In discussion with Marzena Torzecka [1992:261-263] the Laboratory Theatre actor, Ryszard Cieslak, discussed his preparation for his famous role in *The Constant Prince*. He and Grotowski drew on his memories of his own adolescent experiences as the emotional subject matter for a performance in which his character was persecuted and tortured. Unlike a Stanislavskian approach in which an actor might draw on his/her similar memories of the represented emotional experience, Grotowski and Cieslak were not concerned with finding a correspondence between actor and character experiences. Rather, they were interested in reversing a process in which the actor is assumed to 'become' the character, and develop means in which the character 'becomes' the actor. Again, this is not a question of correspondence, but of seeing the character as a score or frame for a particular type of experience for the actor. The 'frame' allows him/her a particular type of experience *beyond* that of the character or the spectator, to the extent that he takes on an almost 'priestly' role undergoing an extremity of experience on behalf of others. As Grotowski suggests, Artaud wanted actors to be 'like martyrs burnt alive, still

signalling to us from their stakes' [1981:92]. The role can be seen as a container *through* which the actor communicates. As Konijn suggests, the style of self-expression demands a high level of physicality from the actor. This is not merely to achieve a surface level of 'expressiveness' or mimetic facility, but to establish a particular relationship between his/her own body and the physical 'score of the role. The mediating force between the two is 'emotion', which 'fills' the score 'from the inside out'. The result of this is that 'the emotions the characters portray in performance are the emotions of the emotions of the actors themselves and must be as spontaneous and as true as possible' [Konijn 2000:41].

Defining Emotion

Emotion is important to Konijn's delineation of the style of self-expression, not only as a physical force which fills the 'container' of the actor, but since the emotions involved are the actor's own, they are presumed to be a means of creating a 'direct' kind of communication between actor and spectator. This deserves further discussion as it moves emotion in relation to acting from being concerned with the *representation* of truth, to a presupposition that the experience of emotion somehow *is* the truth. From the point of view of the relation of actor to spectator, emotional experience becomes something the actor undergoes on behalf of the spectator. In particular, the actor undergoes *extreme* emotional experience. The gestalt of the container and emotion-as-physical-force metaphors not only provide a conceptual framework for the style, but relates common-sense to practice. The actor is concerned with projecting emotional experience outwards, not merely (or even) with undergoing it on behalf of somebody else (the spectator), but with filling his/her physical score with it to the extent that it almost seeps out of the actor/container such is its force. Such a description refers, of course, to an ideal of practice in performance, but this is important in the discussion of common-sense, since, as an accumulation of experience – a Background – common-sense is selective of those moments which tend towards the greatest efficiency, or 'best-practice'.

Common-sense is often described as involving 'folk' concepts of emotion. However, examining Konijn's acting styles in the light of Lakoff and Johnson's metaphorical gestalt, emotion can be seen as an idea which serves common-sense, as much as vice-versa. Rather than its being a concept which can be reduced or explained away by the power of superior theory, it is rather *emotion* itself which requires scrutiny – how useful is it to common-sense (which has practical, pragmatic concerns) rather than vice-versa. In this, Searle's notion of the Background is important, since it allows

emotion to operate without the need for a representational theory, whether in terms of exterior expression or internal states. Emotion, however, is a significantly problematic word, and so I will attempt to keep the on-going discussion grounded in acting – particularly what might be thought of as ‘Western’ theatre acting. The arbitrariness of such a category is precisely revealed by discussion of emotion, not only because it (emotion) is culturally specific, but also because, even within in a specific culture, its meaning is determined by the context in which it is used.

Western theories of emotion overwhelmingly deal with the inter-relationship and/or importance of physiological disturbance, cognition, belief, and expression. Whether discounting or prioritising one of these conditions in the chain of events which constitute emotion, they operate as a subtext setting parameters for the discussion. This may or may not be a limiting factor, but the basic premise that we each understand emotion because we each ‘know what it feels like’ and thus believe others to at least be capable of a relatively similar experience invites theorists to either prove or disprove this assumption.

Definitions of emotion are nothing other than functional models put into words, and it is hard to see how anyone could proceed very far without attempting to formulate such definitions. [Lyons 1980:xi]

The ‘problem’ (if one can define it as such), may not be so much to do with the ‘definitions’, but rather with ‘emotion’ itself, as I have begun to suggest. This a consequence of two factors, firstly, that emotion is something of a catch-all term, and secondly that there is an implicit assumption that this catch-all word will translate not just out of English, but also out of the boundaries of Western culture (as if that were a homogenous entity in itself).

As soon as one wishes to explore emotion across history or cultures one comes up against the problem of attempting to find at least a like word or phrase analogous to it. Whether one initially then chooses to overlook the catch-all nature of the word, or recognises from the outset that other cultures may not have an all embracing concept which covers a variety of states and behaviours, the ‘problem’ is that ‘emotion’ (‘I know what it is because I know what it feels like’) is all too often the locus of the investigation. Even in Marks and Ames’ *Emotions in Asian Thought* (which is subtitled *A Dialogue in Comparative Philosophy*), the comparisons are skewed to an attempt to redefine the Western concept of ‘emotion’ through analogy with the like concepts of other cultures. By overwhelmingly maintaining it as a fixed locus through

which to explore these other cultural concepts, they themselves become conceivable as simply sub-, or inter-related species of 'emotion'. Conversely, when the notion of a 'private psyche' which 'emotion' is often felt to imply is asserted, other culture's concepts can become held off at arms length, as if there can never be shared phenomenal experience across cultures. In order to proceed with any sort of comparative study, it is necessary to assume (initially at least) that there is some sort of shared human experience at the level of the emotions, the passions, or any one of the number of the words and phrases which have been used to define those peculiarly well-known and yet ephemeral states by which we mark our relations to others and to objects. If we accept this we can see how 'emotion' (even as an umbrella concept) is a particular way of describing, identifying, and marking 'who I am', in a manner which blurs the division of subjective and objective. This blurring occurs, because as Lyon's accepts, 'emotions are not specified by their objects or targets but by what the subject of the emotion thinks of the object or target' [1980:48]. The experience of emotion is therefore contingent on both 'internal' (my) experience, and something 'external' (the object) which it relates to.²¹

The linguist Anna Wierzbicka writes that:

Emotion is an English classificatory term which has been borrowed from 'folk English' into the language of scholarly literature, where it is now used in a variety of non-defined ways coloured by the folk concept and where it has contributed to a culturally shaped view of 'human psychology' in general. It is a word however, which is so firmly entrenched in the scholarly literature written in English, and even in non-scholarly 'educated' English discourse, that it seems unrealistic at this stage to give it up altogether. [1999:23]

She is not suggesting that the word 'emotion' has no currency at all, rather, she is rightly noting the partiality of its usage. As she proposes, accepting this partiality does not have to mean 'denying the reality of the links between thoughts, feelings, and bodily processes, or the universality of human awareness of, and interest in, such links' [1999:22]. However, it remains a problematic concept, in that, even if one concedes the very 'Englishness' of the term, it remains tied to an affective level of experience which seems hard to deny, a level of experience which seems to underpin the existential awareness of being human, regardless of cultural specificity. That *I* have emotion, allows me to know that *you* have emotion; or so it seems. As Richard and Bernice Lazarus write:

We understand emotions in others, in part, by an appreciation of our own emotions and by our ability to put ourselves in other people's shoes. When

we empathize with their plight, we feel compassion; when they have experienced good fortune, we share their happiness. [1994:4]

Indeed, this ability to empathise with another's emotions would seem to be at the heart of the actor's skill. Is the spectator not looking for sincerity after all - the appearance that what is happening *means* something to the performer? If the experience is not actually their own - is not real to some extent - then what better way to achieve sincerity than through empathy with the emotions of the situation or character portrayed; as Stanislavski suggested:

It is this work – the work of grasping the true nature of each emotion through one's own powers of observation, of developing one's attention for such a task, and of consciously mastering the art of entering the creative circle – that I find absolutely essential for anyone who wants to become a true actor worthy of the times in which he is living. [1967:92]

As Wierzbicka suggests, much of what we understand by 'emotion' rests upon a 'folk' concept - when asking 'what is an emotion', the most obvious/usual answer is that it is a 'feeling'; that is to say, a change of physiological state, caused by an external situation, and perhaps also causing one to react upon the external world. In this view there is little to be done about it. Emotion simply happens, and whether it, or any attendant actions occur as a result of an innate biology, or are a result of developmental stimuli remains an area of popular debate.

Much as the overwhelming weight of philosophical and psychological research seeks to question common-sense or folk theories of emotion, they remain important as the means by which people (a preferable term, surely, to 'subjects') account for, and thus crucially *understand* their experiences, whether or not scientific or other investigation suggests otherwise. Such inquiry seeks to question common-sense or folk explanations, but in so doing it inextricably binds itself to common-sense, not only because scientific paradigms eventually become absorbed by the wider culture at large, but also because culture itself is the source from which scientific investigations originate.

That there is a remarkable degree of fluidity in this exchange is evinced in the examination of the relationship between theories of acting and theories of 'emotion'. Joseph Roach's important and thorough investigation concerning scientific and cultural paradigms of emotion and acting *The Player's Passion* demonstrates the extent to which science and art inform one another. Beginning with Quintillian's

treaties on rhetoric, Roach tracks the development of different historical theories of acting and emotion through their relationship to the medical and scientific theories of their day. Whilst not suggesting a direct link, he nevertheless demonstrates that scientific and medical opinions, in their relationship to the culture within which they exist, have a profound effect on theories of acting.

Defining Emotion

In *The Passions*, the philosopher Robert Solomon characterises the folk-concept of emotion as essentially conforming to a hydraulic model:

Here is the hydraulic model in its clearest form: Pressures from the unconscious threaten to enter consciousness in their demands for discharge...The key to the hydraulic model is the idea that emotions and other passions (or their determinants) exist wholly independently of consciousness, effecting (or 'affecting') consciousness and often forcing us to behave in certain discernible ways. [1977:144]

The suggestion of the hydraulic model is that we do not wholly understand why we have an emotion, even if we are conscious of it. Emotion is also something that happens to the body, as distinct from the reasoning mind. By power of will, or reason then, we may be able to control emotion even if we are not able to prevent, or cause its occurrence on demand.

Training for the three acting styles categorised by Konijn focuses on 'preparing' the actor. Although they disagree on exactly what is being prepared for, they nevertheless share a common assumption that acting necessitates a different 'state' within the actor. If this 'state' is equated with emotion in any way (whether that of daily life, or particular to performance) the hydraulic-common-sense model begins to appear as a reasonable justification for this preparation. By 'clearing the way', so to speak, preparatory training makes expedient the arrival of the desired emotional experience.

Although physiological change may not be essential to characterising an experience as 'emotion', the common-sense suspicion that it is at very least important to one's occurrent subjective recognition of this, does not seem to be easily dismissible (even Brecht's actors utilised a 'second stage' of empathy).²² Certainly as far as the actor is concerned, 'feeling' may be seen as means of connecting herself, with what she is doing. The maintenance of a subjective connection to one's role prevents it from becoming mere repetition. This is not easily articulated and there seems to be little

consensus on what this connection actually *is*, nor indeed how it actually works. Even Garrick, the ideal actor of Diderot's *Le Paradoxe* described:

...those instantaneous feelings, that life-blood, that keen sensibility, that bursts at once from genius, and like electrical fire, shoots through the veins, marrow, bones and all of every spectator...I pronounce that the greatest strokes of genius have been unknown to the actor himself, till circumstances, and the warmth of the scene, has sprung the mine as it were, as much to his own surprise as that of the audience. [Cole and Chinoy 1976:136.]

It would be unnecessarily churlish to dismiss actor's own reports of their relationship to the process undergone during performance; it should not be forgotten that it is they and not theorists who are 'doing'. Given the sheer volume of actors²³ who suggest some sort of subjective relationship involving feeling (if not exactly emotion *per se*) to their performance, failure to take account of this smacks of convenience.

However, a problem of 'control' remains, and Diderot's assertion that acting requires 'a cool head, profound judgement' [1994:151] retains its importance. How then to retain some sort of connection with 'feeling' and yet remain 'in control'? Most acting techniques and training systems involve an attempt at resolving this problem it could be argued. Few, however, do so with a clear idea of what emotion 'is'. If what constitutes an emotion could be defined, might this not lead to the possibility of its induction and control? In their 1988 study of acting and emotion 'Effector Patterns of Basic Emotions', the neuro-psychologists Susana Bloch and Guy Santibanez-H, and the theatre director Pedro Orthous conclude that acting is:

Characterised as a particular form of behavior produced at will by an actor in order to transmit gnostic and emotional information to an audience by word, gesture, and posture within an artistic framework. [1988:197]

If this to be the case it is necessary that we a) concur that the transmission of 'emotional information' is a necessary part of the actors' task; b) accept that 'emotion' must be defined as it occurs 'naturally' (that is to say, on an everyday basis) if there is to be a common consensus about 'what it is', 'what it is like to experience it', and 'how' to recognise it as it occurs for both spectator *and* performer; c) agree that there is a constant general physiological and psychological state called 'emotion', the occurrence of which is necessary for any experience to be 'sincere'; d) accept that this is true of both the everyday and the theatrical/performative, and of spectator and performer; and finally e) agree that in the hands of a skilled actor in a performance

situation, emotion can become manipulated so that it has a more powerful affect upon a spectator than would be the case under ordinary, everyday circumstances.

Having accepted the above five points without too much debate, Bloch *et al* propose that there are six 'basic' emotions: fear, anger, happiness, eroticism, tenderness, and sadness.

We consider as 'basic emotions' those types of emotional behaviors which are present in the human infant and in animals (at least in mammals), either as innate behaviors or apparent at very early stages of post-natal development. We are therefore dealing with the basic invariants of human behavior in a manner close to the meaning given to emotions by Darwin. [1995:200]

Not only do they draw on Darwin's evolutionary theory of emotion in this,²⁴ but more especially from the work of the psychologist Paul Ekman, and in particular from his 1983 paper 'Autonomic Nervous System Activity Distinguishes Amongst Emotions' co-authored with Robert Levenson and Wallace Friesen. In this influential paper Ekman *et al* claimed to have experimentally proven differences in the type and levels of autonomic nervous system activity²⁵ in the duration of six 'target' emotions – anger, fear, sadness, happiness, surprise, disgust.²⁶ The target emotions were presumably elicited from Ekman's earlier research concerning universal facial expressions.²⁷ Ekman *et al*'s experiment is of considerable interest here, since, along with the experiments of Bloch *et al* it specifically used actors as a source of enquiry into emotion.

Ekman *et al*'s experiment had two stages. The first involved the assumption of a 'nonemotional' expression, followed by an 'emotion-prototypical' expression ('that is an expression that theory and evidence indicate universally signals one of the target emotions' [1983:1209]). In the latter, the subjects were 'aided by a mirror and coaching' [1209], and each expression was held for ten seconds. In the second stage the subjects were 'asked to experience each of the emotions (in counterbalanced orders) by reliving a past emotional experience for 30 seconds' [1209]. In each instance, the subjects, twelve professional actors, and control group of four scientists, were measured for examples of autonomic activity such as skin galvanicity, heart rate, muscular tension and so on. The results of the experiment showed that not only were differences in autonomic activity apparent in each target emotion, but that they were considerably more marked during the reconstruction of facial expressions than during the mnemonic recall exercise. This not only seemed to

validate a link between facial expression and emotion ('facial feedback'), but also the apparent universality of the target emotions.

The results caused considerable excitement, not least because they appeared to provide empirical proof of liberal-humanist assertions that human beings are in essence 'the same'.²⁸ As Antonio Damasio writes:

The thing to marvel at as you fly high above the planet, is the similarity, not the difference. It is that similarity, incidentally, that makes cross-cultural relations possible and that allows for art and literature, music and film, to cross frontiers. This view has been given immeasurable support by the work of Paul Ekman. [2000:53]

The experiments of both Ekman and Bloch *et al* again show an understanding of emotion based upon a container schema. If the actor's (objective) manipulation of the 'external' (i.e. his/her facial muscles and/or breathing and posture) in Bloch *et al*'s development of Ekman can be made to bring about an 'internal' (subjective) response, then problems of sincerity as regards 'seeming' appear to be resolved, since the expression is 'real' because of its direct link to internal causation.²⁹ Diderot thus seems vindicated, as control does not, therefore, seem necessarily to compromise the integrity of the experience.

If only it were so simple.

If Ekman and Bloch *et al* are correct, then the use of facial patterning appropriate to the situation should give rise to the experience. It is, however, hard to argue for universal facial expressions which can be exactly mapped on to any face, given the differences (albeit subtle) in muscular structure from person to person (one person has a deeper frown than another, or has a more malleable mouth for example). Such differences make it hard to be objective about a precise pattern; it has to vary from person to person. In an experiment like Ekman *et al.*'s, whilst precise physiological data is reported, no report is given of the subject's personal experiences of performing the patterns, whether or not it 'felt right' and so on – nor, indeed, whether it was 'felt' at all!

What Ekman acknowledges, but underplays, is emotion's dynamic nature. In a laboratory setting, by freezing emotion's 'fundamental' qualities, or showing subjects across cultures particular sets of photographs, universal recognition may seem viable; at least on a conceptual level. Placing these fundamentals within particular

contexts however immediately makes things less clear. Take a simple facial action such as squinting; on the street on a bright autumn afternoon with your face to the sun an observer might simply remark: 'the sun's in your eyes'. In a normally lit room the same squint might cause an observer to remark that you look angry. In either situation you could be angry or simply squinting but the appraisal of your expression in accordance with the known circumstances leads the observer to draw particular conclusions.

Not only is it difficult to identify quite what an emotion is, or when it is occurring, but it is also difficult to argue for the universality of its experience as being one unmediated by culture and language. Indeed, if we are uninterested in the words used then we are always left with the burden of needing to *prove* not only that the phenomena they describe exist, but also what the grounds for their description are. As Anna Wierzbicka points out:

If we are interested in 'emotions' and uninterested in words (as Ekman...professes to be), we still have to take enough interest in words to notice that English words such as *sadness*, *enjoyment*, or *anger* are no more than the cultural artifacts of one particular language. [1998:29]

To acknowledge that 'emotion' is relative to cultural and historical conditions is not to 'explain away' the experience, but rather to focus more precisely on the conditions in which it occurs, and the relation of the experience to these conditions. The problem is not so much one of how or whether one categorises a particular experience as emotion, but whether the use of the word is apt according to the situation. Susan Sontag rightly questions the presumption of the necessity of mimesis to art;³⁰ the relevance of this questioning to acting seems unavoidable. As I have suggested, whilst acting may often involve *seeming* to have emotions, does this necessitate a concurrent assumption that this requires actually *having* them? Even if it were possible to satisfactorily state quite what having this or that emotion entails, is it not the case that acting, as constitutive of the theatrical event, must be thought of as a peculiar kind of reality, demanding its own peculiar epistemology?

Towards a Pragmatics of Emotion

Before discussing this theatrical epistemology further, it is perhaps necessary to explore in a little more detail what might be thought of as emotion in a more daily sense. In *The Passions* Robert Solomon sees emotions as more than an occasional fluctuation in an otherwise constant sense of self; rather, he suggests, 'it is the web

of our emotions that defines human subjectivity' [1977:133]. Under Solomon's analysis emotion is the means by which we constitute ourselves and the world around us; they are the antecedents, rather than the results of action: 'They [emotions] are not only directed towards intentional objects; they are laden with intentions to act. Emotions are concerned not only with "the way the world is" but the way the world ought to be' [1977:212]. This observation makes our emotional lives indistinguishable from our perceptions of the world around us. He argues for a 'logic' of the emotions which relates not only to the manner in which they allow for a subjective constitution of the objective world, but also to their expression and their feeling.

For Solomon there is no necessary connection between the experience 'emotion' and bodily changes or feelings. The British philosopher William Lyons' 'causal-evaluative' theory is similar to Solomon's, in that it does not see a direct causal link between objects or events and expression and feeling, but it does connect them via a series of stages, which allows for Solomon's argument that emotional experiences do not always have to involve feelings, but recognises that they can be important in terms of 'subjective registering'.

According to the causal-evaluative theory of emotions, the fullest paradigm case of an occurrent emotional state will include the person's beliefs about his or her present situation, which may or may not be caused by a perception of some object or event, but which are the basis for an evaluation of the situation in relation to himself or herself. This evaluation in turn causes the wants or desires which lead to behaviour, while the evaluations and wants together cause abnormal physiological changes and their subjective registering, feelings. [Lyons 1980:57]

As I suggested at the beginning of the chapter, feelings will not easily go away, not simply because of their importance to the subjective registering of having an emotion (a sense of self), but also because of their relevance to creativity in our actions, which does not seem to be served in the same way by 'reasoning'.

The two authors cited above are not alone in seeing emotion as involving, or being a form of 'reason',³¹ and whilst this is only one understanding, its pragmatism allows a link to be maintained in common-sense terms between emotion in daily terms and the extra-daily experience of acting. A 'causal-evaluative' theory of emotion would appear to lend support to Diderot's assertion that: 'His talent [the actor's] depends not, as you think, upon feeling, but upon rendering so exactly the *outward signs of feeling*' [1994:107], since, it would appear that the 'outward signs' and their

intentional direction towards objects and events are what actually constitutes emotion in any case.

As Herbert Blau notes of Shakespeare, it is perfectly possible to have a substantial 'ado' even about *nothing*, the suggestion being that the *doing* of something is inherently more interesting than the *thing* itself:

Nothing may come of nothing, but it would also be precise to think of that replicated nothing as a substantial ado. For there is a crucial particle of difference - especially where nothing is concerned - between that and just doing, between just breathing eating sleeping loving and *performing* those functions of just living; that is with more or less deliberation, doing the act of breathing, eating, sleeping, loving, like Didi/Gogo *do* the tree in [Beckett's] *Godot*. [1991:250]

What we might understand as emotion in performance can relate to precisely the 'nothing' that is a fictional character or situation, because it is occurrent and relates in a dynamic way to the context one finds one's self in. The actor's emotional states need not relate then, to past or imagined experience, but to his/her immediate circumstances. The actor, finding him/herself at a particular point of the performance space, at a given time, may, therefore, be understood to have an occurrent state - for example the simple recognition that 'I am downstage left facing away from the audience' - related to beliefs about this state and situation. In this situation the actor can, on one level, be understood as having a dual state of belief. She may have personal beliefs about where she is, and what she is doing (for example: "I'm down stage left, but I need to go to the right, and deliver my line"). These are beliefs *about* something, i.e. her practical tasks as an actor. Whilst this relates to what she actually personally has to do as an *actor*, it also interfaces with what she has to do on behalf of her *character* in order to give across 'gnostic and emotional information' to the audience. It relates to what the actor has to do *as if* (i.e. 'seeming as if') she were a particular character. The actor's focus is very much on the 'outward signs of feeling', but this does not necessarily preclude having feelings related to them.

In *Acting Emotions* Elly Konijn offers a theory of acting and emotion in terms of their relation to task, rather than to character. Konijn has a specific theory of emotion underpinning her work and much of her study is an attempt to understand acting in terms of it. However, the pragmatic results of her findings suggest not only the necessity of a practical theory of emotion as it relates to acting, but also the tautology of the hermeneutical circle entered into when classifying an experience as 'emotion';

understanding the terms of classification becomes more important than understanding the terms of the experience. As Wierzbicka suggests, the only way out of this is to acknowledge that:

Generally speaking, scientific discourse - and in particular scientific discourse about 'human emotions', 'human subjectivity', 'human emotional experience', or 'human communication' - has to build on ordinary discourse, and on words intelligible to those ordinary mortals whose 'subjectivity' it seeks to investigate and explain. [1999:9]

Theory, therefore, must align itself to the working language used by people (in this case actors) to explain and facilitate their experiences and actions. 'Emotion' is thus both a pragmatic word, in that its usage is specific to culture and history, and a practical one, since its application directs a reader or listener towards understanding events in relation to this pragmatism. The explanatory overlap between everyday experience and acting - both in terms of (personal) feelings and (observed) expression - in which both are described as involving 'emotion' somehow, is, as Konijn suggests, the result of a lack of a distinction between two differing types of experience: the theatrical and the everyday:

Because we see 'real people' who portray character-emotions, and moreover use the same *emotion* for general human emotions as well as for the emotions of characters, the interchange is understandable. This is partially explained by the habit of giving the same name to the observation of behavior (which seems to suggest an emotion) as to the emotion itself. [2000:61]

Task Emotions

Konijn's study is important, since it allows her to make a crucial distinction between 'character-emotions', those which the actor must portray, and the actor's 'task emotions', which relate directly to what the actor has to *do*. Curiously, and whilst she seeks to distance herself from him through her evidence of actor's very real experiences of 'feeling' during performance, Konijn's work aligns her very much with Diderot, and demands a radical re-thinking of his *Le Paradoxe* as being a far more subtle and sophisticated argument than it is usually presented as being. Whilst this may appear to be so much sophistry, reclaiming Diderot's argument from endless re-workings of the binary opposition in which it is so often placed, not only restores his reputation, but may also allow discussions of acting to move beyond divisions into one related camp or another - emotionalists versus anti-emotionalists, intellectuals versus anti-intellectuals, thought versus feeling, and so on.

Konijn's theory of 'task-emotions' not only allows the actor to be object directed (as in a causal-evaluative theory), but also to retain a 'subjective' component to his/her performance. Importantly, this apparent subjectivity is inextricable from what might be thought of as more 'objective' concerns. Indeed, the theory makes it necessary to do away with this distinction altogether. As discussed, the three styles of acting identified by Konijn each work from the basic metaphor of the actor as a container with an inside and an outside, and thus weave a subjective-objective opposition into their underlying conceptual framework as regards emotion. Further, the conceptual difficulties of stating just what an emotion *is* reinforces this dualistic position by encouraging a stance to be taken in favour of either the 'internal' or the 'external', which is further confused by a parallel aligning of the 'internal' with subjectivity, and the 'external' with objectivity.

Whilst Konijn makes no reference to Lakoff and Johnson's embodied realism, an understanding of her work in the light of their theory, not only has important philosophical implications for reflecting on *what* acting is, but also connects this reflection to practically directed concerns of *how* best to act, to the extent that one is not conceivable without the other. Since both of these questions crucially arise from, and are concerned with *embodiment*, any inquiry exploring what is known (in this case by the actor), must also ask ontological questions concerning the status of *being*; this will be the concern of the final chapter.

Konijn's theory is developed from the cognitive theory of emotion of Nico Frijda, and a detailed study of 341 professional actors in the United States, the Netherlands, and Flanders. The purpose of this study was to question whether:

If actors portray character-emotions in a performance, do they also experience these emotions themselves? If actors use various performing styles such as detachment or involvement, will different effects on the emotions experienced by actors during the performance be observed?
[2000:123]

Not only did Konijn question her sample group regarding the correspondence between the emotions of their characters and themselves (as Archer had done in the Nineteenth Century), but also regarding what she terms 'task-emotions'. Arising from Frijda's hypothesis that 'emotions function in satisfying an individual's concerns' [Konijn 2000:77], she argues that actor's tendencies towards acting and not acting are regulated by different 'emotions' than those of everyday life. Thus, whilst a character's emotion at a given point may be 'anxiety', the actor may be

more concerned with finishing his/her line in order for a partner's to be timed correctly to make the audience laugh. This lack of correspondence is not a suggestion that the actor is any more or less 'involved' in what she or he is doing, but rather that his/her concerns are directed towards different ends than someone being caused anxiety in a daily situation.

Task emotions are in large part generated by actors' professional concerns. However, these are also informed by their personal and private experiences, and by aesthetic concerns - a desire to 'create something beautiful' [2000:63]. They may actually be required to appear to 'be' the character and so task emotions experienced may be both a consequence of, and an attempt to assist him/her reach this end. They may also be concerned with the heightened sensation of the experience, with managing or inducing it.³²

Each actor in Konijn's study received a detailed questionnaire asking them to reply to the questions in relation to a specific scene they had played. Most questions required a response of a given degree of agreement (from '0 = not at all', to '3 = to a very great extent'). This both simplified the respondents answers and allowed for statistical analysis. It could be argued however, that Konijn's scientific method obscures the complexity of the actor's experience, and she acknowledges that many respondents reported difficulties in separating one state from another. Indeed, she reports that some respondents refused to complete the questionnaire and returned letters discussing the actor's 'mixed feelings', their inability to separate their own emotions from those of the character, or a belief that emotions are for the audience. Konijn takes this as an indication that the actors studied represent a variety of positions regarding the styles of self-expression, detachment, and involvement.

It is important to stress that Konijn's study of task emotions involved *professional* actors, and concerned itself directly with the act of performing, and not with earlier stages such as rehearsal. This is important not merely because it allows for greater specificity of subject matter, but because it allows us to think of performance yet further, in terms *different* (albeit related) from those employed in daily-life, and to see processes such as rehearsal as intermediary stages. This is meta-theoretically important to the thesis since it provides an empirical grounding to my suggestion that acting constitutes the event of theatre, not through its success as representation, but through embodied process.

In the questionnaire the actors were asked to respond to questions concerning fourteen 'character-emotions', and fourteen 'task emotions'. In each case, statistical analysis made it possible to plot the degree of correspondence between the emotions the actors believed that they *needed* to feel in order to perform successfully, and those which they actually experienced. In addition Konijn was able to track the degree of correspondence between actors of the differing styles she identified, and also the relationship between levels of correspondence and what the actors thought of as 'successful' performance.³³

The concept of 'task-emotions' is formed from two principle hypotheses: a) that the 'situational meaning structure forms the basis of an emotional experience', and b) that 'regulation processes during stage acting can be a positive means to cope with emotions' [1994:133]. The first hypothesis fits well with cognitive views of emotion generally (such as the causal-evaluative), in which emotion is seen as being both a response to, and a means of coping with environmental pressures, and of furthering an individual's interests within that environment. However, the second hypothesis allows a 'feeling' basis to performance, which does not detract from the causal-evaluative terms of the first, but far from it, in terms of stage-acting inextricably links the two.

Susan Sontag writes of 'the odd vision by which something we learn to call "form" is separated off from something we have learned to call "content"' [1967:4]. This separation allows us to think of concerns for the shaping of 'form' as being secondary to concerns over 'content'. The value of art is thus seen in the value of its content, of what it *is* rather than with how it is *done*. The importance of Diderot's observations on acting are precisely because of this. In his art criticism, in the *Salons* and elsewhere, and in his editorship of the *Encyclopédie* Diderot never let the apparently more lowly 'technical' aspects of creation be overridden by the 'content' in which aesthetic value was (and is) presumed to be couched.³⁴

As Sontag suggests, it is not simply that form facilitates content, but that form *is* content; the tendency to separate the two creates the need for a hermeneutics of interpretation which is a self-legitimising system of translation of what content 'means' separate to its form. The absurdity of this process is similar to that which allows minds to be thought of as disembodied: 'Interpretation, based on the highly dubious theory that a work of art is composed of items of content, violates art. It makes art into an article for use, for arrangement into a mental scheme of categories'

[1967:10]. 'Meaning' is thus something which can be abstracted from the process by which it is arrived at. To argue against this is not necessarily to take up a position of nihilism as might be presented: that if knowledge is strictly occurrent, then knowing something can have no constancy (in moving from doing one thing to another, we must surely lose knowledge about the former since its doing is the locus of the knowledge about it). But to carry on with this argument is to fall into a logic trap concerning categories. It assumes processes such as doing to be as formally separate as the abstract qualities of formal logic. It is to neglect that knowledge is bound up, concerned with, and known by, a particular body who/which moves from one thing to the next, and in doing so, inspite of change, also *inheres*.

To recognise form and content as one and the same, is also to similarly recognise the mutuality of memory and occurrent knowledge, that what one knows and does *now* is not only informed by the memory of what one has done, but is itself informing of it. This is particularly important in relation to acting and emotion since it might be assumed that the separation between say, rehearsal and performance, means that the latter is always an attempt to recover the experience gained in the former. This is true to an extent, but again another logic trap arises, this time concerning interpretation. In order to perform what was achieved in rehearsal, is the actor required to 'interpret' what it was about his former actions that made them just-so? If, in the moment of performing he has to move back and forth between remembering and doing, doesn't this prevent him from 'full' involvement (or an optimal experience) in what he is doing, which, as I have suggested, seems to be a necessary condition for sincerity, for truly effective seeming? However, this is to assume that doing itself is not able to be an act of remembering, that remembering is an interpretation of past events which is then available to be applied to the present. As Searle suggests, '*there is no action without perception, no perception without action*' [1994:195],³⁵ an underlying *Background* makes this possible, and resolves the need for an endless shuttling back and forth between the two, both take place relative to a Background state of competence. In this, memory is both shaping of knowledge and shaped by it.

One misunderstanding of the Background, particularly important in theories of textual interpretation, is the mistaken supposition that all understanding must involve some act of interpretation. From the fact that whenever one understands something, one understands it in a certain way and not in other ways, and from the fact that alternative interpretations are always possible, it does not follow that in all discourse one is engaged in constant 'acts of interpretation.' One's immediate, normal, instantaneous understanding of utterances is always possible only relative to a Background, but it does not follow

that that there is some separate logical step, some separate *act* of interpretation involved in normal understanding. A similar mistake is made in those theories of cognition that claim that we must have made an inference if, when we look at one side of a tree, we know that the tree has a backside. On the contrary, what we do is simply see a tree as a tree. [Searle 1994:192]

Task-emotions are what prevent the actor from having to be in a constantly interpretative state, constantly enquiring whether he is really happy, or sad, or being convincing in trying to seem to be so. This is not because they allow the actor to perform 'sub-consciously', but because (as Konijn's theory makes clear), the regulation of emotion as it relates to performance is, generally speaking, fully conscious. As Konijn points out, this is in contrast to the regulation of emotion in daily life, which involves avoiding the socially negative side-effects of emotion, and is largely subconscious:

The task situation of the actor is a special one when it comes to studying regulation; a specific form of regulation probably plays an explicit part and even a necessary part in being able to accomplish tasks successfully. With emotions in daily life, regulation is much more implicitly woven into the emotion process. [2000:75-76]

The task-emotion theory is important since it demonstrates that an actor whose character is called upon to display sadness, for example, is not necessarily him/herself experiencing or attempting to regulate a sad experience, but may rather be attempting to regulate an experience of say, concentration. Because a state such as concentration is directly concerned with the actor's personal *doing*, rather than with the hypothetical state of a fictional character, in this instance his/her concerns for content are matched with concerns over form.

Konijn's study quizzed actors concerning twelve words connected to emotions which they might be expected to portray their characters as having, and twelve task-emotions which they might themselves have experienced during the scenes they were asked to recall; *prototypical-emotions*: disgust, anxiety, revenge, hatred, anger, startled, guilty, jealousy, sadness, eroticism, in love, tenderness, pleasure, laughter;³⁶ *task-emotions*: neutral, ashamed, listless, tired, nervous, tensed, excited, with guts, strong, concentrated, challenged, certain. Contrary to Konijn's expectations, her respondents frequently attributed task-emotions to their characters, demonstrating that many of them felt the characters they were portraying to be as much concerned with goal-directedness, as with 'representations' of one state or another. Similarly, when Konijn examined the results concerning actors' experience of prototypical

emotions she found that in general actors reporting this also reported themselves as experiencing it just before the performance, and in similar degrees. Quite apart from such reports being in a statistical minority, they suggest that an overlap between character emotions and those actually experienced by the actor is not produced by performing *per se*, and relates to other psychological concerns. Further, the study shows that even in this overlap, the strongest degrees of correlation involve prototypical emotions which might be thought of as 'positive' and/or task-directed – excitement, for example.

Chapter One discussed the need to move away from a hermeneutics of performance as representation, and for a more sensorially based understanding of it. The notion of task-emotions begins to allow just this; the major finding of Konijn's study was that actors do experience emotions which are related to the prototypical emotions of the characters they portray, but which are not the *same* as them. This begs questions of what their experience might be instead. The study showed that even when no correspondence was reported between actors' and characters' emotions, the actors still reported experiencing some level of 'emotion' during the scenes they were asked about. As I have discussed, emotion is a conceptually unstable term, problematised by issues of categorisation, culture, history and epistemology – what the conditions are for experiencing emotion are unclear, despite of a range of theories about the subject. However, as Konijn's study makes clear, the actors she questioned all reported 'feeling' something, no matter which style their acting was categorised as being; 'detachment' style actors were shown to feel something, and 'involvement' style actors were shown to achieve little, if any correspondence with the emotions of their characters.

What then, is a 'task-emotion?' At first, suggesting what, in the actor's experience might qualify as 'task emotion' seems every bit as difficult as attempting the same of the everyday. In attempting to do so we seem to have re-entered the loop of formal categories, so heavily critiqued by the embodied realism of Lakoff and Johnson, in which language (especially descriptive language) is shown to be drawn from, and framed by, our sensorimotor and perceptual systems and experiences, rather than being a means by which they might be described. As much of the experience of these systems happens as, and forms part of, a Background level of consciousness, its division into strict categories is intensely problematic. There are clearly differences between 'nervous', 'tensed', and 'excited' for example, but the similarities between them demand clarification. Whilst there is a semantic difference between say,

'nervous' and 'tensed', in terms of the physical characteristics of the two states there would appear to be a great many similarities which, without more precise description, make it difficult to distinguish between them. Indeed, it could be argued that 'nervous' is a 'tensed' state.

This problem with categorisation highlights the problem with an assumption that the actor's concerns are primarily directed towards representation. Task-emotions, Konijn suggests, are experienced with some intensity during successful performance, and where most intense relate to issues concerning 'challenge'. Concerns for representation however, require the actor to relate to an idea of an external reality which is, to some extent *disembodied*, since what is to be represented requires some type, or degree, of formal identification, or categorisation. The difference between the concerns of challenge and representation can be seen in their relationship to the basic questions of *how* and *what*. Concerns for representation involve an interpretation of *what* it is appropriate to represent; concerns over challenge however, involve discovering *how* something is to be done.

The actor is present on stage as a professional and uses the emotions which are related to this level of enactment to complete his task. He uses the emotions as an actor-craftsman to lend the illusion of spontaneity to the reproducible form which has become second nature, based on the inner model. [2000:52]

Konijn's suggestion is that whilst actors unquestionably 'play' the emotions of the characters they portray, what they experience is ultimately quite different, and related to *how* they play them. This echoes Diderot's suggestion that not only is there a necessary difference between actor and character, but also that successful (or in his terms 'great') acting, is in any case marked by a considerable *lack* of correspondence with the everyday, since it is directed towards theatrical (rather than everyday) effect:

An actor's tears pour down from his mind; those of a man of feeling well up from his heart, and it's the heart which creates so much trouble in the mind of the man of feeling; it's the mind which occasionally causes a fleeting disturbance in the heart of the actor: He weeps like an unbelieving priest giving a sermon on the Passion, like a seducer at the feet of a woman he doesn't love but wishes to deceive, like a beggar in the street or at the door of a church who insults you when he despairs of touching your heart, or like a prostitute, feeling nothing, but swooning in your arms. [1994:108]

As Joseph Roach notes, Diderot was not so much interested in pointing out the amorality of actors (something of which they have long been suspected in any case),

but in challenging suggestions that the 'presumed continuity of inner impulse and outer action which society calls sincerity, must derive from unusual moral (i.e., psychological) and physiological conditions' [1985:155]. Konijn, like Diderot, agrees that actors 'play' the emotions of the characters they portray, in as much as they are responding to an 'inner model' of the what they believe they have to show on stage; this concerns not so much exploring how the character might act if they were 'real', but to their imagination of an aesthetic ideal. As Diderot suggests of the actress Clairon:

Doubtless she has created a model for herself and tried to adapt her acting to it, doubtless this model she has created is the most elevated, the greatest and the most perfect she could think of; but this model, which she has taken from history or which her imagination has created like a great phantom, it's not her: if this model were comparable to her, how weak and shallow her acting would be! Once hard work has brought her as close to this ideal as she can get, the work is done; sticking to it is simply a matter of practice and memory. [1994:104]

Whilst Diderot's last remark concerning practice is certainly a little glib, the observation is nevertheless an important one. The idea of an 'inner' model of imagination may seem to be yet another reinforcement of container schematic descriptions of acting, but he begins to suggest that rather than being something the actor must hydraulically force out, the 'inner-model' is an imaginary concept shaped and encountered through practice. Perhaps Diderot's own lack of performance experience lets him down at the last, since Konijn makes clear that the encounter with the inner-model is on-going, and is not strictly 'set' through repeated practice.

Task-emotions related to challenge are thus experienced by the actor in attempts to shape his/her performance to fit this ideal; and it remains just that, an ideal which is necessarily never achieved, but consistently re-encountered. Its ideality is shaped by the particular conditions of a performance – since hypothetically at least, it may change from one to the next. The conditions of an individual performance may even change within its duration. The conditions for what is ideal are relative to the context in which the performance takes place, which is not fixed or set. The 'inner model' is thus a Background capacity of the actor against which she or he must act. Like all aspects of the Background this is mutable, since we are always undoubtedly able to 'improve', even in the tiniest ways, our ability to do things. Indeed, the conditions under which improvements must be made are also similarly changeable – age, for example prevents one from doing certain things relative to the ability of one's

younger self, and yet the ability to 'improve' relative to one's changed conditions still remains.

The 'inner-model' is also practically oriented, providing the actor something to play 'against' as much as a goal to achieve. The notion that some kind of struggle is necessary to optimal experience (which successful or 'great' acting must be regarded as involving) is noted by Eugenio Barba³⁷. It is also a factor in what the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's describes as 'flow' experience:

The universal precondition for flow is that a person should perceive that there is something for him or her to do, and that he or she is capable of doing it. In other words, optimal experience requires a balance between the challenges perceived in a given situation and the skills a person brings to it. The 'challenge' includes any opportunity for action that humans are able to respond to. [1988:30]

Konijn describes task emotions as both shaped-by and shaping-of the actor's performance. This lack of a strict subject-object relationship suggests a need to move beyond a container-based description of the actor's sense of self in performance; this will be the subject of the final chapter of the thesis. Task emotions are both challenges set by the actor for him/herself, and the result of such challenges. Container image schemata have an inescapably empirical grounding in that they are structured by sensorimotor and perceptual experiences. The paradox for the actor is that as much as he is concerned with 'outward' expression', he nevertheless requires some kind of 'internal' process to shape this. By collapsing the necessity of either a direct link between expression and subjective process, or the denial of any personal engagement by the actor, Konijn's theory of task-emotions, makes the paradox itself the subject of performance. Rather than aligning itself with a style of 'involvement' or 'detachment', the task emotion theory knocks out many of the objectivist props maintaining the necessity of the opposition between such approaches, and yet retains the well-founded common-sense within them.

If we cannot continue with the container metaphor, what then? Task-emotions direct the actor's attention towards a level of craft which is not directly concerned with an end result, an aesthetic 'finished product'. Rather, as Csikszentmihalyi notes, they direct the actor towards a condition of 'flow'.³⁸ This is not merely a rewarding state of being for the actor, but a highly efficacious one:

Because of the deep concentration on the activity at hand, the person in flow not only forgets his or her problems, but loses temporarily the awareness of self that in normal life often intrudes in consciousness and causes psychic energy to be diverted from what needs to be done...the 'me' disappears during flow, and the 'I' takes over. When the self is conscious of itself, not only does it become less efficient, but the experience is usually painful. In flow the self is fully functioning, but not aware of itself doing it, and it can use all the attention for the task at hand. At the most challenging levels, people actually report a *transcendence* of self, caused by the unusually high involvement with a system of action so much more complex than what one usually encounters in everyday life. [1988:33]

I will discuss the significance of this state in further detail in Chapter Four, but it is unquestionably related to 'feeling'. At the beginning of the chapter I suggested that feeling something is crucial to any creative endeavour, and in addition, I allied this to an idea of pleasure. In Konijn's study, the only consistent overlap between actor and character emotion, is shown as involving 'pleasure'. Konijn admits, however, that 'the actors who experienced pleasure were not the same actors who indicated pleasure as intensely valid for the characters. Much as I have agreed with Susan Sontag in the previous chapter concerning the need for an erotics of performance, it is important to view pleasure as a desirable state for which the erotic is primarily metaphor, rather than a call for the sexualising of performance. An erotic understanding of pleasure in this instance would recognise that, for the actor, personal satisfaction is bound up in concerns beyond him/herself. This involves a necessary extension of the sense of self beyond the confines of a container based description of 'me'. As Csikszentmihaly suggests, in flow, awareness of self is subsumed by concentration on the task in hand. However, it would be disingenuous to suggest that the sense of self is totally obliterated. In coming to understand the pleasure-feeling nexus, we can begin to offer the actor an embodied understanding in which he may actively shape his performance, without indulging a self-consciousness which destroys the sincerity of seeming.

'Having a feeling' Antonio Damasio suggests, is not the same as 'knowing a feeling' [1999:284], and this is an important distinction. *Knowing* a feeling is bound up with *having* a feeling however. Chapters Three and Four will discuss feeling further in relation to knowledge by attempting to delineate further the condition of the actor's sense of self during performance.

Notes

¹ As Angelica Goodden suggests:

Central to this attempt was a re-examination of the part played by bodily eloquence (physical attitude and gesture), and facial expression in dramatic performance: such eloquence came not to be regarded as a superficial accompaniment to the playwright's text, but as a mode of rhetoric in its own right. This last was the title under which painting had won acceptance as a liberal art, for Renaissance theorists had drawn analogies between the orator's assembling and delivering of speeches and the artists composition and execution of pictures. [1986:1]

² I have placed 'emotional' here into inverted commas, since, as I shall discuss later in this chapter, the word is (like 'emotion' itself), conceptually unstable.

³ Originally written in 1770, it was not published until after his death in 1784, becoming the subject of a heated public debate between the English actor Henry Irving and his French rival, Constance Coquelin during the 1890's. The row led the Australian playwright and critic William Archer to publish *Masks or Faces? A Study in the Psychology of Acting*. Based on extensive research into comments about emotion made by actors in the past and an extensive questionnaire circulated amongst leading actors of the day, Archer's study stands as one of the first attempts to systematically study the relationship between actors and emotion.

⁴ The *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts, et des Métiers*, which he co-authored with the mathematician Jean Le Rond d'Alembert.

⁵ *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting*; Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985.

⁶ See Roach 1985 for further discussion.

⁷ It is now widely believed (although some of its functions are still not understood) to act as a biological clock, releasing hormones to trigger physiological change.

⁸ I will give further discussion to the problem of the Cartesian legacy of categories in relation to acting in Chapter Four.

⁹ For example, one might replace 'energy' or 'presence' for 'animal spirits' in terms of contemporary discourse about acting.

¹⁰ See 'Actors and Emotions: A Psychological Perspective' in *Theatre Research International* Vol. 20 No. 2 pp.132-140, 1994, and *Acting Emotions*; Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000.

¹¹ 'Stella Adler assumed, mistakenly, that Stanislavski's position as he outlined it to her was the position he had always occupied. She was no more than the fortunate recipient of his latest thinking. Lee Strasberg had not necessarily misunderstood the exercises on Emotion Memory. He was using material passed on by Boleslavsky and Ouspenskaia, neither of whom had any knowledge of the Method of Physical Action'; Jean Benedetti *Stanislavski: His Life and Art*, London: Methuen, 1999, p.352.

¹² See Roach 1985, and Benedetti 1999.

¹³ As Joseph Roach writes of the intimate relation between Stanislavski's practical explorations and the prevailing psychology:

Reflex action [under early 20th century Russian psychology] thus constitutes the basis of all behavior, spontaneous and acquired, muscular and mental. In fact, the convenient terms *mental* and *physical* simply describe two aspects of an indivisible phenomenon – life. Appropriately, therefore, when Stanislavski asked rhetorically in 1924 if there could be a system for acting founded on 'organic laws,' his answer construed organism materialistically in the light of prevailing scientific optimism about what could be discovered in the tangible, physical reality of the body. [1985:199]

¹⁴ 'At root the question came down to this: Is the actor's bodily instrument to be interpreted as a spontaneously vital organism whose innate powers of feeling must somehow naturally predominate? Or is it best understood as a biological machine, structured by and reducible to so many physical and chemical processes, whose receptivity to reflex conditioning determines its behavior?' [Roach 1985:161]

¹⁵ Cf. Darwin 1890

¹⁶ See Rouse 1995 for a discussion of how Brecht's use of 'individual occurrences' bears comparison to Stanislavski's 'beats', to the extent that he argues that 'the concentration of effort at the level of the beat allows an assimilation of Stanislavsky's acting methods to Brechtian interpretational ends' [1995:232].

¹⁷ Rouse 1995:229.

¹⁸ 'Making gestures quotable' is one of the essential achievements of epic theatre. The actor must be able to space his gestures as the compositor produces spaced type. This effect can be achieved, for instance, by the actor on stage quoting a gesture of his own'. [Benjamin 1998:19]

¹⁹ 'As Brecht points out clearly in one of his 1954 appendices to the *Organon*, the actor's ultimate goal in performance is to achieve a dialectical unity between the gestural presentation of the character in his social relationships, and a realistic emotional foundation won through identification'. [Rouse 1995:240]

²⁰ See Barber 1993, for a detailed account.

²¹ As Catherine Lutz shows however, not all cultures allow for an easy division between 'self' and 'object/others' in the first place. In the Ifaluk society of the South Pacific, the 'emotion' of *fago* (which suggests compassion, love, and sadness) is dependent upon others.

The translation of the concept of *fago* requires an understanding of the implicit way in which the Ifaluk conceptualise the nature of positive relationships with others. *Fago* is used to alert others to the strength of particular relationships, to talk about the pain involved in the severance of those relations by death and travel, and to signal a readiness to care for the other. To explore in more detail the daily events that set the stage for *fago* is to examine the relationships that matter to the people on Ifaluk, *how* precisely they matter, and the kinds of action – including primarily nurturance – that the relationships with others draw from the self. [1995:237]

²² Cf. Rouse 1995.

²³ See for example: Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy (eds.) *Actors on Acting*; New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1970; Lilian Ross, and Helen Ross (eds.) *The Player: Profile of an art*; New York: Limelight Editions, 1984; David Tushingham (ed.) *Live 2; Not What I Am: The Experience of Performing*; London: Methuen, 1995; Carole Zucker (ed.) *In the Company of Actors: Reflections on the Craft of Acting*; London: A & C Black, 1999

²⁴ Specifically *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*; London: John Murray, 1890.

²⁵ The Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) is the system of nerves which regulate the activity of 'smooth muscles' (muscles that are not visible externally, located in the walls of 'hollow organs' - the digestive tract, blood vessels and so on), cardiac muscles, and glands. However, as the naming of the ANS itself implies (*auto* - self, *nom* - govern), we appear to have no direct control over it.

²⁶ Bloch *et al* did not include disgust or surprise and replaced them with eroticism and tenderness, but offer surprisingly little discussion regarding this divergence. Susana Bloch writes that 'with respect to erotic love and tenderness which were not studied by Paul Ekman, distinct facial expressions and breathing characteristics differentiating between them were also found by us' [1993:134n.5]. However, given her additional argument that her experiments differ from Ekman's in that 'if more elements of the emotional system are activated...the emotional output is closer to a *natural emotion*' [1993:125 my italics], and that she is interested in developing a system specifically for acting *as if* one were experiencing 'natural emotions', it seems reasonable to assume that theatrical expediency was as much a factor as experimental rigour.

²⁷ Ekman, Friesen, and Ellsworth [1982] review a range of studies of facial expression, including Ekman and Friesen's 1971 study amongst the 'pre-literate' Fore of New Guinea, who had had minimal contact with Western culture. Subjects were shown forty photographs of '24 different stimulus persons' [1982:136]. In the case, for example, of a face judged 'happy' by Western reports, 92% of Fore observers chose the same photograph to represent 'happy'.

²⁸ See for example the universal claims made as a result by Schechner 1991.

²⁹ Bloch *et al*'s experiments and resultant technique differ from that of Ekman *et al* in that they introduced postural and respiratory patterns as part of the 'emotion-prototypical' expressions. Having taught the actor how to prepare for, simulate, and modulate the intensity of emotions,

the technique devised by Bloch and her co-workers next introduces what they term the 'stop; out'. This describes the abrupt ending of any given emotional exercise followed by 'one or two deep abdomino-thoracic breathing cycles' [1995:208] and a simple action. This is aimed at enabling actors to 'automatically' halt an emotional situation, preventing them from becoming 'carried away', and allowing them to move from one emotional situation to another without having to lessen the efficacy of their simulation.

³⁰ 'The fact is, all Western consciousness of and reflection upon art have remained within the confines staked out by the Greek theory of art as mimesis or representation. It is through this theory that art as such – above and beyond given works of art – becomes problematic, in need of defense.' [1967:4]

³¹ See for example, Lazarus and Lazarus 1994, Schachter and Singer 1962

³² This is an important concern, since, as Konijn suggests, studies show that presenting oneself in public in front of spectators is a highly most stressful experience. For the actor however:

Risky experiences are probably undertaken because you think you can handle them. In short, the need for excitement or sensation seems to be a relevant source concern for professional actors because they regularly subject themselves to the stressful situation of a stage performance. Most of them choose to make it their profession. [2000:63]

³³ Intriguingly, in the results of the study, Konijn conflates the style of 'involvement' and the style of 'self-expression', arguing that in the latter:

To a certain extent the character disappears behind the actor (character = actor) whereas the actor disappears behind his character in the involvement method of acting (actor = character). So, the result regarding the relationship between actors' and characters' emotions is the same, but the process is reversed in these two approaches to acting emotions. [1994:132-133]

This is important, since the results of the study contrast the responses of actors employing a style of involvement against those employing a style of detachment, apparently reasserting the age old binary of 'feel' versus 'not-feel'.

³⁴ His sense of humour never let him down in this; writing of Casanova's *An Army on the March* in the *Salon* of 1765, following much praise of the fantastic spectacle of troops marching through mountains to a castle he suddenly cuts in:

But oh! if only the execution of this painting were up to the conception! If only Vernet had painted the sky and the water, Louthenberg the castle and the rocks, and some other great master the figures! if only all these objects on different planes had been lit and coloured according to their distance! then you would only need to have seen this picture once in your life; but unfortunately it lacks all the perfection which those different hands would have given it. It's a fine poem, well thought out, well constructed, and badly written. [1994:182]

³⁵ Italics in original.

³⁶ I.e. character emotions.

³⁷ 'The performer's body reveals itself to the spectator by means of a myriad of tensions between opposing forces' [1995:24].

³⁸ 'The term had been used as a metaphor by some respondents to describe their feelings while involved in their favorite activities, and the short Anglo-Saxon word seemed preferable to the more clumsy, if more precise, term, *autotelic experience*' [1988:8].

Breathing, Moving, Looking: Doing, Being, Knowing

If 'seeming to be' from either the actor or the spectator's perspective requires a particular kind of feeling, the knowledge of that feeling, as Damasio suggests, necessitates a distinction from simply having feeling. As I have suggested the two states are intimately bound together, but the discussion of this chapter, and also of Chapter Four, concerns the status of this knowledge. As I shall suggest, knowing is not necessarily inimical to feeling, and indeed, feeling can (and must) be considered as an aspect of knowledge, rather than merely informing of it. Feeling must thus also be understood as crucial to understanding 'self' in performance. Knowledge of self, becomes inextricable from the feeling, or sense, of self

An 'epistemology' is an enquiry in to knowledge, its nature, its possibility, its scope and limits. This epistemology is concerned specifically with moments in which knowledge becomes meaning in the particular kind of human action (within the particular context of theatre) termed 'acting'. However, there remains the problem of what I am doing now; writing it down, thinking *about* it. Obviously this is not the same as doing it, but since I don't experience any drastic change as I move from one to the other, in much the same way as I don't in shifting between the daily and the extra-daily as I begin practice, is it reasonable to conceive of them as being 'different'? Clearly a more complex perspective than this simple opposition of thinking and doing is needed, but to what extent is the opposition useful? In the rush to develop synthesis characteristic of much recent interdisciplinary inquiry – to say nothing of the current debate concerning practice and theory within the performing arts – is there an inherent danger of losing certain crucial distinctions, of confusing obfuscation with opacity, and of reifying the impenetrable subjective in the rush to dethrone the objective?

Monologue

Hair gelled aggressively to the right, almost Hitler-esque, slacks with knife edged creases hoicked up over my waist, pressed shirt with buttoned down collars done up to the top, white socks pulled up in sandals, I sit on a brown plastic chair, knees square over my feet, hands on my knees, gazing out to point no.3 through the bright stage lights. The room is white, except for the blond stage floor. As the audience begins to enter down a short flight of steps they are assailed

by the heavy metal horror of Motörhead's 'Ace of Spades' played at full volume through distorting, high treble speakers, every high-hat snap lacerating the eardrum. We all sit in uncomfortable expectation until two minutes and forty-eight seconds, and two 'Fast' Eddie guitar solos later it stops. There is silence. There is more silence. Throughout it I begin to breathe, deep into the abdomen. After a final three controlled breaths I attempt to use the out-breath to force my head around to the left to look at the empty chair behind me and to my right. I resist it.

I think I'll nip down to the games room. Stretch my legs. Have a game of ping pong. What about you? Fancy a game? How would you like a categorical thrashing? I'm willing to accept any challenge, any stakes, any gauntlet you'd care to fling down. What have you done with your gauntlets by the way? In fact, while we're at it, what happened to your motorbike?

pause.

Struggling with the out-breath, the first line comes out as calm and monotone as I can make it. By 'What about you?' the out-breath has won the struggle, and my head moves slowly around to the left on it. My eyes reach point 6. My head moves further around to bring my eyes to point 7: 'How would you like a categorical thrashing?' I move my focus around through points 5, 4, 3, and 2 for 'I'm willing to accept any challenge, any stakes, any gauntlet that you may care to fling down'. The next line moves the focus back to point 6 and for the final one it moves to point 7. During the pause it travels back through points 4 and 5 to rest on point 2.

Throughout all of this I try to maintain an awareness of my left shoulder; more than that, an awareness which extends out of my shoulder to encompass the empty chair behind me. This awareness is especially important during those moments when my visual focus is away from it, and my torso and head are not angled towards it. With the half-breaths (in and out) I 'explore' the punctuation of the text: breathing in before 'what have you done...' so that I can make conscious control of the air flowing through my mouth and over my larynx as I speak the words. The pause in speech during which I take the in-breath gives time for my own cognitive and mnemonic

functions, quite apart from those that may be deduced by a spectator in the character.

The above describes the beginning section of my performance of Harold Pinter's *Monologue* in October 2000. It formed part of a research project exploring a process of embodiment which I have begun to describe as the actor's modulation of 'sense of self'. This involved in a particular type of training and approach to acting, developed over twenty months of training in *kalarippayattu*, Wu style *t'ai chi ch'uan* (short form) and *yoga*, and an extensive period of workshop and rehearsal. I do not have the scope within this thesis (nor even the requisite knowledge) to provide a 'total' account of the practices employed within the training, rehearsal and performance. An attempt to describe them *in toto* would not only take considerable space, but as a written description, would more likely confuse than enlighten. I shall therefore focus on issues arising out of the performance and rehearsal of *Monologue*, and link them to certain key exercises from the training. I shall generally draw upon *kalarippayattu* as a paradigm for this, although it is necessary to state that many of the aspects of its practice which I refer to are also shared somewhat in principle, if not in form, by *t'ai chi* and *yoga*, which I use in training as complimentary disciplines.

Informed by the discussion of the previous chapter concerning emotion, the project was an attempt at empirically exploring not only the epistemological condition of acting, but also what the condition of that knowledge is when the actor's attention is focused more towards concerns related to 'task' than to character. The following focuses specifically on the preparation for, and performance of, *Monologue*. Decisions about the process were made following the perception of 'shortcomings' in existing acting methods to provide an approach that might allow for a strong affective element even as the attention appeared to be with 'physical', 'exterior', or 'technical' concerns. The performance formed part of a research project, and as such, its aesthetic was very much informed by its experimental requirements. Whether or not this may have prejudiced the artistic potential of the performance is something I shall discuss later; suffice to say at this stage that although the experimental conditions more or less *were* the aesthetic of the performance, this was not made explicit to the audience until after it had finished, and then only on an informal basis.

Character

David Mamet writes that:

The more a person's concentration is outward, the more naturally interesting that person becomes. As Brecht said: Nothing in life is as interesting as a man trying to get a knot out of his shoelace. [1998:95]

There is an echo in this of Diderot's assertion that the actor's attention should be focused on the 'outward signs of feeling', which was again echoed in my approach to rehearsal and performance. It should be stressed that no value judgement about the process and training employed in the project is intended in which they become 'right' and other approaches to performance 'wrong'. Certainly it would be foolish not to point out the advantages presented by the training and process over other methods where they occur, and to question alternate methodologies. However, given the plethora of styles and audiences currently nestling under the umbrella of 'theatre' it would be arrogant to begin to make grandiloquent universal claims about one's own approach.

In *Between Theater and Anthropology* Richard Schechner outlines seven stages of the performance event: training, workshop, rehearsal, pre-performance warm-up or preparation, performance itself, cool-down, and aftermath [1985:19]. As a project, *Monologue* took this continuum seriously, and whilst more time and direct attention were necessarily given to certain stages, the 'value' of each is not something that can be weighed proportionally against the others. The continuum proposed by Schechner implies a certain linearity of process, and whilst this may be an accurate reflection of the stages which marked the project overall, it should not also be taken from this that within these stages the process itself took on a linear development.

Two inter-connecting concerns informed all levels of the performance continuum: embodiment and motivation. In discussions of acting, concern with 'motivation' is usually understood from a psychological perspective in terms of character. In methodological terms the intent of the project as a whole was to explore motivation from a non-psychological perspective, placing emphasis instead on the lived process (i.e. as embodiment). This meant attempting to make no pre-judgements concerning the character. Instead of developing an alternative self for the duration of the performance, the focus was on the actor's sense of self (i.e. *myself*), and the interpenetration of the conditions of the performance and this sense of self.

In *Philosophy in the Flesh* George Lakoff and Mark Johnson state that: 'Because our ideas are framed in terms of our unconscious embodied conceptual systems, truth and knowledge depend on embodied understanding' [1999:555]. An embodied

understanding of a given situation depends on a wide variety of factors whose simultaneity cannot be accounted for analytically. Nor is it good enough to attempt to understand them solely on the basis of 'intertextuality' for example, since it is neither textual nor linguistic referents which hold them together in the act of experiencing. This runs counter to the critical tendency to present performance as a 'text' in semiotic terms. Marco de Marinis suggests that:

The textual structure of performance, insofar as it is a more or less hierarchized network of codes is what grants the performance text its coherence *on the level of code relations*, on which I believe the concrete cohesion between the different elements of performance depends. Though coherence between codes is not the only level of coherence within a theatrical performance, it is nevertheless the most important, transforming a performance into a performance text, and allowing it to be modelled according to the paradigms of textual semiotics. This level can thus be called *textual semiotics*. [1993:61]

However, is it not engagement with the acts, rather than the codes and symbols, of performance in practice which gives it (more or less) its cohesion? In seizing on those aspects of performance in which it appears to resemble something else, a solely semiotic or textual understanding overlooks the very (bodily) means by which we become aware of performance in the first place. As Stanton Garner has it:

That the body's centrality should require emphasis may seem strange given the current theoretical attention, reinforced by a focus in contemporary theater itself, on the performer's body as a representational element, the site of cultural coding and inscription. But this signifying (or representational) body is the construction of a theorizing act that brackets the living body and its phenomenal fields in an act of objectifying abstraction; it displays itself under the terms of a transparent readability, uncontaminated by the material and perceptual variables that, in lived experience, engulf the observer as well as the thing observed. [1994:45]

Shifting Self in *Kalarippyattu*

At CVN Kalari, Thiruvananthapuram,¹ as the practitioner steps onto the floor, he enters with the right foot, and with the right hand, touches the floor, the forehead and the chest. This act is a preliminary salutation which asks for blessing for the practice you are about to undergo, and is also a request for forgiveness from Bhumi Devi, Mother Earth, for the stamping you are about to inflict upon the floor.² Having oiled the body (using gingely oil, opening the pores and causing heavy sweating during practice, and believed to be 'cleansing' according to the principles of *ayurvedic* medicine), the practitioner steps up to the seven tiered *puttara* which sits in the south-west corner of the *kalari*, opposite the entrance. He touches the base of it, the floor, his forehead and chest. This is repeated at six other sites situated around the

kalari floor. He may also perform this salutation at other sites – for example, under the portrait of the Gurukkal’s father and his teacher on the southern wall.³ Each site houses either one of the *kalari* deities, or, like the three legged *pitham*, or stool, which sits at the Western wall, not only represents the Gurukkal and his lineage, but actually houses their power.

Collectively, these entry rituals should both ritually protect practitioners from harm and help them to focus the mind for practice by clearing away any mental or emotional obstacles in the way of practice. However, the degree to which students actualize such focus varies greatly. Many students enter the *kalari* and perform these ritual acts perfunctorily; few enter mindfully. [Zarrilli 1998:77]

As I step onto the blonde semi-sprung pale maple floor of the university dance studio where I do most of my training, I see neither the cracked red earth of the CVN *Kalari*, nor the *puttara*, the deity sites, nor the array of weapons ranged across the opposite wall. However, I enter with the right foot, touch the floor, my forehead and chest. I cross to the far left corner, where I place a brass *puja* lamp, light some incense, and for a moment, hands together in a *namaste* before me, take my teachers, my practice (what I have learnt, what I will do), and the particular quality of this space in mind for a moment. I touch the base of the lamp, my forehead and chest. Even if only a rhetorical flourish, carrying out this series of actions begins to enter me into a process whereby my relations to the time and space I occupy, and the actions I carry out within this time and space, become particular to and amongst themselves – as Barba has it ‘extra-daily’.⁴

As I enter the studio space (or a *kalari* itself) and carry out these preliminary oblations, and in my subsequent practice, I am also affecting a transformation; a transformation from the ‘daily’ to the ‘extra-daily’. This involves a shift of roles, from those I occupy in daily environments to the particular and focused one of practitioner within the space; but it is also a shift in my sense of self, with the concomitant issues of consciousness, awareness, perception, and memory that come with it.

The shift in my sense of self that takes place in and through this practice resists the divisions of analysis. It is difficult to describe in terms of *change*, since there is no actual transformation from one *thing* to another. Neither can it be said to follow a prescribed course; certainly, particular results are achieved, but to focus only upon the describable achievements rather than the process which leads up to and involves

them is to place the achievements of the practice outside of that which endowed them with meaning in the first place.

This shift fits into a wider complex of change effected by the practice long term. For example, I've now been training for roughly three years. Three years ago I was very stiff. Today, I can touch my toes – better than that, I can put my palms flat to the floor – at a push I have a full splits, I can kick my thigh flat to my chest, my balance has improved, I'm stronger, leaner, etc. Substantial changes have been wrought upon and in my body through long-term regular practice. To perceive this change in strictly physical terms however, is to perceive only the body as surface, as display. In these body conscious times it is not so easy to dismiss; I can't deny a secret level of pride, of masculine vanity in it. Conceit to one side, and quite apart from all of these 'achievements' sounding rather dull, they offer a somewhat flat *surface* level of description. It is hardly surprising that in written theory we should cling to such descriptions, they fit very well with the sensory order of a scientifically based, late-capitalist society, in which 'writing' is the currency of knowledge:

In our typographic and electronic culture, we find ourselves today delighted by exact correspondence between the linear order of elements in discourse and the referential order, the chronological in the world to which the discourse refers. [Ong 1982:147]

Just as vision favours the immobile surface as the object of its attention, and writing or type is presented on just such a surface, so the tendency of consciousness in a typographically rich culture is to seize upon the surface order of things, and to transpose them in an agreeable order on to another surface. Whilst on the surface that my body has changed is a 'fact', the experience over which this surface is stretched, the past effort, the negotiation of the present and the projection into the future, is far more mutable. This experience, in which the change effected within my self occurs, unfolds in a present which always carries with it the certainty of learnt behaviour, but also the constant possibility of change. In *kalarippayattu* the end one trains towards is combat within the unknown possibilities of an assailant; in the theatre one trains towards performance which holds the unknown possibilities of one's fellow actors and the audience.

Hands, not relaxed, not tense, but poised and ready, I breathe in through the nose, drawing the air deep into the abdomen, feeling the diaphragm bow downwards. As I breathe out, my hands and arms

ride the breath up until they extend forward from my shoulders. Breathing in again, the hands and arms ride the breath as they open out to the side. Breathing out, my hands and arms ride the breath back towards one another until they extend forward from my shoulders once more. Although I'm *looking* forward my attention is also with the hands and arms, in the soles of my feet, the top of my head, and in the space around me. Breathing in, again, the hands and arms ride the breath as they open out to the side, as the sequence is repeated.

Having carried out my preliminary oblations, I perform the *yoga* exercise described above. Even though I've been through this hundreds of times, I'm always aware of the imminent future, of what could happen next. Even though 'what happens next' is always the same in some sense, in another subtle way it never is. A change of temperature, a desire to get finished quickly, a bend in the arm, the drag of the material of my T-shirt; it never is quite the same. The more I practice this same movement over and over, the more I notice these changes, the more they inform the overall quality of the experience. Thus, the slight adjustment of fingers mid-flow is not simply an adjustment in the present to affect a parity with some ideal representation or principle, but a substantive action upon time in order to affect time – the imminent future, which relies on the present for its 'shape' and 'texture'.⁵ The experience of the present is made up of memories of past attempts, imagined ideas of what it should ideally be like, and my own sensed bodily awareness. These are not individual units, or components of consciousness which I switch attention between, but parts of an overall complex. In experience it is difficult to separate them out; it is their binding together in unique ways which accounts for *this* experience as one of particular qualities. For example, as I perform this breath control exercise (the first of several), even as I draw the breath in, or loose it out, conscious and aware very much of myself, I am also directing my attention outwards. Any configuration of self is as much decided by the relations I hold to external properties of space and objects as it is by internal states aroused by, say, the awareness of breathing.

The Man

Man alone in a chair.
He refers to another chair, which is empty.

I have no idea of 'who' this character 'is'. There is an inference to be gained from the script that he is an older man – there are references to 'steam', anachronistic

remembrances of the Balls Pond Road, custard, Beethoven and Notting Hill Gate, or phrases, like 'motorbikist', which stick in the contemporary craw, and all serve to conjure up images of a bygone Britain. First performed by Pinter's friend Henry Woolf in 1973 for BBC television, *Monologue* suggests memories of the 1950's or early 1960's. The indefinite placing of this period is echoed by the very ambiguity of the character himself. Aside from stereotypes culled from kitchen sink dramas and *Carry On...* films, (of which the language has an echo), and photographs of my parents from this era, setting the passages of memory within this period offers little help in approaching how to act the part. Particularly as an actor who might be judged to be 'too young' for the part, it is a past I have difficulty placing myself in. Certainly I can make flights of imagination, but, as I shall discuss, the mnemonic and imaginative processes necessary for performance of the play, are quite specific to the immediate present. The past, real or imagined (and indeed the play between the factual and fictional aspects of memory) is intensely problematic in *Monologue*, and in many of Pinter's plays of that period.⁶

Martin Esslin has noted of Pinter's plays that: 'The dialogue and the characters are real, but the over-all effect is one of mystery, of uncertainty, of poetic ambiguity' [1977:37]. Given the certainty demanded by the Method - the most pervasive conception of acting within the popular imagination - regarding character history and psychology, how is a contemporary actor (most often schooled in technique drawn directly or indirectly from the Method or Stanislavski) to approach a character who exudes 'mystery' and 'poetic ambiguity'? Does the apparent open-ended-ness of Pinter's characters offer room for the actor to create a fantasy life of imagined history and psychology for him/herself, with none of the constraints placed by authors whose scripts include more 'rounded' characters? Given the ambiguity of the motivations, history, and psychology of the character of The Man, it is difficult to see how any attempt to imagine and then play a fantasised process would be anything better than a rehearsal experiment best left at that. Advice offered from a 'dramatic' perspective (as outlined in Chapter Two) fails to address the real difficulty of how to *do* (let alone 'be') that which you are not; the parameters presented to the imagination are so broad as to make almost any interpretation legitimate. Claims that the text itself can provide the actor with an 'actual' platform from which to build a psychological profile which is 'performable', begin to appear increasingly specious. As Pinter himself has said: 'people fall back on anything they can lay their hands on verbally to keep away from the danger of knowing, and of being known' [Ganz 1972:26].⁷

Because the character of The Man in *Monologue* is so ambiguous, his motives unclear, and his words open to interpretation, it is surely the case that, as a dramatist, Pinter himself has not made any firm decisions as to the emotional or psychological make-up of his character. What clues can be gained from the author himself (famously reticent about speculating on his characters' behalf), certainly suggest this. In a Daily Mail article in November 1967, quoted by Martin Esslin, Pinter was said to have received a letter, which read:

'Dear Sir, I would be obliged if you would kindly explain to me the meaning of your play *The Birthday Party*. These are the points which I do not understand: 1. Who are the two men? 2. Where did Stanley come from? 3. Were they all supposed to be normal? You will appreciate that without the answers to my questions I cannot fully understand your play'.

Esslin reports that Pinter's reply was as follows:

'Dear Madam, I would be obliged if you would kindly explain to me the meaning of your letter. These are the points which I do not understand: 1. Who are you? 2. Where do you come from? 3. Are you supposed to be normal? You will appreciate that without the answers to your questions I cannot fully understand your letter'. [1977:37-38]

Pinter's intent is clearly to absolve the actor of the responsibility of 'interpretation', and to place meaning with the spectator. 'She hovered in that light, your slightly sullen, non-committal, deadly dangerous light' [1973:11] The Man suggests to the empty chair. What light? Why dangerous? Why sullen? Is it important for the actor to know? My suggestion is not so much to do with its 'importance' or to otherwise make a value judgement concerning quality of interpretation, but to question the place and role of that interpretation within the actor's process.

Memory

I have always found learning lines difficult as an actor, and once missed out four scenes of a performance of *Equus*, running together two which began with the same lines. The committing to memory of script, blocking, gestures and the specifics of delivery, have led to suspicions that not only is acting simply a case (to paraphrase Noël Coward) of remembering one's lines and not tripping over the furniture, but also that it is somehow 'monstrous'. As Hamlet suggests, if these words and movements are not spontaneously the actor's own, then why should – how do – they appear to be so? How is the information which the actor needs to rehearse, repeat, relate or relay somehow, to be taken into the body, learnt and remembered, taken in, and then put back out?

Memorising the script of *Monologue* presented particular difficulties since, as discussed, the character's motives were unclear, and as there is no other person physically involved, no-one to offer potential cues. How the actor is to remember the performance 'score' which includes not only the printed script, but also the blocking, gestures, timings and so on developed and set during rehearsals thus becomes a particularly personal problem. In a literate culture where an actor habitually learns his or her 'lines' from a printed text, part of the mnemonic struggle involved in performance is the translation of the remembered printed words into living, spoken 'events', the transformation of paper and ink into flesh and breath. Walter Ong notes that in oral cultures, words are 'sounds':

You might 'call' them back – 'recall' them. But there is nowhere to 'look' for them. They have no focus and no trace (a visual metaphor, showing dependency on writing), not even a trajectory. They are occurrences, events. [1982:31]

This peculiar transience of the spoken word, not only creates problems for the actor and memory, but also suggests that the process of remembering, when successfully undertaken, may not involve the translation of a past state into a present one as much as the learning of words as things to do, things to be spoken. This requires a shift of emphasis from attempting to understand the words (although it would be foolish to suggest that this should be totally effaced), to *speaking* them. This emphasis on learning words as a central focus of the actor's task creates further complications for performance as all other tasks become focused around his or her ability to recall them. Further, if this process is constructed around a visual memory of a printed page, then *re*-remembering is directed towards recall of this fixed image rather than the physicality of speech and what it means to understand *whilst* speaking, rather than having that understanding as a prior knowledge.

One of the research aims for *Monologue*, was that I would attempt to approach both rehearsal and performance with as little direct effort towards understanding what either the piece as a whole or its character 'meant'. This was seen primarily as the responsibility of the spectator, and was also part of an effort not to look for meaning outside of the performance event itself.

Walter Ong says of spoken language that:

Words acquire their meaning only from their always insistent actual habitat, which is not, as in a dictionary, simply other words, but also includes gestures, vocal inflections, facial expression, and the entire human, existential setting in which the real, spoken word always occurs. Word meanings come continuously out of the present, though past meanings of course have shaped the present meaning in many and varied ways, no longer recognized. [1982:47]

The implication is, that words, when spoken, do not acquire their meaning from an essential semantic 'truth', which they inherently possess. Rather, the 'habitat' from and in which they are spoken lends them not only meaning, but also reality. Important to the consideration of this must be concerns for how the words are actually spoken, with their physical relation to one another, their accent, tone, pitch, rhythm and timing. The current critical trend in Britain for labelling certain performances 'physical theatre', (as opposed to what it is never quite clear, but the term generally seems to infer a concern for movement and gesture over speech) suggests a strange dichotomy between speaking and physicality. Speech is, however, a physical act.

My approach to memorising the text of *Monologue* involved an effort to connect the act of learning the text to the performance of it. As Ong suggests, the meaning of the spoken word is borne out of the present, and so, rather than focus on the meaning or the subtext of The Man's speech, I attempted to develop a process which shifted my attention to the situational and physical demands of speaking. To speak - moving the tongue, lips, jaw, and larynx - thus becomes more a question of doing, than of moving information from one place to another, from the playwright's mind (via the actor) to the spectator's.

There are then two stages to this process – learning and recall – although, as we shall see, the convenience of this analytical division is denied by practice, which also blurs them into the immediate demands of performance. My approach towards memorising the text, and its delivery in performance was substantially influenced by Walter Ong's writing on the contrast between oral and literate cultures, particularly as it relates to memory. As he notes, given the lack of external references, the memorising of a story or poem in an oral culture is quite different from learning from a page as in a literate culture:

In oral discourse...there is nothing to backloop into outside the mind, for the oral utterance has vanished as soon as it is uttered. Hence the mind must move ahead more slowly, keeping close to the focus of attention much of

what it has already dealt with. Redundancy, repetition of the just-said, keeps both speaker and hearer surely on the track. [Ong 1982:39-40]

If an actor were to memorise a text in this fashion she would, like the oral poet, be forced to turn, not to a visually prompted memory of what the words looked like printed on the page, but to a more muscular, *kinaesthetic* memory of what it was like to say the words, repeating them after the example of a teacher. In the absence of anyone (with the time or patience!) to teach me the script in this fashion I made a recording of it. I then learnt the text by speaking along to the recorded words over numerous repetitions. Learning in this way caused each section to develop a certain logic in the way in which one followed the other, from word to word, sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph. Because the mnemonic process was not related to the 'look' of words on the page but to the actuality of speaking and the sound of the words, they 'had' to follow one another. This enabled me to shift from the recall of language as something 'textual'; as Walter Ong again has it:

Learned tongues textualize the idea of language, making it seem at root something written. Print reinforces the sense of language as essentially textual. The printed text, not the written text, is the text in its fullest, paradigmatic form. [1982:130]

The idea of language (and hence knowledge) as textual is ingrained within our culture and our education system, which, through examinations, essays, and dissertations, privileges the delivery of written 'proof' of knowledge as paradigmatic of it. The ability to manipulate language as text is thus seen as 'proof' of knowledge. Although that there are other forms of knowledge seems to go without saying, how these 'other' knowledges are to be accounted for, and thus given value is an area still open for debate. If it is not through the written language which contemporary culture most values, then how are we to attach value to knowledge at all?

Bourdieu writes of what he calls 'practical sense' or '*sens*' that:

It orients 'choices' which, though not deliberate, are no less systematic, and which, without being ordered and organized in relation to an end, are none the less charged with a retrospective finality. [1990:66]

In a practice such as *kalaripayattu*, learning is incremental; the student learns by example, and a gradual process of trial and error, making the new and unfamiliar forms eventually 'fit'. This process of embodiment relies not so much on a reasoned notion of its being 'right' 'or correct' according to a model (again the visual analogy),

but upon the 'feeling' of its being so, of its 'making sense'. As Bourdieu notes, such processes are not directed towards finite goals, and have no clear or perfect finish which can be stated, although there is unquestionably a sense in which 'mistakes' can be examined after the event. As I made a conscious decision early on in the project to use my *kalarippayattu* and other training as a paradigm for actor training for which the preparation for, and performance of *Monologue* would provide an empirical 'test', I needed to find parallels between it and the acting process. I did not want to attempt to adapt moves or poses from the training into the performance as gestures or choreography, so the analogies drawn in this chapter reflect both those consciously made and attempted before and during the rehearsals and performance, as well as those which arose more 'naturally'.

The recording of my voice was done in as 'neutral' a style as possible as I consciously did not want to set the delivery before having a chance to experiment with it in rehearsals. Memorising it in this neutral way allowed for the pattern of the lines to be learnt effectively, as well as the mechanics of speaking the particular words without attempting to pre-set the outcome. In the same way, as a student begins to learn a *meippayattu*, or 'body exercise' sequence of *kalarippayattu*, he will have watched the teacher perform it, perhaps also have learned sections of the sequence in isolation, and so have an idea of 'how it goes'. Indeed, even once the sequence has been learned in this way, and practised over several years, there is never a sense that one is 'finished'.⁸

The process of learning retains an element of 'looking' and then 'doing', but the student also begins to overcome any passivity implicit in looking which might be held to be a contrast to doing. Watching the advanced practitioner, the student does so in relation to his own ability. As his knowledge of the form continues to expand through continued practice, the ideal presented by watching a more advanced student or teacher takes place within a wider arena of knowledge about how the form works, even if this knowledge is understood only in principle, or has only briefly been touched upon. The student 'learns' by means of a negotiation between experience and the possibility offered by example. The 'idea of how it goes' relates not only to his own knowledge gained through experience, or the 'ideal' of example, but is a negotiation between these two.

As the student carries out the exercise again and again over time, he shuttles back and forth between the example and his own ability - his own experiential knowledge

of 'how it goes'. When learning the script of *Monologue*, listening to it on headphones, and repeating it out-loud to myself, I had to undergo a similar process of repetition, finding many attempts redundant, 'wrong', and subsequently being forced back to begin again. Ong notes that 'oral memory has a high somatic component' [1982:67]; its concerns are more connected with *how to do* something (e.g. *speak* a poem), than with what it means, or the recall of what it looks like (as in the recall of printed text). This means that the memory of speaking in this instance is tied up with the proprioceptive sensation of the act. Over time the sensitivity of this proprioception increases; such learning is an act of increasing embodied awareness. In the learning of a *meippayattu* sequence in *kalaripayattu*, the use of example is not so much concerned with copying *per se*, as with the bringing of our own sensed *bodily* memory to that same example, and from it to our own subsequent efforts. As we learn, bodily memory becomes part of what Brian O'Shaughnessy calls 'long-term body image'.⁹ Rather than view it in 'psychological' terms of cognition, content, belief, and so on, he argues, it is better viewed in terms of how one *seems to oneself to be*, in postural and spatial terms – the condition of one's sense of self. Learning in this instance can thus be seen to be the development of a feeling of a sense of self in relation to particular kinds of task.

Earlier I suggested that the 'meaning' of performance is in the minds of the spectators. The actor, wrote Diderot, should be 'like a prostitute, feeling nothing, but swooning in your arms' [1994:108]. Whilst he has long been criticised for apparently advocating that the actor should 'feel' nothing, many of his detractors have gone on to suppose that this also implies that the actor's performance is 'meaningless' to him/her. This is, however to make a category error concerning causality on two counts. The first, which assumes the necessity of 'feeling' as a predicate of meaning, may appear to be easily dismissible, both on experiential grounds, and conceptually given the vagueness of the term 'feeling'. The second concerns meaning more directly. Diderot's unbelieving actor-whore-beggar-priest, is not acting in a vacuum of meaning; rather, it is located for him/her in the 'mechanics' of the act rather than in the wider social concepts of love, faith, charity, and so on. By locating 'meaning' primarily in 'doing' the actor in this instance is concerned as much with being effective as with being affective, with how effective one *seems to oneself to be*. However, as I have begun to suggest, knowledge about effectiveness in practice is reliant on the development of a certain kind of feeling, or sense of self. As Damasio observes, having a feeling is not the same as knowing a feeling [1999:284]; subsequently, it is important to consider questions of affect and effect as neither

being strictly separate, nor entirely reducible. Following Damasio's observation, the apparently 'objective' process involved in concerns for effect is not without an aspect of feeling, but it would be incorrect to assume from this that feeling can be discussed as being objective *per se*. Similarly the sense of self involves 'objective' concerns, but as I shall discuss, whether in relation to effect and effectiveness or otherwise, this is not to suggest that it is reducible.

Speaking Objectively

The 'oral' approach to learning the text of *Monologue* described above, in as much as it seeks to make the process of speaking the words part of the 'long-term body image', did not directly address issues concerning 'effectiveness'. Whilst I suspect that the trial and error involved would eventually have led to some sort of resolution of this, I also employed a complimentary technique. Before beginning rehearsals I divided the text into the smallest possible semantic units.¹⁰ This was a relatively arbitrary process, which often had to be modified, but was an attempt to give each one an internal coherence without the need to seek to understand them on the basis of narrative, subtext, or psychology. The speaking of each individual unit, was therefore able to be an action in its own right, with its own particular logic and quality. This meant that there was no need to project forwards or backwards into other parts of the text or a concurrent imaginary 'score' to look for meaning to illuminate it.

A passage of text, might, therefore, be divided into units as follows:

Now you're going to say ; you loved her soul ; and I loved her body. ; You're going to trot that old one out.

The division into units here is not intended to conform to any linguistic 'science', rather, it is meant as a working method, more concerned with practical demands (which are initially somewhat unknown, and which may undergo various changes) than with providing 'proof' for a theoretical proposition.

As shown above, the division into units does not yet offer any suggestions as to how they might actually be delivered. Without setting the delivery of each unit down to actual movements of the jaw and so on, the next stage of the process is intended to direct subsequent reading of the text towards concerns with delivery. Each unit is given a tonic, or stress point, which generally marks the stressed syllable in the major noun. Putting stress onto the noun might seem an unusual decision, as it is widely

considered that adjectives or adverbs (e.g. 'very big trees' or 'very *big* trees') signify importance. As Ong again notes however:

The condition of words in a text is quite different from their condition in spoken discourse. Although they refer to sounds and are meaningless unless they can be related – externally or in the imagination – to the sounds or, more precisely, the phonemes they encode, written words are isolated from the fuller context in which spoken words come into being. [1982:101]

Whilst the adverb 'very' might give a sense of scale to the phrase 'very big trees', it is the trees which are the object, and as such the word relates to some sort of physical existence, the particular qualities of which are inferred by adjectives and verbs ('very big *trees*'). The earlier example, when marked with tonics, looks like this:

Now you're going to say | you loved her soul | and I loved her body. |
You're going to trot | that old one out.

Each unit has an internal coherence and a point of stress; again, neither of these involves a direct concern for meaning, but for the delivery of the speech. By placing the stress generally with nouns the emphasis of description is on physical objects, directing the actor's attention 'outwards' towards objects themselves, rather than towards some 'internal' grasp of the quality of their characteristics in an attempt at interpretation.

During rehearsals the small size of the units allowed the performance to be broken down very effectively. As each one is relatively self contained, it meant that very detailed work could be done, not only on the speaking of the text, but also the performance more generally. This division of the text into units bears comparison with Stanislavski's, who also directed actors' attentions to the accentuated, or 'expressive' word.¹¹ In *Creating a Role*, the last of his three famous books on acting, the great Russian director divides a role into 'units', which each conform to the second by second objectives of the character, some of which are *physical* and some of which are *psychological*.¹² Whilst my approach to *Monologue* might seem like a rejection of much of Stanislavski's, particularly as concerns character, his precise focus on what the actor has to *do* performing a role, remains important.

There is also undoubtedly a parallel in this process to the way in which a martial art such as *kalarippayattu* is learnt and becomes meaningful for the practitioner - even though there is no ostensive 'meaning' in its practice, in the sense that it is not

directed towards others, as in performance. Initially the student is introduced to kicks and poses based on animal movements taught one by one, only advancing to put them together in more complex sequences once an initial level of mastery has been achieved. By learning each pose or kick individually (although not in strict isolation, since they are all practised in training), the student learns not only *how* to do each one, but also learns to ascribe each one a particular kind of 'meaning'. This meaning is at once bodily and mental, and offers a useful way into an understanding the development of meaning as an *imaginative* process which takes in bodily as well as mental processes. As Mark Johnson suggests, imagination has a bodily basis, and is crucial both to our understanding of the world, and our ability to act within it:

Imagination is central to human meaning and rationality for the simple reason that what we can recognize and how we reason about it, are both dependant upon structures of imagination that make our experience what it is. On this view, meaning is situated not solely in propositions; instead it permeates our embodied, spatial, temporal, culturally formed, and value-laden understanding. [1987:172]

Imagination

Throughout the performance of *Monologue* I remained seated in a chair, my hands on my knees. Paradoxically, this meant that whilst I made very little ostensive movement, it was also very demanding physically. What movement I did make was quite rigorously structured, and largely involved me moving my gaze between seven 'points' around the space, both within and beyond the area occupied by the audience, and within the stage area itself. There were also smaller movements, largely invisible to an observer involving transfers of weight and pressure between my hands, knees, and feet, and small corresponding movements forwards and backwards by my torso. I also had to breathe and speak. All of my concentration was directed towards these physical efforts.

In a 1993 interview with the *New York Times* critic Mel Gussow, Pinter, speaking of rehearsals for an American production of *The Collection* and *The Dumbwaiter* in the early 1960's, recalled that:

I remember the actors were twisting themselves into real knots about the meaning of the bloody lines and so on, in *The Collection* particularly. I remember saying at the time, 'Why don't you just say the line emphasizing such and such a word rather than thinking and thinking. Just say the line, I recommend this emphasis. It will come and you will feel OK, really.' [Gussow 1994:108]

Such statements are often disturbing for actors as it appears that this advice not to *think* is somehow reductive of their humanity, that they are to become mere automata, *über-marionettes* without thoughts or feelings. Actors are thinking and feeling creatures like any other human being, so there should be little wonder that they should bridle at such suggestions. Such fears mark a common confusion over meaning, thought, and feeling however. In *Against Interpretation* (a still startlingly relevant critique), Susan Sontag observes that: 'interpretation takes the sensory experience of the work of art for granted, and proceeds from there' [1967:13]. This is as true of the actor as of the critic. Further, the conflation of thinking with the discovery of 'meaning', and of meaning with feeling in which one can only 'feel' in relation to a pre-determined meaning (as suggested by the actors Pinter was working with), presupposes the existence of meaning separate from the situation one is in. As Sontag notes, to suppose otherwise is to disengage art from itself, and to allow it value only in terms of what it represents.

What then is the place of the actor's imagination in this? In creating mise-en-scene, blocking, staging, choreography and so on, the actor's imagination maybe of the greatest use, allowing flights of fancy to create moments and gestures of great beauty. Ultimately though, how does the imagination actually assist them in *performing*?

Perhaps the most enduring images of the avant-garde theatre of the Twentieth Century are those taken by Max Waldman of Ryszard Cieslak in The Laboratory Theatre's production of the *Constant Prince*, remarkable images of ecstasy and pain, suggestive of a highly personal and transparent performance. As Ferdinando Taviani puts it in his 1992 *New Theatre Quarterly* obituary of Cieslak, even after the extraordinary performance given in the production, the photographs 'helped to transform current thinking about the possibilities of the actor's work' [1992:252]. Cieslak's own remarkable testimony about his performance suggests that his personal imaginative process, whilst drawn from memories of his adolescence, was a fragile, transient thing:

The score is like a glass inside which a candle is burning. The glass is solid; it is there, you can depend on it. It contains and guides the flame. But it is not the flame. The flame is my inner process each night...I begin each night without anticipations: this is the hardest thing to learn. I do not prepare myself to feel anything...I want only to be receptive to what will happen. [1992:259]

During the performance of *Monologue*, my imagination was extraordinarily active, but this was not something that I consciously chose to effect. As I have suggested, my concentration was directed towards carrying out the physical tasks, which I had previously set. Rather than following a pre-set pattern however, my imagination was mercurial, fleeting, and abstract. Cieslak's point concerning lack of anticipation is important in this. Whilst performing *Monologue* the images, thoughts and feelings that occurred often disappeared as quickly as they had arrived, but I did not attempt to exert conscious control over them, or prepare to feel anything. At certain points I experienced a tremendous feeling of sadness, which is not something I had really noticed in the script or experienced in rehearsals. Rather than being thrown by the novelty of this situation, or attempt to suppress it because it did not fit some pre-determined interpretation, I entertained it, and when it disappeared, seemingly of its own accord, allowed it to do so. Whether this was picked up on by members of the audience is something only they can answer. It was, however, an important part of my performance, as it occurred to *me* at that particular moment. For me, this was a new, and somewhat strange experience as an actor. The example of Cieslak suggests that not only is it possible to train and develop this kind of process, but that it has the potential to illuminate the acting process to a radical extent.

To give a more specific example; in keeping with the 'neutral' level of delivery employed in the learning of the text, I also attempted to avoid overtly planning physical (essentially facial) expression during rehearsals. This was not a decision that meant *no* facial expression, but rather that, following Cieslak, I would begin each time 'without anticipations' in keeping with the concerns over 'emotion' raised in Chapter Two and the connections made between it and facial expression. This meant that, paradoxically, a good deal of my attention was shifted to my face. The concomitant increase in kinaesthetic awareness meant that each tiny movement, which I might ordinarily take for granted, or indeed, not notice at all, became potentially meaningful. Breathing in just before delivering the line 'I think I'll nip down to the games room', I might become aware of a desire to raise my eyebrows, might actually find that I had done so slightly before I became aware of it. Although it only relates to what to do in the imminent future, this choice is an act of the imagination, concerned more with the qualitative impact on the occurring moment than with speculation as to the quality of the ensuing act as mimesis. The struggle to also keep the face 'neutral' meant that these did not overpower in the manner warned against by Diderot.

Susan Sontag suggests that in the West consciousness of, and reflection on and about the practice of art has remained closely allied to classical Greek theories of art as mimesis or representation [1967]. Similarly, I would suggest, so have most Western reflections upon the actor's imagination and his/her use of it. A recent example is Bruce Shapiro's *Reinventing Drama: Acting, Iconicity, Performance*. In it, he consciously doffs his cap to Aristotle's theory of mimesis,¹³ but also seeks to marry it in terms of contemporary neuroscience with a representational theory of the imaginative process he terms 'iconicity'. As discussed in Chapter One, given the dominance of the visual in contemporary language and culture, it is hardly surprising that we should frequently find representation discussed in terms of terms of 'image'. This is often the case even when the writer acknowledges that they are referring to a broader definition:

By image I mean a mental pattern in any of the sensory modalities...[the] first problem of consciousness is the problem of how we get a 'movie-in-the-brain,' provided we realize that in this rough metaphor the movie has as many sensory tracks as our nervous system has sensory portals – sight, sound, taste, and olfaction, touch, inner senses, and so on. [Damasio 1999:9]

Damasio recognises the shortcomings of his own metaphor, but seems unable to let the equation between the mental and the visual go. Given the predominance of visual metaphors for its operations, how are we to think of imagination other than in visually dominated terms? Certainly the etymological links between *image* and *imagination*, are obvious, but it is important to beware of falling into the trap of supposing the descriptive consistency of language. As Constance Classen has shown for example, speech itself was once thought of as a natural human ability in European cultures in much the same way as smelling or hearing remain today.¹⁴ Similarly, we must not presume that experiences we use the word 'imagination' to describe are wholly governed by the visual. To do so presumes a formality of the imagination, which is denied by experience. As Mark Johnson notes:

Imagination can be both formal and material, rational and bodily...there is no unbridgeable gap between these two realms in the first place. Once we no longer demand a disembodied (or nonphysical) rationality [as with the movie-in-the-brain metaphor] , then there is no particular reason to exclude embodied imagination from the bounds of reason. [1987:168]

Imagination is not just the playback of possibilities as a movie-in-the-head but an act of thinking, feeling and (importantly) doing. Whilst this is far from being a wholly original observation, in relation to acting the idea seems still to have little currency.

Imagination in this instance must be in relation to the practice/s it occurs within. My efforts to control my facial muscles for example, led to a particular kind of affective state, which led to a particular imaginative process, which led to a particular facial movement, which led to a particular kind of imaginative state...and so on. The combinations are endless, and suggest not causality, but complexity, a folding over of events, thoughts and sensations to the extent that they are impossible to distinguish. The experience of practice suggests that, however subtle, different aspects 'make sense' in relation to one another, allowing for the holistic recognition of 'getting it right'. The relationship between 'making sense' and the 'sense of self' is a subtle and complex one which resists definition from outside of practice itself. By directing attention towards an optimal level of practice and experience however, it can be seen that, for the actor, the two come together in this 'flow' state. 'Failure' in this respect, at least on a personal level for the actor, can be regarded as a lack of ability at the point of practice to draw the two together. The relationship between 'making sense' and the 'sense of self' will be discussed further in Chapter Four in terms of both the notions of common-sense and the Background raised in previous chapters, and also related issues of environment, emotion and feeling, and sensory perception.

Practice as Epistemology

Bourdieu writes that:

It is difficult to speak of practice other than negatively – especially those aspects of practice that are seemingly most mechanical, most opposed to the logic of thought and discourse. [1990:80]

This could lead to a discussion of practice becoming simply a bald statement of facts. It is necessary to understand however that experience always happens to *someone*, is always *embodied*. This occasions an attempt to provide a framework for discussion of a knowledge which has its genesis within the practical arenas within which it is both formed and applied. Practice is about doing, and doing is a particular way of being. For the actor, like the martial practitioner, this doing requires a 'being in the moment'. The need for a practical aspect to my research in this respect is a reflection of a concern as to whether theory can sufficiently account for being 'in the moment' (something only actually being so would seem to attest to). Further than that, can theory lend anything to 'being in the moment' and vice versa? In *Philosophy in the Flesh* George Lakoff and Mark Johnson state that:

What we understand the world to be like is determined by many things: our sensory organs, our ability to move and to manipulate objects, the detailed structure of our brain, our culture, and our interactions in our environment, at the very least. What we take to be true in a situation depends on our embodied understanding of the situation, which is in turn shaped by all these factors. Truth for us, any situation that we can have access to, depends on such embodied understanding. [1999:102]

Whilst the actor risks being booed off stage (the cause of awful fear for some) if she fails to effectively accomplish this 'being in the moment', the stakes for the martial practitioner are higher and more immediate. Failure to successfully 'be in the moment' in combat potentially involves serious injury or even death. Quite apart from the levels of physical excellence and virtuosity which training in a martial art can lead to, it is as a model of 'being in the moment' that it links to acting practice.

As a research project *Monologue* was an attempt to develop and make active use of a sense of self. This sense of self is itself an aspect of a process of embodiment. This not only involves the carrying out of physical tasks in the most efficacious manner, but also the process by which these physical tasks are made sense of; this requires a link between affect and concept best described in terms of metaphor. As Lakoff and Johnson have it:

We are not claiming that physical experience is in anyway more basic than other kinds of experience, whether emotional, mental, cultural, or whatever. All of these experiences may be just as basic as physical experiences. Rather, what we are claiming about grounding is that we typically conceptualize the nonphysical *in terms of* the physical – that is, we conceptualize the less clearly delineated in terms of the more clearly delineated. [1981:58]

Because of the physical means by which apparently non-physical terms are conceptualised, they 'make sense' in terms roughly 'mental', as well as 'physical' – although, as I shall argue, the process itself begins to suggest the inadequacy of these apparently oppositional categories. The description of the opening section of *Monologue* given earlier, detailing co-ordinated breath and movement, and introducing a notion of 'feeling' which is both internally and externally directed, is a paradigm of the relationship I am trying to describe in terms of a sense of self. The mechanism inherent in the cognitive/conceptual models usually offered as descriptions of thought stands in contrast to the opacity of felt experience to the extent that it would seem impossible to describe one in terms usually reserved for the other without being oxymoronic. Bourdieu writes that:

If practices had as their principle the generative principle which has to be constructed in order to account for them, that is a set of independent and coherent axioms, then the practices produced according to perfectly conscious generative rules would be stripped of everything that defines them distinctively as practices, that is, the uncertainty and 'fuzziness' resulting from the fact that they have as their principle not a set of conscious, constant rules, but practical schemes, opaque to their possessors, varying according to the logic of the situation, the almost invariably partial viewpoint which it imposes, etc. [1990:12]

However, as he also observes, there is an internal and coherent logic to practices, which he terms a 'fuzzy logic'. It is 'fuzzy', because it is only encountered in a dynamic context, and disappears even as it comes into being. The terms of this logic are only apparent occurrently, do not follow any linear patterns of argument, and are opaque. The only means of encountering the ever-shifting dynamic context in which this logic (a particular kind of knowledge) occurs is in directly sensed, continually sensual terms. 'Sensed', because this is how the moment is perceived, how it *occurs* to the practitioner, and 'sensual' since if one moment is to 'make sense' in relation to the next, then some continuity of this initial perception must be achieved.

Making Sense

Pre-rehearsal, I made a decision that I would to some extent set breath and visual focus. The rehearsal and performance would thus provide one test of their conscious use. However, I also had concerns relating to the use of 'energy' which were considerably vaguer. Having begun to make conscious use of this in training (although admittedly having yet to make a convincing exposition theoretically), I was concerned to link it to breath and visual focus in terms of their forming an embodied process, a kind of 'knowledge'. Also, through example, I hoped to provide certain parameters within which it could be described, both on an experiential basis, and also in terms of the 'objective' underpinnings of that experience.

In Wu style *t'ai chi ch'uan*, the practitioner shifts her focus from a point on the hands as they move, to points beyond them in space, and in a combination of the two looks through the hand into space as it blurs slightly in front of them. In each case the gaze is active and directed outwards. Whilst this gaze is directed towards or through a particular point at each moment of the sequence, it is not fastened so 'hard' upon any of them that the practitioner's awareness is focused solely on that point, closing down awareness of the rest of the space around them. Rather, the gaze is 'soft'; she must embody a paradox in which she looks directly at (and in the case of the hand,

follows) a particular point, and yet remains aware of the space around her. Clearly this awareness cannot be accomplished by vision alone, but she tries to maintain awareness of peripheral vision even as she directs the gaze. The mutability of this gaze during practice is curiously physical. This is not only because the shift from points distant to close-up requires rapid changes in the muscles controlling the focusing of the eye, but also because the change in direction and location of this focus both directs, and is effected by the movement of the entire body throughout the sequence. The common Western paradigm of vision discussed in Chapter One has the eye simply as a passive receiver of 'information', rather than active and enacting (in the sense both of bringing into play, and being played upon).¹⁵ As Merleau-Ponty suggests, this paradigm tends towards presenting the eye as disembodied, as a window on the world, rather than in and of the body. However, what happens to, and is enacted by the eye, is also happening to and enacted by the body at large.

In Wu style *t'ai chi ch'uan*, concurrent with each change of visual focus, breath is used as a means for motivating each sequence of movement. Control over the inhalation and exhalation of breath goes together with control over the force, direction, and duration of each movement. Without suggesting that *Monologue* was in any way meant to be a translation of *t'ai chi* into acting, similar use of visual focus was made. *T'ai chi* seeks to use 'control of breath energy...designed to attain and retain physical balance through a mental and physical counterpoise derived from an ability to conserve and direct physical energy, not to squander it' [Scott 1993:48]. Whilst my use of breath was less 'set', and subsequently more difficult to describe, its importance should not be underestimated.

Breath straddles the divide between our autonomic and reflexive actions and those subject to our conscious control. It operates equally well within the realm of the conscious and of the unconscious. This was certainly true of how I began to use it during rehearsals; at times making active, conscious use of it, and at others allowing it to occur 'naturally'. Even in those moments where breathing was not consciously directed, it (or rather the particular embodied process it formed part of) continued to imbue the action with a particular kind of quality. For example, in the following section:

I know that you were much more beautiful than me. More *aquiline*. I know *that*, that I'll give you, more *ethereal*, more thoughtful, *slyer*, while I had both feet firmly planted on the deck. But I'll tell you one thing you don't know. She loved my soul. It was my soul she loved.

Point 3 is directly in front of me on the wall slightly above the spectators' heads; point 4 is slightly to the right of this; point 1 is located on the wall to my left. Beginning at point 4, my gaze shifts to point 3 on '*aquiline*', to point four during 'more *ethereal*', back to point 3 during 'while I had both feet...', before slowly moving to rest on point 1 during the delivery of 'but I'll tell you one thing you don't know...', and only moving once more during the ensuing pause. It should not be assumed that this gaze is a constant state however.

At the beginning of this chapter I wrote of the opening sequence of *Monologue* that: 'I try to maintain an awareness of my left shoulder; more than that, an awareness which extends out of my shoulder to encompass the empty chair behind me'. By creating a very slight, but concentrated increase in the pressure of my feet on the floor, of my hands on my knees, and a slight straightening in my arms, so that I pushed back towards my left shoulder - and in also resisting this - I created an oppositional tension. The addition to this of the idea of breath passing into this area of tension, and extending from it as 'energy', heightened my awareness of its loci, both internal and external. *Kalarippayattu* encourages the development and manipulation of this 'energy'. The use of oppositional force together with directed breath and visual focus is described by Zarrilli as creating a 'grip' in the navel region of the lower abdomen. In the early stages of practice this is especially noticeable in poses such as the 'lion' or the 'elephant' in the C.V.N style. In describing this grip during 'correct' practice of the lion pose, Zarrilli notes that:

As the practitioner moves into the final position, the gripping in the navel region is experienced and manifest as an oppositional set of forces – outward and forward from the navel along the spinal column, continuing out through the arms/hands and eyes, backwards along the same line to the earth. [1998:137-138]

The use of my physicality and breathing to control or collapse the 'energy' or 'force' described above could be understood in terms of 'making sense' of each moment. Rehearsals for *Monologue* were largely directed towards developing the use of this energy between and during the various passages of movement and speech. In order to make these choices however, a certain amount of reflexive thought was demanded.

Rehearsal and Reflection

Concerning reflection, Varela *et al* describe the 'usual training and practice' of Western scientists and philosophers:

We ask, 'what is mind?', 'what is body?' and proceed to reflect theoretically and to investigate scientifically. This procedure gives rise to a gamut of claims, experiments, and results on various facets of cognitive abilities. But in the course of these investigations we often forget just who is asking this question and how it is asked. By not including ourselves in the reflection, we pursue only a partial reflection, and our question becomes disembodied; it attempts to express, in the words of the philosopher Thomas Nagel, a 'view from nowhere'. It is ironic that it is just this attempt to have a disembodied view from nowhere that leads to having a view from a very specific, theoretically confined, preconceptually entrapped somewhere. [1991:27]

Practice is often placed in opposition to theory (as in theory *and* practice) which seems to suggest that one involves 'thinking' and the other 'doing'. Whilst there is, I suspect a degree of truth in this, it is so only in terms of degree, of stretching one away from the other on the continuum of existence, and finding paradoxically (as one so often does), that the effort appears to be making one resemble the other. Can the act of reflection in rehearsal be considered only in terms detached from the acts that form the object of its contemplation? Varela *et al.* call for an 'embodied reflection':

By *embodied*, we mean reflection in which mind and body have been brought together. What this formulation intends to convey is that reflection is not just *on* experience, but reflection *is* a form of experience itself – and that reflective form of experience can be performed with mindfulness/awareness. When reflection is done in that way...it can be an open-ended reflection, open to possibilities other than those contained in one's current representations of life-space. We call this form of reflection *mindful, open-ended reflection*. [1991:27]

As I look from points 4 to 3 I am undergoing this reflection, both concerning the use of breath and visual focus in *t'ai chi* discussed above, but also the ways in which I have tried to develop this action in rehearsal. Certainly the abstracted, *detached* reflection described by Varela *et al* takes place, but as I suggest following their observation, the more it attempts to stretch away from the embodied acts it is concerned with attempting to objectify, the more it paradoxically begins to demand an act of embodiment to define it.¹⁶ In the case of *Monologue* my reflection was directed towards the on-going experience of the 'energy' described above. How though, to use reflection to develop, sustain, and crucially 'make sense' of this 'energy'? In *Bodied Spaces* Stanton Garner writes that:

To render the world of experience available to conceptual manipulation, scientific (or theoretical) reflection performs a rational operation on it, detaching objects from their lived field and reconfiguring them as objective facts, constructs of an abstracting operation. [1994:26]

Any practice that involves 'rehearsal' – any sort of trial and error repetition – does, it could be argued, include a degree of reflection. As Garner observes, this 'rational operation' serves to detach objects from their lived environments. In the process of acting, this is nowhere so well illustrated as in rehearsal. Not all theatre forms engage in rehearsal in the strictest sense, and what is to be rehearsed varies considerably even between performances which will eventually be relatively like. This makes it difficult to say that rehearsal is an event or experience characterised by a particular act or acts. Despite the convenience of Schechner's seven stage continuum, there is considerable blurring between rehearsal and the categories of training and warm-up which he places on either side of it, to say nothing of its frequent resemblance to performance itself. In terms of the process carried out in order to perform *Monologue*, whilst the training developed a particular kind of embodiment, rehearsal demanded a means of transferring the knowledge implicit/inherent within it into a wholly new context. This transference also had to be partial. Since *Monologue* was not to be a performance of the training, what was taken from it would be abstracted under the terms of as yet unknown conditions, albeit informed by knowledge and memories of other acting performances.

In *Between Theater and Anthropology* Richard Schechner writes of rehearsal:

That's where 'creative work' gets done. Characterizations are built, choreography invented or learned, the many elements that compose a performance are tried out. [1985:20]

The same could equally be said of training, particularly in non-western genres such as *Kathakali*. However, Schechner's observation is an important one, particularly in its linking of creativity with trial, or 'trying out'. Training is directed towards making this 'trying out' easier, whether simply in terms of ability, or its suitability in relation to its eventual ends in performance. He goes on to suggest that:

It is the work of rehearsals to prepare the strips of behavior so that when expressed by performers these strips seem spontaneous, authentic, unrehearsed. I don't mean unrehearsed only in the ways familiar to Western naturalism. Authenticity is a display of harmony/mastery of whatever style is being played...During rehearsals a past is assembled out of bits of actual experience, fantasies, historical research, past performances. Or a known score is recalled and replayed. [1985:52]

In rehearsal the process by which the technique developed in training is adapted to a new set of physical circumstances involves an inevitable reflection, whether this is directed towards the task immediately completed, to memory of one's own

experience, or imaginative projection into others. This reflection appears to cause problems for an embodied theory of acting since it seems to suggest that a necessary part of the acting process is effected by not directly 'doing', in what Garner calls 'the lived field', but requires considerable detachment from it; it seems disembodied almost.

Monologue presented a particular difficulty with respect to rehearsals, since I was not only the performer, but also the director. In addition to this, I was also carrying out a role something like an ethnographic field researcher (to say nothing of the theorist lurking in the background, or the martial practitioner).¹⁷

During rehearsals reflection is active, and 'open-ended'; it does not involve any closed decisions, but is on-going and dynamic. As I look from point 3 to point 1 for example, my head turns on an out-breath. To effect this movement involves more than the simple mechanics of the turn. There are potentially an infinite number of ways of making this turn, and the slightly different combinations of breathing, muscular groupings, speed, angle and so on, means that each has a slightly different 'feel'. This 'feel' is of absolute importance; it is itself reflexive. Bourdieu describes the focus of practice as being the 'imminent' future [1998:80-81]. The 'feel' is a constant exchange between a projection into this imminent future and the senses involved in awareness of one's current state – proprioception, kinaesthesia, vision, the directed sense of 'energy' and so on. In rehearsal feel develops as a means of adjusting the moment according to imminent demands, and one's relationship to one's immediate environment. In performance this extends out to one's awareness of the audience.

'Feel' then occurs as an interconnecting aspect of the whole sense of self, from awareness of one's thoughts, to specific awareness of one's body. It can allow these to be quite distinct aspects, as well as allowing them to be so blurred as to be indistinguishable. This is again particularly well illustrated by the example of breath. As my gaze shifts from point 4 to point 3 as I speak the words '*more aquiline*' (as in the example given earlier), obviously I am breathing out, in order for air to pass over my vocal chords and create sound. However, in order for the words not to come out in a great sigh it is also necessary that this out-breath be relatively shallow in contrast to the deep abdominal breathing characteristic of, say, *t'ai chi ch'uan*, or the breathing exercises of *kalaripayattu*. That I was using breath with a similar amount of awareness, albeit manifested differently, enabled me to draw upon the embodied knowledge of my use of breath in other practices. In both *t'ai chi ch'uan* and

kalarippayattu, the deep and concentrated drawing in and out of breath creates a high-level of awareness in the practitioner which, when practised over time together with repeated sequences of movement, develops a sensual relationship between the two. Repeated practice further accentuates the sensual qualities of this relationship. A frequent metaphor used in such practice is of the breath ‘filling’ the movement, or of the movement ‘riding’ on the breath.

Extending the Sense of Self

Models of consciousness in Western thought predominantly rely upon an understanding of perception in which information ‘comes in’ to the body and acts upon, and affects consciousness. It is not unusual to find models in other cultures that reverse this process:

In the Vedas the senses are described as minor deities (*devata*) sent out into the world by major deities such as Indra. Hence they are known as ‘forces sent out by Indra’ (*indriya*). Within later Hindu culture the senses were often viewed as forces (*sakti*) which go out into the world in order to make contact with objects and gather information for the knowing self. [King 1999:148]

One of the key shifts in the sense of self affected for me by my practice and in the performance of *Monologue* has to be the encounter with this ‘outward’ consciousness, which a practice such as *t'ai chi* or *kalarippayattu* not only makes one aware of, but requires that the encounter be negotiated afresh each time. The specific visual focus and the movement of the body is an extension ‘out’ into and through space. If one thinks of consciousness only ever in terms of the impression of external reality upon the sense organs, or being solely characterised by its ‘internal’ qualities of this impression, then this idea of ‘extension’ not only becomes hard to grasp, but nonsensical. If consciousness is located ‘within the body’ (and leaving to one side arguments about where it may or may not be located), then that body is inevitably conceived of as bounded and individual, an object amongst objects. Is it really so hard to conceive of consciousness as travelling outwards from the body however? As Jadunath Sinha [cited by King 1999] would have it:

It is much easier to conceive of the *out-going* of the mind intelligized [*sic.*] by the conscious self to the object than the *in-coming* of the unconscious object to the mind. [1999:148]

The combination of an outwardness of attention with a sense of movement towards an imminent future leads to the sense of self being as much an ‘outer’ as an ‘inner’ experience. The space and the body are *part* of this conscious state not merely

factors in it. That is to say, they are not merely (or even) contributors to a result; rather, the space and the body *are* that sense of self. As Merleau-Ponty again has it: 'our body is not primarily *in* space, it is of it' [1994:148]. Similarly, this sense of self is not *in* the body, but of it.

Acting can be understood as a process of embodiment effecting change within 'self' as an extension across time and space. This change is not an opposition to some other state however. That the 'self' maintains a personal coherence in practice seems to be without question. This is what allows the theatre to maintain its particular 'live'-ness. Herbert Blau writes: 'Of all the performing arts, the theatre stinks most of mortality' [1976:8]. What is most truly mortal about me, that which decays, even now, in front of your eyes, is my body. My body in a theatrical context is both a *means* of expression, and expression itself, hence the mortal stink of the theatre. Questions of theatrical knowledge are bound up with questions of doing and being to the extent that they are indistinguishable.

Notes

¹ Thiruvananthapuram is the state capital of Kerala, South West India. A *kalari* (meaning literally place of training), is the traditional arena for the practice of the martial art *kalarippayattu*. See Appendix for a more in depth discussion of the practice of *kalarippayattu*, its cultural and historical background, and also further discussion of my personal engagement with it.

² See Zarrilli 1998. Although there is a spiritual, 'religious' aspect to this initial oblation, it also serves to mark a crucial juncture between the daily life outside the space of the kalari floor, and the extra-daily activity taking place upon it, carried out according to particular 'rules', and demanding an altering of one's awareness and attendant states of consciousness.

³ Meaning 'teacher', or 'master', the honorific *Gurukkal* is a plural, signalling the continuance of a lineage or tradition of practice, embodied by its possessor. He quite literally is thought of as not only embodying his own knowledge about the practice, but also all that of his predecessors.

⁴ 'Daily body techniques are used to communicate, techniques of virtuosity are used to amaze. Extra-daily techniques on the other hand, lead to information, They literally *put* the body *into form*, rendering it artificial/artistic, but *believable*. [Barba 1995:16; italics in original]

⁵ 'Shape' and 'texture' here are intended to be broad metaphors, rather than precise descriptions. I am not suggesting that time has shape or texture *per se*, but rather that its sensual and formal qualities, which are at best ineffable, can be grasped at through the appeal to parallel concepts in other areas of perception.

⁶ See for example *Landscape and Silence, Old Times, No Man's Land* (1969, 1971, and 1975 respectively)

⁷ With characteristic ambiguity however, it is unclear from this 1972 interview whether he is referring to his characters, to actors, to audiences, or to people generally.

⁸ In the summer of 2000 I spent five weeks training at the CVN Kalari in Thiruvananthapuram, in Kerala, Southern India. Although I had been training for over eighteen months at that point, and, whilst I certainly didn't consider myself an expert, the effect on my practice of watching and training with individuals of considerably higher ability than my own, was profound. Even without consideration of actual spoken or hands-on correction of my technique, the simple comparison of my own attempts at sequences to those of more advanced students provided a 'guide'. Over an extended period of training however, there begins to be a gradual loss of the need to strive to achieve an exact 'copy' of what one is being shown; it comes to be used as a point of reference for the process of making it 'make sense' in terms of one's own process.

⁹ Cf. O'Shaughnessy 1995:176-203.

¹⁰ For this approach, and the complimentary addition of tonics to the noun within each unit, I am indebted to Gerry McCarthy, who introduced me to the technique as part of his Speaking Shakespeare course at The University of Birmingham.

¹¹ 'How are we to single out, in a long speech, the key word and a series of words which are of minor importance, but necessary to the comprehension of the whole? They cannot all be equally important; naturally some will require more and others less emphasis, a third group will be even less essential, they must be deliberately toned down and relegated to the background'. [1986:162]

¹² See Stanislavski 1981:56-62.

¹³ 'All actors fundamentally depend on the innate capacity for performance, because actors do not themselves invent dramas; rather, they reinvent them. To use Aristotle's terms of mimesis, that which fundamentally enables actors to reinvent a drama, the mimetic *object*, in a performance, the mimetic *manner*, which is consistent with its text, the mimetic *medium*, is the innate capacity to perform. If actors did not have this capacity, dramatic performances could not occur'. [1999:23]

¹⁴ She writes: 'The thought of speech seems odd to us moderns. This is because we conceive of the senses as passive recipients of data, whereas speech is an active externalization of data. It is also because we think of the senses as natural faculties and speech as a learned acquirement. The ancients, however, had different ideas on the matter. They were as apt to think of the senses more as media of communication than as passive recipients of data.' [1993:2]

¹⁵ 'In a nutshell, the enactive approach consists of two points (1) perception consists in perceptually guided action and (2) cognitive structures emerge from the recurrent sensorimotor patterns that enable action to be perceptually guided.' [Varela *et al* 1991:173]

¹⁶ The need for ever more 'concrete' examples as 'proofs' would seem to be descriptive of this? This tendency can also be seen in the ever increasing shift in cognitive science towards empiricism. See Varela *et al* 1991, Lakoff and Johnson 1999, or any number of 'thought experiments' in contemporary philosophy, which require the reader to 'imagine' him/herself in a particular situation – i.e. empirically draw on his/her own experience

¹⁷ The touchstone for my interest in disciplines such as Kalarippayattu comes not simply (or even) out of a need for comparison, but from the experience of practice. Certainly my theoretical and research concerns have led me to actively seek out connections between acting and these other practices, but these connections are borne out of practical experience. They do not lie, self-evident, merely awaiting the right theorist to come along and point them out. Like any theoretical intervention, the establishment of such connections are always made by *someone*, and that someone is an embodied someone. Through repeated exploration in practice, I have attempted to explore in detail these connections.

Locating the Sense of Self: Performance as Epistemology

The actor's sense of self is an act of imagination, an imagination that is sensual and embodied. It is a particular concern of this thesis that any discussion of the actor's process inevitably also encompasses that of the spectator. However, since I have begun to argue, both in the three previous chapters, and meta-theoretically, that the condition of the actor's sense of self is constitutive of theatrical performance, it is more specifically with actors that I am now concerned. In particular this chapter is concerned with the actor's sense of self during 'optimal performance'. This is important; the sense of self, in common with any kind of knowledge must be regarded as something which can be heightened, honed, increased, and put to increasingly specific uses. In other words, it is an ability. Konijn, as seen in Chapter Two, rightly directs attention to optimal acting, not only as the ideal model of practice, but because if we are to argue for knowledge *in* and *of* experience in this instance, then it is in optimal acting that this knowledge is most fully realised. It is therefore necessary to question how the knowledge that optimal acting entails might be characterised, and how this does (or might) facilitate practice.

What frames this ability however, and what either sets it apart from, or compares it with, other levels of optimal activity demands more than mere statement of fact. In performance this ability is both directed towards, and directed by practical concerns. The nature and control of this interaction is the subject matter of this chapter. Clearly, discussing this ability in terms of its successful application is easier than discussing it relative to failure. For this reason, it is with the successful application of this ability as optimal performance that this chapter is concerned.

In order to establish how successful performance is known by the actor, it is necessary to examine how performance distinguishes itself within his/her consciousness as an event or practice either separate from, or alternate to, any other. Whether explicitly employing character or not, theatrical performance tends towards the discontinuity of the actor and spectator from his/her daily existence. As suggested in the prolegomenon to this thesis, for all the apparent necessity of a post-modern genre of 'performance', in this it is no different to the theatre; indeed, without this necessary theatricality *performance* cannot occur. Rather than continue to grind

away in the loop of this argument however (which, it must be stated, is a particularly political one, and raises serious questions concerning profession, public and academy – who delineates what, and for whom?), and lose myself in concerns with stating what the limits are or should be, I intend to focus in this final chapter on the condition of this peculiar discontinuity. This is, as I will argue, the locus of the actor's sense of self.

Again, in examining this discontinuity between the daily and the extra-daily¹ it is necessary to consider what its optimal condition might be. It is important, in this respect, to avoid any suggestion that there is a norm by which this optimal condition can be adduced, or that some blanket definition of 'best practice' exists. As Bourdieu notes, the imposition of academic 'rules' onto practically nebulous concepts such as 'how best to do' (acting) 'having extracted from the *opus operatum* the supposed principles of its production, sets them up as norms explicitly governing practices...[which] takes away understanding of the logic of practice in the very moment in which it tries to offer it' [1977:19]. The temptation to intellectualise practice is therefore one that should be avoided. This might appear to be an absurd suggestion to make in what is, after all, an academic thesis and an intellectual exercise. However as Zarrilli notes [1995b], theory and practice are not wholly closed to one another, and, with respect to acting, the temptation to set aside 'thinking' from 'doing' raises an ideological suggestion that the practice of art bears no direct relation to its criticism:

A profoundly patronizing set of attitudes is implicit in this discourse. It projects upon acting students a lack of difference and diversity of experience and limits the range of definitions of what art might be. Acting students would be encouraged to adopt the idea that 'thinking' is inimicable to 'art,' as well as the notion that they would not be able to handle the potential confusion that might result from critical thinking, which prompts them to probe or to question what they might be asked to 'do'. [112]

Thinking about doing need not entail analysis in the strictest sense. Thinking about doing can be just that: 'How do I do this?'; 'What will allow me to do it best?'. The introduction of the personal voice is important here. The previous chapters, and Chapter Three in particular, have sought to provide an empirical basis to the phenomenological bias of the enquiry. In drawing and referring to my own practice I am not only seeking to limit the frame of reference of the enquiry, but to anchor it in experience. A point of view is always someone's, and I am trying to be explicit about this by locating the source and genesis of my point of view.

The importance of a necessary sense of self in this is that epistemological questions become inseparable from questions of value. As Solomon writes: 'what *my* world includes that *the* world does not is *value*' [1977:67]. This demands that we think of acting and performance in terms of the condition of their experience - which is to say that of the practitioner - rather than by the extent to which they facilitate theory. The absurdity of thinking otherwise is well described by Paul Feyerabend:

We now have a situation where social and psychological *theories* of human thought and action have taken the place of this thought and action itself. Instead of asking the people involved in a problematic situation, developers, educators, technologists and sociologists get their information about what these people 'really want and need' from theoretical studies carried out by their esteemed colleagues in what they think are the relevant fields. Not live human beings, but abstract models are consulted; not the target population decides, but the producers of the models. [1997:263]

This is absurd since not only does it implicitly assume that experience resembles theory, but also that theory *is* the thing which it describes. As an epistemology acting is not simply enacting some pre-existing level of theory, but rather is generative of an occurrent state of knowledge for its practitioner. It is somewhat disingenuous to characterise it in terms of theory, not simply because of the position of doubt which theory entails, and which is inimical to acting, but because acting itself is not directed towards theory, whether as a proof or generator of it. Directing attention towards ends over means overlooks the fact that the success of these ends is in the experience of the means.

Doubt

Much has been made of *knowledge*, of *understanding*, and of *meaning* over the last few chapters, of their *conditions* and *grounds*. In other words – how do we know? How are we sure?

Doubt, once generated, can only ever find evidence of deception, never proof of authenticity. [George 1995:353]

As an actor I am in an absurd position; what should I do? Is it my *body*, like the dancer's you have come to see? Or is it another's? Or my body 'performed'? Or what my body 'represents'? How should I know *myself*? How should I know this body in this space? Knowledge and understanding of the body are at issue here; indeed a key question is whether, and to what extent, it is itself (a body of) knowledge. The conditions and grounds of meaning may thus be seen to have their locus within embodied experience.

Leaving to one side momentarily concerns over *what* and *how* it represents, the body is an absolute constant of performance. However, being overly conscious of the mechanics of performance can be a hindrance to the actor - one only need think of how suddenly strange and awkwardly difficult walking can become when one actively 'thinks' about it. Simply apply this to the relative unfamiliarity of rehearsed movement and speech! Thankfully we do not need to subject our actions to this level of enquiry in order to carry them out; as Wittgenstein noted:

Why do I not satisfy myself that I have two feet when I want to get up from a chair? There is no why. I simply don't. This is how I act. [1974:22]

Concerns for *how* and *why* I act are not necessarily mutually beneficial; indeed, concerns for *how* to act may actually be prohibitive to doing so. In the previous chapter I began to suggest that a practice such as *kalaripayattu* provides a paradigm for acting, in that it focuses the practitioner's attention on to the demands of the immediate or imminent moment. This is particularly important, as it is assumed that there may eventually be the necessity of applying such practice within a 'deadly' situation. Whilst it is not to an example of 'deadly' practice that I now turn to further illustrate how concerns for *how* to act can be prohibitive of doing so, nevertheless, the eventual possibility of that level of application informs the practice I shall describe. In the *pakarchakal*, or 'seven legs' sequence of C.V.N. style *kalaripayattu* training, the practitioner makes many rapid movements requiring tremendous speed and agility. For example:

From a low position in the 'horse' pose (left knee bent over left foot, right leg extended backwards, with my body forwards and lowered towards the floor in line with the extended back leg), I step through and forwards with my right foot, and having placed it, raising my left knee towards my chest, leap high into the air to kick my right foot to my hand raised above my head, and attempt to land in a position of calm repose upon my right knee. Whilst doing so I breathe heavily through my nose (the movement is vigorous and done at speed as part of a sequence), and focus my gaze in co-ordination with my movements. There are also certain physical principles I try to adhere to: for example, keeping my spine straight in line with the angle of my extended back leg whilst in the 'horse', or keeping my shoulders

relaxed, and neck extended as I leap to kick my right hand, and bringing my gaze up to meet the kicking foot.

Satisfying myself in an overtly reflexive way that these things are so disrupts the action - in checking that my neck is extended I'm no longer at the point where it needs to be so; and so on. In attempting to run a system of checks parallel to what I'm doing, I actually restrict myself doing so. The action itself needs to be its own justification.

In order for this to be the case there has to be something about what I'm doing which lets me know that it is correct. Given the problems with concerning oneself with *how* to act that I have identified, it is tempting to suggest that a training in which one repeats given actions over and over with increasing efficiency simply becomes 'unconscious', leaving one free to 'think' about how to adapt them. This is not only an oversimplification of the process, but overlooks the intelligence which begins to inhere in such actions over time. As Searle suggests 'we have no conception of an unconscious mental state except in terms derived from conscious mental states' [1994:19]. Suggestions that knowledge about actions (such as those of the *pakarchakal*) passes from the reach of our conscious states into parallel states of the *unconscious* is merely to replace one set of problems concerning self awareness with another. As Searle again notes, it is a particularly post-Freudian tendency to appeal to the unconscious as an explanation for those aspects of human achievement which do not adhere to an objectivist paradigm of 'reason':

After Freud, we routinely invoke unconscious mental phenomena to explain human beings, and we find the notion of consciousness puzzling, and perhaps unscientific. [1994:151]

The kind of knowledge involved in the *pakarchakal* (or in acting for that matter), is necessarily conscious and active, but what is surely now becoming clearer is that in order to perform such actions, a certain lack of doubt is required.

Of what can I be certain then? That 'I' have a body doesn't seem to be a proposition which is ready to go away, despite Cartesian scepticism. As discussed in Chapter Two, for Descartes, knowledge had to rest upon that which is certain, and the body, with its unreliable senses, had a nasty habit of playing him false. He was certain of what he thought of himself, but not of his body. The body appears to present real problems for certainty; it is prone to disease, it has all manner of messy fluids, and

doesn't always do the things we'd like it to. Teeth fall out of it. It has bad hair days. It farts and is hungover. The condition of knowledge begins to look a bit of a state. However, even though it is subjected to constant change, the body nevertheless allows us continuity *within* experience. Indeed, as Lakoff and Johnson have shown, concepts such as 'certainty' are quite literally unthinkable without the body. For example, our sensory experience of kinaesthesia-reafference allows us to sit on chairs repeatedly without first checking their solidity. The solidity of chairs is not merely a given property of the shape we see and remember, but an experience which we have had on and in the body. The sensory and motor experience of this shapes a certainty about it. We can be certain of the solidity of chairs generally because this is our experience of them generally.²

The necessity of such a lack of doubt is important in acting, in that it provides a Background level of certainty, on which to base performance more specifically.³ Throughout the performance of *Monologue* I was certain of the chair underneath me, not because I carried out persistent checks, but because this was a given. Far from this simply passing from conscious awareness, the greater my degree of certainty of it, the more it became something I could work with. This was both as a surface to work against, to try to stretch away from or sink into, and also as an object of sensation which contributed to an awareness of where I was and what I was doing. This bodily-based certainty is of prime importance to the actor. It is an awareness of his/her location in space relative to other aspects of the theatrical environment, but also forms a necessary base for the performance of particular tasks within that environment.

This initial level of awareness is what Lakoff and Johnson characterise as 'direct understanding'. As a result of this, the actor can also acquire 'indirect' understanding, necessary for 'making sense' of tasks which will be performed:

As we have seen, all of the resources that are used in direct, immediate understanding are pressed into service in indirect understanding via metaphor...It is because we understand *situations* in terms of our conceptual system that we can understand *statements* using that system of concepts as being *true*, that is, as fitting or not fitting the situation as we understand it. Truth is therefore a function of our conceptual system. It is because many of our concepts are metaphorical in nature, and because we understand situations in terms of those concepts that metaphors can be true or false. [1981:178-79]

To provide a further exposition of this idea: if I am to be certain of something, then I do not need to doubt it, or question it in order for it to be true for me at a particular moment. Thus, as I sit on a chair I am certain in the instance of that sitting of its solidity (unless it collapses under me, of course). From my experience of such solidity and the certainty which it brings about, in my relation to particular objects (like this chair), I can thus be certain of concepts - such as other, as yet unknown, chairs being solid, even though I have no direct knowledge of them.

It is perhaps necessary to pause here for a moment and to restate the importance of the distinction between representation and experience which I have been trying to draw throughout the previous chapters. For the actor, the knowledge she needs to be certain of has to concern the experience in which she is engaged. She is attempting to deceive us only if she is concerned with convincing the spectator that this *representation* rather than this *experience* is 'true'. If we are concerned with the truth of representation, then we also have to require 'truth' to have a fixity, since representation, whether concerned with verisimilitude or not, is nevertheless always a doubling of some 'other'. Re-presentation assumes permanence. Experience on the other hand only supposes what *is now* to be true.

The process of living is continuous; it possesses continuity because it is an everlastingly renewed process of acting upon the environment and being acted upon by it, together with institution of relations between what is done and what is undergone. Hence experience is necessarily cumulative and its subject matter gains expressiveness because of cumulative continuity. The world we have experienced becomes an integral part of the self that acts and is acted upon in further experience. In their physical occurrence, things and events experienced pass and are gone. But something of their meaning and value is retained as an integral part of the self. Through habits formed in intercourse with the world, we also in-habit the world. It becomes a home and the home is part of our every experience. [Dewey 1958:104]

In contrast to this, a position of doubt begins by questioning what it is not. As I have suggested, it is necessary to consider acting, not from this sceptical position, nor even from its opposite of attempting to affirm positively what it *is*, but from the perspective of what needs to *done*. This could lead to a simple catalogue of actions. However, as I shall suggest, not only does this create objectivist problems concerning categories, but also fails to take into account the relationship between action and environment which occurs in the embodied experience of acting. The nature and quality of this interconnection can be seen as giving rise (in part at least) to the particular sense of self which I am trying to discuss, and so it is to this interconnection that attention should be directed.

In establishing a relationship between action and environment, I am also extending the notion of the sense of self beyond the limits of a container-based schema of body and self (a legacy of Descartes). Crucial to my understanding of the sense of self as it concerns acting is that it is defined as much by interaction (with other objects, other people), as by that which constitutes the 'container'.

A desire to understand this sense of self as (in part) externally directed and active, bears some comparison with Searle's call for an understanding of the 'social character of the mind' [1994:248], since it prevents an assumption that 'mind', or any of its correlatives, are wholly private, within the brain/body and only a passive response to experience. The sense of self, like the social character of the mind is in and of the body, but is also constituted by objects and events external to it.

The sense of self can thus be thought of as 'in' the body, but also very much in the world, a world which is understood according to its social character and values as much as any other factor. As suggested, the actor requires a certain degree of certainty about his/her relationship to the world in order to act within it. In this, we experience the world 'as it is', but we do so relative to our cultural values. These values are, of course, open to change, but in so doing, the world changes with them, because we thus value it in different ways. There are no 'facts' about it which are value free. The same can be said of the body, that in its being in the world it both practices and is shaped by cultural values. In practising *kalarippayattu* I am shaped by the limitations of my knowledge about it, by the tensions created by the transfer of one cultural practice in to another and so on. At the same time however, I am also enacting these ideas, my own suppositions about my body and how *kalarippayattu* should ideally be practised, which I draw from observation, and what I have been told and have read.

For example, my experience of *kalarippayattu* training has involved an encounter with certain beliefs concerning the body, power, and practice implicit within the training. However, having mostly been taught in Britain by an American citizen a martial art of Kerala, South West India, within a university context, not only carries with it these beliefs, but also a wealth of other social and cultural 'narratives' which have an unquestionable impact on the practice. 'Who' I am during practice, and my sense of self in this, is in part determined by the condition of the relationship between these beliefs and narratives.

As suggested, at the point of practice, I experience the world 'as it is'. To present it as otherwise is to subject experience to a level of doubt antithetical to *doing*; 'to be or not to be' is a questioning which facilitates neither. As, in the example of the *pakarchakal* I step forward with my right leg to place my foot and jump, I am certain not only of doing this, but also of my ability to do so. I have not always been so, and indeed there was a long time when I tried, and failed to do so. Even today, on occasion, whether through tiredness, lack of concentration or attention to what I am doing, I fail. Indeed, failure has often been the result of an introduction of doubt into the process; doubt about the foot being placed correctly, doubt about the position of my hands, doubt about having the stamina to reach the end of the sequence. In the moment of doubt I have a disjunction between the immediate sensation of experience and meaning, and the latter becomes something I can only come to terms with apart from the former. This disjunction in turn encourages a dualism in which the condition of knowledge is that it must be *about* experience, rather than experience itself qualifying as such. This is important to the thesis; whilst the body's perceptual systems can be said to provide information 'about' experience and the environment, it is also important to consider the manner in which they are also 'of' experience and the environment. As Merleau-Ponty points out: 'I regard my body, which is my point of view upon the world, as one of the objects of that world' [1962:70].

The immediacy of this state is crucial if performance is to be attributed its own epistemology, since it is in the enaction of the immediate moment that the actor/spectator/practitioner achieves a particular kind of knowing which is peculiar to it (the moment). *Kalarippayattu* stands as a useful paradigm for this, if only for the fact that the stakes for this kind of knowing are dramatically high: failure to grasp and make use of this knowledge in the moment has the potential to mean death for the martial practitioner. Whilst mortal combat is not practised within modern day *kalaris*, it is nevertheless an important part of the history of the martial art,⁴ and the potential for this level of application is retained within the training, and is within the range of possibilities available to expert practitioners. However, knowledge of this potential in practice is not reflective in the strictest sense.

Experiences are always accompanied by an awareness of a 'self' having that experience and hence very rapidly shift from direct cognition to self-consciousness, from immediate apprehension to construction of a dualism of subject and object. These are, however, increasingly today recognized as falsifications against which performance stands as a constant reminder. [George 1999:31]

Whilst the stakes are not as mortally high for the actor, nevertheless she needs to avoid the dualism of subject and object in which the continuity of experience is disrupted. The locus of this experience has to be the body. Again, this appears to present real problems for certainty, in that if I am constantly attempting to understand the situation and functioning of the body as something *apart* from myself - to stand to one side and see 'myself' as detached from this decaying, messy body - then I have created a duality between myself and my experience.

The Generalising Body

'I step forward with my right foot, place it, and leap into the air, kicking it above my head to meet my raised right hand'. I am certain of my ability to do this as I do it, 'since doubt comes only with detached evaluation' [Dreyfus 1998]. Evaluation in this instance is a misnomer; I don't evaluate at all, I *do* it. This doing could perhaps be characterised as 'unthinking' somehow, and in some respects that would be right; if thinking has to be 'about' something then the suggestion is quite correct. *Experience* tells me however, that there has been a long time when I couldn't make this leap; that there have been times when it has not been as high, or as well controlled. I have also seen others leap many times higher, with greater speed and subtlety, but I don't think *about* these things as I make the leap. Not thinking about them means that I do not look forward to the consequences of my actions, and nor do I reflect upon the impact of what I have just done. In this respect, the doing is its own reward; what Csikszentmihaly calls 'autotelic experience' [1988:8].

As I have discussed, at the point of practice there is no separation of self from action. That is to say that there is a 'wholeness' involved in doing which is disrupted by reflective attention to it. This 'wholeness' is not merely conceived of on the basis of bodily experience, but *is* bodily experience to the extent that one cannot be considered without the other. Indeed, it could be argued, along with David Gelernter, that it is impossible to think of *consciousness* (so often presented as a disembodied, or at best 'brain-based' phenomenon) without the body:

The only possible conclusion is that, ultimately, the fact that the brain *itself* is a mere information processing device is just irrelevant to the question of whether thought can be accomplished by a computer. The body is interposed between the brain and its world, and the body is indispensable to thought. Your body must respond in a coherent, consistent way to the world and to your brain, with nerve patterns that are interrelated – that call each other to mind – in exactly the right ways. To the naïve onlooker the brain seems to be doing it all, just as the struck piano strings (say) seem to be wholly responsible for the sound of the piano – but remove the body, or the piano's sounding board, and the effect is destroyed. And the *body*, of course,

is no mere “information processing device.” It’s a complex assemblage of sensors, transducers, and moving parts. [1994:125]

Although Gelernter’s field of enquiry is that of Artificial Intelligence (which as a discipline seems to eschew phenomenal observation), his assertion concerning mind/brain and body, bears a remarkable similarity to Merleau-Ponty’s characterisation of the body as being in the world: ‘Our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system’ [1962:203]. Consciousness, the mind, the brain, the body are thus in the world just as the world is unavoidably in the body - a world of objects, others, environment, and values.

A discussion of *the* body maintains overtones of Cartesian scepticism however, unless I recognise that at some point, in considering *the* body, I am considering *my* body. It is only on the basis of my having/being a body myself that I can have any regard to *the* body at all. The implications for a theory of acting are that issues concerning ‘self’ (consciousness, awareness, and so on) are inconceivable other than from a bodily perspective, since it is always and unavoidably from this perspective that they are considered.

In the light of the ‘wholeness’ discussed earlier, *my* bodily point of view is never reducible to individual processes of cognition, sensation, or to particular body parts such as brain or eyes. Similarly in terms of a theory of acting, this necessitates considering not only the actor’s individual cognitive and active processes – recourse to memory of lines and blocking, employment of ‘trained’ technique, extemporisation of set patterns, etc. – but also how *all* such modes of thought and practice are the ‘whole’ of the actor’s experience. Similarly terms such as body ‘image’ or ‘schema’ are ultimately unsatisfying in this regard since they suggest a Cartesian understanding of the body posited apart from experience. My suggestion is that acting necessitates an understanding *in* experience rather than an understanding *of* experience.

If we take an example from Chapter Three - the opening sequence of the performance of *Monologue* - we can begin to see how understanding occurs *in* experience, not simply as an amorphous response to stimuli, but as a cogent and cohesive ‘logic’. Bourdieu writes: ‘one has to acknowledge that practice has a logic which is not that of logic, if one is to avoid asking of it more logic than it can give,

thereby condemning oneself either to wring incoherencies out of it or to thrust upon it a forced coherence' [1977:109]. This 'logic' is possessed of both structure *and* capacity for change 'relative to a conceptual system and a set of cultural values' [Lakoff and Johnson 1981:227]. The example given below does not explicate itself after the fashion of classical logic, but contains within it both a mutable and yet cohesive conceptual structure (as suggested by Bourdieu) and a set of culturally conditioned values (as suggested by Lakoff and Johnson):

I try to maintain an awareness of my left shoulder; more than that, an awareness which extends out of my shoulder to encompass the empty chair behind me. This awareness is especially important during those moments when my visual focus is away from it, and my torso and head are not angled towards it. With the half-breaths (*in* and *out*) I 'explore' the punctuation of the text.

The conceptual structure involves both my desire to pay more attention to task than to character (as discussed in the previous chapter), and the 'reasoning' behind the patterns of movement I have chosen. My decision to sit face-front to the audience is a result of my desire to allow them to see my face, and also the struggle against expression which I described. However, it also includes less 'deliberate' considerations, such as the timing of the passage of my gaze from one point to another. As I have suggested, this is achieved much more on the basis of the immediate 'feel' of the action, but is 'conceptual' in that it relates to my practice of such movements in training and rehearsal. It is not fixed however; it necessarily changes in the instance of its realisation.

Following Lakoff and Johnson's suggestion, this conceptual level is both informed by, and informing of, a set of cultural values. As discussed earlier in relation to Searle's call for an understanding of 'the social character of the mind', this is a nexus of beliefs about my body and its abilities which forms an understanding of the theatrical situation, my reasons for performing this play, my training, and so on.

As I have suggested, this nexus of beliefs is manifest as part of a necessary certainty in performance, a certainty which requires an ability to generalise about it, and to act on the basis of that generalisation. The ability to generalise saves us from an infinite regress of analysis. If we were to have to subject all objects and events to possible matches within a representational memory the consequences would be potentially

crippling. The body is crucial in this, as it sets the limits and conditions by making that which will be the subject of generalising relative to it - its structure, capabilities and so on.

How do human beings – let alone networks – ever learn to generalize like other human beings so they can acquire the skills required to get around in the human world? If everything is similar to everything else in an indefinitely large number of ways, what constrains the space of possible generalizations so that trial and error learning has a chance of succeeding? [Dreyfus 1998]

This is where the body comes in. The sensory and motor structures of the body (its awareness of up and down, its 'interior' and 'exterior', self-propulsion, and so on) thus constrain, and make possible, generalising. Practice further facilitates this generalising, as can be seen in the skilled performer's ability to 'do' complicated actions without subjecting them to analysis beforehand, and in the tendency of such performers towards working languages, in which the tacit implications of commands such as 'with feeling', or 'more energy' – whilst maddeningly vague – are manifold.

The benefit of *kalarippayattu* as a paradigm for actor training is precisely on the basis of its encouragement, within the structure of its training and practice, of an ability to generalise in the manner discussed above. Further than that, it is experience of this generalisation as an affective state (which neither precludes, nor discounts, what might more conventionally be thought of as 'mental' activity),⁵ which marks it as particularly useful and interesting to a consideration of acting. The result of long-term training, is the development of a 'sensual' relationship to both action and perception as a generalised background ability - experienced on the basis of its 'feel' - which allows the practitioner to be responsive to immediate demands whilst still fulfilling certain 'objective' criteria such as the form of a particular pose.

Thinking in terms of sensuality requires a more 'whole' body notion of experience than the discussion of sensation – so often found in accounts of perception – would allow. Sensation is held to be local, specific, and involving a particular 'system'. Sensuality on the other hand is more nebulous, general, and has overtones of gratification.⁶ This general quality of sensuality is important; as I act, turning my head from one direction to another, I do not experience or perceive my head, or the muscle groups which effect the turn in isolation from the rest of my body. Certainly I may attempt to increase my awareness of this part of my body in order to make further specific my use of it. However, as the experience of training in martial arts such as *kalarippayattu* and *t'ai chi ch'uan* which systematise this specificity of awareness or

focus suggests, in order to do so the use and perception of the body as a whole is equally important.

In carrying out one of the many movements involved in a *meipayattu* sequence, a *kalaripayattu* practitioner not only has to follow and execute a certain form involving the movements of, say, a leg, an arm, or a combination of limbs, but also involve his entire body in this. Not just those parts of the body ostensibly making a movement or pose, but as Zarrilli [2000] makes clear, the *entire* body, which includes sensory and perceptual mechanisms, respiration, and so on. Crucial to this overall sensuality or 'feel' of the body is a directed awareness of the space around the practitioner, which eventually, in weapons training or combat, will include the teacher or an opponent.

This directed awareness is ostensibly projected through specific use of the gaze towards a specific point - whether on the opposite wall of the Kalari, the raised big toe of a kicking foot, or the teacher's eyes - but also requires a dynamic awareness of the body in which there is not only a sense of 'correct' form, but also of a potential for present action. Zarrilli describes this sense within the context of the 'elephant pose' (*gajavadivu*) of C.V.N. style *kalaripayattu* training:

During the brief one to two seconds it takes to assume this position, the 'internal eye' sensed in the lower abdominal region simultaneously continues to maintain a connection with the point ahead where the external focus began, the relationship to the earth through the soles of the feet, and the opening through the head at the top of the spine. When the final pose is assumed one should be as 'immovable' or 'sturdy' as an elephant. One's energy in this dynamic form creates and accentuates a sense of opposition sensed from the lower abdominal region at the root of the navel (*nabhi mula*) – outward/ahead through the eyes/fists, and backwards/down through the soles of the feet and along the spine, into the earth. [2000:48]

The 'opening' Zarrilli describes, like the sense in the *nabhi mula*, is of an extension of the practitioner's own body *in* space. Rather than the closure of sensual experience within skin, 'correct' practice develops the experience of its occurrence *within* space. As much as being a goal of 'correct' practice, this sensuality is something which is constantly modulated, if only for the reason that it must be actively maintained.

In some respects, the sensuality of practice may be regarded as 'objective', in that it assumes that the consequences of certain actions within a given situation are consistently 'knowable'. However, it does not assume this knowledge to exist or occur independent from its practice. Nor does it assume the condition of this

knowledge to be stable; not only does this it have infinitely subtle variety within experience, but the practitioner must actively work to maintain actualisation of it. Doubt is inimical to this; the only way out and into a 'sincerity' of seeming is through 'the silencing of such scruples and taking a blind plunge into "doing"' [Merleau-Ponty 1962:382].

Category Errors

If we are to consider the 'blind plunge' demanded by Merleau-Ponty, then it is important once again to consider blindness more as a particular kind of (inter)sensory engagement (as discussed in Chapter One) than as a disability. As noted, blindness offers a model of how our conceptual systems are founded on embodied experience, which in turn is facilitated by particular sensory and motor systems. Given that blindness allows us to think of perception in terms other than strictly visual, it is important to recognise that these systems are not merely what is 'represented' within the somatosensory cortex of the brain, but are widely distributed throughout limbs, joints, organs, bones, muscles and so on. As Shaun Gallagher notes, there is otherwise a tendency to reduce knowledge entirely to patterns of neurone firings, and to see the body as only providing the raw sensory data for cognition: 'The body is first treated as an intentional object, and then reduced to neural computations' [1995:226].

The difficulties of taking this 'blind plunge' are compounded significantly by cultural constraints. My introduction and discussion of Merleau-Ponty's short precept is solely on the basis of its metaphorical propriety as a result of this. As discussed in Chapter One, it is a characteristic of the visual bias of the sense-ratio of contemporary culture to consider knowledge at one remove from that which it is about. Vision – seeing clearly – requires the eyes to focus properly, which in turn requires a necessary distance between the eye and the object.

Looking over large distances, the eye is able to acquire information from a vast number of sources, and thus allow the viewer to know something of them and their interrelationships without the need for direct contact or proximity. As Mark Johnson notes, this 'bird's eye' or 'God's eye' view – above and apart from objects and events - is one of the distinguishing metaphors by which objectivity is construed: 'that is, a perspective that transcends all human limitation and constitutes a universally valid reflective stance' [1987:xxiii].

As Constance Classen [1993] and Walter Ong [1982] have both suggested, the increasing cultural privilege given to vision in Western societies since the invention of print (to say nothing of the recent impact of electronic media), has also led knowledge away from experience, unless it is significantly marked by the visual. Not only does this include a 'necessary distance, but also a 'trace' to which the visual can attach itself. As Ong notes, vision favours the immobile, the surface:

The human sense of sight is adapted best to light diffusely reflected from surfaces. (Diffuse reflection, as from a printed page or a landscape, contrasts with specular reflection, as from a mirror.) A source of light, such as a fire, may be intriguing but it is optically baffling: the eye cannot get a 'fix' on anything within the fire. Similarly, a translucent object, such as alabaster, is intriguing because, although it is not a source of light, the eye cannot get a 'fix' on it either. [1982:71]

In order for knowledge to be 'about' something, it has to be separated from other things in order to establish a 'fix' on each of them. Different objects and events are thus ascribed particular categories by which they will be identified. In such an objectivist explanation of understanding, knowledge is based on the idea of the difference of one thing from another – the extent to which they do and/or do not share the same category.

How am I then, as an actor, aware of the states I find my 'self' in? Is it on the basis of identifiable categories, and thus the *difference* of one from another? As suggested in Chapter Two, Descartes' chief legacy is the vocabulary and categories of his discussion, which continue to be adopted even as the substance of his ideas is rubbished. Discussion of 'body' and 'mind' as separate entities (as Descartes was concerned with them) might be scarcer in contemporary theory, but the vocabulary and categories used all too often implicitly re-write this division. The use of compounds such as 'body-mind' or 'psycho-physical' may take place in a post-Cartesian context, but the terms of the debate still remain his. All too often one has the impression that, whilst the mutuality of mind and body may be recognised in practice, theoretically, they are still held very much in opposition. They 'work together' perhaps, but are essentially two different things. Even the removal of the hyphen to create 'psychophysical' or 'bodymind' doesn't seem to help much. The new words retain a lingering impression of two different domains, and always leave the necessity of explaining why the conflation has occurred. In Cartesian terms, the non-physical mind is the real *you*, but its causal connection to the physical body, on which it is reliant for sensory input or information, and which it causes to behave in

certain ways relative to its desires, are 'what makes your body yours, and not someone else's' [Churchland 1988:8]. Discussion of 'bodymind' retains this idea of the relationship between two separate entities as being causal or mutual, but ultimately separate.

Whilst Descartes and his objectivist heirs have sought to divide the body, and thus deny it the authority of self (and as a result of that, any claim to understanding being at all *embodied*), it is my suggestion that the opposite is the case. The self is an emergent property of the sensual experience of the body as a gestalt.⁷ Understanding, knowledge, any epistemological foundation or actuality must be not only considered in terms of the body, but is of the body itself and is thus resistant of attempts at categorisation. As much as Descartes claimed the body to be divisible, it is optimally experienced as a gestalt in practice.

Is it wholly justifiable to think of the sense of self as being the *same* in both daily and extra-daily circumstances however? The question is misleading, as it suggests that performance must either be distinguished on the basis of objectifiable difference, or not at all. This appears to be so much semantic quibbling at first, but it raises an important point; as a causal explanation it is to assume that performance has some sort of existence prior to the experience of it. This raises the problem of categories since it thus becomes necessary to explain how performance is demarcated from other events. One solution is, of course, to conceive of performance or 'performativity' as a more general existential state, which contains various different categories within it. For example, Victor Turner [1984] suggests a continuum between 'social drama' on the one hand and 'aesthetic drama' on the other. Social dramas, Turner claims, 'occur within groups bounded by shared values and interests of persons and having a real or alleged common history' [1984:69]. Like 'aesthetic dramas', 'social dramas', for Turner, 'induce and contain reflexive processes and generate cultural frames in which reflexivity can find a legitimate place' [1984:92]. Turner's suggestion is that this reflexive shift is not exclusive to an aesthetic practice such as 'theatre'.

For Richard Schechner this shift is characteristic of 'performance' – by his terms, a broad genre of cultural activity, different categories of which are distinguished by their 'magnitude':

Performativity – or, commonly, ‘performance’ – is *everywhere* in life, from ordinary gestures to macrodramas. But theatricality and narrativity are more limited, if only slightly so. Differences in degree of magnitude do lead to differences in kind. Aesthetic genres – theatre, dance, music – are framed theatrically, signalling the intentions of their composers to their publics. Other genres are frequently not so clearly marked –but this does not make them any less performative. [1990:45]

Leaving difficulties concerning who attributes performativity to whom to one side, this does not seem overly controversial in the light of the discussion of the social character of the sense of self begun earlier. But again the problem of degree arises; how is performativity to be measured and relative to what?

Schechner’s suggestion is that the relation of the individuals involved to ‘performance’ (theatrical or otherwise) is objectifiable in terms of ‘frames’. Even when these frames are suggested as being subjectively constructed, in attempting to identify them we are always stuck with the problem of having to freeze what is necessarily a dynamic state, and in so doing, losing what we were interested in in the first place – the condition of performance. Given the tremendous range of what counts as performative suggested by Schechner (from baseball games to executions to hostage crises), we become stuck with the problem of needing to qualify objective categories.

A further problem with this objectivist method of discriminating on the basis of categories (as discussed in relation to emotion in Chapter Two) is not only the terms under which they are attributed, but also with the concurrent assumption that they can be taken from one context and mapped onto another: hostage crises become like baseball games. Metaphorically this may be the case, but, as Lakoff and Johnson point out ‘conceptual metaphors are grounded in *correlations* within our experience’ [1981:155]. If a hostage crisis is to be like a baseball game, it can only be so to someone for whom, baseball is within their experience. There is unquestionably some benefit in this analysis, but it would surely be absurd to suggest as a result of this that the sense of self of those involved in a baseball game is anything like that of those involved in a hostage crisis.

Rather than comparing specific examples in an attempt to discern categories, a possible alternative is to conceive of performance more generally still - as a ‘way of being’. In his effort to develop a relevant epistemology, David George has written at length of the similarities between a Buddhist philosophy of life as a practice, and

performance as a 'way of knowing and, therefore as a, very different "Existenz" of Time/Space/Person' [1999:8]. For George, performance cannot be defined as a particular genre; making a separation from the 'textual' and 'conventional' theatre, performance is 'less a new mode of artistic expression than a new way of seeing and thinking' [199:26].

This 'new way' involves giving primacy to experience: 'the direct, immediate, particular, singular apprehension of a contact – between an "object" and a "subject"' [1999:30]. The similarity with Buddhist epistemology and practice lies, for George, in the attention given to this contact, not only as a source of knowing, but also in the primacy given to the immediacy of its moment. Buddhism, George suggests, 'neither denies that a world of forms exists nor affirms that it has essence' but advocates a 'continual praxis in living on a cognitive threshold' [1999:42]. Similarly performance, as an active form of epistemology:

...offers a rediscovery of the now; relocation in the here; return to the primacy of experience, of the event; rediscovery that all knowledge exists on the threshold of and in the interaction between subject and object; a rediscovery of ambiguity, of contradiction, of difference; a reassertion that things – and people – are what they do. [George 1996:25]

This still leaves a problem of definition – what is a performance? If this crucial distinction is not made then performance is everywhere at all times. This not only makes enquiry into it fundamentally pointless – if everything is performance, performance is nothing – but also makes irrelevant any enquiry into, or suggestion of, how best to do it. If everywhere and everything is performance there can be no knowledge about performance *per se*, since it exists relative to nothing. If, as George suggests, performance is 'different', 'ambiguous', and so on, then it can only be so in relation to that which is not. How then do we avoid the problems associated with categorisation?

A problem of definition is really a problem of knowledge – in asserting something about performance, how do you know? The intervention of the personal at this point is important. Knowledge - as Searle points out - like points of views, is always *someone's*: 'there is always a first person, an "I"' [1994:20]. This turns the discussion back towards the sense of self. It may be better to think of the relationship between performance and everyday aspects of this sense of self – the daily and the extra-daily - in terms of a continuum, or spectrum of experience. Just as it is impossible to distinguish the absolute limits of a particular frequency (as between say blue and red

in the light spectrum), so the daily and the extra-daily can be understood as segueing into one another with no clear demarcations between them.

The Extra-daily

How might we conceive of such a continuum for performance? Following William James' description of consciousness as a 'stream' in which there is no division between different categories, but rather a continuous flow, the philosopher Owen Flanagan argues for a 'spectrum of consciousness': 'At one end of the spectrum there is the self-consciousness involved in having a subjective experience. At the other end of the spectrum is the sort of self-consciousness involved in thinking about one's model of one's self, or as I shall say for simplicity, *the self* [1992:195].

Flanagan's spectrum begins to allow for a difference between representations of self necessary for reflection and the immediate experience of self without either suggesting them to be reducible to one another, or suggesting a substantial break between them. This idea has also been suggested (albeit along different lines) by David Gelernter.⁸

Flanagan's spectrum concerns 'self' consciousness. Gelernter's 'cognitive spectrum' operates between what he calls 'high-focus' and 'low-focus' states. 'High-focus' states are analytical, in which the parameters of one's attention are tightly defined. My own state as I struggle with these ideas might be defined as 'high-focus' since I have to concentrate firstly on a controlled process of reasoned argument, attach this to relevant examples, and effect this as a behavioural output – typing. This is a difficult state to maintain however, and as Gelernter notes, it operates in a remarkably linear fashion - which may go some way to explaining the enduring popularity of the computational model of the brain amongst contemporary philosophers such as Daniel Dennett and Paul and Patricia Churchland.⁹ As Gelernter observes however, these 'high-focus' states do not adequately describe cognition, or, indeed, consciousness. As regards cognition, what of those 'low-focus' states in which one's attention is more dissipated, attached to less particular objects? These low-focus states are just as important to cognition, creativity, and imagination as high-focus analysis. For example, low focus is characteristic of an 'Archimedes' experience, (following the classical mathematician who realised the theory of displacement as he stepped into his bath), since the broader scope of 'low-focus' allows for the greater possibility of leaps between one object or idea and another. At

the very bottom of the 'low-focus' end of the spectrum Gelernter suggests, are dreaming and sleep.

Hypothetically, the actor's sense of self during optimal acting can be located within a three dimensional space between high and low focus in one plane, and subjective 'self' experience and thought about the experience of that 'self' in another. This first plane is important, because, as noted earlier, an overly analytical state, with its crucial quotient of doubt, focuses the actor's attention too closely upon the mechanics of what he is doing. Too low focus a state implies no real focus at all, leaving the actor no involvement in what he is required to do.

A question which is raised here is thus whether or not I somehow 'represent' myself to myself within this continuum. Do I have to somehow how understand myself as 'other' in performance? This is particularly intriguing if acting is to be characterised as an extra-daily practice, which appears to engender a paradox regarding the actor's self. In one respect, the actor remains familiar to himself both before, after, and during performance; he is still the same certain body. However, the *extra-daily*, operating in a strange overlap between the familiar and the unfamiliar, seems to have written a schism of doubt into its own definitional construct – if not exactly 'daily' what then?

As I suggested in the previous chapter, as I step into a kalari or training space, I do not experience any radical disjunction with my sense of self as I have experienced it elsewhere, or at other times. Stepping onto the floor with my right foot, touching the floor, my forehead and chest, the same body enters the space as walked in from the street outside; the same senses adjust to the darker conditions, breath in the burning incense and feel the coolness of the air; the same network of muscle and nerve fibres moves and feels itself moving through space. Similarly, as the actor steps onto the stage does she really experience a disjunction between the self doing so, and the self who walked in through the stage door an hour ago? Konijn's research, involving a cross-section of actors employing differing approaches suggests that, regardless of the implicit assumptions concerning the condition of self within a given style, there is a crucial continuity between the daily and extra-daily states of actors. It could be argued that this is a question of degree, but again the problem of infinite regress arises concerning how that degree is to be measured and what the distinguishing features of its breakdown might be.

Given the uneasiness of this state, and its apparent 'in-between-ness' it is tempting to thus characterise it as somehow 'liminal'; that is to say a threshold between one state of being and another. Claims to this end are frequently presented relative to anthropological studies of ritual, the cynosure of which is the rite of passage, in which initiates pass from one state or status to another:

The passage from one social status to another is often accompanied by a parallel passage in space, a geographical movement from one place to another. This may take the form of a mere opening of doors or the literal crossing of a threshold which separates two distinct areas, one associated with the subject's pre-ritual or pre-liminal status, and the other with his post-ritual or post-liminal status [Turner 1982:25].

This is sociologically satisfying perhaps, but it does not directly address what the condition of the actor might be in such a mode; she is still left in a state of dualism on a relational axis between one set of things and another. There always exists a problem 'where' exactly to draw the line between pre- and post-liminality which either creates a further problem of infinite regress, or pedantically suggests a definite knowledge of the 'here' and 'there' which the threshold stands between.

The sense of self of the actor during performance (and in particular optimal performance) is *not* separate from those more daily conditions by which she might understand herself. However, given that in acting, actors tend towards the inception of an optimal state in order at least to achieve the sensation of 'success' without the need to recourse to the disruption of reflection, these states must be understood as somehow 'altered'. If they retain such a significant interpenetration with the daily, how can they still remain relevant to understanding acting in practical terms, if acting is characterised as *extra-daily*? As suggested earlier in relation to attempts to distinguish 'theatre' from 'performance', or 'aesthetic' from 'social' drama, this is problematic if one is led to conceive of the two in terms of category or degree. Where exactly does one draw the line? If we consider the daily and the extra-daily as aspects of the same existential continuum *sensually* then not only is metaphorical comparison between them ('life is like a performance') given legitimacy, but both aspects can be considered at an empirically knowable level of reality without the need to suggest absolute difference.

As discussed, knowledge possessed and practised bodily *inheres*, in spite of physical change. If we relocate an understanding of difference (such as that between daily and extra-daily states of the actor) *sensually*, then the knowledge of the daily can be

understood as also inhering sensually in the practice of what is understood (both by the actor and critically) as extra-daily.

Systems of actor training prepare the actor for carrying out the aesthetic demands of a particular style of expression, and thus direct his/her attention to the extra-daily demands of performance. Training of the kind discussed by this thesis, using *kalaripayattu* as a paradigm, develops the actor's ability to achieve optimal states not only by shifting his/her awareness to the extra-daily demands of its practice, but also by inculcating its demands sensually as dispositional states. These states form part of, and facilitate a background, which not only allows the actor to think 'about' performance, but, more important, allows him/her to *do* it. This dispositional background also concerns certain levels of physical ability which are not only knowable in terms of a representational memory (i.e. a picture-in-the-head remembrance of oneself doing something similar) but also of a sensual capacity. As I shall discuss, the sensual capacity of this dispositional background can be understood in terms of imagination, not in the sense of conceiving of possibilities other than those immediately experienced, but of how well one's immediate experience fits an 'ideal' model. This 'fit' is not simply a question of matching one concept with another, but involves a disposition towards the feel of this 'ideal' model. 'Fit' can be understood in sensual terms – how the actor feels in relation to his/her ideal determines its success. This sensuality involves both specific sensation, in that the actor may direct her attention specifically towards a particular part of her body (whether in order to make a specific movement, or to direct her attention in a particular direction through this body-part), and also a more general 'whole-body' state.

Before discussing this sense of 'fit' in more detail however (and indeed, before discussing the imagination which it is an act of), it is important to consider further not only how this sense of 'fit' occurs on a bodily basis, but also how it relates to the body's particular relationship to an environment of which it is itself a part.

Environment

If we cease to characterise knowledge and knowing solely in the terms of vision-from-a-distance, we can see (pun intended) that not only can an altered sense-ratio offer new metaphors for understanding, but that the terms and conditions of understanding themselves need to be refigured. Further than this though, if the distance characteristic of visualised accounts of knowledge is removed, then

knowledge must be presumed to be very much *within* the environment, and similarly the body and the sense of self. It is important to also remember that, as human beings, any consideration of environment is also a consideration of (at least the possibility of) a social space. Bourdieu writes that:

It is in the dialectical relationship between the body and a space structured according to...mythico-ritual oppositions that one finds the form par excellence of the structural apprenticeship which leads to the em-bodying of the structures of the world, that is, the appropriating by the world of a body thus enabled to appropriate the world. [1977:89]

He is of course not directly discussing theatre, but his description of the relationship between the body and ritually circumscribed space begins to allow a conception of theatre which is dynamic and resides in neither texts nor institutions, but in the particularity of the processes of embodiment of its participants. Theatre places social and physical constraints upon its participants – the separation of actors from audience, the development of stylistic and genre conventions, the etiquette of audience behaviour, and so on. These constraints not only play a part in determining the behaviour of the participants (actors *and* spectators), but are crucially also shaped by them. It is thus necessary to not only acknowledge the social and environmental aspects of practice, but also the extent to which the sense of self of the practitioner is bound up with them. In this respect the body is not simply the 'medium' for this dynamic interplay; thinking in such terms maintains and fosters a duality in which experience sits on one side, and understanding on the other. The body must be thought of as the interplay of self and environment (physical and social). In this, the sensory and motor systems by which we make experience 'make sense' are not simply 'things' through which information passes but are part of understanding itself. In wanting to stop and look at them, and understand them and how they work, it is too easy to overlook their dynamism.

In arguing for the bodily basis of understanding in acting, I am also arguing for the mutability of that understanding. As discussed in Chapter Three, acting is necessarily 'mortal', is in a state of permanent change from birth towards death; as Herbert Blau writes: 'someone is dying in front of your eyes' [1990:267]. This not only accounts for the 'live-ness' of theatre, but also for the apparent paradox that what knowledge its participants have is subject to change in the very instance it is experienced. If we are to avoid attempting to discern some slippery point where the knowledge *is* before change commences, then is it not better to accept that change as intrinsic to it?

If an experience must be represented somehow (for example as a 'body image') in order for understanding to occur, then understanding is posited at that moment of representation, and a problem arises of how both understanding and the self move from this single moment of experience to the next. Attempting to pinpoint understanding in this way, as George suggests, 'raises the problem of how anything can therefore have any relationship with the next stage of its own life' [1999:45]. However, if we can conceive of an understanding which is not merely *in* the body (in which the problem of pinpointing temporality and location arises) but *is* the body, subject to change as a condition of its being, then the on-going negotiation of that change itself becomes the (uneasy) locus of knowledge.

In terms of performance then, what constitutes the negotiation of the sense of self (as a form of knowledge) in terms of an environmental relationship is thus twofold. The first factor is my body itself – the material of my performance – and the second, the restrictions placed upon it – the language of the text, my delivery of it, blocking, the structure of the space I am performing within, the objects within it, and so on. Certainly in terms of my process of rehearsal and performance of *Monologue*, 'I made the decisions about how my body should be positioned and moved in these circumstances. However, the condition of the knowledge arrived at having made those decisions, cannot be divorced from my actually carrying them out. Unless I believe there to be some ideal representation which will be effected by my carrying out these actions, there is not some end state of understanding in the sense of some conclusion to be reached. Rather, the knowledge inheres within the action – which is to say within my body and its relationship to the environment. My sense of self in this instance is quite literally 'unthinkable' without the specifics of the environment within which it occurs. As Lakoff and Johnson suggest:

Our embodied system of basic-level concepts has evolved to 'fit' the ways in which our bodies, over the course of evolution, have been coupled to our environment, partly for the sake of survival, and partly by chance. It is not that every basic-level concept exists because of its survival value, but without such an embodied system coupled to our environment, we would not have survived. [Lakoff and Johnson 1999:91]

The ways in which actors seek to effect a 'fit' with their environment is thus a key concern. This is particularly so if we take the predetermined aspects of performance (script, blocking etc.) to be part of the environment, in that they are physical things with defined structures with which the actor must develop a particular relationship in terms of a sense of self – she must establish a certain 'fit' with them. By 'fit' I do not

mean a precise correspondence, like that of one jigsaw piece with another, but a dynamic, adaptive relationship. In order to read these words on the page it is necessary to find the 'fit' of the distance between the page and the eye for example. If we take the body to be part of the environment rather than merely 'in' it, then we begin to see how this 'fit' is not so much a matter of matching like with like, but a question of in-the-moment perception of, and responsiveness to, a wide variety of stimuli.

Making Sense

Merleau-Ponty notes that 'the perceptual "something" is always in the middle of something else' [1962:4]. What is 'sensed' in performance are not isolated occurrences within separate but interrelated systems, but an ongoing and general state of sensation in which perceptual 'somethings' provide momentary concentrations rather than isolated data. As he goes on to suggest in the same essay: 'the word perception indicates a *direction* rather than a primitive function' [1962:12].

If we are to understand such terms as 'sense', 'feel', and 'perception' in relation to acting in terms more sophisticated than those of input, or feedback, then we need to allow the sensation of experience the status of reality. Varela *et al* suggest that 'all experience has a feeling tone' [1991:113]. If we take this 'feeling tone' to involve direction (i.e. purpose and agency), then how the actor *feels* is not only an indication that his/her actions are 'correct' but establishes for him/her an awareness of acting as a particular kind of engagement with the world.

This particular kind of engagement, I have begun to suggest is established as the sensation of a 'fit', in terms a co-perception of body and environment. In *Monologue* for example, as I turn my head and upper torso to bring my gaze to point 6, my awareness of this point, of the movement of my head and torso, and of the physical act of looking go together. This conflates the idea of a 'division of labour' [Bermúdez 1995] between 'outwardly' (environmentally) directed senses such as vision and touch (exteroception), and those 'inwardly' (bodily) concerned with proprioception. The suggestion is that the perception of the world is also a perception or sense of self. In turning my head and upper torso, I not only perceive this action, but also perceive my *self* doing so. The manner in which I make the turn thus has a qualitative effect on my perception of self.

As a result of this, not only is it important to consider the way in which the environment (with our bodies as part of it) determines what we perceive about it, but also the manner in which this perception happens as part of a sensory body. How we sense a fit with it thus begins to resemble something more in common with Varela *et al's* notion of cognition as embodied action:

Cognition as embodied action is always about or directed towards something that is missing: on the one hand, there is always a next step for the *system* in its perceptually guided action; and on the other hand, the actions of the system are always guided toward *situations* that have yet to become actual. Thus cognition as embodied action both poses the problems and specifies those paths that must be tread [*sic.*] or laid down for their solution. [1991:205]

The sensual quality of this 'fit' for the actor is not a means of 'checking' whether the state has been achieved, but is rather an emergent property of achieving it, what Antonio Damasio might describe as the 'feeling of a feeling'. In Damasio's terms, feeling a feeling is a particular mode of consciousness which allows the subject of the feeling the peculiar knowledge that what they are feeling is a property of them as a self. Feeling a feeling is thus not only information about body state but is after the fashion of Descartes' famous *cogito* a means of knowing: 'I feel, therefore I am'.

Damasio's description of feeling feelings is important since he refers not only to the experience of autonomic change (such as a temperature change during fear for example), but also the importance of the senses in providing the neural substrates which allow for the knowledge of your being you:

The presence of you is the feeling of what happens when your being is modified by the acts of apprehending something. The presence never quits, from the moment of waking, to the moment sleep begins. The presence must be there or there is no you. [1999:10]

Feelings, Damasio argues, are changes in body state. These can of course, involve the changes in autonomic function demanded by Ekman and others, or may also take in changes in bodily action, such as a move from sitting to walking. However, sensory perception itself is change wrought on and in the body by its relationship to its environment. Without this relationship with the environment we are unable, quite literally, to *make sense* of it. How we *make sense* in this respect depends not only on the fine tuning of the sensory modalities and the cognitive processes which accompany them, but also the extent to which the environment affords access to it by these modalities.

How does this concern Merleau-Ponty's notion that perception involves 'direction' however? If we consider the example of the *kalarippayattu* leap given earlier, we can see that it involves both the 'problem' of how to get the foot to the hand and the feeling of 'satisfaction' experienced when the two meet. This relationship - between an initial problem and its satisfactory resolution - can be understood as a sensory continuum, which is to say that in 'feeling' the problem of how to get the hand to the foot, I already have the beginnings of its resolution. The satisfaction I will experience is already an aspect of this; it is a *disposition* towards action, in that it affords the problem direction towards its own resolution. Crucially, this disposition concerns not just making the movement, but with making the movement within a particular space at a particular time.¹⁰ This notion owes a debt to the theory of 'Ecological Perception' of the psychologist James Gibson and his followers. Central to this theory is the notion of *affordance*, in which objects in the environment 'afford' - or present themselves - to a perceiving subject as possibilities for action:

The claim here is that the perception of affordances is relativized to the perceiving subject, so that for example, in looking at a window one perceives not just an aperture but an aperture that presents the possibility of one's looking through it. The ecological suggestion is that the perception of affordances is partly a mode of self-perception. Furthermore, it is such constitutively. The whole notion of an affordance rests on relating environmental information to one's own possibilities for action and reaction. [Bermúdez 1995:155]

My sense of self is thus not just of being 'within' the environment (or for that matter 'within' my body) but of being active within it. As Merleau-Ponty suggests: 'I move my legs not as things in space two and a half feet from my head, but as a power of locomotion which extends my motor intention downwards' [1962:146]. Similarly an actor seated on a chair has a relationship with that chair not solely characterised as that between one object and another, but with the chair as a stable, solid thing which affords certain kinds of movement he could not make standing for example. Being seated on the chair alters the motor possibilities of that actor. In these terms, what the actor 'imagines' the chair to be, has more to do with the possibilities for action that it affords him than with what it represents.

Imagination

I think I'll nip down to the games room. Stretch my legs. Have a game of ping pong. What about you? Fancy a game?

As I turn my head and upper torso to bring my gaze to point 6 on an out-breath between the lines 'have a game of ping pong' and 'what about you?', I am executing actions which I *know* I have to carry out. I also have knowledge that I am doing so. As I have begun to suggest however, this knowledge is not strictly reflexive – I do not stand apart from myself observing myself doing so. However, as I began to suggest in Chapter Three, there is nevertheless an 'inner' or 'ideal' model, which, in Diderot's terms, is a 'spectre', to which I try to fit my own performance.

Earlier I suggested, following Merleau-Ponty, that perception has 'direction'. In terms of the inner or ideal model of the actor, this need not relate to an 'image' of the body as a subject of reflection. For this to be the case however, it is important to move beyond a strictly 'inside' and 'outside' characterisation of the relationships between self, body and environment. My suggestion is that this is to be achieved in terms of the senses, particularly the intersensory 'feel' I have alluded to.

As I look towards point 6 during *Monologue*, it is not that this point of space is 'in' my visual perception, rather it *is* my visual perception. Subsequently, what I do with those aspects of visual perception which I am able to control has a marked effect. I might be accused of solipsism if I were to further claim that reality can have no existence beyond my perception. To infer this solipsism however, would be to overlook the increasing amount of evidence, both empirical, experimental and theoretical, that our perceptual systems 'fit' the world in particular ways.¹¹

In Chapter One I discussed the shortcomings of 'image' as a means of defining our thoughts about ourselves and experiences, in that neither is solely characterised by the visual. This is as true of psychological investigations into consciousness as it is of common-sense attempts to grasp theatrical experience. It would be easy just to let the metaphor stand, but as Lakoff and Johnson suggest 'the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another' [1981:5].

Studies of the relationship between body and self are frequently characterised by discussion of the 'body image' as if knowledge about the body were gained from either looking at it, or from drawing a picture of it. 'Body image' also assumes that the body is systematic, that its functions and operations can be laid out in neat charts, each relating to each, and all describing a global 'whole'. To see an image however, as discussed, necessitates a distance from it. With this detached evaluation comes the possibility of doubt. This, the actor cannot afford, since it potentially creates a

schism in the autotelic reward of his/her action and directs his/her attention towards future goals, and possible or past mistakes. A feature of autotelic experience is that it involves a state of pleasure in which the actor seeks to recover the enjoyment gained in rehearsal. As Csikszentmihaly points out, this also means that 'to remain in flow, one must increase the complexity of the activity by developing new skills and taking on new challenges' [1988:30]. Flow, or autotelic experience, is thus open-ended, and does not involve the sense of closure which comes with either detached 'reasoning about' or 'viewing of' one's actions.

If not body image, what then?

To return to the earlier sequence of *kalarippayattu* as an example: stepping forward with my right foot, I place it in front of me, and leap into the air, kicking it upwards to meet my right hand raised above my head. How do I know 'how' to carry out these actions though? Aren't the steps and sequences stored as mental representations, which I then 'remember' and judge my current actions against? Such remembering and comparison must always be carried out from a position of doubt however – 'is this correct?' 'What do I do next?'. As I suggest, doubt creates a schism between doing and thinking about doing which is antithetical to doing itself. Does learning and remembering always require that I mentally 'store' representations of the things done? Far more happens in this sequence than my simplistic level of description makes it seem at first – the neck and face must be relaxed, and the knee raised up before the foot is kicked up, for example. The relaxed face and neck allows a dynamic sensation throughout the entire body and which is not 'cut off' by extraneous tension; the raised knee allows an easier transfer of weight as the left becomes the grounded leg following the kick.¹² If it were the case that I have stored each of these levels of description as finer and finer representations then two problems arise. The first is that of infinite regress mentioned earlier – how far does the breakdown of the representations available for comparison need to go? The second is that of memory, in which it is conceived as being like some giant filing cabinet from which we draw forth appropriate representations from the past relevant to our current situation. As I make *this* kick, however, it is something I have never done before in exactly *these* circumstances. Certainly I have performed other similar actions, but how is remembering to assist in the present, unless, as Searle suggests, we begin to conceive of it as a means for 'generating current performance, including conscious thoughts and actions, based on past experience' [1994:187]? If repeated practice, such as *kalarippayattu* training or rehearsal, is understood as creating *dispositions*

towards similar responses to similar circumstances in future, rather than a series of representations, then the question of memory becomes considerably refigured, and the role of sensory perception is greatly increased.

In order for this to be the case it is also necessary to make a claim for imagination as being a rather more extended function than it is usually presented as being. In addition, it also becomes necessary to consider it as involving more than a) visual representations and/or b) being an activity which is 'distanced' from our current situation. Certainly imagination describes those moments of creativity in science, art, literature, and so on, in which we conceive of extended possibilities. However, as Johnson notes: 'creativity occurs at all levels of our experiential organisation and not just in those rare moments when we discover novel ideas' [1987:170]. This is certainly true of the actor, and allows us to extend the notion of imagination away from an initial moment of 'characterisation', or the conception of an idea of what his/her performance will 'look' like.

If the actor's imagination is understood as involving more than just conceptualising, and directed towards a 'fit' with a co-perceived body and environment (which I have characterised as being experienced as having a particular 'feel'), then the senses become increasingly important, not merely as providers of information, but also in terms of an overall sensuality. Imagination is thus not merely (or even) a projection into a speculative future or a remembered past, but is crucially also determined by sensory perception of the present. Imagination cannot therefore be distinguished from an occurrent level of affect.

To continue the example from *kalarippayattu*: as I step forward and place my right foot just prior to making the kick, there exists, as imagination, a possible kick, based on my memory of having made this movement before, my having watched my teacher and others make it. There is what I 'know' in objective terms about what I need to do in order to make it - weight over the ball of the foot, sinking down through the right knee, left knee raised towards the chest and so on. However, there is also within my sensory and perceptual mechanisms the feel of what it is like to do so. This is not to say that before making the kick I feel what it is like empathetically, but that as I prepare to do it my level of feel relative to my imagination of 'how it goes' (or 'ideal' model) allows me to determine whether or not I can do so. If I am tired I may have to avoid doing so, or moderate the kick. If I have never made the move before, I may adduce my ability to do so or not on the basis of feel from other, similar moves,

and so on. Experience obviously plays a part in this as the relationship between imagination and feel becomes increasingly ‘fine-tuned’ over time.

This knowledge is able to be both cogent and cohesive because of the ‘natural structure’ of the body – what we perceive about the body is shaped by the body:

We can only form concepts through the body. Therefore, every understanding that we can have of the world, ourselves, and others can only be framed in terms of concepts shaped by our bodies...These concepts use our perceptual, imaging, and motor systems to characterize our optimal functioning in everyday life. This is the level at which we are maximally in touch with the reality of everyday life. [Lakoff and Johnson 1999:555]

To return to the example of *Monologue*; the particular, and thus crucially *specialised* decisions I have made about the use of my body (position, timing of movement and so on) create a level of ‘feel’ (as discussed in Chapter Three), or affect, which is both a consequence of what I am doing, and which allows me in turn to regulate it.

As I turn my head and upper torso to bring my gaze to point 6 on an out-breath between the lines ‘have a game of ping pong’ and ‘what about you?’, I am executing a planned series of movements. It could subsequently be argued that what I *know* in this instance is a re-affirmation of prior knowledge; I *understand* that what I am doing is correct because of this. Similarly, other information such as audience response or (in different circumstances) the response of other actors might further provide this level of reaffirmation. That this happens is unquestionably (and necessarily) the case. However, the importance of sense and feel is overlooked in this; even more so the role of the imagination.

Questions concerning the actor’s imagination are often concerned with how she is to get an *internal* process of creativity *out*. My suggestion is that in performance – and particularly in optimal performance - the actor’s imagination is *sensual*, is directed towards the immediate situation and environment (in which I include the body), and thus has ‘objective’ concerns. The apparent rationalism of this need not stand in opposition to the notion of ‘feel’ - an affective sense that what one is doing is correct, and has achieved a certain kind of ‘fit’ with the environment and imagined ‘ideal’ models.

Notes

¹ In the sense in which the terms are utilised by Barba 1995.

² It is important not to underestimate the importance of culture in such activities and directing how we gain tacit knowledge of the particular solidity afforded by objects such as chairs:

To Western human beings a chair affords sitting. Because we have the sort of bodies that get tired and that bend backwards at the knees, chairs can show up to us – but not flamingos, say – as affording sitting. But chairs can only solicit sitting once we have learned to sit. Finally, only because we Western Europeans are brought up in a culture where one sits on chairs do they solicit us to sit on them. Chairs would not solicit sitting in traditional Japan. [Dreyfus 1997]

³ I retain the capitalisation of 'Background' in order to maintain the connection with Searle's concept discussed in previous chapters.

⁴ See Zarrilli 2001.

⁵ 'It sounds strange for certain, that the means to know a feeling is another feeling. The situation becomes understandable, however, when we realize that the proto-self, feelings of emotion, and the feelings of knowing feelings emerged at different points in evolution and to this day emerge at different points in individual development. Proto-self precedes basic feeling and both precede the feeling of knowing which constitutes core consciousness.' [Damasio 1999:280-81]

⁶ Interestingly, the Collins English Dictionary suggests that the word 'sensuous' was coined by the famously puritan poet Milton to avoid the unwanted erotic overtones of 'sensual'.

⁷ 'An emergent property of a system is one that is causally explained by the behavior of the elements of the system; but it is not a property of any individual elements and it cannot be explained simply as a summation of the properties of those elements. The liquidity of water is a good example: the behavior of the H₂O molecules explains liquidity but the individual molecules are not liquid' [Searle 1997:18].

⁸ *The Muse in the Machine: Computers and Creative Thought*, London: Fourth Estate, 1994.

⁹ See, for example, any of the essays of these authors in Ned Block, Owen Flanagan, and Güven Güzeldere (eds.) *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates*; Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998.

¹⁰ It is important to offer an important caveat however. Following the concerns of Varela *et al* regarding the monism of an overtly Gibsonian approach to perception [1991:202-5], in which the environment becomes held to provide all the information which we need to understand perception (which subsequently becomes a matter of 'response' or 'resonance'), I am concerned to stress the importance of the *embodiment* of perception. Not only is it important to consider the way in which the environment determines what we perceive about it, but also the manner in which this perception happens as part of a sensory body.

¹¹ Cf. Bermúdez *et al* 1995, Dreyfus 1998, Lakoff and Johnson 1999, Shipley 1995, Varela *et al*, 1991.

¹² It is important to stress that whilst such principles are made explicit in my training, and may exist either explicitly or implicitly in other styles of *kalarippayattu*, I do not intend to suggest that they are necessary to its practice in any absolute sense.

Afterword

I have argued at length *against* representation; however, I do not expect it to go away. Nor would I want it to. The brilliance of theatre as spectacle, whether in the contemporary physical theatre movement, the *kathakali* dance-drama of Kerala, or the riot of pantomime will continue to constitute one of its chief pleasures and command a major part of the attention of theatre practitioners and spectators alike. My contention is not only with the perceived necessity of interpretation going hand in hand with representation, but with the assumption that representation is somehow 'all there is' to it, and to doing it. I am arguing for an embodied approach to acting in which the generation of a sensual feel of 'fit' is relevant to an ideal model which is similarly sensually rather than representationally understood. In doing so I am suggesting – *demanding* even – that not only is acting 'real' in a manner in which a representation cannot strictly be, but that it be understood as an embodied epistemology. That is to say, that at the point of practice the actor enacts a system of knowledge (and in so doing also gains knowledge) which must be understood in the embodied terms of senses, motor systems, and perception. It is also my argument that this embodiment can no more be conceived of as separate from an apparently disembodied process of 'thought' than that same 'thought' be considered at all without the strata of the sensory, motor, and perceptual systems characterising the embodied knowledge mentioned earlier.

The peculiar changes wrought upon and in the body's sensory, perceptual, and motor systems which lead acting to be an extra-daily experience are experienced and managed *sensually*. The significance of this is that acting both involves and *is* a particular state of consciousness, or knowledge, which cannot be considered other than in terms of the sensual, or feeling. In an optimal state of acting the actor does not know *about* acting, she or he *knows* acting. In the moment of experience they are afforded a perspicacity which does not necessitate explanation, but is not without logic or intelligence for that. Feeling is no more 'dumb' than language in this respect:

Consciousness *feels* like a feeling, and if it feels like a feeling, it may well be a feeling. [Damasio 1999:312]

In the optimal moment of knowing acting there is no doubt. Pleasure (with its overtones of gratification) which goes with the sensuality of the state as I am arguing for it is inherent to this lack of doubt .

The body has a significant impact on how we perceive the world, and our subsequent consciousness of it, as it is only through the interventions of our viscera in the world that we are aware of anything, as much as our wills direct it towards the achievement of certain ends. However, it is no more responsible to reduce mental life to a correlative of physiology, to a first order phenomenology, than it is to maintain an avowedly Cartesian mind-body split or to reduce consciousness to neurone firings. A dynamic model is beginning to emerge in which impermanence and opacity are ruling principles, and which cannot be claimed to be either entirely objective or subjective. Thoughts and feelings intertwine, and struggle with one another, and within this struggle knowledge emerges, not as resolution, with the finality which that implies, but as dynamic and mortal, very much alive.

It will come and you will feel OK, really.

Appendix

I never used to be able to touch my toes. This always embarrassed me. In workshops and rehearsals, whilst warming up, it was always deemed necessary to touch your toes. It made the tendons in the backs of my legs hurt. I had also, on occasion, felt very conscious of my hands. They seemed all too often to be great flapping things on the ends of my arms. They either struggled to make a suitably beautiful gesture (which was important to my aesthetic sense), or else they tried and failed to act as a sort of physical score, a counterpoint to the spoken words which took up most of my effort. I also harboured a tremendous admiration for performers who could do things physically, who could make gestures, who balanced, who danced; none of which came easily to me.

Since January 1998 I have trained in the South Indian martial art *kalarippayattu*; I have also learned *yoga* and a short form of Wu style *t'ai chi ch'uan* from my teacher Phillip Zarrilli, all of which I practice on a regular basis. Prior to commencing this training, and really until quite some way through it, I was not particularly 'able' physically. Although I had begun to attempt to understand and explore the body, and particularly what is often (unsatisfactorily) referred to as the 'body-mind', in performance, I had not had any training in a physical discipline, and could only grasp at theoretical ideas of so-called psychophysical practices. In certain respects, the 'me' of 1998 and the 'me' of now are substantially different, although it would be misleading to suggest that this has involved any radical break. It is not a story of change, but rather of process, which is on-going, and always part of a continuum.

Having been 'trained' within the British education system of the nineteen-eighties and nineties to 'acquire' knowledge, and to 'brandish' it in terms of evidence, argument, and proofs, the 'techniques of the body' I did possess all operated very much within a background level. This was partially available to consciousness at best, but mostly operative on a level which I took merely to be the world *as it is*. Additionally, the 'practical mastery, in which techniques of the body are transmitted without the need to rise 'to the level of discourse' [Bourdieu 1990:73-74], was something I was rarely called upon to engage in. Even when I was, as in the best of my training as an undergraduate, the exposure of my own short-comings could always be (and often was) disguised by the

convenience of feeling suitably informed by the experience, and thus free to theorise it, to objectify it. Much as I enjoyed doing this, it always felt somewhat bogus.

Whilst today, I have acquired a greater degree of physical skill (whether in *kalarippayattu*, *t'ai chi* or *yoga*), as I suggest in Chapters Three and Four, to focus only on the surface level of these achievements, whether in practice, or in watching, is quite literally to *overlook* the subtle co-ordination of physical action with breath and visual focus which underpins them. The subsequent development of a sense of self as a result of this processual gestalt lifts such practices above the merely virtuoso, to become a means of realising a particular kind of self in the moment of practice. My interest in such practices stems from a need as a performer to develop means of acquiring such a realisation of self which did not involve a 'psychological' method, but which developed a concentrated and applicable 'energy'.

Eugenio Barba claims that daily practices are marked by their efficiency, by their economical use of energy, their use of minimum effort. By marking as one of the chief differences between the daily and the extra-daily their alternate uses of 'energy', Barba very quickly cuts through the chaff so often surrounding the use (and misuse) of the word, especially as regards the actor's process. 'To speak of the performer's "energy" means using a word which lends itself to a thousand misunderstandings. The word must immediately be given operative value' [1995:17]. This seizing on the 'operative value' of the word allows a discussion which can incorporate both the practitioner's experience *and* a mutually linked discourse concerning the interplay of content and structure. The tension between these two levels may often obfuscate as much as it offers 'explanations'; indeed, the insights offered by the latter may often be hidden or indefinable at the point of practice or performance. 'Doing' may often be the finest 'explanation' of the principles therein. As Zarrilli writes:

Martial masters are hands-on practitioners normally unconcerned with explaining what they do or how they do it. Their traditional concern is to transmit the techniques of practice to their students so that at least a few will become accomplished. It is not necessary that the student be able to explain what is happening in his practice or what he experiences during his years of apprenticeship. It is only necessary that he practice correctly. [Zarrilli 1989:1305]

This kind of 'hands-on' approach to practice is similar to Barba's 'operative' understanding of 'energy'. In many respects, the semantics of the word 'energy' are unimportant. However, the direction of its use in practice towards an operative level demands that it describe an experience which exists within a shared experience, no matter how much more obscure, or ill defined a student's may be in comparison to a master's. An operative understanding and employment of 'energy' is therefore what I have sought in such practices.

My most substantial training over the last three years has been in *kalarippayattu* and my relationship to it, and also to *t'ai chi* and *yoga* is a complex one, having been taught these Indian and Chinese practices largely in Britain by an American practitioner. Although I have travelled to, and trained in India for a short period, the 'knowledge' I have of *kalarippayattu* (and also *t'ai chi* and *yoga*) is a mix of the 'direct' and the 'received'. The use of references to the writings of Phillip Zarrilli on the subject of *kalarippayattu* not only reflects my relationship with him as my teacher, but also that the majority of authoritative texts in English available to me on the subject remain authored by him. Similarly, my approach to training and identification of certain 'principles' within it are strongly influenced by his teaching,¹ and do not necessarily reflect absolute or universal principles of practice. As the most substantial writer on *kalarippayattu* in English, Zarrilli's attempts to examine it as 'an active embodied doing' [1998:5] offer the most important model for my own configuration of my relationship to my training, my employment of the martial art as a paradigm for embodied experience pertinent to acting, and my major source on the history, culture, and philosophies which inform it. As an 'outsider' to the indigenous culture which has produced *kalarippayattu*, but having also engaged with it on the personal level of practice at an advanced level, he is keen to stress the 'active' nature of this:

To examine a practice is to examine...multiple sets of relationships and experiences. A practice is not a history, but practices always exist within and simultaneously create histories. Likewise, a practice is not a discourse, but implicit in any practice are one or more discourses and perhaps paradigms through which the experience of practice might be reflected upon and possibly explained. [1995:5]

Having given some background to my own reasons for engaging with the practice, it is perhaps necessary to provide more background for it, to further expand on the histories and discourses which inform and are informed by it.

Locating *kalaripayattu*

Kalaripayattu (*kalari* – ‘a place of training’, *payattu* – ‘fencing exercises, or tricks’)² is a martial art of Kerala, the coastal strip on the tip of South West India. Whilst its precise origins are somewhat uncertain, it forms an important part of the historical and contemporary Malayali culture of that region;³ certainly by the arrival of the Portuguese on Kerala's Malabar coast in the late Fifteenth Century, it was being practised in a form which we might recognise today. Zarrilli [1979] quotes the Portuguese explorer Duarte Barbosa reporting that:

The more part of the Nairs, when they are seven years of age, are sent to schools where they are taught many tricks of nimbleness and dexterity, there they teach them to turn about and dance and to twist on the ground, to take royal leaps and other leaps, and this they learn twice a day as long as they are children...when they are fully accomplished in this they teach them to play with the weapon to which they are most inclined, some with bows and arrows, some with poles to become spearmen, but most with sword and are ever practising. [1979:114]

Kerala has a complex social and caste system which is far more expansive than just the five castes (*Brahmin*, *Ksatriya* etc.) familiar to many Westerners. The *Nairs* were originally a warrior caste, whose *dharma* (caste duty) was to train in and practice martial arts in the defence and service of feudal landlords and rulers. This training was not strictly restricted to one caste however, and still today, Muslims, Christians and lower caste Hindus train either together, or in individual *kalaris*.

'*Kalaripayattu*' in the contemporary usage of the word refers to a range of styles and techniques, many seemingly quite different, but all broadly claiming their lineage from the mythological origins of what is today the state of Kerala. The sage Parasurama, an avatar of Visnu, is said to have created what is now the modern state of Kerala by commanding the ocean to retreat up to the point he flung his battle-axe.

It is believed that he handpicked four of the most aristocratic Brahmin sects known as 'Ugram Valli', 'Dronam Valli', 'Khoram Valli' and 'Ullur Thuruthiyad' and imparted to them special methods of warfare. They in turn trained others in the use of various weapons and picked 21 experts from among those trained Warriors [*sic.*] in order to popularise *Kalaripayattu*. [Balakrishnan 1995:13]

The contemporary style of *kalaripayattu* described in this thesis is that of the C.V.N. Kalari in Thiruvananthapuram, the state capital in the far south of Kerala, although it is more properly thought of as a 'Northern' style,⁴ the *Gurukkal's* ('teacher', or 'master') father having originally hailed from Tellicherry, a town in the north of the state.⁵ The student's relationship to the *Gurukkal*, and the manner in which he organises his *kalari*, is of vital importance to an understanding of the practice, not merely as a fighting technique, but as a more complete system. As P. Balakrishnan notes, in order to gain access to the many subtle strata of knowledge within the practice, the student must submit himself to the *Gurukkal*:

The trainee obeys the commands of the Guru not only inside the Kalari, but even outside it and is dedicated to obey him (the Guru) implicitly. The Guru is also responsible for creating and cultivating virtues among his disciples, and shall himself be a model of nobility and virtue worthy of emulation by the disciples. He should be able to command respect before he can command others. The Guru is respected by all alike in the society. Kalaripayattu is thus not a mere training in fighting but contains a multiplicity of virtues that the trainee should assimilate and practise in his life. [1995:31]

As Zarrilli [1979] notes, Western reaction to Asian martial arts is often one of awe at physical technique and mastery. *Kalaripayattu* undeniably offers the student, at the greatest extension of its practice, potentially devastating levels of ability and skill. To focus only on the 'spectacular' is to overlook the integration of the physical with high levels of mental and visual concentration encouraged by many *Gurukkals* (this is certainly the case in C.V.N. Kalari training). Not only is *Kalaripayattu* a physical training, but it also (dependent on the individual *Gurukkal's* skills and emphasis) includes a medical system, a series of massage treatments, religious ritual practices, and, as Zarrilli [1998] notes may even on occasion be used as part of inter-communal or political violence.

Although ostensibly a martial art, *kalaripayattu* can thus be thought of as a complete 'system', which not only teaches the practitioner deadly fighting techniques, but also shapes his/her social practices and selves. Whilst this inevitably requires mastery of the body in training, it also assumes that inherent in the actualisation of this mastery is the assumption of particular kinds of 'power'. In this it shares assumptions about the body (or rather various types of *bodies*) in common with *yoga*, and traditional *ayurvedic* medicine. Subsequently, at its highest levels of practice *kalaripayattu* makes demands

on the practitioner's physical, social, and psychic self, and as such is as much a 'life' system as a martial one.

As a body training *kalarippayattu* consists of a series of preliminary and ritual exercises, and a vast number of steps, poses, jumps, kicks, and leg exercises performed in complex combinations back and forth across the floor of the *kalari*. These exercise sequences (*meippayatt*), together with a rigorous system of massage with specially prepared oils (*ulicci*)⁶ develop a tremendous degree of flexibility, suppleness, and agility. The massage (part of a complex medical system which sees *Gurukkals* carry out a variety of therapies for bone and tissue damage both for students and within the wider community), not only compliments the increased flexibility gained by training but also begins to awaken within the student the potential to access a more subtle level of 'power'. The knowledge underpinning this power is not usually something passed on lightly by the *Gurukkal*, and access to 'deadly' applications of technique is not generally given until relatively late in the training. Practice with the array of weapons available in the *kalari's* armoury is not given until substantial training has been undertaken, and the 'empty-hand' techniques, more familiar to Westerners in considering the martial arts, are (certainly in the case of C.V.N. style *kalarippayattu*), not taught until the student is very advanced.

Whether in terms of weapons, kicks, poses, or *meippayattu* practice, *kalarippayattu* training discourages the student from the use of overt physical force, or strength, but instead aims towards the actualisation of any particular move by the whole body. 'Correct' *kalarippayattu* practice, as embodied by advanced practitioners of the C.V.N. style, aims towards a constant flow of energy, actualised with the entire body during each cut, blow, defence etc., characterised by complete physical control, an active 'inner' level of experience, co-ordinated use of breath, and 'one-point' focus. The training aims to allow the student to pass from one movement, blow, or kick to the next with a continuous and unbroken flow of dynamic energy. As Zarrilli notes, 'simply mimicking correct external form is not enough' [1994:32]. *Kalarippayattu* training aims to foster the actualisation of *sakti*, or 'power', by linking correct practice of external form with a 'one-point focus' which co-ordinates it with directed breath and visual focus. 'Breath-energy' (*prana-vayu*) is understood as giving power to movement as directed by visual focus.

However, as Zarrilli notes, in common with the 'subtle body' assumed within *yoga* practice this 'one-point focus'

...should not be confused with the simple act of focussing the eyes on an external object. One-point focus has both external and internal dimensions, the internal developed as an integral part of raising the discovery of the internal wind or energy. For a few masters, one-point focus is simply the first stage in an ever-deepening and more subtle process of interior practice, further developed through meditational techniques' [1994:35]

Given the subtlety inherent in its practice *kalarippayattu* can be thought of, not merely as an efficient and deadly fighting technique, but as a means of crafting a certain kind of 'sense of self'. This requires the development of control over both 'external' and 'internal' aspects of that self, and a consistent relationship between practice in the *kalari* and life in broader arenas outside of it.

Notes

¹ For example, the reference in Chapter Four to the necessity of keeping the face and neck relaxed during the leaping kick of the *pakarchakal*.

² Cf. Zarrilli 1998:25.

³ Ibid.

⁴ The 'Central' and 'Southern' styles share many similarities with the 'Northern' (see Zarrilli 1998), but may also be thought of as quite distinct disciplines. 'Kalarippayattu' should therefore not be considered as referring to a 'fixed' system of practice, but is rather an umbrella term describing a relatively diverse number of techniques, styles, and approaches.

⁵ 'Somewhat anachronistically, my own training took place in Thiruvananthapuram the capital city of Kerala in the far south, but the style is strictly 'northern' kalarippayattu, while the martial arts of Travancore and Kanyakumari district...*ati tada* or *ati murai* are called 'southern' kalarippayattu' [Zarrilli 1998:28].

⁶ See Zarrilli 1989.

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⁶ See Zarrilli 1989.

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