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**Women Practitioners and the Development of Pedagogy in
Theatre-Making (1970-2016)**

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Doctorate of Philosophy

The University of Sussex

September 2016

Statement

**Women Practitioners and the Development of Pedagogy in
UK Theatre-Making (1970- 2016)**

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

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University of Sussex

Doctor of Philosophy

Women Practitioners and the Development of Pedagogy in UK Theatre-Making (1970-2016)

This thesis considers the relative absence of women in the lineages of actor training in order to foreground pedagogy, gender and the contribution of women in what is understood as a primarily male-dominated field. It maps a specific female genealogy of actor training, drawing substantially on twenty interviews with actors and teacher/directors and extensive field work, conducted over a period of four years, observing pedagogic practices in rehearsal rooms and in workshops. Combined with analysis of existing research and documentation, the thesis therefore proposes a revisionary reading of the current state of actor training and theatre-making inclusive of, and responsive to, these specific approaches and contributions.

Chapter One, 'Surveying the Landscape', situates women at the vanguard of developmental acting pedagogy. Tracing the early foundation of drama schools reveals actor training developing alongside teacher training and points to an original commitment to the critical value of pedagogy. Chapter Two in conversation with Chapter Three frames a 'beside' methodology, applying critical feminist theories to pedagogical approaches. 'Feminist Interventions in Acting Pedagogy' draws on Rosi Braidotti's affirmative politics¹ to illustrate the potentially liberatory and critical practices of a feminist approach. 'A Female Ontology of Acting: Being, Seeing and Feeling', speculates that learning to act is a female domain. Adopting Gayatri Spivak's 'strategic essentialism',² I consider an alternative way of thinking about acting where being female can be seen to be a positive advantage. Chapter Four, 'Acting and the 'Hidden Curriculum': Women's Training Practices', applies these methodologies to the approaches of women working in different contexts in UK actor training: Kristine Landon-Smith, Vanessa Ewan and Alison Hodge. Chapter Five, 'The Feminist Director as Pedagogue', considers the work of UK directors Katie Mitchell and Emma Rice. To conclude, I sketch the features of a female genealogy of acting which begins to map new ways of thinking about pedagogy in its broadest context.

¹ Rosi Braidotti, *By Way of Nomadism* (New York, Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1994), p.315.

² Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in Nelson, C and Grossberg, L, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), pp.271-313.

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Women Practitioners and the Development of Pedagogy in UK Theatre-Making (1970- 2016)

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Introduction

On 4th September 2015, at a symposium entitled ‘Contestation and Congruence’, theatre scholars and practitioners considered their current concerns for feminism and performance.¹ In the plenary, Jen Harvie drew together three overarching questions to advance theory and practice in the field: What institutional shifts need to happen? What new critical practices are most useful? Which performance practices are most important? While these questions did not initiate this thesis, in structure and scope it responds to these provocations through a consideration of women’s theatre-making practices and the ways they have impacted on the development of pedagogy.

As a female educator, theatre-maker and scholar, working in a range of educational contexts — drama teacher education, drama school and university theatre and performance programs — I work at the intersections between disciplines, and this position of ‘between-ness’ offers a particular vantage point. Feminist theorist Eve Sedgwick suggests that an alternative way to advance theory might be to shift our focus from ‘thinking beyond’ to ‘thinking beside’.² Adopting a parallel line of enquiry resists the fault lines and ring fences that manoeuvre thinking into one or other camp, social science or humanities. This interdisciplinary study announces from the start its ‘beside’ investigation— women’s practices and the pedagogies of theatre-making — to question what might be gained from applying post-structural feminist theories to practices of teaching and learning.

I am in part provoked by a number of silences heard loudly in the field of actor training. The first silence concerns the pedagogy of acting, or the processes of teaching and learning, where *how* an actor learns is eclipsed by methodology or methods of practice; in other words *what* an actor does. When documenting training practice, practitioners tend to explain their method as opposed to

¹ ‘Congruence and Contestation: Contemporary Feminism and Performance.’ Roehampton University, 04.09.15.

² Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p.8.

analysing the ways that they are facilitating the learning.³ I interrogate the moments of interaction between learner and teacher/pedagogue to give space to hear this process of coming to learn. The second silence, as Jonathan Pitches notes in *The Actor Training Reader*,⁴ is the absence of women in the recognised lineages of actor training. My concern is to map an alternative female genealogy of training, which draws attention to the important contributions women have made and problematises the inequities for a female majority inspired to work in an industry where they remain a minority. The third silence is the voice of the actor reflecting on his/her learning. Whilst autobiographical accounts exist,⁵ it is rare for an actor to deconstruct or theorise the learning process.⁶ The fourth is the neutering of gender in the discourse of pedagogy in acting and theatre-making. This study takes gender as a vital point of investigation in order to advance knowledge in the field. Working from Elaine Aston's premise that women navigate a marginal space,⁷ I speculate on what this position might enable in the pedagogies of acting and theatre-making.

The pedagogic turn

By looking behind methods of practice to focus on *how* learning happens we can re-orientate our thinking about learning to act. In 2014, The Standing Conference of University Drama Departments (SCUDD), generated an online thread in response to the question, 'Are we experiencing the death of the professional actor?'⁸ The actor can be seen to be a conduit for the changing political,

³ Here I am thinking of the tendency to document actor training as a series of exercises as seen for example in Jacques Lecoq, *The Moving Body: Teaching Creative Theatre* (London & New York: Routledge).

⁴ Jonathan Pitches, *The Actor Training Reader*, ed. by Mark Evans (London & New York: Routledge, 2015), p.56.

⁵ For example, Anthony Sher, *The Year of The King: An Actor's Diary and Sketchbook* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1985).

⁶ Bella Merlin, an actor who has used her developing process as the focus for her scholarship, noted this in a workshop at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, (07.11.10).

⁷ Elaine Aston, *An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), pp.1-3.

⁸ SCUDD online thread, *Re: The Death of the Professional Actor* <<http://www.scudd.org.uk>> [accessed 06.05.14 – 09.05.14].

philosophical, spiritual and scientific concerns of the time.⁹ Since 1970, poststructuralist thinking, the training landscape, the field of Performance Studies and new approaches in contemporary performance-making have informed and impacted on the role, function and knowledge of acting, so that we now understand it to be more than mimesis.¹⁰ The SCUDD thread cautioned that traditional perceptions about training urgently needed review. Accordingly, the July 2014 edition of *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, entitled 'Training, Politics and Ideology', called for radical action to recognise the need for a political turn where the actor might be seen as a 'cultural worker'. The key question to emerge was 'How do our pedagogies make us complicit in the maintenance of existing conditions and how could they offer us possibilities of resistance?'¹¹ What has emerged in recent scholarship is the recognition that explicit consideration of pedagogy is vital for the future of actor training and this thesis draws upon women's practices to examine pedagogies, which both implicitly and explicitly politicise the actor.

Part of the challenge for scholarship is that the ways of learning in acting are too diverse to suggest a common pedagogy. Phillip Zarrilli explains that actors work in highly idiosyncratic ways, drawing on the 'diverse modes of performance/acting and/or types of training they have experienced to address the specific problems faced in each new production context'.¹² However, by avoiding these complexities altogether pedagogy can be sidelined and the development of alternative approaches is shut down. Equally, in its broader context, the possibility for cross-fertilization of knowledge is denied. Ross Prior's study, *Teaching Actors*, highlights the resistance to notions of pedagogy in UK and Australian conservatoire training.¹³ According to Prior there is a lack of value placed on articulating teaching and learning processes in a vocational setting. As he explains,

⁹ A consideration of how the actor is representative of the time can be seen in Joseph Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (The University of Michigan Press, 1993).

¹⁰ Geraldine Harris offers a useful overview of poststructuralist thinking and the intersections with post-feminism in *Staging Femininities: Performance and Performativity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp.1-25.

¹¹ Maria Kapsali, 'Editorial', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 5(2), (2014), p.104.

¹² Phillip Zarrilli, Jerri Daboo and Rebecca Loukes, *Acting: Psychophysical Phenomenon and Process* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.6.

¹³ Ross Prior, *Teaching Actors: Knowledge Transfer in Actor Training* (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), pp. 172-174.

‘Professionals do their job, they don’t define it’.¹⁴ In the section entitled ‘Anti-Pedagogical’, Prior critiques the prevailing view that learning to act happens by osmosis and that acting cannot be taught, only coached. The title of teacher and the term teaching was rejected in favour of training or coaching, reflecting the somatic and vocational perception of the role. The idea of actor training as being ‘completely organic’, replaced explicit pedagogic language with words such as ‘passion’ and ‘inspiration’ to describe the learning process.¹⁵ The trainers rarely had specific educational knowledge, as their capital came from their experience of working in the industry. As a result there was no acknowledged division between *what* they taught and *how* they taught. Prior notes, ‘Their pedagogy was the methodology of particular acting processes employed, which adhered to heroes or idols’.¹⁶ The actor trainers talked about their practice synoptically, meaning they replicated their own experience of learning so that tacit meanings prevailed, which were metaphorical and anecdotal rather than theoretically discursive or critically evaluative. Prior concludes: ‘How practice can be informed by explicit understanding of pedagogy remains in serious question’.¹⁷ Whilst teaching and learning remains tacit it is impossible to critically examine, develop or efficiently pass on a body of teaching knowledge resulting in practices that are vulnerable to hit-and-miss approaches. In 2013, at a roundtable discussion: ‘Training for a Cold Climate’, teachers of acting in UK conservatoires and universities agreed that actor training must make the *how* and *why* of training practices explicit.¹⁸ Pointing to the outmoded traditions of conservatoire training, Catherine Alexander suggested that some traditional conservatoire training ‘infantilises actors’.¹⁹ I suggest that the lack of attention given to pedagogy stifles development in the field of acting and the capital of the actor suffers the legacy of this neglect. At worst this perpetuates oppressive power structures which can disempower and dis-embrain (or de-intellectualise) the actor.

¹⁴ Donald Schön focused on the training of professionals in a number of areas, most usefully for this study in the field of music training. Donald Schön, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987), p.12.

¹⁵ Prior, pp.172-174.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.161.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁸ Maria Kapsali, ‘Training for a Cold Climate: Edited Transcript of Roundtable Discussion’, in *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 5(2), (2014), pp. 2019-231.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.223.

Disempower, disembody, dis-embrain: raising the stakes for acting pedagogy

Empowerment can be seen to be something one undertakes for oneself; it is not done 'to' or 'for' someone. Considering notions of empowerment in education, Patti Lather explains, 'The heart of the idea of empowerment involves people coming into a sense of their own power, a new relationship with their own contexts'.²⁰

Thus, if we do not make the processes of learning explicit for actors we can be seen to disempower them. Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire theorised the construct of empowerment in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, to offer a seminal critical pedagogy for education.²¹ His consideration of power recognises that certain forms of knowledge are privileged by the dominant economic imperatives, which ensure that education functions to serve the needs of those in power. He asserts that pedagogy is always political.²² From this position one can argue that without explicit access to pedagogy, actors are depoliticised and disempowered.

Historically, theatre-making required that the actor serve the text, the writer, the director, the company, the industry with her/his body, emotions and vulnerabilities. The relegation of pedagogy maintains an acceptance of this service to the industry. Maria Kapsali notes that, 'by following the guidelines of the industry, training reinforces the status quo by preparing artists that are disciplined and passionate enough to accept the working conditions'.²³ In the UK, where there is a surplus of actors and twice as many male to female roles, the actor remains economically vulnerable to mechanisms of control.²⁴ In a field where unemployment is seen as a matter of course, the concept of the actor as servant becomes a professional trait.

In an interview for this study, actor and director Fiona Shaw observes, 'Where I've worked in various theatres the passivity of actors shocks me [...]

²⁰ Patti Lather, *Getting Smart. Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/in the Post-Modern* (New York & London: Routledge, 1991), p.12.

²¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York & Great Britain: Continuum, 2000).

²² Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (London & New York: Continuum, 1974), p.44.

²³ Kapsali, p.161.

²⁴ Charlotte Higgins, 'Women in Theatre: Why Do So Few Make It To the Top?', *The Guardian* <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/dec/10/women-in-theatre-glass-ceiling> [accessed 11.11.13].

there's a lot in the culture of actors that needs to be run in a different way'.²⁵ The idea of the 'passive actor' recalls the 'docile bodies' of Foucault's critique of the mechanisms of power. Foucault argues that disciplinary forces subjugate the body as a malleable object, which can be used, transformed and improved to best serve the new forms of economic, political and military organisations.²⁶ Applying a Foucauldian lens, one can see the actor's body as the primary site of complex inscriptions of power.²⁷ The term 'embodiment' in acting can be variously used to refer to knowledge, character, emotion or role. I use the term 'dis-embodiment' to highlight the way in which the body, as an actor's primary capital, is objectified in an aspectual labour market, by which I mean a market where appearance is of primary importance. Roanna Mitchell's research into body image and acting problematises the body as hardware to present the habitual view of the actor as victim, citing common sayings such as the 'show must go on' and 'no pain no gain' as evidence of the culture of servitude inherent in the discourse of the field.²⁸ The idea that if the actor is not 'suffering for the art' then they are not evidencing the necessary qualities of sacrifice for the discipline is infused through acting mythology, borne out of the psychological exposure of the American Method system²⁹ or through Eastern traditions of durational physical stamina.³⁰ These traditions have grown from guru-type lineages, which neuter the actor's body.

The gendered implications of this perception of training are difficult to measure. However, taking for example the circumstances of entry into drama schools (where the female is immediately at a disadvantage, with a 3:1 female /male ratio), women are particularly marginalised in an environment where the power of the trainer/auditioner/viewer is pervasive. The actor is produced as an object of commodity within the industry and these conditions become exaggerated for the female due to the phallogocentric systems of control. Mark Seton's research

²⁵ Interview with Fiona Shaw. Glyndebourne, East Sussex (24.09.13)

²⁶ Michel Foucault, *Power: Essential works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984. Volume 3* (London: Penguin, 1984), pp.323-340.

²⁷ Ibid. p.83.

²⁸ Roanna Mitchell, 'The Actor's Body: Identity and Image', Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, (15.10.13).

²⁹ Ellen Mergolis and Lisa Tyler Renaud, *The Politics of American Actor Training* (London & New York: Routledge, 2009).

³⁰ Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre: Statement of Principles* (London & New York: Routledge, 2002), pp.211-218.

into the ethics of embodiment in acting exposes how, in a teaching environment where the teacher/student ‘profoundly form each other and are formed by each other’, vital ethical training practices are neglected.³¹ One of the expectations of actors is that they demonstrate their vulnerability physically and emotionally, learning to be ‘accessible’, ‘porous’ or more ‘truthful’. There is a dangerous risk of an abuse of power in a climate where fostering vulnerability is a condition of success. As one trainer in Prior’s study expressed, ‘You’ve got to look out for the person and try not to destroy them. That’s my pedagogy really’.³² This questionable reading of pedagogy and the vocabulary of violence is worrying. The notion of being ‘destroyed’ was also present in Seton’s study where one trainer (female) asserted that the training experience at her institution would ‘seduce’ rather than ‘rape’ the students.³³ This idea that the learning process is ‘painful’ and ‘penetrative’ is a commonly held view. Lorna Marshall, a movement teacher who has worked in UK and Australian drama schools for the last three decades, described ‘The JCB tradition of actor training’³⁴ referring to J.C. Bamford Excavator machinery and indicating a violent, destructive and generalised way of learning. The idea that actors must surrender themselves, both physically and psychologically, is seen as part of the legitimised knowledge of the profession.

Finally, the repeated trope to “Get out of your head!” or “Don’t think about it, just do it!” — alluding to the inhibition of impulses where the actor becomes frozen in thinking about what to do — perpetuates a discourse of outmoded dualisms. Playing on the term ‘disembodied’, I suggest that this direction ‘dis-embrains’ the actor. The ongoing Cartesian separation of the body and the mind relegates the brain/mind/intelligence of the actor as an obstacle to somatic knowledge. In his critique of training practices, Kent Sjostrom argues that by rejecting the value of theorising practice, new theories and ways of learning are closed down. He suggests that instead of telling actors not to think about it, it might be more useful to tell them what they should think about.³⁵ Whilst others

³¹ Ibid., p. 5.

³² Prior, p.169.

³³ Mark Seton, ‘The Ethics of Embodiment: Actor Training and Habitual Vulnerability’, *Performing Ethos*, 1:1, pp.5-18, p.9.

³⁴ Workshop led by Lorna Marshall at RCSSD, (25.02.11).

³⁵ Kent Sjostrom, ‘Reflection, Lore and Acting: The Practitioner’s Approach’, *Nordic Theatre Studies*, 20, (2008), p61-68.

point to the damaging ethical neglect in actor training and agitate for institutions to improve their policies, I propose that a more explicit understanding and sharing of pedagogy might empower, embody and embrain the actor. In order to examine this in detail, I look to the work of women practitioners applying feminist theories to their practice to consider how pedagogies might work to achieve this. In the field of feminism and performance, scholarly attention has been given to writing, productions and companies. Here I suggest that the formative influence of feminist practice happens through approaches to teaching and learning. Whilst it is not my intention to essentialise women as more emotionally intelligent, better listeners, more maternal, more instinctive, more generous, more emotional or more corporeal, I am interested in how qualities or states situated as 'female' or 'feminine' operate and are produced within the developing pedagogies of contemporary theatre-making. I navigate this terrain, adopting what Gayatri Spivak terms a 'strategic essentialism'³⁶ where an identity category operates as a site of political contest.³⁷ By drawing attention to the specificity of the female sexed state I offer alternative perspectives to the dominant male lineages of actor training. Remaining within the context of the UK, focusing on the period from 1970 to the present day, allows me to map a female genealogy of acting pedagogy that responds to the feminisms of the time.

Convergence and contestations: definitions

When using the term 'pedagogy' I refer to the teaching and learning that happens between the person controlling the learning environment (in this case the teacher/director) and the learner (in this case the actor). Feminist educationalist Patti Lather references Luster's definition of the change in consciousness between three agencies: the teacher, the learner and the knowledge that they produce together.³⁸ I adopt this understanding of the term, as it neither privileges one agency over the

³⁶ Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in Cary Nelson, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), pp.271-313.

³⁷ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), pp.221-222.

³⁸ Patti Lather in *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/in the Post- Modern* (New York & London: Routledge, 1991), pp.15, cites David Luster, 'Why Pedagogy?' *Screen*, 27(5), (1986), pp. 2-15.

other, nor denies the teacher as a neutral transmitter or the student as a passive receiver. In this way pedagogy is presented as a fruitful site for uniting research, methodology and praxis.

Whilst practitioners offer methodologies to enable a remote dissemination of practical knowledge, surprisingly few studies focus on the learning partnership between the actor and the teacher. Stanislavski's *An Actor Prepares*, published in 1936, arguably the most seminal book on learning to act because it was the first to systematically attempt to narrate a technique, is structured around the reciprocal dialogue between teacher/director and actor.³⁹ The split persona of learner and teacher allows for a pedagogical enquiry that moves beyond methodology to focus on the learning exchange. Another pedagogical exchange is narrated in Boleslavski's *Acting the First Six Lessons*, first published in 1933, between himself, the teacher (referred to as 'I') and 'the Creature'.⁴⁰ The 'Creature' refers to a pretty young actress and the dialogue is laden with a gendered position of power.⁴¹ More recently actors have documented their own process of learning,⁴² but I have yet to find a text that offers a similar exchange. Rather than confining this study solely to actor training, I consider the pedagogy of theatre-making in its broadest sense to acknowledge that the learning of the actor is contingent on the form and aesthetic of the practice of the work. I look beyond training in educational settings to recognise how different forms of theatre practice enable specific and distinct ways of developing lifelong learning. As such, this study considers the practice of teaching acting in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, (UK) drama schools, universities and in mainstream theatre-making. I confine my focus to the UK — England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland— where actor training is acknowledged to be world class and yet there is a lack of research interrogating the politics and implications of its pedagogy. Like Prior, I make a political point in using the term 'teacher' as opposed to 'trainer', in order to stress the wider

³⁹ Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work* (New York & London: Routledge, 2008).

⁴⁰ Richard Boleslavsky, *Acting the First Six Lessons* (USA: Eco Point Books and Media, 2013).

⁴¹ Rhonda Blair considers this problem in her editorial introduction to Richard Boleslavsky, *Acting: The First Six Lessons. Documents from the American Laboratory Theatre* (London & New York: Routledge, 2010), p.xi. This edition documents the influence of Maria Ouspenskaya on Boleslavsky's method.

⁴² Bella Merlin, *The Psycho-Physical Approach to Actor Training* (London & New York: Routledge, 2002).

education of acting beyond the vocational. I use the title 'pedagogue' to point to the way that a director might be seen to teach. Jerri Daboo posits '[T]he developers of the different approaches to actor training have tended to be directors'⁴³ and research acknowledges that actors often feel that their real training happens through their work in professional theatre.⁴⁴ From this perspective I consider an actor's lifelong learning from training ground through to theatre-making to offer a broader view of developmental pedagogy as an ongoing and unfolding process, not necessarily bound by a limited period of time.

The term 'woman' has proved to be the most slippery of all.⁴⁵ In using this term it is not my intention to homogenise or mythologise. I am mindful of Julia Kristeva's concern when she states,

I think that the apparent coherence which the term 'woman' assumes in contemporary ideology, apart from its mass or shock effect for activist purposes, essentially has the negative effect of effacing the differences among the diverse functions or structures which operate beneath this word. Indeed the time has perhaps come to emphasize the multiplicity of female expressions and preoccupations so that from the intersection of these differences there might arise more precisely, less commercially and more truthfully, the real fundamental difference between the two sexes.⁴⁶

Kristeva's intersectional feminism points to the multiple expressions and preoccupations that the term 'woman' umbrellas, recognising differences between women, as opposed to reducing 'woman' to sameness. Rosi Braidotti develops this position, pointing to the differences within 'woman', which challenges notions of the fixed self.⁴⁷ In this way 'woman' signals the contingent nature of the term. One challenge to the gender specificity of this thesis is that it will ghettoise practice into some sort of women-only category. Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris place [Women] in square brackets in the title of their study: *Performance Practice and*

⁴³ Zarrilli, Daboo and Loukes, p.160.

⁴⁴ Patrick Tucker and Christine Ozanne, *The Actor's Survival Handbook* (London & New York: Routledge, 2005), p.44.

⁴⁵ Here I am thinking of Lacan's provocation, 'There is no such thing as woman.' Jacques Lacan, *Le Seminaire Livre. XX. Encore, 1972-73*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, (Paris: Seuil, 1975), p. 6.

⁴⁶ Julia Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p.193.

⁴⁷ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (New York & Chichester: Colombia University Press, 2011), p.148.

Process. Contemporary [Women] Practitioners, to present the term 'as an expansive and contingent category'.⁴⁸ Whilst I find the decision to apply brackets problematic, as it seems to entrap more than liberate, this thesis follows their intentions to foreground the voices and practices of women. When using the term 'female' I mean the biological sexed state. Like 'woman', the term 'feminine' is problematised as a social and cultural construct; defined as 'other' through male constructed philosophies or psychoanalysis as a way of perpetuating modes of behaviour that subjugate women. I understand 'feminine' as performative and relative and I am alert to how these terms can be used as weapons as much as shields. My particular concern is to attend to the neutering of gender in the discourse of acting pedagogy by looking at the ways that teachers teach, directors direct and actors learn through a gendered lens. The neutering of gender in the title 'actor' is addressed in the re-orientated title of Rosemary Malague's feminist study of American acting, *An Actress Prepares*.⁴⁹ Unlike Malague, my project is not solely concerned with the female condition in training, nor is my intention to necessarily define a female pedagogy, but to focus as much on difference in pedagogical approaches as sameness. Like the term 'teacher', 'actor' describes the labour of the role, so I use the pronouns 's/he' and 'hers/his' and 'actress' only when it feels necessary to identify the specificity of the female body.

Context

This research process immediately presented the challenge of access. One of the reasons that there is comparatively little discussion about the process of learning to act is the limited access to rehearsal rooms and training grounds and the time it takes to observe a rehearsal or training process. The majority of studies on process tend to rely on interviews without the added perspective of observer or participant. The inaccessibility of observing directors is acknowledged by Helen Manfull where she writes, 'It was interesting to me that none of the directors liked

⁴⁸ Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris, *Performance Practice and Process: Contemporary [Women] Practitioners* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.1.

⁴⁹ Rosemary Malague, *An Actress Prepares: Women and "The Method."* (London & New York: Routledge, 2011).

to have visitors in their rehearsal rooms'.⁵⁰ Accordingly in Prior's study evidence came from the qualitative data of interviews rather than observation of practice.⁵¹ Directors and teachers are rarely comfortable with having an observer in the room as it changes the dynamic. There is also an underlying sense that theatre/acting/stagecraft is a practical magic that cannot be articulated and should guard its mystique. I agree that the dynamic of the rehearsal room is intangible, yet my particular experience of observing teachers demands that I am receptive to this. Indeed, one of the complexities of applying any structural models to the processes of theatre-making is that many practitioners will resist defining their practice in these terms, denying that there is any strategy, model or formula. In looking at how to articulate the pedagogies of theatre-making I must consider the extent to which theorising practice illuminates understanding. I am mindful of Aston and Harris's caution that practice can be globalised in the way it is used to illustrate theory, divorcing it from its contextual specificity so that 'the theoretical apparatus itself, rather than the practice, [becomes] the most important aspect of academic enquiry'.⁵² As such, I present theory and practice as mutually informing and I am open to the ways in which practice might test the limits of theory when considering the particular challenges of theatre-making.

One of the feminist intentions of this study is to document the voices of women working as teachers, directors and actors and I am grateful to the number of women who made time to talk to me about this subject and to the five practitioners who allowed me into their rooms to observe their practice. Two of the practitioners were open to a relational research model, where they used the observations as part of their own reflexive and reflective developing pedagogy. A triangulated research approach was adopted, with myself as observer alongside interviews with each practitioner and participating actors.

⁵⁰ Helen Manfull, *Taking Stage: Women Directors on Directing* (London: Methuen, 1999), p.61.

⁵¹ Prior, (2012).

⁵² Aston and Harris, p.7.

Overview

The structure of this thesis is framed by the three questions concerning feminism and performance which opened this discussion.⁵³ Chapter One, 'Surveying the UK Landscape: Women and Theatre-Making Pedagogy' engages with the question: what new practices are needed in institutions? It considers the gender inequality in the field of actor training and theatre-making and illustrates that women have been at the vanguard of development in teaching actors since the 1950s. Mapping the early foundation of drama schools, the beside-ness of actor training alongside teacher training emerges, pointing to an original commitment to foreground pedagogy. The focus then shifts to a consideration of how women have been and continue to be represented in this landscape as trainers, directors, actors and more widely in the theatre industry. The separatist nature of training the voice, movement and acting as distinct curricula has created a tri-partite approach where women predominantly lead voice and movement. There is a striking mismatch in the defining female majority attracted to and educated in the subject and the unchanging 2:1 minority of female employment. I consider the extent to which the contours of the landscape have shifted for women since the 1970s and point to recent advances in institutional practices as hopeful signs of change.

Chapter Two, in conversation with Chapter Three, offers a 'beside' methodology that responds to the question: what critical feminist practices are needed in order to develop the field? I apply critical feminist theories intersecting with pedagogical approaches to the knowledge of acting. 'Feminist Interventions in Acting Pedagogy' proposes that the anti-pedagogical stance might be better understood through feminist epistemologies, by which I mean knowledge constructions. I present this argument in three parts: firstly, I re-orientate attention away from technique to what I term the hidden curriculum, the personal and social knowledge of acting which foregrounds the in-between, relational space of becoming; secondly, I illustrate how a feminist re-interpretation of the foundational pedagogies of acting enables a liberatory practice, drawing in particular on Rosi Braidotti's 'affirmative politics'⁵⁴; finally, I foreground the

⁵³ 'Congruence and Contestation: Contemporary Feminism and Performance', Roehampton University (04.09.15).

⁵⁴ Braidotti, (2011), p.315.

'positivity of difference'⁵⁵ to politicise acting as a critical pedagogy with the actor as 'cultural worker'. These three parts set out a politically productive alternative way of learning to advance pedagogy in the field.

Chapter Three, 'A Female Ontology of Acting: Being, Seeing and Feeling', takes a radical position to speculate on the knowledge that acting produces as a primarily female domain. Working from Braidotti's nomadic theory of 'vital materialism' and 'positivity of difference',⁵⁶ and adopting Spivak's strategic essentialism,⁵⁷ I sketch an alternative way of thinking about acting from the specificity of the female sexed state. My opening provocation attends to how male acting pedagogues recognise that the actor must adopt a state of 'femaleness' in order to develop his craft. In seeking to pin down what this female domain might be, notions of doubling, hybridity and between-ness emerge. I speculate that both women and the actor occupy the marginal position of other and both experience the double position of being and being seen. Using a framework of being, seeing and feeling I consider how acting knowledge, theorised through feminist post structural thinking, can be reconsidered as a female ontology where the female sexed state is a positive advantage in learning to act.

Chapters Four and Five respond to the final question: what practices are most important for the development of feminisms in the field? Whilst attention has been given to feminist writing and performance, there is relatively little consideration of women working in mainstream theatre and specifically in actor training. Chapter Four, 'Acting and the Hidden Curriculum: Women's Training Practices' draws on the work of three practitioners working in different contexts in UK actor training. In each case I apply the methodologies of 'being, seeing and feeling' sketched in Chapter Three to highlight the features of a critical relational practice, which educates the actor beyond a specific training regime. I look at the particular problems these practitioners seek to solve with actors in training, applying a triangulated research approach of observation and interviews with the practitioners and the actors they teach. Two of these women also make theatre with their own companies and all have articulated their approaches through

⁵⁵ Braidotti, (1994), p.161.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. ed. by Nelson, C., and L. Grossberg (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), pp. 271-313.

publication. Kristine Landon-Smith has developed an intra-cultural practice, which tackles the particular problem of liberating the actor to work with the multiplicity of the self, to access their culture operating from the positivity of difference. She developed her approach through her education work with Tamasha, a UK company working with British Asian artists. My focus is on how she liberates the actor to 'be' by accessing each individual's multiple cultural identity through the voice. Vanessa Ewan is a movement teacher who works in UK drama schools and who has developed a training process which helps the actor discover the expression of the physical being.⁵⁸ Considering Ewan's practice, I focus on the way she teaches actors how to 'see' through movement. Alison Hodge has worked for most of her career teaching in universities in the UK. Her scholarship has made a major contribution to the understanding of actor training approaches and her practice, *Core Training for the Relational Actor*, builds an actor's relational awareness.⁵⁹ Here I consider the way she develops the 'feeling', or emotional accessibility of the actor through different forms of touch.

Chapter Five, 'The Feminist Director as Pedagogue' considers the work of Katie Mitchell and Emma Rice, two UK directors who have made a significant impact on the way that theatre is made and the way that actors learn to act. Through a triangulated research approach of observation, interviews with the practitioners and the actors they work with conducted over three years, I establish the context of their work and the foundational pedagogical features of their theatre-making processes. I consider the different ways that their female authority operates in practice and how they can be seen to have developed a feminist acting approach within their respective bodies of work. Working together, Chapters Four and Five map a female genealogy of actor training and theatre-making to propose new ways of thinking about pedagogy in the field.

To conclude, I tease out the dominant strands of theory and practice to speculate on the features of a female genealogy of acting pedagogy. I consider the political potential of learning to act, which I present as 'critical acting pedagogy', situating the actor as 'cultural worker'. Underpinning this way of learning is an affirmative politics which I suggest has ramifications for pedagogy in its broadest

⁵⁸ Vanessa Ewan and Debbie Green, *Actor Movement: Expression of the Physical Being* (London & New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015).

⁵⁹ Alison Hodge, *Core Training for the Relational Actor* (London: Routledge, 2013).

context. Drawing on Rosi Braidotti's nomadic theory and in particular her argument for affirmativity as an alternative way of being, I suggest that female pedagogic practices operate from this position. In this way the specific and localised pedagogies of acting outlined in this thesis can be seen to have a more global reach, as they point to sustainable alternatives to dominant paradigms of learning.

Chapter One

Surveying the UK Landscape: Women and Theatre-Making Pedagogy

Critical theorist Gayatri Spivak advises that we should look for what is absent in order to construct an argument for change.⁶⁰ The absence of women in the accepted lineages of theatre-making pedagogy offers a provocative space for examination. In *The Actor Training Reader* Pitches notes how issues of gender in training are ‘too often overlooked’.⁶¹ Kristine Linklater is the only female to be represented amongst thirteen international practitioners. Pitches observes that in Alison Hodge’s first edition of *Twentieth Century Actor Training* two out of fourteen practitioners were female, which subsequently increased to six in the second edition: Monika Pagneux, Stella Adler, Anne Bogart, Joan Littlewood, Maria Knebel and Ariane Mnouchkine.⁶² Hodge’s mapping of a more equally gendered landscape offers an alternative to the dominant male lineages of gurus: Stanislavski, Chekhov, Meyerhold, Grotowski, Strasberg, Meisner, Lecoq and Gaullier. Indeed, until recently some drama schools continued to refer to teachers as ‘Masters’. Shona Morris, former Head of Acting at the Drama Centre, reflects in interview that, ‘embedded in the history of actor training is an unchallenged patriarchy’.⁶³ This chapter looks at what a gendered reframing of the landscape might reveal, to re-imagine its foundations, fault lines and genealogies through the formative contributions of women.

One possible reason that women’s work has remained relatively hidden is the way that practice is branded. The traditional lineages of actor training are dominated by familial apostologies or tribal ‘belonging’ to a company, where an actor might be described as being a Lecoq, Stanislavski or Meisner trained actor. The value economy of the industry is built on reputation and fame. Whilst the UK has a more homogenised ‘tool-box’ approach, practitioners still bank on the

⁶⁰ Gayatri Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ in Cary Nelson, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), pp.271-313.

⁶¹ Jonathan Pitches, *The Actor Training Reader*, ed. by Mark Evans (London & New York: Routledge, 2015), p.56.

⁶² Pitches, p.57, citing Alison Hodge, *Twentieth Century Actor Training* (London: Routledge, 2010).

⁶³ Email exchange with Shona Morris (1.11.13).

provenance of their training as cultural capital and actors become the commodified brand that sells institutions. The steps to the entrance of The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD) are engraved with the names of famous graduates, who are claimed as the cultural currency of the school. The relative absence of women in the training lineages might suggest that they have been less concerned or successful in branding their practice. In interview for this study, Di Trevis, the first woman to run a company at the National Theatre in the 1980s, considers how she had resisted being commodified as a brand in the commercialisation of training, finding the idea of a 'Trevis trained actor' abhorrent. She reflects that the notable disparity in branding practice might be considered to be a gendered trait.⁶⁴ In a roundtable discussion on the future of actor training, detailed in an issue of *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, Tom Cornford cautions against 'becoming another branch of study of the dead white males'.⁶⁵ Catherine Alexander, echoing Trevis, suggests that the 'untouchable arrogance' of being able to set down your ideas and pass them on to future generations is perhaps a male domain.⁶⁶ The male domain of training can be seen to espouse a guru tradition, built on the premise that the master holds all the answers and that the student is in their thrall, dependent on their instruction. This power dynamic and the expectation that practitioners reproduce rather than challenge received knowledge, can stifle pedagogical development. Morris explains this:

Somehow the guruisation of teaching has made the student transfer their own struggle and fear of not being able to come up with things, onto fear of the master (or disappointment with the instructor for not giving them the answers). It infantilises the art of acting.⁶⁷

In this comment Morris echoes the view of Catherine Alexander, who in the Roundtable discussion previously cited in the Introduction, expressed her concern that the operative power dynamic in acting pedagogy 'infantilises the actor' and this perhaps points to another gendered position.⁶⁸ Certainly, the way that gender

⁶⁴ Interview with Di Trevis (09.08.13).

⁶⁵ Maria Kapsali, 'Training for a Cold Climate. Edited Transcript of Roundtable Discussion', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*. 5(2), (2014), p.231.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Morris, (1.11.13).

⁶⁸ Alexander cited by Kapsali, p.223.

operates within the pedagogy of acting remains under-researched and fascinating questions emerge such as: what is lost by the absence of women's work in the training canon? How might a consideration of gendered pedagogy offer different specific and contextual ways of looking at how an actor learns?

In building a context for these questions I survey the training landscape in the UK through a gendered lens, looking for the patterns, shapes and landmarks that map women's work. One way of addressing the relative absence of women's practice is to document their histories which, as Susan Bassnett argues, 'ensures that the traces will not disappear altogether'.⁶⁹ A number of organisations document women's work: The Women's Library housed at the London School of Economics; The Women's Theatre Collection at The University of Bristol; and The Magdalena Project, an international body based in Wales which represents the work of women in theatre.⁷⁰ Sue Parrish, Artistic Director of *Sphinx*, draws attention to what is lost when women are 'hidden from history'.⁷¹ Without these histories the cultural struggles of women's work are marginalised and, in the context of this thesis, important developmental pedagogies are lost. In this chapter I document women's hidden histories to map an alternative training landscape. Whilst the body of women's theatre-making work, organisation and, in some cases, rehearsal processes may be archived, I have yet to find documentation of the specific pedagogical contributions made by women to theatre-making.⁷² An oral history project of this nature would make an important contribution to knowledge

⁶⁹ Susan Bassnett, 'The Changing Status of Women in Theatre', in *The Routledge Reader in Gender and Performance*. ed. by Lizbeth Goodman (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), p.88.

⁷⁰ The Women's Theatre collection was established in 1990 to provide a centre for playscripts by women. The Magdalena Project was founded in 1983 and provides an international forum for women performers and researchers. More information at <http://www.themagdalena-project.org/en/content/magdalena-project> [accessed 11.11.13].

⁷¹ Sue Parrish, 'Gender Equality Requires Context', *The Stage* (24.10.13) <http://www.thestage.co.uk/features/analysis-opinion/2013/10/letters-october-24-2013> [accessed on 01.10.13].

⁷² Theatre and performance making processes have been described with some consideration of pedagogical practice by Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris, *Performance Practice and Processes: Contemporary [Women] Practitioners* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 7-14.

in the field.⁷³ Whilst this is not my focus, I have tried, where possible, to build qualitative data through interviews, conferences and reports and to record the voices of women. Drawing on quantitative data provides a contextual background to women's pedagogical contributions and highlights an ongoing gendered bias in the industry. The chapter follows two fault lines in the landscape of pedagogy and theatre-making: firstly, women's impact on actor training; and secondly, women's contribution to developing approaches in mainstream theatre-making. In this way life-long learning in professional contexts is presented as a continuous and unfolding process. I consider the ways that women are represented in each field, mapping hidden histories, and through this certain defining traits of practice emerge which point to an alternative female genealogy of training.

Pedagogical foundations: 'actors who could teach and teachers who could act'⁷⁴

Whilst my focus is UK practice (from 1970 – present day), it is useful to first establish the foundational impact made by earlier generations of women to acting pedagogies. This is most clearly illustrated by the number of successful and respected UK drama schools founded by pioneering women. Many of these schools enabled drama teacher education and actor training to co-exist and develop alongside each other. During the early 1900s there was a flowering of training establishments in the South of England. Elsie Fogarty (1865-1945), was an English teacher of speech and drama who trained at the Paris Conservatoire and later taught at the Crystal Palace School of Art and Literature (1889). In 1906 she founded the Central School of Speech and Drama, a school dedicated to the training of actors, which operated from the Albert Hall, before moving to Swiss Cottage in 1967. Fogarty campaigned for the recognition of drama and drama teaching as subjects worthy of serious academic study. At Central, drama teacher training

⁷³ 'The Unfinished History Project' is a developing archive of oral histories and material recording UK Alternative Theatre (1968-88), <http://www.unfinishedhistories.com/> [accessed 03.11.13].

⁷⁴ Rose Bruford, 'The Rose Bruford Story – A Spirit of Collaboration'. *Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance*. <http://www.bruford.ac.uk/about/the-rose-bruford-story.aspx> [accessed 11.11.13].

courses, actor training and voice training ran alongside each other.⁷⁵ Another vocational drama school, the Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts, was founded by Ruth Conti (1874-1936) and grew out of a production at the Savoy Theatre in 1911, when Ruth, an actress, was employed to help direct the children in the production. Conti's school became renowned for theatre training and due to her 'impeachable authority as a teacher'⁷⁶ she was invited to contribute to the 1918 *Employment of Children Act*. The Arts Educational School was first founded in 1939 and was originally known as the Cone-Ripman School. It was formed as a result of a merger between the Cone School of Dancing, founded in 1919 by Grace Cone and the Ripman School, founded in 1922 by Olive Ripman. These pre-war London drama schools, founded by women, enabled developmental approaches to education and vocational actor training to develop beside each other.⁷⁷

After the war years, this trend continued with women setting up a number of prestigious schools. In 1950, Rose Bruford, an actress and voice and speech teacher who taught at the Royal Academy of Music, founded a unique drama school in Kent that aimed to unify theatre practice and drama education under one curriculum. She fought to actively foster the interdependency of teaching and acting and 'aimed to train actors who could teach and teachers who could act and foster a spirit of collaboration'.⁷⁸ This recognition of the education inherent in a vocational training led Rose Bruford to become the first college in the UK to offer a degree in Acting and Theatre Practice in 1976. Margaret Bury and Jean Newlove, an assistant to Rudolph Laban, founded East 15 in 1961 in Essex. Both women were long-time members of Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop and directed the students in the style of the company, drawing on Littlewood's collaborative practice. The Theatre Workshop was based in the Theatre Royal, Stratford, part of the East 15 postal district from which it took its name.⁷⁹ The high proportion of UK drama schools founded by women from acting or speech training backgrounds is important to note. At its earliest foundations, the education and training of actors

⁷⁵ The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, 'History' <http://www.cssd.ac.uk/about-central/history> [accessed 11.11.13].

⁷⁶ Italia Conti, 'A Champion of Stage Children' <http://www.italiaconti.com/history.html> [accessed 05.11.13].

⁷⁷ Arts Educational, 'History' <http://artsed.co.uk> [accessed 11.11.13].

⁷⁸ Rose Bruford, op. cit.

⁷⁹ East 15, 'History' <http://east15.ac.uk> [accessed 11.11.13].

and teachers happened alongside each other and pedagogical enquiry was at the forefront of practice.

The intersections between drama education and actor training, evident in the histories of these drama schools, point to features of pedagogy common to both fields. Women were pioneers of drama-in-education (DIE). In the 1900s, education heralded a significant shift in understanding the practices of teaching and learning and American educationalist, Harriet Findlay Johnson, identified the ways that learning through drama raised engagement. In *Dramatic Methods of Teaching* she reflects that through dramatising their lessons children 'developed a keen desire to know many things which had hitherto been a matter of pure indifference to them'.⁸⁰ This movement, which validated drama as a way of learning through doing, extended the educational possibilities of the subject beyond an art form. In 1913, Henry Caldwell-Cook's *The Play Way* considered play as a way of learning. This was followed by *The Newbolt Report: Play Up and Play the Game* in 1918,⁸¹ which extended the idea of play as pedagogy. Women made important advancements in this field in the United States, where Neva Boyd (1876-1963) set up a programme of games and play to build confidence, language and problem-solving skills, which grew into a *Program of Recreational Therapy* and which initiated Educational Drama during the 1920s. Viola Spolin (1906-1994), who worked under Boyd in the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression, developed a practice of game pedagogy, which became a seminal approach for theatre-making with the internationally acclaimed text, published in 1963, *Improvisation for the Theatre*.⁸² Spolin's practice adapted games and ways of learning through play as acting exercises, illustrating how drama education pedagogy directly intersected with and influenced theatre-making practice. In the UK, the Education Act (1944) established free provision for secondary children up to the age of fifteen, later sixteen. A decade later in 1954, Peter Slade, who was then the drama advisor for Staffordshire, published *Child Drama*,⁸³ which placed

⁸⁰ Harriet Findlay Johnson, *The Dramatic Method of Teaching* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1912), p.20.

⁸¹ Andy Kempe and Helen Nicholson, *Learning to Teach Drama 11-18* (London & New York: Continuum Publishing Group, 2007), p.38.

⁸² Viola Spolin, *Improvisation for the Theatre* (USA: Northwestern University Press, 1963).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.40.

drama as a way of learning at the heart of teaching approaches. The pedagogical benefits of drama were significantly advanced in 1976, when Betty Jane Wagner published an exposition of Dorothy Heathcote's *Drama as a Learning Medium*, presenting a performative pedagogical approach through role-play and 'mantle of the expert' technique.⁸⁴ Heathcote's practice was to co-create a dramatic scenario where the students took on the role of experts and worked together to solve particular problems. In this way she was able to generate engaged learning through drama across the curriculum. Heathcote reshaped the possibilities of DIE and her work, alongside the pioneering contributions of women establishing teacher/actor training approaches, illustrates the seminal contributions made by women to foreground developmental pedagogies.

Women and actor training

A survey of women's contributions and impact on UK acting pedagogy in the twenty-first century reveals certain patterns and a gendered bias within the separatist fields of training. Whilst women are a minority in acting departments they tend to dominate the fields of voice and movement, which many consider to be the defining features of UK training. Trevis reflects in interview, 'What marks British acting is the combination of the physical life and the vocal life of the actor'.⁸⁵ What is interesting is the way that this 'combination' continues to be taught as separate disciplines. Since the early twentieth century, the curricula of drama schools has been separated into acting, movement and voice work. These disciplines have a gendered bias, which I will go on to evidence, indicating the 'unspoken patriarchy' in acting. Why should these fields appear to perpetuate a gendered knowledge? The separatist approach to the curriculum maintains specialisms that are seen as a useful way to organise the complexity of learning to act. One can surmise that this separation best serves the structures in the industry, where movement and voice directors might be collaborating with director and actor in rehearsal, so the actor might receive specific direction and coaching from different sources. The patriarchal hierarchy in UK theatre-making, where men are twice as likely to direct, is reflected in UK drama schools where it is unlikely you

⁸⁴ Betty Jane Wagner, 'Drama as a Learning Medium', *National Education Association of the United States*, <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED130362.pdf> (accessed 15.09.13).

⁸⁵ Interview with Di Trevis, London, (09.09.13).

will be taught acting by a female. At the risk of generalising, aside from the obvious power structures at play, the processes of acting/directing tend to be concerned with translating a text and/or applying a methodology. This more structured, linear and (arguably) objective practice, has an end product in its learning aims — the performance. One could argue that this differs from the individualised, subjective and process-based exploration of voice and movement work, which investigates the particular individual — the self in relation to the other. Voice and movement training equips the actor with tools that they can apply independently to the particular challenges of a role. In the next chapter, 'Feminist Interventions in Acting', I foreground this personal and social knowledge, which I describe as the hidden curriculum of acting, to speculate that this aspect of acting pedagogy is a distinct feature of female practice.

In interview, Jane Boston, Head of the ICV (International Centre for Voice) at RCSSD, identified a number of key questions for UK women and voice teaching: What has determined the UK as a centre of excellence for voice teaching? Why, when working in a male dominated field (theatre) and when language is such a male construct,⁸⁶ is voice work entrusted to women? What can a gendered consideration of voice pedagogy reveal about the specific qualities of voice work? These questions, which are outside the scope of this study, offer fascinating provocations for future research. In voice teaching, UK female practitioners lead the field: Cicely Berry (1926-), the world-renowned voice teacher and Voice Director at the Royal Shakespeare Company; Patsy Rodenburg (1953-), Head of Voice at Guildhall School of Music and Drama; and Kristin Linklater (1936-), Head of Acting at Columbia University — are women who have positioned UK voice training at the top of the field. They have authored a significant body of work — Berry (1973, 2000, 2001); Rodenburg, (1992, 1998, 2009, 2005); Linklater (2006, 2010) — to establish a female domain in voice teaching. Many teachers taught by these women or at RCSSD, which remains the main centre for UK voice training, have also authored their methodologies and branded their voice work (for example *The Fitzmaurice Voicework*, which was created by RCSSD alumna

⁸⁶ Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p.173.

Catherine Fitzmaurice and is now widely taught in the USA.)⁸⁷ These practitioners, along with Kate Fleming at The Old Vic, form a body of internationally renowned UK voice specialists. The branding of technique by Berry, Rodenberg, Linklater and Fitzmaurice (all of whom work predominantly in the US), reflects the male lineages of actor training. However, as opposed to the familial apostologies of acting, what tends to be evidenced in the emergent practices is not so much a replicated knowledge, but more of an individualised and developmental learning approach. A consequence of this is the sense of a holistic relationship between pedagogy and method, often presented in a kind of self-help format, which might be practised independently of a teacher.⁸⁸ This points to a different pedagogical position from that of the guru tradition where the master holds all the answers. In the following chapter, I consider how this alternative liberatory pedagogy, which positions the teacher/student in a different power relationship, might be seen as a feature of female practice.

Women also dominate UK movement teaching, with many practitioners coming from dance backgrounds and moving into movement direction or teaching. As in the field of voice training, one can map a female genealogy of UK practitioners: Trish Arnold (London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, Guildhall); Jane Gibson (the National Theatre); Litz Pitz (the Old Vic and RCSSD); Shona Morris (Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, Guildhall, Drama Centre); Sue Lefton (the National Theatre); Glynne MacDonald (the Globe); Vanessa Ewan (Frantic Assembly, RCSSD). These women have careers that move between teaching in institutions and collaborating with actors and directors in rehearsal. Many have worked with or been trained by each other. Trish Arnold, now in her nineties, has been Head of Movement at LAMDA and Guildhall and her work is authored in the film *Tea with Trish*.⁸⁹ Litz Pisk (1909-1998), movement director for the RSC, authored *The Actor and his Body*, a seminal text for movement teaching.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ For an overview of contemporary voice teaching see Paul Meier, 'Training the Trainers: A Review of Some of the Leading Programs for Training Voice Trainers', in 'Voice and Gender' ed. by Mandy Reese Cincinatti, *Voice and Speech Review*, vol. 7, (2007), pp.53-67.

⁸⁸ For example, Kirstin Linklater, *Freeing The Natural Voice* (New York: Drama Group publishers, 1976).

⁸⁹ Merry Conway, *Tea with Trish: The Movement work of Trish Arnold*, (2008) <http://www.teawithtrish.com/> [accessed 11.1913].

⁹⁰ Litz Pisk, *The Actor and His Body* (London: Harrop, 1975).

Many women trained by Arnold, including Kristin Linklater, recognise how her 'pure movement' and work with the spine was transformative in their own practice and her approach is blended into Linklater's embodied natural voice work.⁹¹ Female movement teachers have tended to author their practice, as opposed to branding it, as is the case with Annie Louie, Dymphna Callery, Lorna Marshall and Niamh Dowling.⁹² One should also recognise recent training practices, which aim to integrate voice and movement, such as the work of Experience Bryon's Experience Vocal Dance Company.⁹³ In movement, as with voice practice, there appears to be an holistic relationship between pedagogy and method, with the focus on individual experience and exploration. In UK actor training, women's practices have dominated the fields of voice and movement, operating alongside the American and European (mostly) male acting systems. If one thinks outside of separatist fields, this contribution can be seen to be foundational in the development of UK acting pedagogy. Voice and movement practitioners work at the intersection, or inhabit a space between the actor and the director and in the following chapters I consider this liminal position as a female domain. The idea of enabling and supporting, but not leading from the front, was expressed by Trevis as the role of the 'help-mate'⁹⁴ and the gendered implications of this position are a common concern for the women in this study.

In the field of UK actor training, women are notably absent in branding their practice or authoring a method. This is in contrast to American practitioners: Uta Hagen (1973); Stella Adler (2000)⁹⁵; Ivana Chubbuck (2004); Mary Overlie, Anne Bogart and Tina Landau's *Viewpoints*⁹⁶; Tanya Gerstle's *Pulse Training*⁹⁷ or

⁹¹ Kristine Linklater discusses her debt to the work of Trish Arnold in the film *Tea with Trish*. <http://www.teawithtrish.com/> [accessed 11.19.13].

⁹² Annie Lou, *The Physical Actor* (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), Dymphna Callery, *Through the Body* (London: Nick Hern, 2001), Lorna Marshall, *The Body Speaks* (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2000).

⁹³ Experience Bryon, *Integrative Performance: Practice and Theory for the Interdisciplinary Performer* (New York & London: Routledge, 2014).

⁹⁴ Ibid., Trevis.

⁹⁵ See Rosemary Malague, *An Actress Prepares* (London: Routledge, 2011), for a feminist reading of Hagen and Adler's approach.

⁹⁶ Anne Bogart and Tina Landau, *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005).

⁹⁷ Tanya Gerstle, *Pulse: A Physical Approach to Staging Text*. http://www.doubledialogues.com/in_stead/in_stead_iss03/Gerstle.html [accessed 10.07.15].

Susana Bloch's *Alba Emoting*.⁹⁸ Women who teach acting tend to deliver their interpretation of European or American methodologies inherited through their own training, such as Joanna Merlin (Michael Chekhov); Rena Mirecka (Grotowski); or Bella Merlin (Stanislavski). In many cases the teachers have been acting students at the same institutions and so familial apostology is maintained, most clearly evidenced in the case of Dee Cannon, acting tutor at RADA, whose Stanislavski teaching methodology was passed down from her mother, Doreen Cannon (1930-1995), who was Head of Acting at RADA for many years.⁹⁹ In the UK, the result of this pass-it-on acting tradition is that it is the institution itself that becomes a brand, as an in-house style is maintained which creates a 'RADA actor' or a 'Drama Centre' actor. The training methodologies that have emerged from training grounds have tended to come from male acting teachers such as Phillip Zarrilli (2009); Nick Mosely (2005); John Wright (2006) and John Abbot (2010). Occasionally female practitioners, working in UK universities, have authored their approach to training, for example Dorinda Hulton's *The Creative Actor*¹⁰⁰ and Alison Hodge's *Core Training*.¹⁰¹ Equally, there are examples of women authoring their directing methodologies, such as Di Travis, *Being a Director: A Life in the Theatre* (2012) and Katie Mitchell, *The Director's Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre* (2009). Female practitioners have made significant developments in the actor training curriculum. Catherine Alexander, a former performer with Complicite, has developed and run the Collaborative and Devised Theatre Degree (CDT) at RCSSD since 2006, with her largely female team, to move beyond the traditional and historical notion of conservatoire actor training and to reposition the actor as theatre-maker. However, there are few women in a position to shape curricula in the field of acting and surveying the gender demographic of the UK training ground highlights problematic and ingrained institutional trends.

⁹⁸ Susana Bloch, 'Alba Emoting: A Psychophysiological Technique to Help Actors Create and Control Real Emotions,' *Theatre Topics*, 3,2, (1993), pp.121-138.

⁹⁹ Jane Boston, *Teaching Stanislavski: An Investigation into How Stanislavski is Taught to Students in the UK*. A project initiated by SCUDD (the Standing Conference of University Drama Departments) in conjunction with PALATINE (the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Dance, Drama and Music), 2008.
<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/subjects/palatine/teaching-stanislavski.pdf> [accessed 16.19.13].

¹⁰⁰ Dorinda Hulton, 'Creative Actor (Empowering the Performer)' in *Theatre Praxis*, ed. by Christopher McCullough (London: Macmillan, 1998).

¹⁰¹ Alison Hodge, *Core Training for the Relational Actor* (London: Routledge, 2013).

Gender demographics in drama schools

A gendered consideration of actor training across institutions in the UK gives a necessary contextual background to this study. What, if anything, has changed in the landscape for women since 1970? As the focus is vocational actor training I have limited my findings to the seventeen institutions which make up the accredited schools as represented by Drama UK. In 2012, The Conference of Drama Schools (CDS) merged with the National Council of Drama Schools (NCDS) to form Drama UK, with the remit to support accredited training providers and the industry to work together.¹⁰² In considering gender distribution I focus on the number of female principals, heads of department and the ratio of male to female students on the BA acting courses. I did not chose to look at the overall gender balance across the institutions, but have focused on those individuals with the power to define curriculum content on the flagship actor training courses.

My preconceptions were in part challenged by the research findings. I had observed in practice the gender balance towards female students that exists in Further and Higher Education. Every year there was a clear majority of female students auditioning for drama school and applying for university courses and this was reflected in national figures.¹⁰³ In 2001 I had observed an audition panel at Drama Centre, a London drama school, and was told that only three out of fifteen places were available for female students. This alarming gender prejudice responded to the comparative lack of roles for females in the industry. My research started with an expectation that I would be exposing the gender inequality of admissions at UK drama schools. However, the Equal Opportunity Act of 2010 appears to have had a positive impact.¹⁰⁴ Whilst all schools continue to receive a higher proportion of prospective female students (in the case of RCSSD approximately 3 to 1), the gender ratio on the BA acting courses across the seventeen institutions shows much greater parity than in the previous decade.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Drama UK, <http://www.dramauk.co.uk> [accessed 03.03.13].

¹⁰³ Higher Education Statistics Agency - the official source of data for UK universities and HE colleges. <http://www.hesa.ac.uk> [accessed on 03.04.13].

¹⁰⁴ Equality Act Guidance. Government UK. <https://www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010-guidance> [accessed 11.11.13].

¹⁰⁵ Through the websites of each school I was able to consider the gender breakdown of staffing and students at exit point over the last three years. The website links for all

This reflects the increased transparency of drama school admissions and the need to ensure compliance to equal opportunity policies. However, a significant gender imbalance continues to dominate employment structures.

Out of the seventeen institutions in the survey there were only three that had female principals at the time of this research (Arts Educational Schools, Mountview and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland). What was also striking was the gender distribution when considering the heads of department of acting, movement and voice. There was a definite gender bias towards male heads of acting, with only two women holding these posts.¹⁰⁶ There were significantly more women in role as head of movement (7) and head of voice (7). What these figures evidence is that, at the level of determining curriculum choice, this remains 'a male dominated terrain'.¹⁰⁷ If you are trained as an actor in a UK institution it is likely that you will be taught from a male canon of training methodologies, with a male principal and a male head of acting and perform in plays written by men, where the majority of challenging roles are for men. This gendered imbalance is described by one female trainer as: 'An old fashioned cabal of patriarchs setting an agenda that is no longer relevant'.¹⁰⁸ Such a response reflects the frustration at the sluggish movement in actor training towards gender equality, which I propose requires a pedagogical overhaul.

For aspiring female acting students the gendered disadvantage starts at the point of audition, when two thirds of applicants will be female. Geoff Coleman, Head of Acting at RCCSD, acknowledged the need for a training programme to address the female experience at drama school. He comments:

We have nearly 5,000 people applying to our course each year and there are about 11,000 people applying to be actors in the sector each year. Two thirds of them are women. If when they arrive they are not given the same opportunities and challenging narratives they can develop worries about their own gender and their approach to their own gender as required by the

seventeen institutions can be accessed via Drama UK. <http://www.dramauk.co.uk> [accessed 11.10.13].

¹⁰⁶ Shona Morris has since stepped down from this role at Drama Centre.

¹⁰⁷ Ross Prior, workshop at RCCSD (06.10.13).

¹⁰⁸ Female Head of Drama. (1.11.13).

industry [...] This pressure has to stop.¹⁰⁹

Such disparity demands attention and the relationship between structures of power, pedagogy and the female body is at the forefront of this study. One advancement in training is that, out of the seventeen institutions surveyed, it was rare to find a gender imbalance with a number of courses showing marginally more females to males. However females have already been significantly disadvantaged at audition. As recently as 2013, certain institutions continued to apply gender prejudice in admissions, with one school maintaining their historical 3 to 12 female to male ratio. The reason that certain schools have resisted equality at audition is the recognition that females will not experience equal opportunities in the industry, due to the comparative lack of female roles. In interview, Alexander commented on how actor training tended to be 'hamstrung by what's out there' instead of 'bucking the trends'.¹¹⁰ However, whilst some schools attempt to challenge it, this remains a fact of employment. To what extent has the 2010 Equal Opportunities Act impacted on gender employment in the industry? This is one of the questions I consider as I turn to the second strand of enquiry, looking beyond institutional training to survey the developmental contributions that women have made to the pedagogy of theatre-making.

Women and collaborative practices in theatre-making

When we look to early twentieth century UK theatre history, women have made significant contributions to theatre-making pedagogy. Their marginal position may have been an impetus to re-shape ways of working and to develop creative practices. In citing the sentiments of Elizabeth Robbins, theatre historian Julie Holledge remarks 'The stage career of an actress was inextricably involved in the fact that she was a woman and that those who were the masters of the theatre were men'.¹¹¹ Holledge's research charts the historical fight of women acting in

¹⁰⁹ Geoffrey Coleman, 'Creating the Roles and Expanding the Boundaries', *Vamps, Vixens and Feminists Fighting the Backlash*. Sphinx Theatre Company. Young Vic, (29.10.10), pp.17-29 <http://www.sphinxtheatre.co.uk/resource.html> [accessed 12.06.14].

¹¹⁰ Interview with Catherine Alexander (15.07.15).

¹¹¹ Julie Holledge, 'Innocent Flowers no More' in *The Routledge Reader of Gender and Performance*, ed. by Lizbeth Goodman (London, New York: Routledge, 1998), pp.92-96.

Edwardian England and the feminist calling of the first Women's Theatre Company. Started in 1913 by suffragette Inez Bensusan, and interrupted by war before its second season, the Women's Theatre Company laid a template for the 1970s Women's Theatre Group. It is important to note that alongside feminist-driven theatre-making, women other than actresses impacted on the mainstream theatre scene. In *Taking Stage: Women Directors on Directing*, Helen Manfull identifies the early formative work of women theatre managers working in the West End during the early nineteenth century.¹¹² Lucia Vetis (1797-1856) managed two theatres, The Olympic and The Lyceum, and was credited as being the first theatre manager to employ the box set as part of the production process. Manfull highlights the ways that women made vital, yet rarely acknowledged developments in the ensemble acting approaches of repertory theatre. Marie Wilton (1839-1921) borrowed £1,000 at the age of twenty-five to lease the Queen's Theatre, later renamed the Prince of Wales, and she is credited with developing ensemble acting and improving scenic elements in realistic theatre.¹¹³ Annie Horniman (1860 -1937) developed the practice of a collaborative acting company when she created England's first repertory theatre in 1907.¹¹⁴ This pioneering approach significantly changed the ways that actors learned through ongoing training within companies and raised the economic and cultural agency of acting until the gradual dissolution of repertory in the 1960s. Such historical foundations trace women's ongoing concern to develop collaborative pedagogical practices in theatre-making.

In the 1970s, the second wave of UK feminism joined the conversations that had been initiated by French feminist theory about women's subjectivity, the notion of 'woman other than Man' and social materialism.¹¹⁵ Michelene Wandor, in her overview of UK women's theatre during this decade, *Carry on Understudies: Theatre and Sexual Politics*, identifies the social materialist feminism that drives the work. She concludes that the two key influences were the women's liberation

¹¹² Helen Manfull, *Taking Stage: Women Directors on Directing* (USA & London: Methuen, 1999).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.7.

¹¹⁵ Elaine Aston, 'Mothering the Self: French Feminist Theory and Theatre' in *An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp.45-56.

movement and theatre in education (TIE).¹¹⁶ Women's work was fuelled by a desire to politicise and educate. However, the most radical feature to emerge from this work was the commitment to a collective practice, evidenced by The Women's Theatre Group (1973), which changed its name to Sphinx Theatre Company in 1993. The concerns of women through the changing legislation of the 1960s and 70s were reflected in the writing and performance of this group, which began by showing free lunchtime plays written by women. Nell Meyers, writing in the *Morning Star* (1979), describes the company as 'a living challenge to stereotypes and hierarchies'.¹¹⁷ Making theatre within hierarchical power structures was challenged by these women, whose way of working was largely a practical response to the conditions of managing family and work commitments, alongside their artistic desires. Toeckey Jones, writing for *Socialist Commentary* in 1973, articulates this flattening of hierarchy:

One last interesting point about the Women's Theatre Group is the way in which they organize themselves. They have no rigid, hierarchical structure; no committees or graded levels of responsibility with titles. Decisions are taken at open meetings and are based on majority consensus... Anne Engel, an actress within the group summed up:

"The aim is not to cast the limelight on individual genius, but to show that the group can work together as a group and find new working methods that are happier and more successful and perhaps fairer than those that are used by men." ¹¹⁸

Another feature of this flattened hierarchy was not being bound to serve a text but to work with new material created by women, either through devising processes or/and with a writer. This allowed women to make work that reflected their concerns. The feminist message of companies in the 70s and 80s, such as Split Britches, Gay Sweatshop, Monstrous Regiment and Siren characterised a time when according to Gillian Hanna, founder member of Monstrous Regiment, women

¹¹⁶ Michelene Wandor, *Carry on Understudies: Theatre and Sexual Politics* (London: Routledge, 1981).

¹¹⁷ Nell Myers, 'Women's Theatre Group', *Morning Star* (20.03.79) in *The Women's Theatre Archive*. Sphinx. <http://www.sphinxtheatre.co.uk> [accessed 11.11.13].

¹¹⁸ Toeckey Jones, 'On Stage for a New Role', *Socialist Commentary*, (1973) in *The Women's Theatre Archive*. Sphinx. <http://www.sphinxtheatre.co.uk> [accessed 11.11.13].

wanted to change the world by making the personal political.¹¹⁹ The legacy of a flattened hierarchy in organisational practice and working with personal and shared experiences in the spirit of resistance, had a formative impact on the way that theatre was made through collective discussion, shared decision making and fluid power structures.

Alex Mermikides, in her research on devising structures, draws on the approaches of The Women's Group to identify 'The Collective and The Devising Playwright' as a specific and historically contextualised approach to devising in the UK, developed by women.¹²⁰ Mermikides attributes the first scholarly use of the word 'devising' to the non-text based work of The Women's Street Theatre Group's *The Equal Pay Show* as described by Wandor in Sandy Craig's *Dreams and Deconstructions*.¹²¹ Feminist scholars such as Lizbeth Goodman (1996, 1998) and Elaine Aston (1995, 1999, 2007, 2008) have mapped some of the working methods and devising practices of feminist companies and this body of work provides frameworks for considering a female approach in theatre-making. However, here I highlight the second, less considered feature of women's work —its commitment to education.

TIE as a genre of theatre-making developed through the 70s and 80s and many women's companies ran programmes in schools or other non-theatre venues as an important aspect of their creative and political remit. One example is the work of the company Clean Break, set up in 1979 by two ex-prisoners to bring the hidden stories of imprisoned women to a wider audience. The company is still in operation and TIE remains integral to their work. Much of the work generated by these women's companies grew from the collaboration between actors and writers, referred to by Mermikides as 'The Devising Playwright'.¹²² This alternative approach to theatre-making, which did not start with a script and a director but evolved through a group process, had an immediate impact on developing university curricula from the 1970s and slowly started to feature as part of drama

¹¹⁹ Gillian Hanna interviewed in Lizbeth Goodman, *Feminist stages: Interviews with Women in Contemporary British Theatre* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 1996), pp. 32-40.

¹²⁰ Alexandra Mermikides, *Negotiating Creativity: An Analytical Framework for the Study of Group Theatre-Making Processes*. Unpublished thesis. Goldsmiths College, University of London (2006), p.86.

¹²¹ Ibid., p.13.

¹²² Ibid., p.86.

school courses.¹²³ Students explored the structures of devising companies who had allowed their processes to be observed and theorised.¹²⁴ Devising skills have been seen to be increasingly necessary as part of actor training. In 2013, the first research study initiated by Drama UK surveyed the landscape for UK actors, using Spotlight casting services to track the employment of beginning career actors from nineteen drama schools during the first five years after training.¹²⁵ In 2014, a quarter of acting jobs were in the fringe which, as the single largest graduate employer, was seen to have replaced the repertory system for actors' ongoing training. These employment figures confirm the need for new pedagogical approaches to enable the actor to be an entrepreneur. Alexander positions devising approaches as a female alternative to male theatre-making structures:

There is a different way of creating work that is less about a male producer, commissioning a male director to work in a very traditional way on a script with actors serving his process. I think we have to take responsibility for the fact that we have to change the perception about the way that work is made.¹²⁶

From this position we can identify devising practices, arguably the most radical shift in theatre-making and increasingly recognised within actor training, to have originated from women's theatre practice which works with a flattened hierarchy. However, it is important to recall the foundational work of DIE, which underpins this pedagogy. Many actors will have had experience of process-orientated devising pioneered by educators such as Johnathan Neelands, Gavin Bolton and

¹²³ Ibid., p.22.

¹²⁴ For a range of case studies and an overview of the development of devising see Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling, *Devising Performance: A Critical History*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

Sara Jane Bailes, *Performance Theatre and The Poetics of Failure* (London & New York, Routledge, 2011).

Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris, *Performance Practice and Process* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

¹²⁵ This data was discussed at a symposium 'The Changing Landscape' at Birkbeck College in London on the 28th June 2013, when casting agents, industry professionals, actors and teachers, gathered to consider the findings.

¹²⁶ Alexander, (15.07.15).

Dorothy Heathcote.¹²⁷ Mermikides recognises that DIE is ‘one of the most important starting points for the development of devising in this country’.¹²⁸ Whilst acting and theatre-making pedagogies are dominated by traditional male lineages, the more radical possibilities for actor training, beyond mimesis, have been shaped by drama education and through the collective and devising structures of UK women’s theatre groups from the 1970s and 80s.

Directing, pedagogy and communities of practice

Jerri Daboo notes ‘The developers of different approaches to actor training have tended to be directors’.¹²⁹ Female directors and choreographers have made seminal shifts in the ways that actors learn to act and make work within a community of practice¹³⁰ where there is a shared and ongoing commitment to developing pedagogical approaches. Manfull’s research into female directors notes the direct connection of teaching as an extension or a way into the field. She explains ‘To several of the women teaching, or a desire to teach, provided the route to directing’.¹³¹ This is most visible in women’s practices outside the UK and whilst beyond the scope of this study, the formative influence of female practitioners across the US and Europe should be noted, albeit as an aside. Women have developed formative pedagogies through their ongoing collaboration with companies. Anna Halprin (1920-) founded the groundbreaking San Francisco’s Dancer’s Workshop in 1955 to take experimental dance in new directions. She taught Yvonne Rainer (1934-), whose Judson Dance Theatre opened up alternative ways of making avant-garde theatre in the USA between 1962 and into the 1980s, without the traditional hierarchy of a director. Rainer’s work radically influenced movement training with a turn towards ‘pure movement’ and the body.¹³² Anne Bogart (1951-) and her SITI (Saratonga International Theatre Institute) company,

¹²⁷ Tony Jackson, *Learning Through Theatre: New perspectives on Theatre in Education* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), and John O’Toole, *Theatre in Education: New Objectives for Theatre. New Techniques for Education* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976).

¹²⁸ Mermikides, p.23.

¹²⁹ Daboo, p.41.

¹³⁰ Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 8.

¹³² Moira Roth, *The Amazing Decade: Women and Performance Art in America 1970-1980* (USA: Asito Artz, 1983).

which she founded with Japanese director Tadashi Suzuki in 1992, continues to experiment with a performance style that unites Viewpoints training and Suzuki. In Europe, Pina Bausch (1949-2009), a German performer of modern dance, choreographer and teacher, created a body of work with her company Tanztheatre Wuppertal Opera Pina Bausch, which blended expressionistic dance, theatre, lavish sets, multi-media and eclectic musical scoring. Ariane Mnouchkine (1939-) founded Théâtre du Soleil in 1964 and, through the influence of an Eastern aesthetic, developed a company dedicated to exploring the essential qualities of being in the present.¹³³ Whilst Mnouchkine has described any theory of acting as 'somewhat imperialistic and pretentious',¹³⁴ she has developed a heightened awareness of the learning of an actor and has asserted that it is the duty of every director to invest in the pedagogy of actors to ensure their ongoing training.¹³⁵ My intention here is not to homogenise these women's work, as I recognise each as distinct and unique, but certain commonalities might be usefully drawn. They have all built communities of practice with a commitment to long-term training and collaboration, where the development of a shared artistic aesthetic is an extension of a learning process.

In the UK, individual theatre directors have made significant developments in traditional theatre-making practice and continue to destabilise the conventional power dynamic, for example: Annabel Arden, co founder of Complicité; Anne Jellicoe (1927-) and her development of the Community Play¹³⁶; and Annie Castledine (1939-2016), described in her obituary as 'a modern Joan Littlewood'.¹³⁷ Any mapping of UK women practitioners must recognise Littlewood (1914-2002) — described as 'the Mother of Modern Theatre'¹³⁸ — as a pioneer, trying to reach a working-class audience and politicise British Theatre. Littlewood founded Theatre Workshop in 1945 to re-awaken British theatre after the Second World War. As Manfull observes, it is surprising that Littlewood has not

¹³³ Josette Feral, 'Building up the Muscle: An Interview with Ariane Mnouchkine' *TDR*. 33 (4), (1989), pp. 88-97.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.88.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.259.

¹³⁶ Anne Jellicoe, *Community Plays: How To Put Them On* (Methuen Publishing Ltd, 1987).

¹³⁷ Michael Coveney, 'Annie Castledine Obituary', *The Guardian*, (07.06.16)[accessed 17.06.16].

¹³⁸ Staff writers, 'Obituary. Theatre's Defiant Genius'. *BBC News*, (21.09.02), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1628351.stm> [accessed 02-16.13].

received more scholarly attention as she developed an aesthetic and a way of making work which was both anarchic and poetic, highly politicised and democratic.¹³⁹ Clive Barker identifies the pioneering contribution she made to the development of actor training, citing one company member who claimed that 'he learned more from one afternoon with Littlewood than in all the other time he spent at Drama school'.¹⁴⁰ Barker cites Littlewood who justifies her alternative approach to theatre-making:

I do not believe in the supremacy of the director, designer or actor or even the writer. It is through collaboration that this knock about art of theatre survives and kicks...No one mind or imagination can foresee what a play will become.¹⁴¹

Barker explains Littlewood's approach as harnessing a 'jazz combo', rather than a 'classical orchestra' and this metaphor captures the spontaneity, the shared ownership and the resistance to linear structures. The work grew out of research, games and improvisations and the 'complex inter-weavings of the individual actor's rhythms into the jazz ensemble'.¹⁴² Like the seminal European and US practitioners, Littlewood can be seen to be a director pedagogue, who foregrounds the shared learning process of the ensemble. Her bravery and uncompromising dismissal of the British theatre establishment meant she gained little favour from critics and her contribution is sidelined when compared to that of her male contemporaries. She turned her back on theatre and ended her career, 'working with at-risk children at the Theatre Royal Stratford and dreaming of a Fun Palace at Lea Valley'.¹⁴³ Many UK female practitioners cite Littlewood as an inspiration, but she never documented her process and dismissed her own achievements. Alexander, who met Littlewood and was struck by her self-effacing attitude, reflected, 'Maybe women have more humility and the sense of what they don't know'.¹⁴⁴ Recalling Prior's observation that female trainers would more readily

¹³⁹ Manfull, p.xvii.

¹⁴⁰ Clive Barker, 'Joan Littlewood' ed. by Alison Hodge, *Twentieth Century Actor Training*. (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 114.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p.114.

¹⁴² Manfull, p.114.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p.xvii.

¹⁴⁴ Alexander, (15.07.15).

admit their pedagogical ignorance, and Trevis's refusal to 'brand' her expertise, this attitude might be viewed as a gendered trait, which may go some way to explain the relative absence of female practitioners in the training cannon.

Deborah Warner, when considering the pedagogical impact of UK female directors in interview, points to the 1970s as the generation whose hidden histories are most important to acknowledge. At this time the work of Buzz Goodbody (1947-75), the first woman to direct at the Royal Shakespeare Company when she was just twenty years old, was pioneering in its commitment to and development of pedagogy in theatre-making. Goodbody was responsible for setting up The Other Place in 1961 in Stratford-upon-Avon, as an alternative to the main house and a place to continue the traditions of Actors Commando and Theatre-go-round. These touring laboratories of the RSC were committed to TIE, experimentation with Shakespeare, and developing a wider audience. The new approaches that Goodbody initiated were a response to the vibrancy and vitality which Peter Brook and Michel Saint-Denis brought to the RSC. Through European experimental traditions they were exploring the culture of the time and, like The Women's Group, were concerned with social justice and the group as opposed to the individual.¹⁴⁵ Goodbody was noted for 'the incredible freedom she gave her actors to bring their ideas to the fore'.¹⁴⁶ She determined that the same Marxist approaches and resistant politics of fringe theatre might be embedded in the work at the RSC. She asserted that: 'The Other Place is a first step towards ending the economic and social barrier between the RSC and the society that partly finances it'.¹⁴⁷ This initiative allowed a broader audience to come closer to the stage action and to benefit from cheaper tickets, making work that was 'local' in character with a commitment to educational projects. Goodbody's initiatives at The Other Place made a significant impact on the practices of theatre-making at the RSC. Tragically, Goodbody committed suicide in 1975. She had enjoyed great success in the environment of The Other Place but was less comfortable on the main stage and her death occurred after shifting *Hamlet*, played by Ben Kingsley, from its previous incarnation to the main stage. The Other Place closed after a fourteen year history,

¹⁴⁵ Alycia Smith- Howard, 'Knowing her Place: Buzz Goodbody and The Other Place', *Early Modern Studies Journal*. 5, (2013), pp.77-93.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p.78.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p.82.

with many believing that the tribal feeling of experimentation and pedagogical growth had died also.

Warner identified this loss as a vital catalyst for the shift which came about for the next generation of women directors. In the 80s there was a feminist backlash, fuelled by actors Fiona Shaw, Lyndsay Duncan and Juliet Stevenson and taken up by the media, about the lack of female directors. When Warner directed *Titus Andronicus* in 1988, she was the first woman to direct on the main stage and half of the eight directors that season were women.¹⁴⁸ Interestingly, most of the directors I interviewed for this study had built their careers at some point at the RSC and, like the movement and voice trainers, had crossed over or worked with each other at various points in their career. Katie Mitchell assisted Di Trevis and Deborah Warner, and Emma Rice was an actor for Mitchell in *A Woman Killed with Kindness* at The RSC (1991).

It is important to note the inextricable influence of Shakespeare on UK actor training. Theatre researcher Elizabeth Freestone holds Shakespeare's legacy as responsible for the dominant male employment traditions in the UK theatre, when there are only 155 female characters in the canon compared to 826 male roles.¹⁴⁹ Coleman, reflecting on the significant disparity in the opportunities for challenging acting roles for female students at drama school reflects: 'The women were playing more maids than Lears' and plays driven by male narratives were being used to train women.¹⁵⁰ Female directors have given opportunities to actresses with gender blind or cross-gendered casting. Doing so opens up the training opportunities for actresses, as they are able to develop their skills through the complex protagonist roles which have been previously denied to them. In interview, Fiona Shaw recalls the 1991 landmark production of *Richard II* directed by Warner, where she played the title role. She reflects that this was a moment 'where suddenly the tables turned and people were very cross... something must

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Deborah Warner. Glyndebourne, East Sussex (07.10.13).

¹⁴⁹ 'Women in theatre: how the '2:1 problem' breaks down.' *The Guardian*, (10.12.12) <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/dec/10/women-in-theatre-research-full-results> [accessed 12.07.13].

¹⁵⁰ Geoffrey Coleman speaking at The Young Vic, (29.10.10), 'Creating the Roles and Expanding the Boundaries.' *Vamps, Vixens and Feminists Fighting the Backlash*. <http://www.sphinxtheatre.co.uk/resource.html> [accessed 03.06.13].

have cracked there'.¹⁵¹ The conservative British theatre establishment felt that that these women had gone too far. Interestingly, Warner denies that this casting decision was prompted by a feminist agenda, but was simply driven by the desire to explore interesting texts with Shaw, who she describes as her 'muse'. She does however reflect that she was quietly addressing the very real problem of the lack of roles for females. Two decades later, a growing number of cross-gendered Shakespeare productions continue to challenge convention: in 2013 Phyllida Lloyd directed an all female *Julius Caesar* at the Donmar, set in a prison; Sarah Frankcom's cross-gender casting of *Hamlet* at the Royal Exchange, with Maxine Peake in the title role, was the first female Hamlet for 35 years; and in 2015, Josie Rourke directed Harriet Walters as *Henry IV* at the Donmar. Lloyd is an activist for equal opportunities in UK theatre and she provokes, 'For every job given to a girl in the London theatre, three jobs go to a boy, and I just felt the time had come to make some reparation'.¹⁵² In 2016, Lloyd directs a trilogy of all female productions at the Donmar, with Harriet Walters playing the title roles in *Julius Caesar*, *Henry IV* and *The Tempest*. Lloyd has publicly urged that the European Union legislate for imposed gender equality in the workplace so that theatres are forced to cast accordingly. In response to Lloyd's provocation, Gregory Doran, artistic director of the RSC responded: '[A] company with a 50/50 split of male and female actors is one that I've already challenged Phyllida to come and run in Stratford-upon-Avon'.¹⁵³ If Doran is suggesting that Lloyd should be his successor as opposed to assisting him, he draws attention to the fact that there has yet to be a female artistic director at the RSC. However, the appointment of Emma Rice as artistic director of the Globe theatre in 2016 signifies a sea change.¹⁵⁴ Rice, whose practice is presented as a case study in Chapter 5, has produced a body of work that foregrounds the female condition and she describes herself as a feminist director. On the eve of her inaugural season at the Globe, Rice has committed to a target of a 50/50 gender split in casting and is asking 'How can we change the

¹⁵¹ Interview with Fiona Shaw, Glyndebourne, East Sussex (30.09.13).

¹⁵² Libby Galvin, 'Award-winning Iron Lady director says EU "should force Royal Shakespeare Company to cast women as men."' *Mail Online* (07.12.12). <http://www.dailymail.co.uk> [accessed 10.13.13].

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Rice is due to start in April 2016.

mould?’¹⁵⁵ It will be interesting to see if and how she is able to address the pervasive gender inequality from this vanguard position.

Advance? Gender demographics in theatre

Whilst a number of male UK directors have authored their practice as a training for actors,¹⁵⁶ no female has documented their approach in this way.¹⁵⁷ Looking at the legacy and employment landscape for women directors in the UK gives a possible context for this silence. In 2013, the National Theatre marked its biennial celebratory year with a televised gala performance of extracts from fifty years of theatre-making. Out of thirty extracts performed none were selected from a play written by a woman and in comparison to male showcase performances, the female acting roles were notably sparse. The very real problem of women’s work and talent being sidelined in the British theatre industry was visible in this historical mapping of the National’s story thus far. At the 2012 Sphinx conference, Professor Mary Luckhurst commented: ‘It was all women that taught me and trained me. Then I came into the industry and decisions were being made by men’.¹⁵⁸ To what extent, if any, has gender inequality in theatre shifted since 1970? Tracking statistical data through the ongoing research of Sphinx (formally the Women’s Theatre Group), evidences little change in women’s employment since the 1970s, with a stubborn 2:1 ratio across most sectors.¹⁵⁹

However, recent media attention suggests a shifting cultural moment. Lauren Bell’s blog, *‘Women in Theatre, the Movers and Shakers’*, offers a roll call of

¹⁵⁵ Mark Brown, ‘The Globe’s Emma Rice. “If anyone bended gender it was Shakespeare.”’ *The Guardian*. (05.01.16) [accessed 08.03.16].

¹⁵⁶ Declan Donnellan, *The Actor and the Target* (London, Nick Hern Books, 2005)

¹⁵⁷ Katie Mitchell *The Director’s Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre* (New York & London: Routledge, 2009) is presented as a training guide for directors rather than actors.

¹⁵⁸ *Vamps, Vixens and Feminists... In the North!* West Yorkshire Playhouse (02.03.12) Sphinx Theatre Company <http://www.sphinxtheatre.co.uk/> [accessed 06.07.14].

¹⁵⁹ Sphinx: The Conference of Women Theatre directors and Administrators, ‘The Status of Women in British Theatre (1982-1983)’ http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwj_5fHLgvLJAhVLXBoKHS7mD_sQFgghMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.sphinxtheatre.co.uk [accessed 16.17.13].

Caroline Gardner, ‘What Share of the Cake?’ in Lizbeth Goodman with Jane de Gay (ed.), *The Routledge Reader in Gender and Performance* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), pp.97-102 and Jennie Long, ‘What Share of the Cake Now?’ pp.103-107.

names of women who have made a mark on the UK theatre landscape.¹⁶⁰ She lists female playwrights who have won a host of awards including: Lucy Kirkwood, Lucy Prebble, Laura Wade, Nina Raine, Polly Stenham, Beth Steel, Anya Reiss. In 2005, Helen Edmundson's play *Coram Boy* was the first play by a woman to be performed on the Olivier stage at the National Theatre, followed by *Her Naked Skin* by Rebecca Lenkiewicz in 2008. Bell cites the increase in female producers: Sonia Friedman, Tali Pelman, Judy Craymer, Sally Greene, Nica Burns, Becky Barber, Rachel Williams, Rachel Tyson, Sarah Brocklehurst and Kate Pakenham. She also lists female critics: Libby Purvis, Lyn Gardner, Susanna Clapp, Kate Bassett. Female directors include: Marianne Elliot (*War Horse*, 2011), Phyllida Lloyd (all female *Julius Caesar*, 2014), Lyndsey Turner (*Chimerica*, 2013), Carrie Cracknell, (*A Doll's House*, 2012). However, it is the wave of recent female artistic director appointments that offer the most optimistic shift in the landscape: Jude Kelly at the Southbank Centre since 2005; Josie Rourke at the Donmar in 2012; Indhu Rubasingham at Tricycle Theatre in 2012; Erica Whyman as Deputy Director of the RSC in 2012; Emma Rice at the Globe in 2016; and Vicky Featherstone at the Royal Court since 2012. Featherstone pragmatically states: 'It is a no brainer that there should be equal representation of men and women in the theatre. It is absolute common sense and I expect nothing less'.¹⁶¹ Many believe that the last decade has shown a movement towards gender equality and one might assume that the 2010 equality legislation has started to take affect.

However in 2011, a report by Elizabeth Freestone commissioned by the *Guardian* revealed that the 2:1 male to female ratio remained across employment data.¹⁶² This is confirmed in the most recent research initiatives by Tonic. Lucy Kerble set up Tonic in 2011 with support from the National Theatre and the Royal Opera Houses Step Change scheme, in order to improve gender equality in all aspects of UK theatre. Tonic asks the questions: Why does gender inequality continue to exist in the industry and what might be lost because of it? Kerble

¹⁶⁰ Lauren Bell: *Women in Theatre: The Movers and Shakers*.

<http://www.atgtickets.com/blog/women-in-theatre/> [accessed 07.08.14].

¹⁶¹ Charlotte Higgins. 'Women in Theatre: Why do so few make it to the top?' *The Guardian*. (10.12.12) <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/dec/10/women-in-theatre-glass-ceiling> [accessed 11.11.13].

¹⁶² Ibid.

points out that in 2013, when Equity sent letters to all major UK theatres about the need to employ more women, only four replied. Tonic has made a number of concrete initiatives to address the problem of apathy or denial in the industry: the publication of *100 Great Plays for Women, 1 and 2*;¹⁶³ a research project, *Putting Girls Centre Stage*, to address lack of opportunities for girls in Youth Theatre;¹⁶⁴ and support programmes for artistic directors to work with more female artists. These initiatives have improved the pedagogical possibilities for women in the field. In 2014, a symposium at RCSSD entitled *Advance*, shared the findings of a six-month research project which confirmed Freestone's view that the actual data shows little change. For example, in the previous decade 30% of new plays produced were written by women; in 2013 it was only 31% with 63% of artistic directors male and 37% female. The symposium identified what academic Julie Wilkinson described as the 'organised forgetting' of those who had believed that equality would happen.¹⁶⁵ Tonic has tried to tackle the processes and practices of employment culture through an action research approach, persuading 11 of the UK's top theatres and companies, including the RSC, the Royal Court and the Young Vic, to identify one question particularly pertinent to their own gender issues and then to spend six months researching and finding ways to solve the problem. Participants have made changes in their programming habits, with Sheffield Theatre committing to gender balanced casting in their in-house productions within one year. Theatre critic Lyn Gardner concluded: 'It will be interesting to look back in a year's time and see what difference has been made. If the *Advance* initiative forces real change, it could transform the theatrical landscape forever'.¹⁶⁶ Clearly Tonic have agitated beyond debate to action, but apart from the 11 participating theatres, what institutional changes are needed and how might these be implemented?

One suggestion is that by having more women in artistic director jobs, or in commissioning roles, more female writers will be enabled to write plays with varied and challenging female roles. When the majority of the audience are female

¹⁶³ Tonic Theatre: <http://www.tonictheatre.co.uk> [accessed 12.08.15].

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Taken from 'Platform' transcript at Tonic Theatre: <http://www.tonictheatre.co.uk> [accessed 12.08.15].

why do we continue to accept that theatre will prioritise men's stories, situations and dilemmas? Vicky Featherstone points to a gendered cultural psyche. She asks:

Do we know how to write and watch plays that have complex, flawed female characters? Is there something in our cultural DNA that makes us respond differently when a play has a central male character?¹⁶⁷

The idea that more female artistic directors will solve the inequity seems to side-step the problem of the gender bias at the heart of theatre culture and the possibility that women are just not interested in taking on these jobs. A disincentive is the nature of this employment for women with families. In interview, Fiona Shaw reflected: 'I don't know if women are being excluded, or if they self exclude. There isn't a structure for women who have families to do it'.¹⁶⁸ The anti-social hours and probability that you will need to work away from home are major impediments for women pursuing a career, whether as an actor, director or running a theatre. Maintaining a long-term career in the industry is a significant challenge which no doubt impacts on women's ability to develop pedagogical practices. In a five-day workshop at the Young Vic in 2015 entitled *Women as Artists*, director Katie Mitchell worked with 15 female directors to examine the challenges of being a minority and to arm them with practical strategies. The key factors seen to limit women's careers in the UK theatre landscape were inequalities in wages, recruitment processes and a failure to address the practical realities of motherhood. Mitchell, herself a single mother, noted the few female directors with children able to maintain their career, pointing to Sasha Wares, Carrie Cracknell, Marianne Elliot, Erica Whyman, and Annabel Arden as exceptional examples. Alongside issues of maternity, women's lack of confidence in navigating the inherited male power structures was seen as an impediment. At the Sphinx conference in 2012, Erica Whyman, who has been artistic director at the Gate, the Northern Stage and the City Playhouse reflected that women respond

¹⁶⁷ Sarah Compton, 'Sexism on the Stage – Meet the Women Tearing Up the Script'. *The Guardian*. (17.01.16) <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jan/17/sexism-stage-female-playwrights-royal-court-theatre> [accessed 22.02.16].

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Fiona Shaw, Glyndebourne, (30.09.13).

badly to the 'unspoken game of what confidence looks like'.¹⁶⁹ She pointed to the need for women to make power relationships explicit and highlighted the different ways that women approach the position of leadership. She explained:

Actually what we do is network, we collaborate...I do think that the way we work together – the way we programme and work with artists has changed – we should shout about the success of this.¹⁷⁰

By highlighting the ways in which women navigate hierarchical structures from their marginal position we can open up a consideration of the multitudinous roles of the leader and the nature of female authority. Institutions might look more specifically at the ways that women work to consider alternative approaches in both the content and form of their practice. One consensus from this panel discussion was that women were more open to share their power than men.

To conclude, women have operated from a marginal position to shape the pedagogy of UK theatre-making. Three fault lines shape the landscape. The first marks women's commitment to pedagogy, where by mapping hidden histories we can track their pioneering work in founding drama schools. Many of these women were voice and speech teachers who foregrounded pedagogy, so that teacher training ran alongside actor training. In the UK, women have continued to dominate voice and movement teaching which foregrounds the individual's particular body. This develops personal and social knowledge, a heightened awareness of the self and the other, which is simultaneously reflective and reflexive. It demands a different teacher/student exchange and points to a second trait of women's work: to destabilise and flatten hierarchical structures. This feature is evidenced in the structures of collaboration and commitment to ongoing shared training that dominates women's theatre-making practices. They have been seen to prefer to work collaboratively, building communities of practice to enable life-long learning. For directors this might mean cross casting and working with pedagogies that foreground gender to develop training opportunities for women. These traits have emerged through the hidden histories of the women who have shaped the pedagogy of UK theatre-making.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p.7.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

The July 2014 edition of *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* called for a radical pedagogical turn, uniting ideology, politics and training.¹⁷¹ In the next chapter I consider the ways that feminist pedagogies allow us to think about learning to act in a different way.

¹⁷¹ Maria Kapsali, 'Editorial', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*. 5(2), (2014), pp.104.

Chapter Two

Feminist Interventions in Acting Pedagogy

Talking about pedagogy, thinking about it critically, is not the intellectual work that most folks think is hip and cool.¹⁷²

The 'anti-pedagogic prejudice' in acting, discussed in the Introduction,¹⁷³ stymies the political potential of learning to act. Looking behind *what* an actor does to focus on *how* an actor learns dispels some of the mysticism of acting that perpetuates closed models of learning. Feminist perspectives offer us alternative ways of thinking about acting pedagogy which might empower, embody and em-brain,¹⁷⁴ re-positioning the actor as 'cultural worker'.¹⁷⁵ When we consider pedagogy as the change in consciousness between three agencies: the teacher, the learner and the knowledge they produce together, it becomes a formative site for uniting research, methodology and practice.

In this chapter I consider acting pedagogy from a feminist position, looking for ways to articulate its ideological underpinnings, to assert its political potential and to reconsider its foundational practices of learning. I recognise that there are many types of feminisms, but here I focus on feminist approaches to teaching/learning which resist traditional pedagogic structures. Viewed from this perspective, acting emerges as a relational knowledge, somatically experienced through a particular and gendered body. Knowledge is not acquired through a linear acquisitive process but is cyclical and repetitive to enable a knowing how and then a realised knowing, where learning happens through misunderstanding. Dualisms are dismantled to find non-hierarchical ways of understanding knowledge, with an awareness that meaning exists in in-between spaces and ideas can operate beside each other rather than in linear or dualistic narratives. Rosi

¹⁷² bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), p.204.

¹⁷³ Ross Prior, *Teaching Actors: Knowledge Transfer in Actor Training* (Bristol UK/Chicago USA: Intellect, 2012), pp.55-56.

¹⁷⁴ In the Introduction to this thesis I problematise the lack of pedagogical enquiry to suggest that this disempowers disembodies and 'dis-embrains' the actor.

¹⁷⁵ Maria Kapsali, 'Training for a Cold Climate', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*. Vol. (2), (2014), pp.103-106.

Braidotti suggests that we look to ‘the positivity of difference’ as an alternative to divisive and separatist structures of advanced capitalism.¹⁷⁶ When considering acting pedagogy through a gendered lens, the female body can be seen as a positive difference in developing alternative pedagogical approaches.

This study builds on the foundational work of UK feminist theatre scholars Geraldine Harris and Elaine Aston, which positions women’s theatre-making processes as ‘sites of resistance’ to male-dominated theatre traditions.¹⁷⁷ A focused critique of feminist actor training pedagogy has mainly emerged in the USA where the highly publicised sexism of the Group Theater, with the resulting emergence of acting pedagogues Uta Hagen and Stella Adler, neatly frames alternative feminist pedagogies.¹⁷⁸ Broadly speaking, UK feminist theatre scholarship has pointed to a gendered mode of production in the ways that women adopt a more Brechtian approach in order to resist mimetic representations and work collaboratively to encourage shared ownership.¹⁷⁹ The scholarship of Aston and Harris has gone furthest to unpick features of female praxis, examining processes used in feminist theatre workshops which ‘defamiliarise the ways in which women play Woman in their everyday lives as well as being used for actor training programmes’.¹⁸⁰ The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded *Women’s Writing for Performance* programme brought women across arts performance disciplines together to identify commonalities and differences in their approaches. Overlooking the pedagogical structures of the workshops, Aston and Harris point to features of radical and potentially transformative ways of learning, that

[P]rompt ways of thinking and doing which were non linear, associative, dialectical but without synthesis, with circularity and ‘layering’ – all very much in accord with Sedgwick’s notion of ‘beside’ ... These processes were intensely exciting, pleasurable and potentially *politically productive*. This

¹⁷⁶ Rosi Braidotti, *By Way of Nomadism* (New York & Chichester: Colombia University Press, 1994), p.161.

¹⁷⁷ Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris, *Performance Practice and Process: Contemporary [Women] Practitioners* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp.1-19.

¹⁷⁸ Rosemary Malague, *An Actress Prepares: Women and “The Method.”* (London: Routledge, 2011).

¹⁷⁹ Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997).

¹⁸⁰ Elaine Aston, *An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 101.

was because these moments allowed us to begin to *realise* (physically, emotionally *and* intellectually) the possibilities, not just for coming to know what we know differently, but for *imagining and doing otherwise*.¹⁸¹

What is of particular interest is the provocation that a politically liberating 'different' way of thinking and feeling through the body might be traits of female pedagogic practice.

Working from this starting point, the three sections of this chapter pursue the idea that acting pedagogy finds its political agency when viewed through feminist interventions. In 'Feminist Underpinnings' I examine the ways that feminist knowledge constructions help us to re-think the ideological foundations of acting pedagogy, to foreground the politicising personal and social knowledge of acting, which I term 'the hidden curriculum'. In 'Pedagogical Frameworks', I consider the ways that structures of learning operate with a particular focus on the interaction between actor and teacher/director to question what a gendered approach might enable. Re-orientating constructs of power in acting pedagogy allows for an alternative affirmative politics and a different teaching authority, which I term '*via positiva*'. Finally, in 'The Politics of the Body' I propose that acting be seen as a critical pedagogy, where the female body can become a site of resistance. Building on Chapter One, this points to a female genealogy of theatre-making pedagogy, where feminist interventions offer emancipatory alternatives to traditional male approaches.

Feminist underpinnings

Maria Kapsali, considering the development of actor training, insists that interconnections between ideology, method and pedagogy be made explicit. She states:

[T]he ideological assumptions that underpin the philosophy and/or delivery of a training regime can no longer be ignored. Accordingly, there are signs of a concerted effort to trace the operation of these ideologies in the actual pedagogy.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Aston and Harris, (2008), p.12.

¹⁸² Kapsali, p. 106.

Before we think about pedagogy in practice it is important to note the ways in which feminist epistemology (theory of knowledge and how it is constructed/acquired), aligns itself to acting. In many ways acting is removed from Western male theories of knowledge. A feminist position sees knowledge construction as relational and situated, formed within the community as opposed to within the individual, struggling for epistemic autonomy.¹⁸³ Feminist epistemology is concerned with individual particularity to recognise that gender, race, class, sexuality, culture and age affect understanding. It resists the linear ways that history is remembered and critiques the power structures that make meaning. From this perspective, the 'anti-pedagogical prejudice' that Prior identifies in attitudes towards teaching acting, might be seen to reflect an underpinning feminist epistemology.¹⁸⁴ I have noted in interviews that directors and trainers become uncomfortable with the idea of their practice being categorised, as this pins down a creative process, which they would rather view as organic and evolutionary. This reflects a preference in the field for 'knowing how' as opposed to 'knowing that' and a concern to avoid generic descriptions of practice.¹⁸⁵ Acting pedagogy resists the modes of value and educational structures that have come to define how knowledge can be measured. Similarly, a feminist paradigm locates the rational structures of scientific or objective knowledge in the masculine hegemony of universal truth. Feminist readings of the Enlightenment identify woman with the fall from grace, therefore inherently unstable and man with logic, reason and stability. Liz Stanley identifies the binary opposites (nature/reason, rational/irrational, subject/object, mind/body, masculine/feminine) that establish what Luce Irigaray terms the 'Logic of the Same' and which have come to define phallocentrism.¹⁸⁶ The actor trainers in Prior's study can be seen to take a feminist position in their resistance to structures which might rationalise ways of learning in acting, which are somatic,

¹⁸³ Antonia Cavarrero, *For More Than One Voice: Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (USA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

¹⁸⁴ Prior, op.cit.

¹⁸⁵ Donald Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (London: Temple Smith, 1983).

¹⁸⁶ Liz Stanley, 'The Knowing Because Experiencing Subject: Narratives, Lives and Autobiography' in Kathleen Lennon and Margaret Whitford, *Knowing the Difference. Feminist Perspectives in Epistemology* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 164.

non-linear, at times chaotic, processual and transitory. The desire for order, stability and empirical outcomes can be seen as a more cerebral position, whilst the actor is learning through the whole body to access the irrational such as: emotion, instinct, instability, vulnerability and impulse. From this perspective, the knowledge of acting might be located within a female realm and the resistance to articulate pedagogies may indicate an unwillingness to impose structures or linear processes onto learning which is intangible, chaotic and unpredictable.

A feminist pedagogy is built on these knowledge constructions and values. It examines the gaps and distortions of knowledge which challenge constructs of 'ownership' to focus on the experiential and notions of difference.¹⁸⁷ In mapping a female genealogy of training I am drawn to these gaps and spaces between as an alternative to dualistic frameworks, which dominate acting ontology and discourse. Notions of inside/outside, individual/ensemble, external/internal, objective/subjective, self/other, representing/presenting are ways that actors make sense of the double nature of the experience of acting. Feminist epistemologies of difference allow us to think in the gaps between. Another alternative 'between' position is Eve Sedgwick's 'beside thinking', which she explains in *Touching, Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*.¹⁸⁸ Thinking beside, where constructs operate in parallel rather than in dualistic tension, is an alternative topography to linear narratives.¹⁸⁹ Sedgwick suggests:

'Beside' permits a spacious agnosticism about several of the linear logics that enforce dualistic thinking: non-contradiction or the law of the excluded middle, cause versus effect, subject versus object.¹⁹⁰

Beside thinking allows for notions of difference, flux and possibility. These alternative positions lead me to focus on the knowledges of acting that develop beside and in between technique or skill. This less tangible knowledge might be viewed as 'the hidden curriculum of acting'.

¹⁸⁷ Sue Jackson, 'Crossing Borders and Changing Pedagogies: From Giroux and Freire to Feminist Theories of Education', *Gender and Education*, 9(4), (1997), pp.457-468.

¹⁸⁸ Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003).

¹⁸⁹ Sedgwick, p.8.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. p.14.

Educationalist Vic Kelley explains the hidden curriculum as learning that is not explicitly identified in the examined curricula, which can include attitudes or qualities.¹⁹¹ In acting, the task of nurturing the personal and social consciousness of the actor is acknowledged by trainers in Prior's study. He explains personal and social knowledge as 'ethics, interpersonal skills, community responsibility and environmental awareness'.¹⁹² The actor trainers viewed this knowledge as politically productive in its potential to 'produce better human beings' who 'understand humanity not judge it'.¹⁹³ Simon Murray, in a round table discussion on the future of actor training, acknowledges the importance of this learning and describes it as the 'dispositional attitudes' of acting.¹⁹⁴ Actor trainer Steven Wangh, in his monograph on training practices, describes it as 'transferable skills'.¹⁹⁵ This knowledge is key to politicising acting pedagogy. It enables two types of learning to develop beside each other: relational understanding and the reflexive space of meta-learning, where the actor learns to become her/his own teacher.¹⁹⁶ Whilst these knowledges are fundamental for the actor they can remain tacit within the curriculum.

Turning to educational theory, we can see how subjugated knowledge, overlooked or hidden in the value economy of a field, can be the pivot on which an oppressive learning practice balances. Educationalist Paulo Freire developed a critical and liberatory 'pedagogy of the oppressed', where individuals from predominantly marginalised groups were empowered to take control in the processes of their learning.¹⁹⁷ Developing this approach, Henry Giroux drew attention to what he termed 'naïve knowledges, located low down in the hierarchy', but which functioned as a politically empowered pedagogy for marginal groups.¹⁹⁸ Applying this premise to acting, what might be seen to be the subjugated knowledges? Recognising that this list is not exhaustive, I identify the transferable

¹⁹¹ Vic Kelly, *The Curriculum: Theory and Practice* (London: Paul Chapman, 1999)

¹⁹² Prior, p.164.

¹⁹³ Prior, pp.164-168.

¹⁹⁴ Simon Murray cited by Kapasali, p.231.

¹⁹⁵ Stephen Wangh, *The Heart of Teaching. Empowering Students in the Performing Arts*. (London & New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 139.

¹⁹⁶ Wangue, p.144.

¹⁹⁷ Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (London & New York: Continuum, 1974).

¹⁹⁸ Henry Giroux, *Schooling for a Democracy: Critical Pedagogy in the Modern Age*. (London & New York: Routledge, 1989), p.47.

skills of the actor as: imagination; emotional intelligence; being in the moment; impulse; intuition; emotional availability; generosity; inner listening; polyphonic awareness; empathy; altruism; collaboration; reflection; reflexivity; learning through mistakes; knowing the value of fear. Capturing *how* these subjectively experienced knowledges are produced through the dialogic interaction between learner and teacher/director is hard to describe and quantify, but is necessary in order to develop a better understanding of acting pedagogy. Such knowledges do not fit into any easily structured or measurable system of learning. However, this hidden curriculum equips actors to manage the complex challenges of acting, to operate in a state of 'habitual vulnerability' and enable an autodidactic approach to learning where the actor becomes her own teacher.¹⁹⁹

Feminist approaches to knowledge construction embrace the knowledges of the hidden curriculum. As a somatic practice, acting immediately takes its reference from a bodily knowledge and a 'felt sense', which operates beyond the limits of cerebral reasoning. Hence the acting trope, 'Get out of your head!' might be explained as a rejection of hegemony, which shuts down the possibility of an embodied wholeness. This points towards a more female knowledge where the capacity of the body to work with the qualities of instinct, impulse and emotional becoming are explored. Luce Irigaray posits that 'Women are concerned with a corporeal geography whereas men establish new linguistic territories'.²⁰⁰ It is this corporeal geography that lies at the heart of acting. In the previous chapter I drew attention to the female-dominated fields of voice and movement teaching. These strands, mainly taught by women and focusing on corporeal geographies, can be seen to access the hidden curriculum.

The value placed on acquisitive knowledge and 'knowing that', is challenged by a feminist position that argues for the value of not knowing. In *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, Peggy Phelan gives value to that which is not really 'there' within the boundaries of the real and argues that meaning exists in the space between. At the end of her project Phelan suggests that this way of thinking might radically challenge pedagogical approaches. She asks: 'How can one invent a

¹⁹⁹ Mark Seton, 'The Ethics of Embodiment: Actor Training and Habitual Vulnerability' *Performing Ethos*, 1(1), (2010), pp.5-18.

²⁰⁰ Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p.175.

pedagogy for disappearance and loss and not for acquisition and control? How can one teach the generative power of misunderstanding?²⁰¹ Phelan calls for value to be placed on subjectivity and identity rather than representational visibility, 'to find a way of knowing that doesn't start with what you see' and points to the liberatory possibilities of a performative pedagogy, which I consider later in this chapter. Matt Hargraves applies this same position to acting when he calls for a pedagogy which celebrates 'failing to finish' and 'not knowing' where 'the call for definitive answers should be continually suspended'.²⁰² Feminist approaches recognise the value gained by inhabiting the space of not knowing and that knowing is always relational. Phelan's call for 'disappearance' and 'loss' presents learning as a fluid, processual state of 'becoming'. This coming to understand through misunderstanding, like seeing presence through absence, is a form of dialectical pedagogy adopted in both psychotherapy and in holistic somatic practice where learning happens through the whole body.²⁰³

Constructs of feminist epistemology underpin pedagogies of theatre-making, where teaching/learning is relational, somatic and the chaos of not knowing can be transformative and productive. But how might the esoteric knowledges of the hidden curriculum with its pedagogy of 'disappearance' be observed, theorised and analysed? In seeking to articulate the political potential of acting through feminist interventions in pedagogy, I consider which, if any, pedagogical frameworks help to explain the specific interactions between actor and teacher/director in practice.

Pedagogical frameworks

Several scholars have drawn on intersections with science to contextualise and map acting as a human science, where the technologies of the actor's body are culturally inscribed.²⁰⁴ However, whilst developments in neuroscience and

²⁰¹ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), p.173.

²⁰² Hargraves cited by Kapsali, p.227.

²⁰³ I am particularly thinking here about the holistic practices employed by actors regularly such as Feldenkrais, Alexander technique, Yoga.

²⁰⁴ Phillip Zarrilli, Jerri Dabbo and Rebecca Loukes, *Acting: Psychophysical Phenomenon and Process*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

cognitive situated scientific models have been applied to acting, intersections with educational frameworks are rarely acknowledged.²⁰⁵ Theories of social constructivist education (Dewey, Kolb, Vygotsky and Lave & Wenger)²⁰⁶ and critical, feminist and performative pedagogies (Freire, Giroux, hooks and Weiler),²⁰⁷ can help us to understand how the hidden curriculum is taught.

As the process of knowledge construction is dependent on the interaction between actor and teacher/director, my focus here is to interrogate these points of exchange to consider what teachers actually do in order to develop an actor's knowledge. Lev Vygotsky's educational construct 'The Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD), provides a useful starting point. ZPD describes the gap between what an actor brings with her at the start of her training or rehearsal process and the value added to her knowledge or skills. Vygotsky defines this as:

[T]he distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.²⁰⁸

Lave and Wenger identify different interactive strategies, which support this in practice, such as scaffolding (structuring) the learning at the start and throughout the process.²⁰⁹ Mary Thorpe defines 'scaffolding support' in teaching to identify seven ways that learning is facilitated.²¹⁰ These prove useful when thinking about the interactions between teacher/director and actor in practice:

1. Modelling (comparing to an image)
2. Feedback (comparing to a standard)
3. Contingency management (discipline and re-enforcement)

²⁰⁵ Ibid. pp. 233-238.

²⁰⁶ In the context of this study I draw on John Dewey, *Experience and Education*. (West Lafayette, Indiana: Kappa Delta Pi, 1998), Lev Vygotsky, *Thought and Language* (London: MIT press, 1988), Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

²⁰⁷ Freire, op.cit. Giroux, op.cit. hooks, op.cit. Katherine Weiler, 'Freire and a Feminist Pedagogy of Difference'. *Harvard Educational Review*, 61, (1991), pp.449-474.

²⁰⁸ Lev Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.86.

²⁰⁹ Lave and Wenger, op.cit.

²¹⁰ Mary Thorpe, 'Re-Thinking Learner Support: The Challenge of Collaborative Online Learning', *Open Learning*, 17(2), (2002), pp.105-19.

4. Instructing (requesting specific action)
5. Questioning
6. Explanations
7. Task structuring (chunking and sequencing).²¹¹

In a workshop, class or rehearsal all seven of these interactions will be observed. The teacher/director might show or demonstrate how to perform a technique or play a moment (1); feedback and give notes on a performance (2); organise the logistic, practical and operative structures necessary for working (3); instruct, question and explain (4,5,6); organise the time into specific tasks to enable development of the process/rehearsal (7). Of course, these interactions do not only exist between actor and teacher, but in a relational and constructed exchange with fellow actors in the rehearsal room. Lave and Wenger's research shows how communities of practice, with a sense of membership, characteristic biographies and professional legitimacy, socially construct learning. This is seen in the shared knowledge of theatre companies who have relationally shaped their training approaches over the years and through a familial apostology, which enables an inherited 'knowledge with', where any explicit consideration of pedagogy is deemed unnecessary.²¹²

Donald Schön's research into professional learning practices draws a distinction between professional knowledge as facts, rules and techniques and professional knowing, explained in terms of 'thinking like an actor'.²¹³ For Schön, the generation of this knowledge depends on the reciprocally reflective dialogue between teacher and student. In his study of professional coaching in music, two dominant approaches are explained: mimicry of modeled examples, which, once mastered, enable improvisation; and joint experimentation. Here the relationship constructed is not so much teacher and student, but rather partners in an enquiry, where the learner is asked to consider their choices and preferences and in this way learning is mutually structured. Schön identifies the following actions of immediate reciprocity in performance coaching practice as:

²¹¹ Ibid., p.111.

²¹² Prior, p. 188.

²¹³ Donald Schön, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1987), p.37.

- Setting and solving the substantive problems in performance
- Tailoring demonstration or performance to a student's particular needs
- Joint experimentation
- Follow me (where the coach models for the student who copies them). ²¹⁴

This reciprocal construction of knowledge between 'partners in enquiry' is at the centre of notions of collaboration. The two approaches 'follow me' and 'joint experimentation' tend to dominate pedagogical approaches in acting.

Andrea Milde, an arts linguist, has developed what she claims is the only method for analysing the way that language operates in rehearsal between actors and director, which she terms 'spoken artistic discourse' or 'rehearsal analysis'.²¹⁵ Her research helps to break down Schön's reflective dialogue more specifically. She identifies the dialogic interaction as: providing feedback, providing explanations, using improvisations, providing keys (meaning spontaneous coaching or 'side coaching') and framing one's own activity.²¹⁶ Milde's work offers an analytical framework, focusing solely on recorded and empirical speech interactions. This approach doesn't attempt to analyse the more intangible and yet vital conditions of learning such as: the atmosphere or mood in the room, the behavioural and expressive communication, the way that authority is physically communicated and the dynamic of space and time impacting on learning. In Chapters Four and Five, when observing teachers and directors working with actors, I have developed a fluid analytical methodology in response to Thorp and Milde's models which considers:

- How the hidden curriculum of personal and social knowledge is delivered
- How an atmosphere of trust and relationality is built
- How vulnerability is supported
- How authority operates in the room
- How choice and action are scaffolded for the actor
- How instruction, explanation and feedback are given
- How individual and group progress is managed within time constraints

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Andrea Milde, 'Spoken Language and Doing Drama'. *Working Papers in Urban Language & Literacies* Paper 89, (2012a), <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/education/research/ldc/publications/working-papers/the-papers/WP89.pdf> [accessed 23.04.14]

²¹⁶ Ibid.

- How gender operates within the learning.

These eight factors recognise that verbal and non-verbal communication operate simultaneously in a learning exchange.

Returning to Schön's overarching model, whether working with 'follow me' or 'joint experimentation' the process of learning in acting is structured around solving substantive problems. *How* the actor is brought to solve these problems defines the pedagogical approach. Different methodologies and aesthetics lend themselves more to particular approaches and this, in part, affects the ways that structures of power operate in the practice. In many acting processes, particularly in Eastern traditions, the actor is taught specific somatic forms from a master teacher, the mastery of which enables improvisation within that structure.²¹⁷ This 'follow me' methodology can also be seen in Western practices where physical training dominates. In these types of practices, which are usually developed by male pedagogues, the learning process is navigated through the experience of failing. I now turn to this formative way of learning and consider the ways that feminist interventions can refigure potentially oppressive pedagogies in acting.

Foundational pedagogies: play and the 'via negativa'

Mark Evans, in his examination of teaching notions of the self and identity in actor training, presents 'foundational practices' as 'practices that underpin the system and the techniques they use'.²¹⁸ In acting two foundational practices can be seen to underpin a variety of training approaches: constructs of 'play'; and learning through the experience of 'failure', which I consider in relation to the term the '*via negativa*'. Play as a medium of learning was recognised by Jean- Jacques Rousseau and Friedrich Froebel in the early nineteenth century and developed in the thinking of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, who saw symbolic play as a way to construct meaning as opposed to being purely for pleasure.²¹⁹ In this way, playing within strict rules allows more freedom and increases the intensity of choice and the sense of challenge. As I identified in Chapter One, the seminal work of female

²¹⁷ Zarrilli, pp. 51-157.

²¹⁸ Mark Evans, 'Playing with History: Personal Accounts of the Political and Cultural Self in Actor Training Through Movement', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 5(2), (2014), p.149.

²¹⁹ Nicolas McGuinn, *The English Teacher's Drama Handbook* (London & New York: Routledge, 2014).

drama educationalist Finlay Johnson at the turn of the last century privileged play to reposition the authority of the teacher as equal to the learner and their peers in constructing meaning.²²⁰ Whilst a detailed study of play in the learning of the actor is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to acknowledge the foundational practice of play in acting pedagogy. A distinction should be made between play and games, where play is the action and the game is the structure. In acting, games might form the warm-up practice, structure training exercises or inform rehearsal techniques. This type of play can lead to the discovery of characters' motives, reveal staging choices or generate a particular openness or quality of alertness between actors. Then there is the play-acting of situation, which might be a mimetic act with characters and narratives exploring social settings and dilemmas, or abstract and surreal realities, enabling movement between the symbolic and the semiotic. This dual existence, where one is both subjectively experiencing being inside the drama, while objectively aware of the role one is playing, is a fundamental condition of being in acting. Play enables this development of spontaneity and openness within a structure.

Lynne Kendrick's scholarship interrogates play through the complex pedagogy of Lecoq and Gaulier, to construct a '*ludic performance theory*', which might enable analysis of the complex pedagogical approaches that produce a particular '*paidic aesthetic*'.²²¹ Here, *ludic* refers to 'a highly complex combination of playing and engaging in games' as the act of learning. *Paidic* describes the particular type of performance, which is 'playful, exuberant and imbued with pleasure'.²²² Drawing on the play theory of Callois,²²³ which focuses on a ludic dialectic between *paida* (the play instinct) and *ludus* (the structure of the game), Kendrick looks at how acting professionalises play.²²⁴ The pleasure of game play is, in part, dependent on the experience of avoiding failure and the games are constructed around winners and losers. I have experienced the difference between playing a game in the spirit of competition and the notion of 'playing well', which

²²⁰ Harriet Finlay-Johnson, *The Dramatic Method of Teaching* (Boston & New York: Ginn and Company, 1912).

²²¹ Lynne Kendrick, 'A Paidic Aesthetic: An Analysis of Games in the Ludic Pedagogy of Philippe Gaulier', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*. 2(1), (2011), pp.72-85.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

²²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.77.

generates a playful and responsive connection between actors. Inherent in the learning of playing is the function of failure to drive the learning for the actor, whether this is through repetition in rehearsal or in training exercises. Through learning by failing, either literally through losing the game or in making mistakes through rehearsal, the actor and teacher add value to the ZPD. This necessary negative economy in the learning of acting, which is both intrinsically and extrinsically motivational, is managed and structured by the teacher or director. Their position of authority in this joint experimentation can sit on a spectrum from despot controlling the game, to partner in the game and it is interesting to consider how gender functions in this type of strategic power play.

The term *via negativa* is applied to the approaches of Jerzy Grotowski and Jacques Lecoq to describe the way that the actor learns through an encounter with failure. Wangh observes that in the Catholic tradition the *via negativa* is the negative pathway to God.²²⁵ Grotowski appropriated this term to explain a way of learning which is not so much an acquisition of skills but more of an eradication of blocks, or a 'process of elimination'.²²⁶ The *via negativa* points to a dialectical way of learning. Negativity references positivity and failure references success. This draws attention to the space between one state and the next and so neither become fixed but are states of becoming, with a liquid architecture. One person's 'failure' or 'block' is uniquely experienced and the subjective nature of the teacher or director's decree of failure on another in the realms of performance constructs a heightened authority. How this authority manifests depends on how the teacher/director facilitate failure in their context and approach. Evans, reflecting on his own training, explains that when director/teacher do not make their approach to failure explicit, the experience of learning to act becomes 'inward' and self referencing, which he experienced in terms of 'not being man enough',²²⁷ and the power of the teacher becomes even more pronounced. Conversely, Wangh presents the process of 'unlearning' as empowering for the student, as long as they have been given the reflective and reflexive skills to process their experience. He explains, 'It's a process that requires self-observation, patience and a great deal of

²²⁵ Wangh, p.11.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Evans, p.145.

generosity – towards oneself'.²²⁸ This meta-learning needs to be scaffolded for the learner.

For Grotowski, the term *via negativa* refers to the psychophysical 'blocks' that the actor must confront, which stop her from being able to achieve her potential. He explains:

The education of an actor in our theatre is not a matter of teaching him something; we attempt to eliminate his organism's resistance to this psychic process... Ours then is the *via negativa* – not a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks.²²⁹

This elimination of psychophysical blocks, as opposed to the acquisition of skills, described by Freire as the 'fill'em up' approach,²³⁰ demands a condition of internal passivity. Grotowski frames learning as 'unlearning' and this Western passivity, which is seen as an Eastern strength, is explained thus:

But if one learns *how to do*, one doesn't reveal oneself; one only reveals the skill for doing. And if someone looks for means ... he does it not to disarm himself but to find asylum, a safe haven, where he could avoid the act, which could be the answer... In the end one has to reject it all and not learn, but unlearn, not to know how to do but how not to do and always face doing.²³¹

This statement reflects the 'un-learning' and 'unmaking' of feminist epistemologies and asserts a pedagogy of resistance and of possibilities. The extreme physical nature of Grotowski's training with its sustained, durational challenge (particularly as experienced in his para-theatre experiments), confronted the participants with the same types of psychophysical exertion as might be faced in extreme sport or in Eastern performance and martial art traditions, which are perceived primarily as a male domain. In this context the participants do not *want* to do the work because it is so physically challenging, but they do it anyway. This 'passivity' reflects the notions of servitude and habitual vulnerability attached to acting. Grotowski's approach was to side coach the actor to help her identify her blocks and to find her

²²⁸ Wangh, p.13.

²²⁹ Richard Schechner and Lisa Wolford, *The Grotowski Sourcebook* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), p.31.

²³⁰ Freire, op.cit.

²³¹ Ibid., p.230.

own solutions, an approach that reflects the authority of a guru. Whilst the term 'guru acting traditions' implies a despotic or abusive tyrant, and I have adopted this meaning in the introduction to this thesis, it is interesting to note that in Eastern religions the guru does not instruct but coaches to help one independently discover one's own answers — to become an autodidact.²³²

Jacques Lecoq used the *via negativa* to explore the relationship between play and failure inherent in experiencing the humanity of the clown. Simon Murray, in his analysis of Lecoq's work, explains the term in practice as 'an approach which rejects prescription and illustration by example, in favour of a search for the truth through negation'.²³³ Like Grotowski, Lecoq would alert the actor to her failure, but would not offer a solution or model. In this way, the actor moves through a process of self-diagnosis to figure out her own solutions.²³⁴ For some, this process of learning through failing is empowering and liberatory, but for others the experience is damaging and destructive. Murray explains, 'At its most extreme, this is a tough and ruthless pedagogy which less resilient students can find intimidating and morale sapping'.²³⁵ Murray cites actor trainer John Wright's explanation of Le Coq's *via negativa* as a way '[T]o manipulate creative energy' and to generate urgency, as his students try to figure out what he is looking for. Wright concludes: 'He plays a sophisticated game with his students and does not like them being too comfortable or confident'.²³⁶ This more despotic position of authority is also seen in American Method training and it ensures the heightened state of habitual vulnerability of acting students. The structure of a master watching and failing you without explaining why can, as Murray states, feel ruthless, and the predilection of male pedagogues to operate with this form of oppressive authority dominates traditions of acting pedagogy.

Maggie Irving considers how gender features in the power dynamic of the *via negativa*, reflecting on her negative experience in workshops with Philippe

²³² Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *The Secret Art of the Performer* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), pp.26-33.

²³³ Simon Murray, *Jacques Le Coq* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), p.49.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.49.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

Gaullier who also works with this pedagogy.²³⁷ She questions the position of her own sexuality, her frustration with being denied explicit or useful feedback and how 'the positioning of pupil/teacher, high status/low status, youth/maturity, male/female might impact upon students'.²³⁸ Gaullier describes his authority as a teacher in violent terms: 'When I teach clown, I box. An uppercut on the face of the nice little character, a right hook on the gums of will, determination, resolution and volition'.²³⁹ This metaphorical violence is realised in Gaullier's classroom and his 'unexplained cruelty' is recorded by Kendrick:

The punishment consists of an arm lock, 'shampoo' (he tickles the player's hair), 'French guillotine' (chops the back of the neck), 'Chinese acupuncture' (he pinches the skin on the player's back), 'Guantanamo' (he presses the player's fingers into the palm of the hand) and to finish off, he administers a Chinese burn on the arm.²⁴⁰

This physical abuse is an 'intrinsic pedagogical act' in an advanced form of ludic training, to place the actor in a state of 'genuinely awful feelings' where acts of idiocy may occur.²⁴¹ Although this is a form of actor training particular to clowning, as Roanna Mitchell has observed, notions of punishment and shaming result in habitual servitude becoming a professional trait.²⁴² While Irving questions the ethics of the approach, one can also recognise in Kendrick's analysis, how the sophisticated manipulation of failure is a way of initiating creative tension in the performer. This kind of oppressive power play, which ignores the particularity of bodies, teeters on the edge of abuse and appears to rely on anxiety and fear. In what ways might the *via negativa* be scaffolded to ensure a more positive learning experience for all? Michel Foucault drew attention to the positive potential of power play when experienced as 'a sort of open-ended strategic game where the situation may be reversed is not evil'.²⁴³ In acting, within a process of

²³⁷ Maggie Irving, 'Clown Training, Preparing for Failure' unpublished paper presented at TAPRA in 2010.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Gaullier (2007), p.290, cited by Kendrick, p.73.

²⁴⁰ Kendrick, p. 80.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Roanna Mitchell, 'The Actor's Body: Identity and Image', Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, (15.10.13).

²⁴³ Michel Foucault, *Power: Essential works of Foucault 1954-1984. Volume 3* (London: Penguin, 1984), p.298.

joint experimentation, learning through failure can liberate when it is explicitly understood as a productive, creative exchange. Building on Irving's enquiry, in the next section I consider how the gender of the teacher or director might affect *via negativa* in the pedagogy of acting.

Feminist interventions: power, affirmativity and the 'via positiva'

As discussed, the lineages of actor training and theatre-making have established a male-dominated tradition of teacher/directors as the 'founding fathers' of the twenty-first century. Zarrilli, citing Cruciani, observes: 'When speaking of the first decades of the twentieth century, it is perhaps more useful and correct to speak of director-teachers rather than of theatrical pedagogy'.²⁴⁴ The establishment of masters' laboratories can be seen to replicate the idea of apprenticeships and the master/student power dynamic of Oriental training practices. The guru tradition of passing on knowledge and spiritual guidance is predominantly a male domain, which Rosemary Antze describes as 'modelled on a father-son relationship... intimate yet hierarchical rather than a meeting of friends or equals'.²⁴⁵ It involves absolute discipline, faithfulness and obedience. Many Western twentieth century teacher/directors have been and continue to be influenced by Eastern performance traditions, the apprenticeship model and the distinct power hierarchy in the rehearsal room or acting class.²⁴⁶ The kind of master/mentor/sage/guru/father/son dynamic that Stanislavski constructs through the pedagogic relationship between Kostya and Tortsov in *An Actor Prepares*, has influenced perceptions of male authority in actor training and directing. This authority is problematised when viewed through a gendered lens. Rosemary Malague in *An Actress Prepares* attends to the misogyny of American Method training systems and how teachers, even unconsciously, can misuse their authority.²⁴⁷ Looking at the work of Stella Adler and Uta Hagen as alternative

²⁴⁴ Zarrilli et al, p.28.

²⁴⁵ Rosemary Jeanes Antze, 'Oriental Examples' in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer* (London & New York, 1991), pp.31-34.

²⁴⁶ Brecht, Grotowski, Artaud, Brook, Bogart, Mnouchkine have all declared the influence of Eastern theatre on their practice.

²⁴⁷ Malague, p.16.

approaches to Lee Strasberg and Sanford Meisner, she identifies a positively different approach to the power of the teacher. Hagen cautions '[t]he teacher's chair is a dangerous one... It can lead to a development of coteries, of pseudo-cultism. I always try to remember that my students are my colleagues or my potential ones'.²⁴⁸ The way that Hagen flattens hierarchies, mindful of the ethical responsibility that such a marked power dynamic necessitates, is a feature of feminist pedagogy that resists hegemony.

Rachel Daniels, researching women stage directors, identifies working collaboratively within reimagined power structures as a feature of female directing/teaching practice.²⁴⁹ Peggy Phelan explains power in the collaborative act of performance making as a fluid architecture, constantly shifting, appearing and disappearing as the nature of sociality in performance means that there is always someone being looked at and someone doing the looking. She proposes that this binary can be made to disappear and posits:

In the performance of that disappearance the interpretation of power changes. Less monolithic, more local and in perpetual motion, a continually performed power can be the 'subject' of pedagogical discourse.²⁵⁰

Phelan's productive power performs its mutability as it is passed between, to establish 'the perpetual failure of in/sight',²⁵¹ with joint experimentation as the way of learning. This way of thinking about power illuminates the pedagogy of the female collectives in the 1970s who initiated collaborative devising practices, which Duska Radosavljevic, in her study of the development of contemporary ensemble practice, presents as a radical shift in the traditional hierarchies of theatre-making.²⁵² Female collaborative practices are presented as an alternative to phallogocentric structures and egoistic traditions. But how does such collaboration operate within the marked status positions of teacher/learner or

²⁴⁸ Uta Hagen, *A Challenge for the Actor* (New York: Scribner, 1991), p.292.

²⁴⁹ Rachel Daniels, *Women Stage Directors Speak: Exploring the Influence of Gender in their Work* (North Carolina: MacFarlan and Company inc., 1996).

²⁵⁰ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London & New York; Routledge, 1993), p.173.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Duska Radosavljevic, *The Contemporary Ensemble: Interviews with Theatre Makers*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), p.10.

director/actor? A delegate at the 2012 Sphinx debate commented on the way that women had changed approaches to theatre-making. She said: 'I do think that collaboration has changed... It's all about your leadership mode. The multitudinous role of leaders'.²⁵³ Rather than interrogate the pedagogy of collaborative practice, which others have considered, my focus is to better understand what is meant by the 'multitudinous role of leaders' in the context of the female teacher/director.²⁵⁴ One evident trait is the way that women practitioners approach leading in a less conclusive way and are more disposed to lead from behind. By this I mean that women have been found to be more investigative and critical to the automatic position of authority, which I position here as a strength but which has equally been used to suggest that women are less confident or willing to take on positions of leadership. Women's ability to empower has been identified as a feature of a feminist directing practice.²⁵⁵

The authority of the feminist director is overviewed in *Upstaging Big Daddy*, where Ellen Donkin and Susan Clement, in their analysis of female practice in the USA, identify the position of director as key to instilling collaborative and collective making practices.²⁵⁶ They consider a distinct trait, which they term a 'Spectral Aesthetic',²⁵⁷ uniting the double consciousness of the actor being and being seen and in Chapter Three I develop this idea. Joan Schehkar, writing about the feminist director, suggests that the traditional director is expected to be the culturally constructed renaissance male, who simultaneously controls lots of different artists and technicians. She argues that the feminist director resists ideas of control as she doesn't want to disempower anyone. Empowerment by its very nature is and must be hierarchical, but Schehkar suggests that for a feminist director the model of production 'should look less than a pyramid and more like a series of odd sized interceptive spheres with each person who contributes to the production responsible for her or his special circularity'.²⁵⁸ This cartography differs from

²⁵³ Sphinx: Women and Theatre conference (2012).
www.sphinxtheatre.co.uk/resource.html [accessed 012.06.14].

²⁵⁴ Radoslavljjevic, op.cit.

²⁵⁵ Ellen Donkin and Susan Clement, *Upstaging Big Daddy: Directing Theatre as if Gender and Race Matter* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1993).

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p.252.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p.256.

Phelan's organic power play in the way that it is a stable and concrete architecture, built on mutual dependency and interconnection. In this way learning is facilitated within a supportive structure to enable empowerment, the operative mode of production in feminist pedagogy. Kathleen Weiler, in her analysis of feminist pedagogy, explains female authority as being 'a joint learner with the students, who holds authority by virtue of a greater knowledge and experience'.²⁵⁹ The teacher presents herself not as the guru, but as the expert whose expertise is a condition of a lack of ego, a respect for the unknown, a willingness to get things wrong and a recognition that all knowledge is socially constructed and relational. This might be seen to reflect the qualities that Hargraves considers to be vital for the future of actor training. He asks, 'Is the best teacher the one who knows or who does not know the answer to the student's question?'²⁶⁰ This openness to decentralising power enables others to take more ownership of their learning, trusting that they will be safe in conditions that allow them to fail, but crucially that they will be supported to find solutions. Gore states that the 'differentiation of power as domination, to power as creative energy, is central to the reclaiming of authority for feminist pedagogy'.²⁶¹ This offers an alternative affirmative position from which to learn through failing in acting.

The *via negativa* process of learning means the actor must exist in a state of habitual vulnerability. In interviews, actors, irrespective of gender, repeatedly expressed the opinion that they could be more vulnerable with a female director. Fiona Shaw explained:

You need your bad ideas to be celebrated and not to be made to feel that you've failed. You need to be willing to be stupid and sometimes it's easier to do that with a nurse than with a doctor.²⁶²

Looking beyond Shaw's gender stereotypes, she recognises that sexed bodies have different power and that it is easier for her to expose her vulnerability and allow

²⁵⁹ Kathleen Weiler, *Women Teaching for Change* (Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey, 1980), p.161.

²⁶⁰ Hargraves, cited by Kapsali, p.221.

²⁶¹ Louise Alcroft and Elizabeth Potter, *Feminist Epistemologies* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), p.72.

²⁶² Interview with Fiona Shaw, Glyndebourne, (30.09.13).

herself to become 'weaker' with another woman. Actor Tristan Sturrock, who, during the last two decades, has mostly worked with female directors, expressed similar views. In interview, he reflected on the difference when working with female directors:

They [female directors] definitely bring out the best in me as a performer... I feel very safe, I feel like I can take far more risks and when I've worked with male directors it's a very different, much colder, more technical relationship and I think I'm allowed to be lazier with men. Female directors probe much more in different ways, using their own approaches they push harder but softer, in a way that you feel that you can develop or be riskier.²⁶³

From this perspective, female authority is more enabling for the actor in a training process where learning happens through failing. Enabling vulnerability might be seen as a more female domain. However, adopting such essentialist claims, such as the female disposition for nursing/caring and the notion of 'mothering', creates limiting assumptions. Vanessa Ewan, Head of Movement at RCSSD, points to the difficulty in separating the motherly role and the wisdom that the mother is seen to possess, with the objectified loss in status that this carer role generates, particularly when working in a male-dominated work environment. In interview, she reflects on the relationship between teaching and mothering to question: 'How do you get the positives, or the really rich, deep understanding that the female has, without developing this archetype mother thing?' ²⁶⁴ One suggestion is to divert the focus away from notions of servitude towards the positive authority of the mother as problem solver, fixer or diagnostician. The ability to respond diagnostically, in the moment to what one is seeing, without preconceptions, was described in interview as a 'female space' by Shona Morris, former Head of Acting at The Drama Centre:

I think a female space is a liminal space... and it's actually quite fragile what I'm about to say because you can't always find it. But you can be working on something and you know that the relationships between two people in the space, or sometimes the relationships with everyone in the room has somehow been shifted ... The quality of everyone connected in that space is really electric and how you get there is not through the mind... you're

²⁶³ Interview with Tristan Sturrock, Bristol, (30.01.15).

²⁶⁴ Interview with Vanessa Ewan, RCSSD, (15.11.13).

making it happen between them, or you're facilitating it, but you're not telling them what you want to see. And facilitating sounds like you know what you want, you don't know what you want, you're going on that discovery with them, but when you get there you have to hold it for them, so that it is safe. Or you have to have enough judgment to know when it is going too deep. That feels very feminine to me.²⁶⁵

Morris' liminal, female space points to the space between director/teacher and actors and how relational and mutually receptive this space of joint experimentation is. The teacher/director must employ close observation and adjust to the signs of the actor, rather than holding preconceived ideas about a product. This quality of looking, listening and giving attention to the other is seen by Luce Irigaray as an essential female quality as women are 'better listeners, more able to discover and manage the other and the world'.²⁶⁶ Whilst Irigaray's essentialism might be seen as reductive, in this project, working from the positivity of difference to highlight the ways that females reframe potentially oppressive pedagogy, it is necessary to adopt a strategic essentialism. Using the constructs of vital materialism and affirmativity in Rosi Braidotti's nomadic theory, I anchor my strategic essentialist position to offer an alternative female interpretation of *via negativa*.²⁶⁷

Braidotti explains that strategic essentialism operates through vital materialism and this construct is particularly relevant for acting. Building on Simone de Beauvoir's embodied and embedded brand of materialism, vital materialism combines phenomenological theory of embodiment with Marxist and poststructuralist re-elaborations of the intersections between bodies and power.²⁶⁸ From this perspective, bodies are simultaneously embodied and embedded. With scientific developments, understanding the body as matter has evolved since the ideas of historical materialism. Matter is seen as vital and self organising, not something done to and inscribed. Braidotti cites Donna Haraway and bio-literate feminists as 'fighting matter with matter' and offering an

²⁶⁵ Interview with Shona Morris, Drama Centre, London, (01.11.13).

²⁶⁶ Irigaray, (1993), p.175.

²⁶⁷ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p.16.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p.128.

alternative feminist critical theory.²⁶⁹ She refers to Harraway's construct of the cyborg as redefining the interaction between bodies and machines. She explains 'Figuration of the cyborg reminds us of the need for a new political ontology that may enable us to rethink the unity of the human being'.²⁷⁰ Like Braidotti, I believe that the problem of essentialism is redefined when advancements in science and technology have established the embrainment of matter. If the body is embrained, then the brain is embodied and there is one bodymind. If bodies are differently sexed and as such have different levels of power, so do minds. In this way we can reject the neutering of the mind as easily as rejecting the neutered body. The female body affects the female mind, but as each embodied component has its own specificity, it is impossible to reduce what a female nature might be. Also, when the body is relationally formed through encounters which are unplanned, we can never think in terms of a fixed identity or nature.²⁷¹ Adopting this position of strategic essentialism allows us to operate from the sexualised difference between males and females and to recognise traits as positive in their difference whilst rejecting ideas of a fixed nature, as all factors of sex/gender are enacted and enacting in a relational state of becoming.

Braidotti's nomadic theory offers a theoretical position to rethink an affirmative feminist pedagogy as an alternative to the potentially oppressive experience of learning through failing. She foregrounds affirmation as both critical theory and political practice, placing movement and mobility at the heart of thinking which, adopting a Spinozian position, is seen as a positive way of relating to and affecting others.²⁷² She explains 'Nomadic theory prefers to look instead for the ways in which otherness prompts, mobilises and allows for flows of affirmation of values and forces that are not yet sustained by the current conditions'.²⁷³ Rather than matter being produced by some master code, nomadic thought sees matter as relational, with each encounter as an ethical opportunity for empowering through connection to others. Braidotti's affirmative politics offers a sustainable alternative to a politics of negativity, rooted to the past in Freudian memory and Lacanian

²⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 66-69.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p.66.

²⁷¹ Ibid., p. 145.

²⁷² Ibid., p. 21.

²⁷³ Ibid., p.305.

history. She problematises the way that negativity, through the construct of melancholia, is presented as the only form of political action.²⁷⁴ The negative state of melancholia is presented as opposite to Spinozian affirmative politics. This way of thinking isn't located in monism, narcissism or paranoia, but in relations and looking to the future. Braidotti's feminist affirmativity is not a naive position of avoidance of pain or misery but an act of faith in the conditions of possibility — a conviction that ethics is about the transformation of negative into affirmative passions, something which she suggests has always been a condition of feminism. The body's threshold, limit and endurance are part of the process of affirmative politics. Just as the body has a pain threshold, it also has the potential for endurance and Braidotti describes the affirmative state as 'sustaining the pain, without being annihilated by it'.²⁷⁵ As such, affirmation is not naive optimism, but endurance, transformation and ethical principle. In this way, Braidotti argues, we might 'construct social horizons of hope and sustainable futures'.²⁷⁶ This position might be usefully considered beside Sedgwick's move away from the negative affect of 'paranoid reading' towards a 'reparative reading'. She considers the prescribed paranoia necessary for a critical stance, where any other position is seen to be 'naïve, pious or complacent'.²⁷⁷ A reparative position does not deny or dismiss the 'enmity of oppression' as its motive for seeking pleasure is in response to the depressive position, however it reshapes the paranoid position, which according to Melanie Klein happens through love.²⁷⁸ Sedgwick's reparative project opens up Butler's notion of performativity of gender to reimagine a more hopeful and sustainable critique for minoritarian societies. When viewed in the context of the *via negativa* of acting, where learning can be seen to operate through the negative affect of paranoia, Sedgwick's reparative and Braidotti's affirmative politics indicate an alternative pedagogical position — a *via positiva*.

Reconsidering the *via negativa* through this lens allows us to view this way of learning from a particular feminist position which opens up the possibility of the *via positiva*. Within the female domain of actor training, this offers an alternative to

²⁷⁴ Ibid., pp.305-306.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p.21.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., p.315.

²⁷⁷ Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling. Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), p.126.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., p.128.

dominant training practices. In this approach, the actor is facilitated to become their own teacher in an affirmative and productive creative exchange, where the nature of the exchange is made explicit. Rather than leaving the actor to manage negative feelings of fear, anxiety, blocks or failure, s/he is supported through explicit pedagogy to endure and sustain the habitual vulnerability necessary as part of her/his practice. By making their practice explicit as opposed to tacit, the transferable skills and dispositional attitudes of the hidden curriculum, such as recognising the value of fear, instinct and vulnerability, are facilitated. A female pedagogy works in joint experimentation to diagnose problems and facilitate solutions. The *via positiva* recognises that one might equally be motivated by what feels good and gives pleasure. The idea of 'no pain, no gain' and 'suffering for the art' fuels the melancholic assumption that depression is somehow noble and that happiness is vulgar.²⁷⁹ This idea can be challenged through a feminist affirmative politics. I was first alerted to this alternative position through the training of movement teacher Laura Marshall who derided 'the JCB approach to actor training', referencing J.C. Bamford demolition machinery as a metaphor for destructive learning, to favour learning through affirmation, pleasure and achievement.²⁸⁰ She asked actors to discover 'their sweet spot', meaning what felt pleasurable and to allow this to lead their impulses in training.²⁸¹ I have repeatedly observed female practitioner's teaching and directing from this position in field work. This shifts the focus to a positive economy of learning, where the actor, whilst still identifying their failure, views this in positive terms. By repositioning power as creative energy and pleasure as equal to suffering in learning, a female reorientation emerges. As Mark Evans has recently asked:

What value does pleasure in actor training and acting have? Can pleasure and discipline go hand in hand? Or is part of actor training learning to deal with discipline, setback and even failure? ²⁸²

²⁷⁹ Sarah Posman interview with Rosi Braidotti, (19.0613) <http://www.ny-web.be/transitzone/conversation-rosi-braidotti.html> [accessed 27.12.16].

²⁸⁰ Lorna Marshall, RCSSD, (25.02.11).

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Mark Evans, *The Actor Training Reader* (London & New York; Routledge, 2015), p.xxx.

The *via positiva* allows pleasure and discipline to operate beside each other and opens up the possibility of endurance and sustainability being an affirmative experience. I return to this learning approach in the conclusion to this thesis, where I consider what working from an affirmative position might offer education in its broadest context. In the final section of this chapter I consider the ways in which feminist acting pedagogy foregrounds the politics of the body.

The politics of the body: the positivity of difference

‘What is hidden by the neuter?’²⁸³

In the field of acting, where women are already notably absent in training lineages and in the industry, the issue of the neutered body in pedagogy becomes an urgent concern.²⁸⁴ Malague’s gendered substitution of *An Actress Prepares*, draws attention to the need to move beyond a ‘neutered’ position which perpetuates a male experience.²⁸⁵ Braidotti’s strategic essentialism urges that critical feminist theory return to the positivity of difference to recognise the particularity of the female body. She refers to strategic essentialism as ‘a new universal based on female specificity’ and suggests that we embrace our marginal status to become minoritarian, relocated into patterns of becoming, ‘a subject in the process of differing from others and within itself’.²⁸⁶ For Braidotti, sexual difference becomes an essential starting point for transformative practice. Difference happens through the process of differentiation as the body is always in relation to what it is not itself. Modalities of sexual differentiation are due to the specificity of particular bodies. This is the meaning of the positivity of difference as there are differences within a particular woman as well as between women. Aston and Harris note that any negotiation of difference is demanding and certainly should not be viewed naively. Differences cannot be dealt with ‘by listing them, embracing them

²⁸³ Irigaray, (1993), p.171.

²⁸⁴ Sherry Shapiro, *Pedagogy and the Politics of the Body: A Critical Praxis* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), p.94.

²⁸⁵ Malague, op.cit.

²⁸⁶ Braidotti, p.41.

celebrating them or remarking their proliferation'.²⁸⁷ Navigating difference is risky, often teetering on the edge of confrontation and collapse and yet, as Braidotti argues, it is vital for a sustainable future. In this section I examine how acting pedagogies work with notions of difference to enable a politically engaged learning process.

There is an apparent disconnect between the act of teaching an acting class, the affect of the gender dynamic, and the acknowledgement of gender in educational theory and scholarship. The gender dynamic influences every aspect of decision-making: what scripts might be best suited to the group; how to group successfully; and how to work with the individual and collective bodies in the room. The immediate impact of gender in the teaching of both acting and drama in Higher Education is striking. As explained in Chapter One, over the last five years most drama schools have moved to gender equality in recruitment, in spite of a three to one ratio of female to male applicants. In the university sector applications for drama degrees also reflect inequalities in gender. Referring to the UCAS conference presentation in 2014, Stephen Lacey asked that universities question the difference in participation between men and women. From 2009 – 2013 there were twice as many females to males applying, with between 7800-8,500 women compared to well under 4,000 male applicants.²⁸⁸ Such a gendered bias offers a strong position for the strategic essentialism of this study. It is evident that from an early point in their experience of learning some form of drama, females seem to be more attracted to the enabling 'knowledges' of the subject. Without detailed qualitative data we can only speculate on why such inequality is shown in the quantitative evidence. One conjecture is that the hidden curriculum, which develops knowledges perceived as being more female, such as empathy and vulnerability, is the reason for this preference. Another possibility is that, rather than it being the types of knowledge or way of thinking that attract females, it is the desire to perform and woman's position as object which is embedded in female consciousness and agency. This position of the double consciousness of

²⁸⁷ Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris, *Feminist Futures? :Theatre, Performance, Theory* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.12.

²⁸⁸ These statistics were posted by Mark Taylor-Batty on SCUDD <http://www.scudd.org.uk/2014/04/24/ucas-application-stats-04-14/> [accessed 24.04.14].

women as simultaneously 'being' and 'being seen' and the way that the female, like the actor, can be seen to be both object and subject, point to a female ontology of acting, which I develop in Chapter Three.²⁸⁹

In trying to identify why so many more females are attracted to the subject, one might also consider the gender of the teacher as a factor and the comparative dominance of female drama teachers working in the UK secondary school system. The gender of the teacher has an impact on the experience of the students and this has been most fully articulated by feminist scholars in relation to how women pay attention to difference in their pedagogy and are more likely to be reflexive. Esther Sullivan presents the idea that women are both inside ideology in their objectification and outside as 'not the woman' of dominant discourse. She posits that:

Such awareness exists in margins that provide a vantage from which to understand our differences that is our difference from ideological constructs and imperatives as well as the differences that constitute community and individual identities.²⁹⁰

Similarly, Braidotti's argument is that only by being minoritarian might we resist the fixed states of advanced capitalism. We are all relational in our understanding of ourselves, so that I compare and construct my difference to your situatedness and through this I question my own assumptions. Through this understanding, any notion of the idea of difference moves from a fact to an effect, to enable an enactive way of seeing and being which is always moving and never complete.²⁹¹ This way of coming to understand through the other tends to be theorised in acting through scientific paradigms rather than through feminist epistemologies. For example, Rebecca Loukes considers the intersection between scientific cognitive situatedness and actor training, focusing on cultural identity, but she does not acknowledge gender within this situatedness.²⁹² By continuing to neuter the

²⁸⁹ This idea has been mapped by feminist scholars through readings of Lacan. In particular through the work of Butler, Phelan, Rose, Braidotti and Diamond.

²⁹⁰ Esther Beth Sullivan cited by Ellen Donkin, *Upstaging Big Daddy: Directing Theatre as if Gender and Race Matter* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), p.28.

²⁹¹ Phillip Zarrilli, *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach after Stanislavski*. London & New York: Routledge, 2009), pp.46-63.

²⁹² Loukes in Zarrilli, pp. 233-238.

actor's body we fail to work with the rich possibilities that difference might allow. Working from the positivity of difference the politics of the actor's body becomes a central concern, where the female body might become a site of resistance. I now situate this approach within the tradition of critical pedagogy.

Scaffolding the space between: acting as critical pedagogy

As early as the end of the last century, pioneering work in Drama in Education (DIE) recognised that through constructs of play and role-playing, students could engage their bodies and minds in investigating themselves in society.²⁹³

Performance Studies also uses 'acting' as a form of critical pedagogy, however whilst the hidden curriculum of acting develops 'personal and social knowledge'²⁹⁴, 'dispositional qualities'²⁹⁵ and 'transferable skills'²⁹⁶, the political potential of actor training is rarely examined. At a time when the political position of the performer is increasingly seen to be an imperative,²⁹⁷ re-situating acting in this way can provide an alternative to outmoded ideas of acting as mimesis and to notions of professional servitude. Looking to educational models of critical pedagogy offers a context for this shift.

The idea that the learner might be 'empowered' through the process of learning to act is drawn from models of critical pedagogy, which place the notion of the self and the other, or in other words, relationships between identity and society as its central concern. Whilst I would argue that constructs of critical pedagogy are inherent in DIE, its origin is attributed to the pioneering work of Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire. In his concern for the oppression of illiterate groups Freire theorised how education should escape 'fill em up' structures, where students passively receive knowledge, and move towards a more critical and personalised approach to learning with the student as an active participant. Social philosopher, Jacques Rancière explores this position in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, where he describes a move away from 'the circle of powerlessness' to 'the circle of

²⁹³ Harriet Finlay-Johnson, *The Dramatic Method of Teaching* (Boston & New York: Ginn and Company, 1912).

²⁹⁴ Prior, pp. 91-92.

²⁹⁵ Murray, p.229.

²⁹⁶ Wangh, p.124.

²⁹⁷ Kapsali, p.104.

power', which emancipates students to teach themselves.²⁹⁸ A critical pedagogy allows us to critique oppressive power structures to activate alternative ways of being. Educationalist Henry Giroux, describes this process of learning as 'the process of appreciating and loving oneself', reflecting the affirmative learning I have previously considered.²⁹⁹ Students critique the mechanisms of power at work in language and behaviour to understand how oppressive marginal positions are constructed and to re-imagine the status quo. The negative view of 'the other' is challenged to enable empowerment where there is difference. Critical pedagogy's features can be summarised as: recognising that *how* you teach something is as important as *what* you teach; flattening power structures; individualised learning with a commitment to develop the individual's political, personal and social awareness; recognising the complexities of problems as opposed to seeking conclusions; taking notions of difference and particularity as productive sites for resistance.

Feminist educational theorists have criticised a number of aspects of critical pedagogy. They have commented on the neutering of gender, the heroic claims that fail to root theory in practice and the extent to which a recognition of 'difference' paradoxically strengthens the most privileged voices.³⁰⁰ Feminist pedagogy is a strand of critical pedagogy that confronts concerns of difference to foreground the position of women as both subjects and objects. It developed in the UK in the late 60s and 70s in response to the consciousness raising of the Women's Movement. As with feminist theory there are many different positions for feminist pedagogy, such as radical, socialist, black, postmodernist, liberal, and intersectional, but all use gender as a central tool for analysis. Women seek to challenge the validity of denying the importance of the personal experience in the classroom and, as previously explained, look at power both as a constraint but also as a possibility (not dichotomous but as mutually informing relations of contradiction). Feminist educationalist Sue Jackson points to the way that feminist pedagogy strives for egalitarian relationships in the classroom, trying to make all students feel valued

²⁹⁸ Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (Stanford, Carolina: University Press Stanford, 1991), p.15.

²⁹⁹ Henry Giroux, *Schooling for a Democracy: Critical Pedagogy in the Modern Age* (London: Routledge, 1989), p.189.

³⁰⁰ Katherine Weiler, *Feminist Engagements: Reading, Resisting and Revisioning Male Theorists in Education and Cultural Studies* (New York & London: Routledge, 2001).

as individuals and using their experience as a learning resource.³⁰¹ The reciprocity between teacher and student is inherent in the pedagogy of bell hooks, which she describes as an 'engaged pedagogy' that is 'more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy, for unlike these two teaching practices it empowers wellbeing'.³⁰² For hooks, the wellbeing and a shared enjoyment of the act of learning is crucial, so that teachers grow alongside their students and this offers another example of affirmative politics underpinning a feminist pedagogy. In order for this to happen there needs to be a step away from set and routine practice towards a more changeable and spontaneous response to the needs of the individuals in the moment. This requires both students and teachers to listen to each other and share in risk taking and in vulnerability. In this way, notions of power shift from domination to a creative and affirmative exchange based on pleasure as opposed to pain, and we are reminded of Morris's allusion to the 'female space' of this shared becoming. These features of shared creativity, reciprocity and relationality are central to the processes of joint experimentation in the pedagogy of acting and theatre-making.

However, the ideologies of critical and feminist pedagogies are driven by dialogic structures rather than through bodies. Performative pedagogy, which positions thinking as happening through the body, has developed as a field of research over the last decade alongside the establishment and growth of Performance Studies as a discipline. Elyse Pineau's scholarship recognises the intersections between these two fields as a fruitful site for liberatory practice and has coined the term Critical Performative Pedagogy (CPP).³⁰³ The social constructivist nature of learning is made explicit through close attention to the sociological and anthropological conditions for action which determine the way that people behave. Attention is given to the space between the dialectic, the moment of choice and by making this space explicit the learner comes to develop personal and social understanding. Identity and exploration of the self and other is explored through structures of role-play and improvisation, which become both

³⁰¹ Jackson, p.458.

³⁰² hooks, p.13.

³⁰³ Elyse Pineau, 'Pedagogy: Fleshing Out the Politics of Liberatory Education.' In Nathan Stucky and Cynthia Wimmer (eds.), *Teaching Performance Studies*. (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), pp41-54.

the content and the form for investigation. The body is a site for historical, political and ideological inscription and seen as a canvas for creating alternative possibilities through bodily play. Like forms of DIE and the liberatory practice of Boal,³⁰⁴ performative pedagogy enables unique insights through the body that often elude the disembodied, intellectual reflection.³⁰⁵ In many ways this is the knowledge of acting, but Pineau maintains a distinction between performative pedagogy and 'simply acting out' to argue that performance 'probes beyond the surface of observable behaviours' and that '[I]t is a shift from mimesis to kinesis'.³⁰⁶ This reductive view suggests that mimesis requires the actor to replicate real life without critical engagement and generalises acting to foreclose its political potential as a critical pedagogy. Performative pedagogy directly positions itself as such. It is concerned with issues of power which Pineau explains as 'politics, history, ideology, domination, resistance, appropriation, struggle, conflict, accommodation, subversion and contestation'.³⁰⁷ Unlike the anti-pedagogical strain in the field of acting, performance scholars openly call for more interdisciplinary research with education to help to further understand this pedagogy. John Warren cautions:

Without the sharing of our voices, the discussion of performative pedagogy will continue, but I suspect it will lack the unique quality that our scholarship can offer. Ultimately, performance studies connects the performance of identity to performance as a critical method: learning through the body thus gives rise to a learning about bodies producing meanings that, when brought together, are greater than either in isolation. My ultimate hope is that as the fields of performance and education become more interdisciplinary, we will pursue more linkages between our disciplines promoting a more complex and rich conversation for all.³⁰⁸

While performative pedagogy confidently asserts its critical and political ideology and the necessity for interdisciplinary scholarship, acting pedagogy is only

³⁰⁴ Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (London: Pluto Press, 1979).

³⁰⁵ Elyse Pineau, 'Teaching is Performance: Reconceptualising a Problematic Metaphor'. *American Educational Research Association*. 31(1), (1994), p.16.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.16.

³⁰⁷ Dwight Gonquergood, 'Poetics, Play, Process and Power: The Performative Turn in Anthropology', *Text and Performance Quarterly*. 9(1), (1989), p.84.

³⁰⁸ John Warren, 'The Body Politic, Performance and the Power of Enfleshment'. *Text and Performance Quarterly*. 19, (1999), p.266.

recently starting to mine its political potential. What acting enables is not only the analysis of the inscribed body, but also the phenomenological exploration of the 'lived body', as Elizabeth Grotz argues in her project *Volatile Bodies*. Grotz posits: 'Both physical and social dimensions must find their place in reconceptualising the body, not in opposition to each other but as necessarily interactive'.³⁰⁹ This beside thinking has influenced Mia Perry and Carmen Medina who place notions of embodiment alongside performative pedagogy as a site for research. They describe the lived body as 'the tool' and the social body as 'the text' to recognise the double nature of bodily learning.³¹⁰ The psychophysical knowledge of acting operates from this thinking beside position and a consideration of how the social body intersects with the lived body develops a critical acting pedagogy (CAP). Here the actor develops her/his relational awareness, both reflective (life body) and reflexive (social body), of how existence operates in the space between people, space or objects. In Chapters Four and Five, I look at the ways that women practitioners scaffold or structure this somatic 'thinking beside' in practice, to illustrate CAP. One area where acting has been openly conceived as a critical pedagogy is in considerations of feminist acting pedagogy.

Feminist acting pedagogy

Different types of feminisms are evident in women's approaches to theatre. Aston overviews the three dominant feminist positions as liberal, radical and materialist. Broadly speaking the liberal minimises difference between men and women and works for reform as opposed to revolt. The radical stresses the superiority of female attributes and favours a separate female system. The materialist stresses the conditions of production that shape race and class, whilst minimising biological differences between men and women.³¹¹ Any feminist acting pedagogy will be contingent on the type of feminism and the form/aesthetic/cultural context of performance. Aston's research considers how radical female counter-cultures have opened up the possibilities of a feminist acting technique, drawing on the

³⁰⁹ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Indiana University Press, 1994).

³¹⁰ Mia Perry and Carmen Medina, 'Embodiment and Performance in Pedagogy Research: Investigating the Possibility of the Body in Curriculum Experience', *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*. 27(3), (2011), p.63.

³¹¹ Aston, (1995), p.8.

international languages of myths, symbols and archetypes where approaches to knowing the body are central. She cites Leavitt's research into American radical feminist theatre groups in the 1980s and the emergence of a women's acting method 'based on women's emotional responses to their personal experiences such as memories, dreams and wishes'.³¹² In this context the workshopping of personal material, including areas of experience recognised as common to women, meant a radical break with traditional notions of character and mimesis, allowing the performer to be 'herself'.

Within other theatre-making processes women have shaped feminist acting pedagogies from a materialist position. Elizabeth Stroppel's research pursues feminist approaches to the Method, taking over one hundred testimonials from female practitioners about how they worked in the classroom as trainers and on the stage.³¹³ Stroppel identifies two main approaches: 'implicit', which relates to realistic performance, which has been created with an individual psychology and a social critique; and 'explicit', which exposes the constructedness of characters created. She explains that a feminist acting technique: '[V]isibly highlights differences of gender, race, sexual preferences and class as cultural representations rather than subsumes them as natural reflections of society'.³¹⁴ Feminist acting pedagogies seek out alternative approaches to traditional male practices. Both Aston and Stroppel express concern that training programmes which assume the masculine norm operate through extreme physical regimes and exercises which draw attention to bodily strength. Harris, speaking on 'Gender Issues in Drama/Theatre Departments' at a SCUDD conference in 1993, proposed that female students were 'abused' by training exercises, pointing to the way that some drama exercises, for example trust work where you have to support each other's weight, can create body anxiety for females.³¹⁵ Malague, in her feminist reframing of the American Method advises that any feminist acting technique

³¹² Ibid., p.67.

³¹³ Elizabeth Stroppel, 'Reconciling the Past and the Present', in David Krasner, *Method Acting Re-considered* (New York: St. Martins Press, 2000).

³¹⁴ Malague, p.106.

³¹⁵ Aston, (1994), p.101.

should stress the importance of developing emotional strength alongside physical strength.³¹⁶

American scholar and practitioner Rhonda Blair considers her approach to teaching actors within the context of a feminist pedagogy. She asks that director/teachers reimagine their authority to become 'honest leaders' and 'partners' in a process of liberatory learning and joint experimentation.³¹⁷ Contrary to her perception of conservatoire training as skills bound and resistant to change, a feminist acting pedagogy demands that stereotypical limitations are foregrounded and that damaging representations of women are challenged through critical frameworks. These frameworks, within a feminist context, make actors aware of the historical, political and social assumptions underlying and supporting, not only the representations they are playing, but also the methodologies they are working with. In this way new forms and approaches are possible and the actor can work with choice and from an affirmative position, which Blair explains as 'acting for herself' as opposed to for 'some other'.³¹⁸ She elucidates the difference between these states as the latter being based on anger and fear, 'for to react to something is to acknowledge its power by trying to control or destroy it', while the former is acting from the simple knowledge of being 'in oneself'. She states:

One resists the erasure of the self by knowing oneself and letting the work move out of that self. Ideally a feminist pedagogy helps the student develop a self-acceptance which allows her to be simultaneously critical and compassionate towards herself, her work and the world at large.³¹⁹

This reflexive, personal and social knowledge is located in the space between performance and performativity and within these two terms discourses compete, collide and converge.

In *Staging Femininities: Performance and Performativity*, Harris inhabits the space between these terms to show how in 'the clash between competing discourses...the possibility of political resistance, of active agency and of 'choice'

³¹⁶ Ibid., p.11.

³¹⁷ Rhonda Blair, 'Liberating the Young Actor: Feminist Pedagogy and Performance', *Theatre Topics*. 2(1), (1992), pp.13-23.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid., p.23.

occurs'.³²⁰ The slippage in this space between offers a fruitful site for feminist acting pedagogy that foregrounds gender and identity. Harris explains that the very act of being female and making performance means that the work will immediately have political resonance and that essentialism operates beside social materialism as a necessary doubling of the female condition. We exist in a biologically sexed body which performs gendered acts that have been socially constructed. She unpicks two constructs that are central to this study: she cites how, in *Bodies that Matter*, Judith Butler clarifies the space between the two terms and explains how performance is 'a bounded act' where the staging reflects the author's intentions, whilst performative acts 'precede, constrain and exceed' the performer'.³²¹ However, the nature of repetition, which produces these acts, also allows for choice and difference. In other words, rather than gender being imposed and fixed, we have the possibility of agency through the inevitable slippage of repetition, which Butler terms 'a hiatus in iteration'.³²² Secondly, that '[a]ny performance is already double, marked in quotation marks'.³²³ Bounded performance depends on how these quotation marks are viewed — as citation, iteration, mimesis, mimicry, representation or appropriation. For feminist theatre pedagogy this enables gender to be opened up as a site of political contest which foregrounds the processes of production. In Chapters Four and Five I consider the ways that feminist acting pedagogy operates in practice, moving between performance and performativity, acting for oneself or for some 'other' and how practitioners make this knowledge explicit to enable a critical acting pedagogy.

The three sections of this chapter explore ideas about acting pedagogy from a feminist perspective to foreground its political potential. When we adopt a gendered position to consider the underpinning ideology, the foundational pedagogic practices and the politics of the body, we can reconsider acting as developmental pedagogy, concerned with notions of identity and power. Whilst training discourses increasingly turn to intersections with science to advance thinking, detailed examination of educational practice is rarely considered. The

³²⁰ Geraldine Harris, *Staging Femininities. Performance and Performativity* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.173.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, p.74.

³²² Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.220.

³²³ *Ibid.*, p.77.

feminist interventions I have examined re-orientate attention to the hidden curriculum and explore the value of approaching learning to act from a minoritarian position. They open up alternatives to traditionally accepted pedagogies to propose fluid and liminal relationships to power structures, working with an affirmative politics where the experience of failing is positively supported. I propose that this enables a critical acting pedagogy (CAP), which transcends outmoded notions of mimesis to reimagine the actor as ‘cultural worker’.³²⁴ Building on Perry and Medina’s research, this positions acting as a holistic learning experience, which is simultaneously embodied and performative.³²⁵ The besidene-ness of this learning, where reflective and reflexive thinking operate together through an integrated body-mind, offers valuable insights for pedagogy in its broadest context and in the Conclusion I pursue this idea. In the next part of the thesis I turn to practice and examine CAP, the hidden curriculum and the *via positiva* through the specific approaches of female practitioners teaching/directing actors in training classes and in rehearsal. Using the eight-point structure developed in response to the research of Milde and Thorpe,³²⁶ I focus on the moments of interaction between teacher/director and actor to consider *how* the liminal space between (reflective/reflexive, self/other, subject/object, seeing/being) is scaffolded. However, I am first compelled to ask a more radical question. Can acting itself be framed as a female ontology?

³²⁴ Kapsali, p.104.

³²⁵ Perry and Medina, p.63.

³²⁶ This structure is explained pp.55-56.

Chapter Three

A Female Ontology of Acting: Being, Seeing and Feeling

In the creative process there is the father, the author of the play; the mother, the actor pregnant with the part; and the child, the role to be born.
³²⁷

In the creative process there is *he*, the husband (the author). There is *she*, the wife, (the actor or actress pregnant with the role, who receives the author's seed, the kernel of his work). There is *the fruit, the child* (the role as it is being created). ³²⁸

Stanislavski's familial metaphor for the creative process of acting provides an appropriate starting point for theorising acting as a female ontology. By ontology I mean the nature and relations of being and I speculate that acting has many aspects associated with notions of female-ness. Stanislavski presents the actor as the mother who gives birth to the role. The differences between the original and most recent translation illustrates the tendency to unsex the female body in acting. Benedetti's translation robs the original of the particularity of the female sexed state by suggesting that the actor, as a receptacle for a role, can be either male or female whilst maintaining the pronoun '*she*'. This metaphor jars in its apparent concern to ensure inclusivity whilst undermining the potential that a female sexed perspective might afford. Hapgood's original translation, where Stanislavski indicates the processes of acting as a female domain, is the starting point for this enquiry which seeks to understand why, when women continue to be marginalised in the industry, there remains a strong female bias towards acting. The chapter questions the ways in which the female body might become a positive difference when learning to act as well as what a gendered perspective on the personal and social knowledge of acting might afford. Furthermore, what might a consideration of acting in conversation with feminist theories offer the field? In my project to map a female genealogy of acting I work from a position that feminist scholar

³²⁷ Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. Elizabeth Hapgood (London & Tonbridge: Geoffrey Bles, 1937), p. 312.

³²⁸ Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work*, trans. Jean Benedetti (London & New York: Routledge, 2008), p.344

Gayatri Spivak terms 'strategic essentialism'.³²⁹ While I recognise that such feminism has been seen to operate 'between complicity and critique',³³⁰ arguments about essentialism become redundant in light of developed scientific understanding of the vital materialism of bodies. Braidotti explains that biological materialism has moved beyond the historical materialism of Simone de Beauvoir to recognise that bodies are not only embedded and embodied, but are self organising and vital.³³¹ If one's sexualised body determines one's power and the brain is part of the body, then the brain is also sexed. Thus the sexed body/brain experiences and interacts with others from its particular position. This does not mean that female experience can be generalised, or that the female body has somehow moved beyond social inscription. Notions of sexuality and gender are always in a state of becoming, as all experience is relationally constructed and impossible to predict or pin down. In this way all bodies have the potential to resist foreclosing structures as bodily components are in constant flux. There are differences between women and within every woman. However, looking to the specificity of the female sexed state allows us to mine its alternative knowledge, which Braidotti refers to as 'the positivity of difference'.³³² This becomes particularly necessary when discourse in actor training tends to neuter gender and assumes the male 'I'. From this position I consider how being female, which is a disadvantage in terms of gaining entry to actor training and employment, might be an advantage in developing the necessary core skills of acting.

Redirecting attention to women's practices in the pedagogy of theatre-making provokes the radical question: what if acting is a female knowledge? Responding to this question I use the term 'female' to mean the sexed body and 'feminine' as a male language construction, negatively produced to position woman as 'other' than man. In this way 'feminine' is a way to describe gender, which is seen through repeated actions interpreted as traits that are socially inscribed on the body. Woman is not 'other' because she has an 'other' essence, but

³²⁹ Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in Nelson, C and Grossberg, L. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Basingstoke, Macmillan Education, 1988), pp.271-313.

³³⁰ Geraldine Harris, *Staging Femininities: Performance and Performativity* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.19.

³³¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Vintage Books, 1997).

³³² Rosi Braidotti, *By Way of Nomadism* (New York & Chichester : Colombia University Press, 1994), p.161.

because the definition produces her as other. In this way a woman's 'being' is an effect of division and concepts of doubling, division and duality become central to this argument. Acting requires a process of doubling and this aspect of the female condition is interrogated through poststructural feminist theories. Eve Sedgwick's double thinking, which she terms 'thinking beside' underpins my approach.³³³ The double consciousness necessary in acting necessitates a practice of thinking beside and this offers an alternative to dualistic knowledge construction that is particularly pertinent to the practices of acting, which are intimately related to a binary system of self/other, inner/outer, mind/body.

In this study of theatre-making pedagogy my focus is the 'hidden curriculum of acting',³³⁴ which enables the development of what Simon Murray refers to as 'dispositional attitudes'³³⁵ and what Steven Wanh terms 'transferable skills'.³³⁶ This personal and social knowledge was articulated in interview by Shona Morris, former Head of Acting at Drama Centre, as 'learning how to be, how to see and how to feel'.³³⁷ Morris identified these three strands as the core learning that underpins skills acquisition. In this chapter, I consider each of these acting knowledges from a feminist perspective to speculate on the female disposition for acting. The essential doubling which acting necessitates in 'being', 'seeing' and 'feeling', is considered in relation to notions of 'doubling' as a female domain. From this position certain phallogentric constructs of acting might be resisted. In the section, 'Being: the female space of acting', I consider how we might understand the idea of female space in relation to acting. What might a female space be? When we consider the female space as liminal and minoritarian, enabling creative and transformative production, we can recognise this space as a necessary condition of acting. In 'Seeing: female perception and double vision in acting', notions of female visibility are seen to enable the double gesture of performance and performativity which allows for the double consciousness necessary in acting. In the final section, 'Feeling: force and fragility in acting', states

³³³ I refer to this in the introduction to this thesis. Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003).

³³⁴ I explain my understanding of this term and how it relates to acting in Chapter Two.

³³⁵ Murray, p. 231.

³³⁶ Wanh, p.139.

³³⁷ Shona Morris, interviewed at Drama Centre, London, (01.11.13).

of excessive emotion, which have been used to subjugate women, are privileged in the economy of acting. Feminist theorists have re-orientated the agency of the female body to situate notions of doubling, hysteria and vulnerability as productive sites for feminist protest. By weaving together certain strands of thinking to emerge since the 1970s, we can recognise a female ontology of acting, which offers an alternative to the perpetual male 'I' assumed in training discourses.

Being: the female space of acting

Stanislavski's metaphor for acting situates the actor as female, labouring in the production of phallogentric truth. It is interesting to note that other male twentieth-century acting pedagogues have similarly alluded to acting as a female domain. The Artistic Director of Polish company Gardzienice, Wlodimir Staniewski, asserts,

Real 'acting out' occurs when the man is able to break through the limitations of his male conditions and assumptions to reach the secret and the enigma of the female body. Of course you cannot get it without identifying with the female soul and vice versa.³³⁸

We can presume that 'real acting out' means finding some form of liberation. Staniewski attributes this 'old' knowledge to ancient Greek and Eastern theatre traditions where, by playing a woman, the (male) actor acquires 'knowledge about what you have broken through'.³³⁹ Apart from the normative male 'I' assumed in this statement, Staniewski's provocation prompts the questions: What specific knowledge has a man 'broken through' when he plays a female? What is the 'secret' or the 'enigma' of the female body? How do we identify with the 'female soul'? Why should a man performing female be more revelatory than a female performing female? Surely any woman asked to perform female would ask 'What female?' Erica Munk, responding to the International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA) conference, 'The Female Role and its Representation on Stage in Various

³³⁸ Wlodimir Staniewski and Alison Hodge, *Hidden Territories: The Theatre of Gardzienice* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), p.97.

³³⁹ Ibid.

Cultures', asks similar questions.³⁴⁰ Her frustration centers on the way in which constructs of 'female' were used as a vehicle for exploring technique for male actors. At the conference, Eugenio Barba called on the actor to harness both animus and anima energy, without any discussion of what anima energy might be, or due consideration given to the implications of codified female representation. Munk concludes, 'When men are securely in their power they will play woman's roles, create the very idea of womanhood and, smugly tap into feminine energy whilst refusing to ask women to use it'.³⁴¹ In considering what the 'secret' or the 'enigma' of the female body' might be, or what 'feminine energy' might refer to in an acting practice, it seems appropriate to examine these terms via feminist critical theories. This approach is necessary in order to redress the balance and find appropriate mechanisms to understand Staniewski's perspective from a female position.

Stanislavski's metaphor locates 'enigma' as female reproduction. When he presents the actor as the mother, 'pregnant' with the part, he recalls the Platonic space of the 'chora' or 'receptacle' as one of the three forms of creative construction of the cosmos.³⁴² In *Timaeus*, Plato describes the making of worlds in familial terms: the father derives the ideas for shaping the world; the mother holds the unformed material; the son forms these ideas in the material world. This holding ground is a liminal and changeable space and is described as female. It is beyond visibility, materiality or intelligibility:

For the moment we must reflect on three kinds: that which comes to be, that in which it comes to be and that from which, by being made in its likeness what comes to be is born. Indeed we should liken the recipient to the mother, that from which to the father and what they produce between them to their offspring.³⁴³

Plato's analogy for cosmic creation and Stanislavski's creative creation of the role both establish a womb-like space (the chora) as a maternal place of becoming or transformation. Feminist theorists have, in varied and specific ways, drawn upon

³⁴⁰ Erica Munk, 'The Rights of Women', *Performing Arts Journal*, 10(2), (1986).

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.42.

³⁴² Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* (London: Penguin Classics, 2008).

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.41.

the biological condition of the female sexed body and its reproductive capacity, as a way to reclaim original female creative power and to challenge male hegemony.³⁴⁴ Other feminists challenge positions of gynocentric reductionism as they perpetuate the inevitable divide and rule of phallogentrism. Indeed, Plato and Stanislavski situate the female space as receptacle for male original truth. In the Stanislavski metaphor, the mother/wife/actor labours to reproduce the child/role of the playwright father.

Post-structural feminist theories challenge male Western philosophical and psychological thinking, which positions women as receptacle, 'other' and 'lack' of being man. Luce Irigaray's challenge to the idea of the male original referent, which she calls the 'Law of the Father',³⁴⁵ is particularly pertinent to this argument. In *Plato's Hystera*, she takes the metaphor of Plato's Cave in Book 4 of *The Republic* and re-works it through the metonymy of a womb-theatre.³⁴⁶ Plato's Cave presents man as imprisoned by viewing illusory and worldly objects as reality, when they are in fact re-presentations which keep him from seeing the Truth. Plato's prisoners are chained and can only look in one direction where they watch moving images projected on the wall in front of them. They are not aware that these images are shadow projections, produced by others manipulating objects behind them. The duplicity of mimesis holds man back from the light of Truth, which the prisoners only experience when they leave the cave. Irigaray re-orientates attention from this Truth to the complexities of mimetic production within the womb cave. She makes the implicit birth metaphors explicit and presents the womb cave as a fully operational theatre, not as a passive vessel of male seed, essentialising female maternity and nurturance, but as a site of material production. In this cave, as in theatre, the mode of production is hidden and everything is reflected and distorted back on itself, 'It will turn your head, set you walking on your hands'.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁴ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*. (Cornell University Press, 1985).
Helene Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', The University Chicago Press. *Signs*, 1(4), (1976), p.881.

³⁴⁵ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One* (Cornell University Press, 1985).

³⁴⁶ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp.243-364.

³⁴⁷ Irigaray, p.244.

Elin Diamond, in her insightful reading of Irigaray's womb-theatre in *Unmaking Mimesis*, considers it to be vital for feminist theory and performance because it dismantles notions of male original truth and in doing so shatters the idea that mimesis has a true referent.³⁴⁸ She states: 'If the maternal womb is a theatre, then ideas of essence, truth, origin are continually displaced onto questions of material relations and operations'.³⁴⁹ In this womb theatre no original is possible, as what the prisoners see projected on the wall is already mimicry and so a representation of repetition. Irigaray explains: 'Everything is acted out between rehearsal and performance, repetition and representation or reproduction'.³⁵⁰ In this way Irigaray playfully returns Platonic philosophy to its female origins and by asserting the 'non-truth of truth' she presents a womb theatre that delivers 'fake offspring'³⁵¹ where 'philosophic man discovers that, horrifically, mother is theatre'.³⁵² It is interesting to consider Irigaray's feminist construct of womb theatre and fake offspring against Stanislavski's metaphor of the pregnant actor giving birth to the role. Understanding the space of 'the secret enigma' (womb, chora) from an Irigarayan perspective emancipates the female body from serving a male originary as there is no original, only states of becoming. Her womb theatre also opens up the possibility that this space might be a political weapon where 'mimesis imposed' becomes 'mimicry unleashed'.³⁵³ Later in this chapter I will consider the ways that women practitioners enable the actor to explore the politics of representation as they labour and give birth to the role.

Both self and other: acting and being female

Another way to consider the female 'enigma' and what it might mean for acting is through a consideration of the dual position of the female as both self and other. Constructs of reproduction, doubling and duplicity are embedded in notions of female identity where twentieth-century psychoanalysis has situated the female self as 'other'. Froma Zeitlin, looking at the origin of the Greek theatre form,

³⁴⁸ Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. x-xiii.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.xii.

³⁵⁰ Irigaray, p.247.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.xi

³⁵² Diamond, p.xi.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

identifies the notion of 'self' as male, with woman as 'other' or 'lack'.³⁵⁴ She makes the point that women's function in theatre is to show a resistance to the masculine order as 'catalysts, agents, instruments, blockers, spoilers, destroyers'.³⁵⁵ Zeitlin proposes that the architectural space, the plot and the mimesis of acting might find their cultural referent, in the traits that society most associates with the feminine domain.³⁵⁶ She refers to the way that, like the doubling constructs of theatre, the female operates from a marginal position as other. The idea of playing double, acquiring presence through absence and existing with a double consciousness of being and being seen, all tropes that have been applied to the state of being woman, is particularly pertinent to acting.

At this point it is useful to consider the different ways that notions of the female self have been articulated since the 1970s, when feminist theory, in its attempt to resist patriarchal structures, moved from focusing on biological difference to intersect with psychoanalytic and post-structuralist theories of identity.³⁵⁷ The feminism emerging in the 1970s was seen as either 'cultural' or 'gynocentric', moving from the sexed term 'female' to 'feminine', which assumed that women operate in categories of sexual difference. In the 1980s the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan proved useful to feminists who had rejected Freud's biological determinism. In particular, some found Lacan's reading of gender formation as a socio-psychological construction a more productive concept to work with. Feminist readings of Lacan, in particular his constructs of the real, the imaginary and the symbolic, can be usefully applied to examinations of the double consciousness of acting in relation to the female condition. As such, it is first necessary to outline certain constructs.

Lacan reworked Freud's ideas about castration and the Oedipal complex to propose a difference between the penis as an organ, and the phallus as a signifier of power. The gendered subject is determined by the 'lack of the phallus', which defines sex and imposes the symbolic. The phallus signifies power, which the

³⁵⁴ Froma Zeitlin, 'Playing the Other: Theatre, Theatricality and the Feminine in Greek Drama' in *Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p.346.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., p.347.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., p.349.

³⁵⁷ Sarah Edge, *Images and the Self: Semiotic Chora in Recent Postfeminist Theory*, (2000) Formations seminar paper, [accessed 20.11.13].

female is seen to lack. Lacan's mirror stage highlights how development is based on specular rather than spoken relationships.³⁵⁸ During the mirror stage a child looks in the mirror and misrecognises the image of themselves as themselves, structuring all further images as a projected reality, which Lacan terms - the imaginary. The ego is created through the narcissistic recognition of one's own appearance to others. Key to visual culture, this specular awareness and sense of otherness, provokes the child to miss the feeling of oneness with the mother and to desire the 'jouissance' of sexual gratification. Language formation, which is termed the symbolic, is the way for the child to communicate their desire for the phallus and their recognition of female as lack — the lack of the phallus and the anxiety of losing 'jouissance'. Therefore Lacan's comment 'There is no such thing as woman' expresses the way that 'woman' is constructed through lack.³⁵⁹ The Lacanian term the real is the final state of being; it refers to a sort of primordial unconscious — a waiting to become, which could be seen to reflect the chora. From this perspective any sense of difference, or 'other', only exists within the hierarchy of values that produces it and woman is constructed purely through the negative economies of not being a man and what has been lost.

Feminist theorists find ways to destabilise Lacan's gender construction to problematise the female in the subjective construction of self. For example, in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray transforms the mirror into a political weapon and denounces the specular reflection status imposed on women by men. Jacqueline Rose, theorising Lacan's symbolic, argues that there is no feminine outside of language. If woman is defined as other, it is because the feminine is constituted as a division in language, which produces the feminine as its negative referent.³⁶⁰ Woman is not other because she has another essence, but because the definition produces her as other and feminine is a term that only exists within the construction of the symbolic order. Elizabeth Grosz sees in the construction of

³⁵⁸ Jacques Lacan, 'Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function, As Revealed in Psychoanalytical Experience' (1949) in *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002).

³⁵⁹ Jacques Lacan, 'Télévision', (1973) in *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, ed. Joan Copjec, trans. Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson, (New York: Norton, 1990), p.60.

³⁶⁰ Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality and the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986).

women as 'lack of the lack',³⁶¹ a foundational state of femaleness. She asks the question: 'Are women not partly the unconscious?' and presents Freud and Lacan's unconscious as a metaphor for the female, as what is repressed and intolerable to the social order.³⁶² These ideas offer fertile ground for theorising the female domain of acting and I return to them later in the thesis. At this point, Julia Kristeva's interpretation of the 'semiotic chora', in relation to Lacan's imaginary, symbolic and real, locates the female space as 'the poetic in-between' and her ideas are particularly pertinent to this argument. Kristeva identifies a construct of doubling which is crucial for the double consciousness of acting.

Doubling and division in acting: the poetic in-between, the relational and vital materialism

It is interesting to note the way the in-between space, whether explained through myth, post-structural linguistic constructions or through matter is repeatedly theorised as a politically transformative female domain. The labour of acting is, by its very nature, hidden. The actor hides the work of her craft so that conscious practice appears unconscious. She exists in the space between the semiotic, what is hidden beneath language, and the symbolic, language and text. Meaning is created in the space between what is said and what is meant and here the actor's imagination and her felt sense reside. Kristeva viewed feminist essentialism as problematic in its construction of alternative myths which served to perpetuate inequality.³⁶³ However, her adoption of Plato's 'chora' as a 'semiotic chora' and a female space of becoming, is compelling when speculating on the female space of acting. Kristeva challenges Lacan's symbolic as a monolithic structure and explains the semiotic as what is beneath language, with the two, semiotic and symbolic, relying on each other to find meaning 'beside',³⁶⁴ rather than being perceived as separate. For her, the semiotic is 'indifferent to language, enigmatic, and feminine... a rhythmic space, irreducible to an intelligible verbal translation;

³⁶¹ Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* (London & New York: Routledge, 1990), p.55.

³⁶² Ibid., p.171.

³⁶³ Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time' in *The Kristeva Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp.187-210.

³⁶⁴ Sedgwick, op.cit.

musical, anterior to judgment'.³⁶⁵ Might this 'enigmatic' and poetic space explain the female 'enigma' that Staniewski identified as necessary for acting? Kristeva situates the semiotic in the realm of Plato's 'maternal',³⁶⁶ as the mediating space with 'rhythms, which cannot be comprehended or catalogued by a symbolic system. In the chora, a vertiginous motility and movement prevent anything from being separate from anything else'.³⁶⁷ In this motility we might recognise the transformative and constantly relational state of becoming for the actor, who shifts between states of double consciousness and divided being. The actor experiences subjectively, accessing her interior world of imagination, emotion and awareness, which I term her inner listening or life body and which Kristeva calls the semiotic. She simultaneously experiences objectively with her outer listening or social body, responding to the symbolic. Kristeva's interpretation of Plato's 'semiotic chora' presents this female space as the voice of the poetic text, where language is seen as the pre-verbal unconscious.³⁶⁸ She asks the question:

Doesn't the feminine prefer, on the contrary "the poetic regions of thought," where meaning is rooted in the world of the senses, where representations of words run alongside representations of things and where ideas give way to instinctual drives?³⁶⁹

For Kristeva the semiotic operates beside the symbolic as a bodily felt sense where the pre-symbolic is always present. The female semiotic chora is a space of motility where everything is in relation to each other, constantly re-shaping a process of becoming. From this perspective, the double consciousness of acting — semiotic beside symbolic, life body beside social body, inner listening beside outer listening — can be seen to be a female domain.

Feminist scholars have critiqued such arguments where the semiotic is identified as a female space and is placed apart from language. Jacqueline Rose argues that this idea reduces the female and femininity to the hidden underside of

³⁶⁵ Julia Kristeva cited by Antonia Caverrero, *For More Than One Voice: Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (USA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p.135.

³⁶⁶ Plato, op.cit.

³⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 134.

³⁶⁸ Julia Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 1985), p.94.

³⁶⁹ Julia Kristeva, 'Is There a Feminine Genius?' *Critical Inquiry*, 30(3), (2004), p.501.

culture, which cannot be managed or is idealised. She suggests that the essentialising of the semiotic is one of the most problematic aspects of Kristeva's work, as it doesn't allow the basis for a political identity.³⁷⁰ In other words, women are only given a relational identity which is a realm to which they have always been confined. Kristeva's essay 'Women's Time',³⁷¹ responds to this concern with a direct comment on feminism, connecting the development of feminist politics with an adherence to notions of relational space and time: the linear time of history; cyclical time of repetition and the monumental time of eternity. She identifies the female experience of menstruation and maternity as breaking with linear time, suggesting that 'the rhythm of renewal' is set against the 'linear time of the realisation of destiny'.³⁷² It is important to note that acting processes operate in this rhythm of renewal, with repetition through practice, rehearsal and repeated performances that requires a more cyclical approach to time. Kristeva's essay calls for a new wave of feminism to move beyond the essentialising power play, where a relational difference continues to be reduced to dialectic arguments, to look towards complex multilayered identities and individualism, so that feminism might acquire a 'sort of separate vigilance' in its approach.³⁷³ In these terms we might find a way of critiquing the socio-symbolic nature of signs to empower men and women to rethink their views on what it is to be masculine and feminine and to embrace the positivity of difference. Kristeva is not identifying women as 'being' the semiotic chora, but proposing that feminists use the construct strategically to signify sexual difference, where the metaphysics of identity and difference is not based on one sex or race or class as a rival to another. In this way we recognise that we are simultaneously both the self and the other.

Turning aside from philosophical and linguistic readings of the female space, feminist thinking about the operational body offers us alternative constructs to consider its doubling. Judith Butler uses the actor as a metaphor for explaining gender formation as repeated actions through imposed social structures:

³⁷⁰ Rose, p.154.

³⁷¹ Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time' in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986)

³⁷² Kristeva, p.502.

³⁷³ McAfee, p.98.

Actors are always already on the stage, within the terms of the performance. Just as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just as a play requires both text and interpretation, so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts its interpretations within the confines of already existing directives.³⁷⁴

Butler challenges the normative readings of 'woman as other' and 'man as subject' as missing the point that these categories are effects of institutions and practices, with multiple and diffuse points of origin. For Butler, gender is relational and contextual and is understood differently depending on how power is articulated. From this perspective, women can't *be* because they are the relation of difference, neither the subject or the other, but simultaneously exist as both. Recent feminist ideas about the relational construction of identity consider phenomenological theory of embodiment beside Marxist and post-structuralist re-elaborations of the intersection between bodies and power. The idea that identity is created through relational interaction opens up a politically empowering space for female bodies to move beyond ideas of 'being as lack' or 'in relation to' towards a positivity of difference, constantly in a state of becoming and 'in relation with'. This allows for a non-unitary image of a multi-layered subject. For Rosi Braidotti, 'the re-location of difference and of the self-other relation'³⁷⁵ is central to her nomadic theory and locates the in-between space as one of potential empowerment. In 'Feminist Transpositions' she elaborates on the way that postmodern theories of feminism stress the in-between state of becoming, the hybridity, transitional and nomadic process.³⁷⁶ She provokes, 'If the only constant in the third millennium is change, then the challenge lies in how to think about processes rather than concepts'.³⁷⁷ Braidotti looks towards the post-human and calls for feminist theory to move beyond the limitations of poststructuralist linguistic critique to return to the body in what she terms 'vital materialism'.³⁷⁸ Bio-literate feminists, such as Donna

³⁷⁴ Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Construction: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory' in Sue-Ellen Case, *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre* (London & USA: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), p.277.

³⁷⁵ Braidotti, p.15.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., pp.13-16.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., p.15.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., p.16.

Haraway,³⁷⁹ fight matter with matter to think about 'what new kinds of bodies and gender systems are being constructed right now'.³⁸⁰ From this perspective the body and the self is always in motion, changing moment to moment in relation to others and, internally, in relation to its own material components.

Since the 1970s feminist critical theory has questioned what might constitute a female space. When considering how these ideas intersect with acting we can point to three constituent features. Firstly, that through ideas of female reproduction we can recognise the metaphor of becoming, transformation and productivity which is so pertinent for acting. Secondly, that constructs of doubling, division and lack, identified in linguistic, psychoanalytic and psycho-social constructions of the feminine are essential in enabling the double consciousness of acting. And finally, that the in-between, liminal and relational female space allows us to move beyond universalised notions of identity to recognise the positivity of difference. In these spaces of motility and doubling we might find the female 'enigma' that Staniewski is drawn to and the female 'energy' that Barba deems to be essential for the actor. From this perspective the sexed and particular female body becomes a positive advantage in acting. This argument is furthered through a consideration of constructs of female visuality in acting.

Seeing: female perception and double vision in acting

The proposition that one sees oneself in terms of the other and the other in terms of oneself is itself differently marked according to men and women.
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Phelan recognises that in the scopic relational exchange, women operate from a position of unequal visuality. The objectification of the female body positions women as both discursive object and embodied, historically located subject. The ideological forces of capitalism ensure that 'women, signs, goods, all pass from one man to another'.³⁸² Thus, the woman's body becomes a focal point for the

³⁷⁹ Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborg's and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London & New York: Routledge, 1991), pp.127-149.

³⁸⁰ Braidotti, p.65.

³⁸¹ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), p.17.

³⁸² Irigaray, p.107.

construction of an identity, with the woman 'being-as-object'. This objectification of women can find parallels in all human beings who are dehumanised for the sake of another. Females are conditioned to act themselves as an aspect of their gendered socio-symbolic position and to perform what Rebecca Schneider, pointing to Irigaray's ideas about female mimicry, describes as a 'double gesture'.³⁸³ Female actors, acting teachers and directors operate from the double awareness of the female body as simultaneously subject and object. This doubling claims a space for critical enquiry, where the politics of the female body can be explored. In theatre, the actor's body is objectified both as a signifying element in a dramatic fiction and as a sign system itself where gestures, pace and voice are referents for the performer and the audience. Diamond explains that this sign system is governed by a particular apparatus, 'usually owned and operated by men for the pleasure of a viewing public, whose major wage earners are male'.³⁸⁴ As a result, the way that teachers and directors guide actors and audiences to experience this being-as-object becomes an important consideration. Woman is culturally and socially conditioned to treat herself as an object to be evaluated and to perform her femininity and this is magnified in jobs with an aspectual capacity, such as acting, where appearance is part of employment conditions. Simone de Beauvoir presents the female as doubled, 'instead of coinciding exactly with herself, she now begins to exist *outside*'.³⁸⁵ John Berger echoed this view twenty years later: 'A Woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself... From earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually'.³⁸⁶ For the actress, the doubled state of being both subject and object becomes doubled again when performing a role and this demands a developed reflexive awareness, which acting teachers and directors scaffold in fascinating ways. Because the process of acting requires that actors exist in the double state of being and being seen, being female can be seen to be a positive advantage. Feminist critical theories look to challenge this unequally gendered visibility and these ideas enable the female actor or teacher/director to

³⁸³ Rebecca Schneider cited by Geraldine Harris, *Staging Femininities: Performance and Performativity* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.19.

³⁸⁴ Diamond, p.52.

³⁸⁵ de Beauvoir, p. 373.

³⁸⁶ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972), p.46.

not only use the knowledge of her sex to her advantage, but to look for ways to resist this inequity.

Disrupting scopic regimes: the reciprocal gaze

One of the earliest and most cited examples of femininity being examined as a construct, was articulated in 1929 by psychologist Joan Riviere in 'Womanliness as a Masquerade'.³⁸⁷ Riviere put forward the idea that intellectual American women were driven by Oedipal rivalry and castration fantasies and had to hide their masculinity in order to protect themselves and to perform their womanliness with flirtation. She explained:

Womanliness could be therefore assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to hide the reprisals expected if she were found to possess it.³⁸⁸

This idea that the female condition necessitates masking, disguising, or hiding, perpetuates the notion of the female as other. Steven Heath suggests that the female state requires that women become actresses, citing Nietzsche, '[D]o they [women] not have to be first of all and above all else actresses? ...they "put on something" even when they take off everything... woman is so artistic'.³⁸⁹ We are reminded of the Lacanian idea of 'woman' appearing through disappearing and only coming into being as the negative referent. Woman is always lacking what she desires (the phallus), and always wanting, so division is the condition of her subjectivity and therefore her identity is uncertain. From this perspective woman's duality, her mask and her hidden desire can be seen to make her dangerous and disguised. As Zeitlin observes, this female position is constantly represented in Greek drama where women are 'blockers, spoilers, destroyers'.³⁹⁰ Her duality results in an assumption or performance of femininity, whilst experiencing a fundamental alienation in her being. In Lacanian terms, the subject's division in the symbolic means that they are subjectively alienated which becomes a feature of

³⁸⁷ Joan Riviere, 'Womanliness as a Masquerade' in *Formations of Fantasy*, eds. Victor Burgin, James Donald, Cora Kaplan (London & New York: Routledge, 1986).

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.37.

³⁸⁹ Steven Heath, 'Joan Riviere and The Masquerade' in *Formations of Fantasy*, eds. Victor Burgin, James Donald, Cora Kaplan (London & New York: Routledge, 1986), pp.45-61.

³⁹⁰ Zeitlin, *op.cit.*

the female condition. However, when viewed with the 'positivity of difference'³⁹¹ this female alienation can be seen as a valuable knowledge, which Kristeva described as kind of 'separate vigilance'.³⁹² It allows for a heightened reflexive awareness which is necessary in acting.

I have previously considered some of the ways that feminist critical theorists have destabilised the male 'I'/eye of Freudian or Lacanian gender formation, where woman comes into being through lack and 'othering'. Feminist theatre scholar Harris, in response to Judith Butler's discussion of drag and performativity, reminds us that femininity is always drag, even when performed by a woman, because masculinity is seen as the original.³⁹³ When the self only comes into being through being seen by the other and that visibility is unequal, how can feminist approaches disrupt scopic regimes? A Butlerian reading of Lacan challenges the way that the female has been constructed through negation to assert the powerful potential of the female sexed state. In 'Lacan, Riviere and the strategies of the Masquerade', Butler points to the way that through the performance of the masquerade, power is wielded by the female position of not having, as the female appears 'to be' the phallus. She explains:

By claiming that the Other that lacks the Phallus is the one that is the Phallus Lacan clearly suggests that power is wielded by this feminine position of not having, that the masculine subject who "has" the Phallus requires this Other to confirm and, hence, be the Phallus in its "extended" sense.³⁹⁴

For Butler, all being is about the play of appearances and she defines the masquerade as the performative production of sexual ontology, appearing as being.³⁹⁵ However, appearing as being remains unequally biased towards males. Shapiro positions the notion of 'seeing' as 'knowing', within a male economy,

³⁹¹ Braidotti, op.cit.

³⁹² Kristeva, op.cit.

³⁹³ Harris, p.59.

³⁹⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York & London: Routledge, 2007), p.60.

³⁹⁵ Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Construction: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory' in Sue-Ellen Case, *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre* (London and USA: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), p.277.

linking the idea of seeing to a masculine form of ownership.³⁹⁶ As one is unable to see oneself, one exists through the eyes of the other and under these conditions the imaginary vision of ourselves as we are perceived by the other, constructs our sense of subjective self. The representational self is unequal in terms of power and dependent on sex, age, class and ethnicity. For the actor, learning how to see oneself through the other is central to developing personal and social knowledge. In *Unmarked*, Phelan presents the unequal position of the performer as essentially female:

As a description of the power relationships operative in many forms of performance Foucault's observations suggest the degree to which the silent spectator dominates and controls the exchange. (As Dustin Hoffman made so clear in *Tootsie*, the performer is always in the female position in relation to power). Women and performers more often or not are 'scripted' to 'sell' or 'confess' something to someone who is in the position to buy or to forgive.³⁹⁷

Phelan's observation is important in the way that it parallels the objectification of the female with the actor. Staniewski may be referring to the actor 'breaking through' these aspectual power structures when he alludes to the 'female enigma'.³⁹⁸ The breaking through is a movement from the privileged male position to the marginal female position. Only by becoming minoritarian can the male actor gain the insight and experience of the marginal political position and as the female always occupies this marginal position, her sex enables 'the positivity of difference'.³⁹⁹ Phelan suggests that one way to resist the female degradation of self as the 'social I' of the symbolic, is by paying attention to the 'imaginary I'. If identity is relationally constructed through the specular, we can each make ourselves into the image that we believe the other wants to see, where there is no distinction made between us. When we operate from a positivity of difference we can move beyond theorising the masculine gaze, to pursue what Phelan refers to as a

³⁹⁶ Shapiro, op.cit.

³⁹⁷ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993, p.164.

³⁹⁸ Staniewski, op.cit.

³⁹⁹ Braidotti, op.cit.

‘reciprocal gaze’.⁴⁰⁰ Looking at and for the other, we seek to represent ourselves to ourselves, as a social form of self-reproduction. As such, the reciprocal gaze is a politically productive way of resisting phallogentric structures. In acting, working with a reciprocal gaze, where one is accurately observing rather than interpreting and being receptive to the way that power is exchanged, renegotiated and passed between moment to moment, is an important part of learning to see each other.

Looking-ness: performing female

Feminist theatre-making approaches rethink how to see the performance of gender. Rather than essentialising femaleness, actresses learn to recognise performative behavior, to enable a reflexive double consciousness. In her interrogation of feminist performance, *Unmaking Mimesis*, Diamond considers the possibility of reclaiming acting for feminist action, where through her authorship of the playing, the actor draws attention to the irreducibility of notions of truth. Recalling Kristeva’s semiotic chora as the subject in process, she describes the motility and mutability of mimesis, describing it as:

[S]imultaneously the stake and the shifting sands; order and potential disorder, reason and madness... In imitating (upholding the truth value of) the model, the mimos becomes an other, is being an other, thus a shape shifting Proteus, a panderer of reflections, a destroyer of forms.⁴⁰¹

From this position the actor is not serving and perpetuating hegemony when s/he acts but, as ‘the other’ being ‘the other’, she has the potential to challenge, derail and transform. In considering how female practitioners develop approaches that challenge the objectification of women, Diamond focuses on historicisation as a way of showing the differences. Both actor and character remain ‘processural, historical, incomplete’.⁴⁰² She outlines how reflexive approaches might help the actor rethink visibility to enable a critical perspective. In a chapter entitled ‘Spectator, author, gestus’, she explains that by working with gestic feminist criticism, ‘the historical actor, the character, the spectator (and) the author, enter

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid. p.17.

⁴⁰¹ Diamond, p.xv.

⁴⁰² Ibid., p.51.

and disrupt the scopic regime of realist representation'.⁴⁰³ One way of achieving this in practice is to utilise the Brechtian 'not but' approach,⁴⁰⁴ where the dialectic is made explicit to employ a double gesture. The actor takes authorship of her action by showing his/her attitude to it in the playing. Diamond's thesis presents mimesis as an ethical accounting, realism as revealing and concealing assumptions and Brechtian theatre as attempting to historicise. She concludes that feminist work will do all three to enable a double vision, which she explains as not 'to-be-looked-at-ness' but 'looking at being-looked-at-ness' or even 'just looking-ness'.⁴⁰⁵ This position enables a critical pedagogy of acting which foregrounds the politics and particularity of bodies, power and choice.

Looking beyond Brechtian approaches, what critical ways of thinking through performance might be useful for feminist practitioners? Harris points to the slippage between notions of performance and the performative in Butler's thinking and questions what this space between can offer feminist performance practice. She explains that 'any performance is already double marked in quotation marks... These quotation marks make all the difference'.⁴⁰⁶ The extent to which the performer shows that they are performing determines the style, aesthetic, acting approach and reception to the work. In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler addresses the space between the construct of performance and the performative. Feminist scholars had questioned the way that the explanation of performative action in *Gender Trouble* suggested the unalterability of gender. Butler seemed to be suggesting that through iteration, gender became embedded and unalterable. In this light, possible actions of resistance, which might challenge unequal scopic regimes, were closed down.⁴⁰⁷ Butler clarifies that performance is 'a bounded act',⁴⁰⁸ operating within its particular constructions and the performative is repeated actions, which through repetition, establish gender. However, the action of repetition inevitably opens up the possibility for change. No repetition will be

⁴⁰³ Ibid., p.54.

⁴⁰⁴ Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (London: Methuen, 1964), p.137.

⁴⁰⁵ Diamond, p.52.

⁴⁰⁶ Harris, p.77.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid. xi.

⁴⁰⁸ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), p.234.

exactly the same and this enables a 'hiatus in iterability',⁴⁰⁹ reminding us of Irigaray's impossible original, or 'non-truth' of truth. The blurred space between performance and performativity can therefore be seen as a chora like space of becoming, relational and potentially transformative as both constructs operate beside and in relation to each other. Like a Brechtian double gesture, Butler posits 'it is necessary to learn a double movement: to invoke the category and, hence, provisionally to institute an identity and at the same time to open up the category as a site of permanent political contest'.⁴¹⁰ Irigaray similarly inhabits this space between when she calls for a female mimicry, which draws attention to the masquerade through its exaggeration, where the woman performs an exaggerated playing. In this case, performing female is offered as 'an actively offensive rather than defensive strategy, so as to make visible, by means of a playful repetition, that which was supposed to remain invisible'.⁴¹¹ Female representation foregrounds the processes of production as a space of future re-articulations. The space between the performative and performance and the extent to which citation is revealed as a double marking, is key for the actor. Her interpretation can author her performance and 'enflesh' the female body as a potential site of resistance.⁴¹² Building this awareness enables the 'personal and social knowledge'⁴¹³ that can politicise acting. In Chapter Four, this way of learning 'to see' is examined in relation to Vanessa Ewan's gestic movement practice and in Chapter Five I return to these constructs to analyse the feminist acting pedagogies of Katie Mitchell and Emma Rice. The third and final line of enquiry considers how excessive emotion and vulnerability, traits identified with women in order to weaken their position in a male-dominated public sphere where such behaviour is not valorised, acquires a positive value in the female ontology of acting.

⁴⁰⁹ Harris, p.72.

⁴¹⁰ Butler, p.222.

⁴¹¹ Irigaray, (1985) p.46.

⁴¹² John Warren, 'The Body Politic, Performance and the Power of Enfleshment', *Text and Performance Quarterly*, vo.19. (1999), pp.257-266.

⁴¹³ Ross Prior, *Teaching Actors: Knowledge Transfer in Actor Training* (Bristol & Chicago: Intellect, 2012), p164.

Feeling: force in fragility of acting

Acting necessitates what Mark Seton refers to as a 'habitual vulnerability',⁴¹⁴ where developing psychophysical accessibility is a professional trait. Turning to feminist theory, one is able to reconsider the value of vulnerability within the terms of a female ontology of acting. In this section, I will trace some of the ways in which women have been oppressed as victims of their bodies through male constructed notions of hysteria and loss of control. Such constructions have rendered (and continue to render) the female body vulnerable, but within the discipline of acting, vulnerability has a positive value.

In her project to locate the female origins of Greek drama, Zeitlin considers the ways that women are presented as being more vulnerable than men, both physically and emotionally. She states:

The boundaries of women's bodies are perceived as more fluid, more permeable, more open to effect and entry from the outside, less easily controlled by intellectual and rational means.⁴¹⁵

In Greek theatre the female body is repeatedly seen as vulnerable, either wracked with the pangs of childbirth or the torment of sexual desire. At the start of *Phaedra* the chorus speaks in generic terms about the body of a woman, calling it '*dustropos harmonia*' an 'ill-tune harmony'.⁴¹⁶ The female body experiences pregnancy, birth and menstruation, which render her powerless in the face of physical pain, whilst simultaneously victim of objectification. The psychophysical connection between emotion or passionate excess and the female body is evidenced in female humours, where physicians attributed certain features of emotional distress to the menstrual cycle. In John Lyly's 1590 masque *A Woman in the Moon*, the goddess Nature creates the first woman, Pandora, to please male mortals.⁴¹⁷ The threatened male gods of the cosmos undermine her by infecting her with a series of emotional states, which she is cursed to perform for their pleasure and her humiliation. This early satire evidences the double bind of women as victims of their emotional

⁴¹⁴ Mark Seton, 'The Ethics of Embodiment: Actor Training and Habitual Vulnerability.' *Performing Ethos*, vol 1, (2010), pp.5-18.

⁴¹⁵ Zeitlin, p.345.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., p.346.

⁴¹⁷ John Lyly, *The Woman in the Moon (Revels Plays)* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

weaknesses, cursed to perform these vulnerabilities for men's aspectual enjoyment.

Women's emotional instability was seen to be caused by the menstrual cycle or 'curse', afflicting women with a diminished reasoning capacity. Joseph Roach maps how developments in medical science affected the way that actors approached acting emotion and he cites the dominant fifteenth-century belief that the passions were symptomatic of psychophysical maladies. The humours, or fluids in the body, were thought to rise up and attack the brain and heart so rending the victim hysterical. Roach explains,

Physicians called the extreme form of this malady *hysteria* and identified it with a visceral disorder. Hysteria drives the womb or entrails, *the mother*, upwards in the body, suffocating and poisoning the vital organs.⁴¹⁸

By the eighteenth century, hysteria was no longer seen as a visceral disorder but as a nervous condition now known as 'the Hyp,' or 'The English malady' and as a fashionable female disease. This condition continued to be associated with the women whose sensibilities were more prone to excesses, as seen in the epitaph of a Dorchester woman whose 'nerves were too delicately spun' and who died 'A Martyr to Excessive Sensibility'.⁴¹⁹

Significantly for this study, Roach's seminal historical overview of emotion from Greek to twenty-first century theatre fails to explicitly acknowledge how gender features in emotional physiology and its representation in acting. In the nineteenth century the treatment of hysterical women was well documented, pointing to the propensity of the female to fall victim to psychosexual desires and her inability to control her emotions. Diamond focuses her attention on this period when a new kind of social realism saw drama concerned with, '[t]he object (hysteria/the fallen woman), the claim to truth (the discovery of her secret) and a common genealogy (nineteenth century melodramatic and clinical spectacles)'.⁴²⁰ Freud's clinical spectacles attempted to find a cure for hysteria, which he explained as symptomatic of a woman's bisexuality, 'An hysterical symptom is the expression

⁴¹⁸ Joseph Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), p.48.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.98.

⁴²⁰ Diamond, p.xiii.

of both a masculine and a feminine unconscious sexual fantasy'.⁴²¹ For Freud, the female's repression of homosexual impulses as a child and her consequent desire to be male, results in masochistic impulses as symptoms of the hysterical woman. Irigaray tracks the history of psychoanalytic theory and female sexuality and highlights Freud's view that hysteria does not constitute an exclusively feminine pathology but that the 'inversion of the Oedipus complex must be categorised within the symptomatology of hysteria'.⁴²² In feminist discourse hysteria becomes a significant manifestation of social oppression and an enabling fiction within patriarchy that justifies female oppression.

In her attempt to frame hysteria in the nineteenth century, Juliet Mitchell explains it as 'the pre-political manifestation of feminism. If femininity is by definition hysterical, feminism is the demand for the right to be hysterical'.⁴²³ The nineteenth-century plays of Ibsen evidence the way that representations of women suffering from hysterical conditions simultaneously conformed to the condition of female emotional excess, whilst presenting a feminist challenge to these conditions of representation. Gail Finney analyses the double standards in gender, marriage, the emancipated woman and motherhood, to recognise how certain female characters reject the divisions between masculine and feminine behaviour, even to the extent (in the case of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* and *Nora Tesman*) of turning their back on children or rejecting pregnancy.⁴²⁴ These 'un-motherly' mothers display hysteric behavior as a symptom of their inability to inhabit the confines of a constructed feminine norm and so their behaviour can be seen to stem from the lack of not being a man. Diamond's critique of the hysterical women, as presented in nineteenth and twentieth-century realism, locates 'mimesis' as a male constructed truth, with representations of female hysteria presenting a feminist challenge to dominant theatrical discourse. She states:

⁴²¹ Sigmund Freud cited by Penny Farfan, *Women, Modernism, and Performance* (United Kingdom, Cambridge: University Press, 2004).

⁴²² Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One* (USA: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.46.

⁴²³ Juliet Mitchell in Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture 1830-1980* (Harmondsworth & New York: Penguin Books, 1987), pp.333-334.

⁴²⁴ Gail Finney, *Women in Modern Drama: Freud, Feminism and European Theatre at the Turn of the Century* (USA: Cornell University Press, 1989), p.92.

A feminist mimesis, if there is such a thing, would take the relation to the real as productive, not referential, geared to change, not to reproducing the same. It would explore the tendency to tyrannical modeling (subjective/ideological projections masquerading as universal truths), even in its own operations.⁴²⁵

Whilst a more detailed consideration of hysteria is outside the scope of this study, the male constructed hysterical protagonists of early twentieth-century naturalism offer female directors and actors the opportunity to tackle complex characters from an informed twenty-first century feminist position. In this way the male construct of hysteria as vulnerability, can be reframed as feminist protest.

Vulnerability as female power

In her critique of *The Bacchae*, Zeitlin suggests that female vulnerability, which lies at the heart of tragedy, might paradoxically be positioned as female power. Whilst females are represented as weaker than men, they are also stronger in the divine power they hold over men. Dionysus, in his femininity, is a dangerous 'other' to the masculine norm. In *The Bacchae*, Pentheus, through his female mimesis, steps outside the safety of masculine society and his male gaze is met with the full destructive power of the women's passion, as he is torn apart by the Bacchantes. Zeitlin notes that the plots of Greek tragedies frequently place women in control of the drama, through plotting and manipulating duplicities as a mark of their 'double consciousness with regard to the world of men'.⁴²⁶ In Greek drama, the paradox of female vulnerability is central to the dramatic construction of social protest, between the public and the domestic.

In her project which analyses the ethics of vulnerability, Erinn Gilson applies feminist critique to open up positive readings of vulnerability and to consider its ethical merits.⁴²⁷ She considers how Hélène Cixous presents vulnerability as both a strength and a female disposition in her essay 'Sorties', where she draws a picture of her own experiences of vulnerability. Gilson reads Cixous' vulnerability as feminine in its open way of relating to others and sharing

⁴²⁵ Diamond, p.xvi.

⁴²⁶ Zeitlin, p.357.

⁴²⁷ Erinn Gilson, *The Ethics of Vulnerability: A Feminist Analysis of Social Life and Practice* (London & New York: Routledge, 2014).

emotional fragility, without judging relationships on a scale of profit and return. This is set in contrast to a masculine economy which is characterised by hiding emotional weakness in the desire to achieve mastery and control and judging interactions for their potential gain. Cixous describes vulnerability in terms of fragility, receptivity and self-dispossession. This is seen in the way that a feminine economy doesn't immediately presume that others pose a threat to the self and so is more open to a posture of 'non closure that is not submission but confidence and comprehension'.⁴²⁸ A woman admits otherness to herself to a greater extent, without expecting a transactional return on the investment and in opening up herself to others she is able to alter herself in relation as a 'gift of changeability'.⁴²⁹ In this vulnerability comes strength, which Gilson explains as 'force in fragility'.⁴³⁰ This points towards Murray's 'dispositional attitudes'⁴³¹ of acting and indicates Seton's 'habitual vulnerability', which he describes not so much as an attribute, but as an ongoing personal accomplishment in the capacity to be affected and to affect others.⁴³² In Chapter Four I relate this idea to actor training practice, considering the ways that Ali Hodge develops the state of vulnerability through touch and in Chapter Five I look at how Katie Mitchell works with actresses to perform emotional excess, re-imagining Diamond's feminist mimesis.

Irigaray asks, 'What is hidden by the neuter?'⁴³³ Considering acting as a female ontology allows us to mine the perspectives and knowledge of the female sexed body, as a positive alternative to dominant neutering discourses. In asking why it is that there remains a female bias in the field we might speculate that the female consciousness is predisposed to the complex challenges of acting. Whilst actor training increasingly looks to science to advance practice, turning attention to movements in feminist thinking offers fascinating insights into the knowledge of acting. A female ontology recognises the body as embodied and embedded, inscribed and inscribing, enabling psychoanalytic and materialist approaches to operate alongside and in relation to each other. In specific and particular ways, feminist critical theories examine the intersections between sex, gender and power

⁴²⁸ Ibid., p.86.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., p.88.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., p.95.

⁴³¹ Murray, p.231.

⁴³² Seton, op.cit.

⁴³³ Irigaray, (1993), p.171.

to assert the female position. Returning to the particularity of the female body allows us to undermine male constructions of truth, subvert myths, deconstruct poststructuralist theory and challenge political structures. In the context of acting, notions of doubling reflect the double-ness of the female condition, as both self and object. The unequal visual exchange is particularly relevant because the actor, like the female, is always in the marginal position in terms of power. Returning to the opening premise — that male pedagogues repeatedly reference acting as a female state of being — we can better understand notions of female ‘energy’ or the ‘secret enigma of the female body’ as the ways that females operate within hegemony.⁴³⁴ The nature of acting requires that one becomes minoritarian and from this position the politics of the actor’s body can be brought to account.

A female ontology of acting offers a critical paradigm for thinking about the politics of the body and serves this thesis in a number of ways: it re-orientates attention to the under-represented practices of women in a field which continues to attract a female majority; it pursues the positivity of difference, be that gender, ethnicity, age or class, enabling actors and teacher/directors to refigure power structures that perpetuate appropriations and objectification. This enables actors to develop a critical, personal and social knowledge, which I have previously termed the hidden curriculum. Morris’s ‘being, seeing, and feeling’ curricula gives a useful structure to a female ontology of acting.⁴³⁵ Working with this paradigm, alongside the methodology developed in Chapter Two, I now examine the pedagogical practices of women teaching and directing in mainstream theatre-making. I do not wish to generalise these women’s distinct and specific approaches and contexts by applying some fixed method of observation to their work. At an early stage in this research it was apparent that any ‘one size fits all’ approach for considering practice would replicate the very structures I have been critiquing. Therefore, as I observe their practices, I consider two questions: In what ways can this be seen to illustrate a critical acting pedagogy? To what extent might it reflect a specifically female ontology of acting?

⁴³⁴ I refer here to the citations which opened this chapter: Stanislavski, Barba and Staniewski.

⁴³⁵ Morris, op.cit.

Chapter Four

Acting and the 'Hidden Curriculum': Women's Training Practices

Male lineages of actor training dominate the landscape, but when we widen our field of vision, the significant contribution of female practitioners to the development of pedagogy is brought into relief. Acknowledging the politics of the actor's body the processes of learning to act can be viewed as a politically and socially engaged way of learning - a critical pedagogy. The actor develops her/his personal and social knowledge which underpins technical skills acquisition. I frame this as the hidden curriculum. My concern is to better understand how learning to act enables this knowledge, which Wagh describes as 'transferable skills'⁴³⁶ and Murray explains as 'dispositional qualities'.⁴³⁷ Looking at the practice of three practitioners we can better understand *how* this learning happens, paying attention to the gendered self of actor and teacher. Like Aston and Harris, I am mindful that practice should not be subsumed by 'the theoretical apparatus itself', which might limit the possibilities of analysis.⁴³⁸ My focus is the way that a teacher scaffolds, or structures, the learning of the actor through moments of interaction. This necessitates a re-orientation away from the speculative and theoretical focus of previous chapters to the observational and experiential, where I privilege the voices of the practitioners and the actors they teach.

In observing rehearsal practices I apply the fluid analytical methodology explained in Chapter Two.⁴³⁹ This structure for analysing the interactions between actor and teacher/director was developed in response to Thorp and Milde's models to recognise that verbal and non-verbal communication operate simultaneously in a learning exchange.⁴⁴⁰ My observation considers eight factors: how the hidden curriculum of personal and social knowledge is delivered; how an

⁴³⁶ Stephen Wagh, *The Heart of Teaching: Empowering Students in the Performing Arts* (London & New York: Routledge, 2013), p.139.

⁴³⁷ Simon Murray, 'Training in a Cold Climate' in *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 2, (2014), p.229.

⁴³⁸ Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris, *Performance Practice and Process: Contemporary [Women] Practitioners* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp.7-8.

⁴³⁹ Chapter Two, pp. 57-58.

⁴⁴⁰ Thorp, op.cit, Milde, op.cit.

atmosphere of trust and relationality is built; how vulnerability is supported; how authority operates in the room; how choice and action are scaffolded for the actor; how instruction, explanation and feedback are given; how individual and group progress is managed within time constraints; how gender operates within the learning. These considerations enable an analysis of pedagogy in practice in relation to the feminist interventions explored in Chapter Two.

In order to survey the broad UK training landscape, I consider the work of three practitioners who, at the time of this study, were working in different contexts: drama school, university and a theatre company. At an early stage I thought to re-orientate attention from the dominant training traditions, (e.g. Le coq, Stanislavski and Grotowski) towards the work of female practitioners. However, this risked perpetuating the patrilineages I had been seeking to resist. In *A Female Ontology of Acting* I consider the ways that actors are taught how 'to be', 'to see' and 'to feel', speculating that the notions of doubling required of the actor might be considered as a female domain. In interview Shona Morris, former Head of Acting at Drama Centre, identified these strands as the core learning that underpins skills acquisition and which operate beside each other.⁴⁴¹ The actor comes 'to be' through a process of doubling in which learning 'to see' requires a double vision, and learning 'to feel' necessitates a habitual vulnerability.⁴⁴² Using each strand as a lens through which to focus analysis I consider how this esoteric learning, which I position as personal and social knowledge, is scaffolded through the senses of voice, observation and touch.

The three approaches to training are offered, not so much as case studies, but as illustrative examples of distinct practices, viewed from a position which Braidotti terms the 'positivity of difference'.⁴⁴³ Constructs of Braidotti's nomadic theory, which were considered in Chapter 2, resist negative associations of difference to recognise the affirmative value in this exchange.⁴⁴⁴ Each illustrative example of practice offers a snapshot of the practitioner's work and looks at how they foreground difference. My intention is not to homogenise a 'feminine' training

⁴⁴¹ Shona Morris, interviewed at Drama Centre, London, (01.11.13).

⁴⁴² These constructs are discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

⁴⁴³ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (New York & Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2011), p.17.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., pp.268-298.

practice, but to maintain each woman's work as distinct in the ways it tries to solve particular problems. Landon-Smith helps the actor learn how 'to be' through exploring voice, in what she terms an 'intra-cultural practice'; Vanessa Ewan guides the actor to learn how 'to see' the performativity of the body using keys and codes; and Alison Hodge develops an actor's capacity 'to feel' through touch in a relational core training.⁴⁴⁵ I examine *how* the learning operates in practice through distinct means to consider the context and ideology of each practitioner's work, the foundational features and how their pedagogy foregrounds the positivity of difference in acting.

Kristine Landon-Smith: Learning how 'to be' with intra-cultural practice

Kristine Landon-Smith is the joint founder of Tamasha, one of the longest running multicultural theatre companies in the UK, which brings contemporary work of Asian influence to the British stage. Born to an Indian father and Australian mother, Landon-Smith acknowledges that her own mixed race heritage has enabled her to develop an intra-cultural practice, as her own position is a marginalised in-between-ness. She explains: 'I am conscious of my own mixed heritage background because I position myself as 'the other', so I'm already 'the other' with 'the others'.'⁴⁴⁶ As previously examined, this between state can be situated as a female domain.⁴⁴⁷ Cultural theorist Rustom Bharucha coined the term 'intra-cultural' as a way to describe how different communities and cultures exist alongside one another in the same country.⁴⁴⁸ Bharucha was concerned with the 'cultural tourism' he perceived in the work of Barba, Brook and Grotowski, the ethics of representation underlying cross-cultural exchange and the social relationships that constitute it.⁴⁴⁹ Landon-Smith's praxis responds to these

⁴⁴⁵ Alison Hodge, *Core Training for the Relational Actor* (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁴⁴⁶ Landon-Smith, (17.01.15).

⁴⁴⁷ In Chapter Three, I situate Plato's chora as the in-between space of becoming and consider how Julia Kristeva presents this as the feminine chora of poetic thought.

⁴⁴⁸ Rustom Bharucha, *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁴⁴⁹ Bharucha, p.4.

concerns by enabling multi-ethnic actors in the UK to recognise their multiple, nomadic, hybrid identity as a powerful asset for performing.

In 1984, Landon-Smith trained as an actor in Australia at NIDA (National Institute of Dramatic Art), but left after a year to complete an acting degree at the Royal Scottish Conservatoire. It was her own negative experience of training that led her to teaching and directing. She explains: '[W]e had a lot of teachers who, in my mind, didn't help me as an actor. I mean we all sort of had to get on with it'.⁴⁵⁰ In 1987, she taught at the National School of Drama in Delhi, directing *Untouchable*,⁴⁵¹ cementing her role as a director, and in 1988, she trained and subsequently worked with Philippe Gaulier in Paris. She returned to the UK and with the playwright and actress Sita Bukrah set up Tamasha, a training and production company, with the remit to provide opportunities and development for British Asian artists. Tamasha operates in three distinct ways: firstly, it provides a platform to new writing by Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) artists in the UK, so making the stories of under-represented communities central to the work; secondly, it builds new audiences; thirdly, it provides intra-cultural training for actors, directors and writers and outreach work in schools and communities. Tamasha has now been operating since 1989 and has 'played a key role in driving the crossover of Asian culture into the British mainstream',⁴⁵² with a mixture of new writing and adaptations, achieving success with *East is East* in 1996. During the course of this research, Landon-Smith moved to Australia to teach at NIDA whilst completing an MPhil investigating her practice as research. Here I draw on two interviews with her conducted between 2014 and 2015, interviews with three actors in *The Arrival*,⁴⁵³ which I observed across three weeks of rehearsal in February 2014 and observation of five training workshops, (including one transcontinental workshop between the UK and Australia) conducted between 2013-2015.

⁴⁵⁰ Landon-Smith, (07.03.13).

⁴⁵¹ This is an adaptation of the novel by Maulk Raj following a day in the life of an Indian latrine cleaner. It was the company's debut production in 1989 at London's Riverside Studios playing alternative nights in English and Hindi.

⁴⁵² Tamasha, <http://www.tamasha.org.uk/about/history/> [accessed 15.05.15].

⁴⁵³ *The Arrival* toured the UK in March 2013 and was co-created by Landon-Smith and Sita Brahmachari, based on the illustrated novel by Shaun Tan.

Landon-Smith's intra-cultural practice illustrates Critical Acting Pedagogy (CAP) in practice. Critical Performative Pedagogy (CPP) is a term used by Elyse Pineau to describe a politically engaged somatic approach to teaching and learning, which she claims as the domain of Performance Studies.⁴⁵⁴ CAP develops this form of learning to include the lived body operating beside the social body and considers the blurred space between the performative and performance as a critical form of enquiry.⁴⁵⁵ By learning to recognise our performative behaviours, by which I mean the repeated bodily and speech acts that inscribe ideas of race, age, gender and class on our bodies, we might challenge and resist their forms of production in performance. Landon-Smith's practice opens up the space between the lived body and the social body as a reflexive space for the actor to utilise the political potential of her/his intra- cultural identity. Braidotti maintains that by adopting a 'positivity of difference' we might resist the structures of advanced capitalism, which Braidotti believes creates a culture of paranoia and xenophobia.⁴⁵⁶ From this perspective, Landon-Smith's practice can be seen to challenge limiting notions of sameness in the face of a twenty-first century multicultural society, where actors acknowledge their multiple selves. In presenting the foundational features of this training, I consider the reorientation of gendered power which underpins the pedagogy.

*Learning 'from the crest of a wave'*⁴⁵⁷

Landon-Smith's own training and teaching with Philippe Gaulier means that she situates constructs of 'le jeu' (play) as central to her teaching.⁴⁵⁸ She begins any workshop or rehearsal with games, known as *paida*,⁴⁵⁹ designed to help the actor 'play well', such as 'keeping uppy,' where the group work as a team to keep a ball in the air for the longest time possible, name tag or musical chairs. Using games at the

⁴⁵⁴ Elyse Pineau, 'Critical Performative Pedagogy: Fleshing Out the Politics of Liberatory Education' in Nathan Stucky and Cynthia Wimmer, *Teaching Performance Studies*. (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), pp.41-54.

⁴⁵⁵ I explain CPP, forms of critical pedagogy and the intersection between performance and performativity in relation to acting in Chapter Two.

⁴⁵⁶ Braidotti, op.cit.

⁴⁵⁷ Landon-Smith, (07.03.13).

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Lynne Kendrick, 'A Paidic Aesthetic: An Analysis of Games in the Ludic Pedagogy of Philippe Gaulier', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*. 2(1), (2011) pp.72-85.

start of any rehearsal or workshop establishes a culture of learning through play and flattens hierarchy, as Landon-Smith plays with and referees the actors, creating a dynamic of shared risk taking. The games allow her to quickly diagnose the qualities and habits that actors bring to their practice. She can identify who might be holding back through fear, who is playing ‘too hard’ and where individuals hold their energy (high or low). She makes ‘playing well’ explicit, asking people to identify when they observe this behaviour in others. ‘Playing well’ is when the actor is able to give all their attention outwards, whilst being relaxed and open in their attitude and physicality. Landon-Smith uses humour to engage and cajole, whilst instilling a sense of competition in the play to energise and sharpen the actor—praising, gently teasing, encouraging or challenging. She invites actors to reflexively question their own responses and guides them to observe performative habits.

In Gaulier’s clown practice the experience of ‘flopping’ is central to the pedagogy where, in order to find her clown, the actor is put in situations where she becomes foolish and ‘flops’ in front of the audience. Through this exposure, she discovers the ways in which she is funny. As previously examined, learning by confronting one’s blocks, termed *via negativa*,⁴⁶⁰ is a formative way of learning in actor training. The actor independently diagnoses and finds a solution for their own performance problems and through this process becomes their own teacher — autodidact. Landon-Smith guides the actor to diagnose her own habits through flopping and then to re-learn how to play well. However, she reinterprets Gaulier’s autodidact approach, also noted in the practices of Meisner and Strasberg,⁴⁶¹ where the actors find solutions for themselves to facilitate a shared problem solving — a joint experimentation.⁴⁶² The autodidact process through *via negativa* is a particularly impactful pedagogy in actor training but, as Murray explains, it requires a robustness from the individual and can be a hit or miss approach.⁴⁶³ Because the teacher withholds explicit explanation, the actor can be left feeling

⁴⁶⁰ This term is used by Lecoq and Grotowski to explain how an actor learns by confronting her blocks and then working to solve her own solutions.

⁴⁶¹ Whilst not taking an explicit pedagogical perspective, Rosemary Malague examines this in *An Actress Prepares: Women and “The Method”* (London: Routledge, 2011).

⁴⁶² I refer to this approach as examined by Donald Schön in Chapter Two.

⁴⁶³ Simon Murray, *Jacques Lecoq* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), pp.49-51.

exposed, vulnerable and humiliated.⁴⁶⁴ In Chapters One and Two I have problematised the oppressive affects of this guru/apprentice approach to learning, which has characterised the male dominated training lineages and which I have suggested can disempower the actor.

Landon-Smith's pedagogy has developed in response to two aspects of Gaulier's practice she felt were lacking: explicit and direct feedback, where the actor is given strategies to solve their problems and a kinder, supportive approach which does not leave them feeling vulnerable and belittled. She recognises that, whilst she personally benefited from Gaulier's pedagogy, some actors struggle with it and she reflects on her preference for affirmative learning:

I do ultimately feel it is better for people to work from the crest of a wave with a level of confidence and feel good. And I must say, I personally am uncomfortable when people flop for too long. I've got an empathy for that, so maybe, naturally, I do move people beyond that in a session or in a rehearsal room. I don't let the actors leave the floor and feel bad. I'm interested in helping people.⁴⁶⁵

Landon-Smith's pedagogy reminds us of Braidotti's call for affirmativity as an antidote to a negative value system where one can only advance through pain or suffering.⁴⁶⁶ She is not naively suggesting that struggle can be avoided, but that by adopting an affirmative position and working from the positivity of difference, development is supported and sustainable.⁴⁶⁷ In this way endurance is viewed as a positive process, pleasure as opposed to pain is privileged and there is a joint experimentation between teacher/director and actor, driven by intrinsic motivation as opposed to extrinsic sanction and fear of failure. This pedagogical approach illustrates the *via positiva* in practice.⁴⁶⁸

Landon-Smith's authority is built on transparency. She states, 'I am quite happy to have a very open rehearsal room'⁴⁶⁹ and positions herself as a

⁴⁶⁴ Maggie Irving, *Clown Training: Preparing for Failure*. Un-published paper presented at TAPRA in 2010.

⁴⁶⁵ Landon-Smith, (07.03.13).

⁴⁶⁶ I explained this idea in Chapter Two, Braidotti, pp.299-314.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., pp.268-298.

⁴⁶⁸ The *via positiva* as a feminist intervention is explained in Chapter Two.

⁴⁶⁹ *Intracultural Actors' Masterclass*, Kings Place, King Cross, London, (17.09.13).

diagnostician with inclusive, direct and incisive observation, rejecting Stanislavskian psychological terminology for the simpler terms of somatic 'felt sense'. Andrea Milde, whose work was discussed in Chapter Two, has been researching Landon-Smith's practice for the last five years. She identifies key terms as forming part of the dialogic scaffolding structures where learning happens in the moments of interaction between actor and teacher.⁴⁷⁰ Terms such as being 'open', 'soft', 'full', 'fluid', 'forward' are used to explain the quality of 'playing well' in contrast to 'playing too hard', 'being too heavy' or 'inward'.⁴⁷¹ These material descriptors bring to mind Laban's efforts⁴⁷² and a phenomenological and somatic felt sense of the lived body as opposed to a psychological state. As Landon-Smith establishes herself as both participant and adjudicator, there is a sense of working for and with the group, allowing her to pick up on actors' habits or defense mechanisms from the start with coaching such as, 'Don't play too hard!'; 'Listen more carefully!'; 'Lighter!'⁴⁷³ This dialogue is immediately transparent and direct. For instance, fear, which is acknowledged as a primary obstacle, is openly discussed and strategies are offered to deal with it. As a result, an atmosphere of trust is established, with Landon-Smith explicitly explaining the learning, 'What I'm doing with you is I'm helping you to explore what it is that happens when you are open'.⁴⁷⁴ This openness establishes a shared responsibility for each other's progress, where actors learn 'from the crest of a wave'.⁴⁷⁵

*'All these little parts of yourself'*⁴⁷⁶

Landon-Smith's approach has developed to help actors, in particular BME actors whose first language is not English, solve the disconnect that happens when working with text. She reflects that in her practice, 'Chapter One is the

⁴⁷⁰ Andrea Milde, 'Spoken Language and Doing Drama'. *Working Papers in Urban Language & Literacies* Paper 89, (2012a), <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/education/research/ldc/publications/workingpapers/the-papers/WP89.pdf> [accessed 23.04.14]

⁴⁷¹ Taken from observation notes: *Actors workshop*. The Rug Factory, Brick Lane, London, (28.11.12), (19.02.13).

⁴⁷² Vanessa Ewan's translation of Laban efforts is examined later in this chapter.

⁴⁷³ Landon-Smith, (28.11.12), (19.02.13).

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Landon-Smith, op.cit.

⁴⁷⁶ Harris (08.03.13).

actor...normally chapter one is the text, which is very problematic'.⁴⁷⁷ Destabilising the tyranny of the text and giving the power back to the somatic self can be framed as a female position, which her pedagogy scaffolds through an exploration of what Adriana Cavarero calls 'the multiple voice'.⁴⁷⁸ In *For More Than One Voice: A Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, Cavarero presents the voice (as opposed to speech) as a way to access our hybrid identity and she presents this as a female domain.⁴⁷⁹ Cavarero's thesis presents the symbolic structures of language as male and the semiotic and the voice as female. This reminds us of Jane Boston's observation that voice training is a more female-dominated field.⁴⁸⁰ Julia Kristeva situates Bakhtin's 'langue' (the symbolic, formal structures of speech) and the 'parole' (the language, the word), as 'the symbolic' and 'the semiotic'. She identifies the formal structures of text and speech as belonging to a male construct of language with the semiotic stemming from a female domain, which she terms 'the semiotic chora', examined in Chapter Three. Kristeva recognises that the semiotic and the symbolic happen beside each other and her thinking is particularly pertinent when analysing Landon-Smith's practice, which enables the semiotic to operate beside the symbolic when the actor works with text.

A disconnect can result from feeling alienated or intimidated by the symbolic structures of text. This is exacerbated for BME actors who are trained to deny their accent or dialect and perform a homogenised self that obscures their heritage. English (with a small 'e'), as spoken by multi ethnic communities, is seen to have 'impurities'⁴⁸¹ and by accessing their multiple voices actors, 'think of themselves as particular rather than neutral, to play with difference in the rehearsal room'.⁴⁸² This is facilitated through various stages of improvisation, where the actor uses her first language in order to connect to the space between self and text, to inhabit the space between the symbolic and semiotic. In this way she moves to connect speech with voice as a bodily felt experience. The power hierarchy shifts from serving the law of the text to taking control of it. Antonia

⁴⁷⁷ Landon-Smith, interviewed in London, (17.01.15).

⁴⁷⁸ Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (USA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ I present an overview of this in Chapter One.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² *Intracultural Actors Masterclass*. Kings Place. King Cross. London. (17.09.13).

Cavarero's theory of 'multiple voices' critiques how the agency of the voice is sidelined when compared to speech, when it is through the voice that relationships are created, which in turn enables political power.⁴⁸³ Thinking of voice in terms of identity, Cavarero's multiple voices point to the notion of a hybrid identity, which underpins Braidotti's nomadic feminism. Landon-Smith, who originally considered becoming a voice teacher, helps actors rediscover the positive potential of their hybrid identity, as the layers of text and speech are peeled away to reveal the self in a constant state of becoming.

The exposure of multiple selves occurs through a form of Active Analysis,⁴⁸⁴ where the actor moves behind the text, to explore her own responses in the given circumstance. Once the logical sequence of actions and intentions are discovered, the text is layered on the top. In this way the actor's self is the starting point, rather than any constructed notion of character. This enables the actor to shift into a double consciousness where they are connected both to them 'self' and themselves being in performance. In an acting master-class, where actors came prepared with a speech to work on, Landon-Smith states the aim of the session (the disconnect when working with text) and after enabling the state of 'playing well'; she offers a simple structure such as counting consecutively as a group from one to twenty. When she claps her hands, she asks an actor to move into their text. Through this, the group is able to witness how there is an immediate tendency to disconnect from one's own voice to perform an appropriation of oneself, with an inscribed 'Britishness' and received pronunciation. In this performance, the direct connection to an inner self in the situation is lost and the actor becomes 'closed', explained by a participant as 'You can hear your own voice lying. You can feel your physicality lying'.⁴⁸⁵ This fascinating reflection acknowledges a moment of reflexive self awareness, or self surveillance where performative action is critically felt.

Landon-Smith's skill lies in her ability to spontaneously diagnose what is the most useful and, most importantly, pleasurable improvisation for each individual to play to locate their multiple voices. Her approach is diagnostic and

⁴⁸³ Cavarero, op.cit.

⁴⁸⁴ For a good overview of Active Analysis see Bella Merlin, *Konstantin Stanislavsky: Routledge Performance practitioners* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003).

⁴⁸⁵ *Actors Workshop*. The Rug Factory, Brick Lane, London, (19.02.13).

relational. As she has indicted, 'I totally just respond to what's in front of me'.⁴⁸⁶ By observing and talking to each individual about their cultural heritage and background, she is able to frame an improvisation that either directly, or obliquely, reflects the circumstance of the text. At no point does she analyse or discuss the text itself. In her diagnosis of each individual's needs she will strip back language, asking some to improvise in their first language, others to work with a strong accent and some to imitate the accent of a family member. Other actors and sometimes the whole group are part of the improvisation. She side coaches where necessary, stepping into the improvisation to raise the stakes and provoke a 'fuller' imaginative connection to the situation. Once the improvisation is fully underway and the actor is open to the impulses and relationships that have emerged, she will direct her to move to the text, sometimes still in their first language and eventually in English. The text falls lightly over the top of action and the actor maintains a connection to their natural voice.

Whilst ostensibly Active Analysis is a common method of working with text, the way that layers of speech and language are peeled back to expose the multiple voice reveals the body/voice as an expression of hybrid identities. The dismantling of language, speech, dialect, accent, voice, illuminates the different tempo rhythms of different identities.⁴⁸⁷ As one actor explains:

For example, often in English you assume a certain tone. So I am much more relaxed when I speak in English, I am much more one tone. Yet if I speak in Italian, all at once I will become more articulate, for instance my voice goes a lot louder, I use my body expression much more. I can often forget that because I have learnt to speak English so well. But by allowing me to speak Italian you bring all these little parts of yourself out, which you could forget if you are just speaking in English.⁴⁸⁸

The breath, tone, pitch and inflection creates a distinct vocal and physical rhythm and the imposition of different rhythms changes the psychophysical experience. Landon-Smith leads the actors to navigate the space between these different rhythms and identities and so, like Cavarero, acknowledges that they have more

⁴⁸⁶ Landon-Smith. (07.03.13).

⁴⁸⁷ Stanislavski explains the tempo rhythm of an actor's body on p.466 in Jean Benedetti, *An Actor's Work*. (London & New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁴⁸⁸ Harris, (08.03.13).

than one voice and there is power in this position of difference. Cavarero explains that 'vocal uniqueness is seen dependent on enabling a multiple voice where many 'I's can emerge in the register of the unconscious'.⁴⁸⁹ For the white British actor this might be the space between themselves and themselves playing text; for the BME actor this may be themselves as an actor working in the UK industry and their cultural identity inherited from their parents, for as Landon-Smith points out, 'Everything you learn from your parents is just in you, without you realising it is'.⁴⁹⁰ This connection to family through their first language can provide an emotional release. An actor in *The Arrival* acknowledged that she felt more confident and 'full' as she only spoke to her parents in Vietnamese, so the rhythm of the language immediately tapped into her most vulnerable self. She explained: 'It feels more natural when I have to express emotion. I feel that I can express it with assertiveness or directness. So I try to channel them [my parents] when I speak'.⁴⁹¹ By helping the actor gain access to the space between multiple voices, Landon-Smith guides her to access her vulnerability. Actors talk of the 'pride' they feel when bringing their cultural heritage into the process of their learning.⁴⁹² In this way the practice reflects the pedagogy of Dorothy Heathcote's mantle of the expert,⁴⁹³ where the learner is positioned as the expert of the multiple identities they can draw upon in performance.

Critical acting pedagogy: 'doing' race

Elise Pineau, in her explanation of CPP, makes a distinction between performance studies as a kinetic process, which interrogates notions of power, choice and agency and the 'mimesis' of acting.⁴⁹⁴ From this perspective, acting is seen to perpetuate normative assumptions and values, which negates its political potential. In Landon-Smith's practice the space between the performative and the performed self of the actor enables CAP, which challenges Pineau's reductive

⁴⁸⁹ Cavarero, p. 136.

⁴⁹⁰ Landon-Smith: *Intracultural Actors Master-class*, London, (17.09.13).

⁴⁹¹ Jackie Le, Circus Space, (08.03.13).

⁴⁹² (17.09.13) *Intracultural Actors Master-class*. Kings Place. King Cross. London.

⁴⁹³ Dorothy Heathcote, *Drama for Learning: Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert Approach to Education* (Portsmouth: Heineman, 1995).

⁴⁹⁴ Pineau, p.44.

view.⁴⁹⁵ In 2014, a cross continental training workshop where a live feed enabled six multiethnic Australian actors to simultaneously undertake training with six multiethnic UK actors, brought notions of the space between into sharp focus.⁴⁹⁶ This event asked actors to improvise with each other through the live broadcast and initiated a provocative intercontinental debate about the commonly experienced problems of homogenising cultural identity and appropriating racial stereotypes in acting. Paradoxically, Landon-Smith utilises performative actions which inscribe stereotypes as the lever to liberate the actor to work from her 'cultural self', and to reconsider notions of difference as positive. She uses the term 'cultural self' to refer to the actor's inherited culture. In interview, she reflected on her recent experience of working with an Aboriginal actor at NIDA. At first the actor was resistant to the idea of playing from her Aboriginal self as she saw it as limiting her potential casting by being forced to play a negative racial stereotype.⁴⁹⁷ When she attempted this approach she performed '[A] mimic of her own culture. She presented what she thought the cultural authority wanted to see of her, the Aborigine'.⁴⁹⁸ In other words, the actor was 'quoting' race in the way that she drew on the repeated performative action, which inscribes the racial type. Judith Butler in *Bodies that Matter*, refers to such actions as 'doing race', where through repetition, assumptions about gender or race become assimilated.⁴⁹⁹ Looking at Landon-Smith's practice we can see how by 'doing race' the actor gains awareness of the positive power, *potencia*, that her difference allows. Landon-Smith reflects on the way that this enables the multiple voices of her ancestry to be heard. She explains, 'When she allows herself to tap into her own personal narrative, she brings this echo of her history. It's extraordinary and you can hear the history in her performance'.⁵⁰⁰ Only by experiencing the difference between performative action and performed action could the actor at the NIDA workshop start to recognise her choices.

⁴⁹⁵ Geraldine Harris offers an overview of the problematic blurring of these two terms in *Staging Femininities: Performance and Performativity* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp.172-175.

⁴⁹⁶ *Intracultural Actors Master-class*. Kings Place, King Cross, London, (17.09.13).

⁴⁹⁷ Landon-Smith (17.01.15).

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), pp.12-18.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

Performing the stereotype as an anti-model is used in Boalian performative pedagogy to critically expose the social constructions which subjugate minorities. By modeling the negative stereotype in a role-play, you then re-model, repeating the performance in different ways and working with different choices to reflexively challenge limiting representations.⁵⁰¹ This approach makes acting a kinetic process of discovery that opens up a site of resistance in performance. Actors might be asked to appropriate 'Chinese Man' or 'African woman' as a way to get them to connect with their inherited culture and so explore this part of themselves through an-other.⁵⁰² Rather than seeing these as stereotypes, Landon-Smith prefers the term 'cultural sign-posts,' or in other words, 'archetypes'. She considers this in interview:

[T]he Indian mother and the Indian son relationship, it's a cultural signpost. The person who is playing that will have some knowledge of that and so they can be the expert and they'll know how to play the Indian son and the Indian mother and whilst it might be a stereotype to start with, we can keep modeling it and then end up with the nuance. So I do subconsciously go to cultural signposts.⁵⁰³

In improvisation, Landon-Smith uses situations where a tension is built around an imbalance of power. For example, waiter and customer, nanny and employer or king and servant. In this way she uses a structure of anti-model, where a negative and oppressive power structure is revealed in order for the imbalance to be critiqued and possible solutions found. The cultural context is approximated, but through this comes an awareness of 'the difference between appropriating yourself and being yourself'.⁵⁰⁴ By placing actors in situations, whether bound by racial stereotypes or by the circumstances of failing (not getting the job, losing the boyfriend) she invites them to defend their position and raises the stakes, which is the hook to engage full commitment to the situation. Once a clear objective is being played at high stakes, the actor moves beyond the stereotype. The shift in confidence and ownership brought to the playing of the text is palpable and

⁵⁰¹ Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), p.173.

⁵⁰² *Intracultural Actors Master-class*. King Cross, London, (17.09.13).

⁵⁰³ Interview with Landon-Smith, (17.01.15).

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

transformative. It can appear as if Landon-Smith is unpeeling the layers of socially constructed behaviour.

In her summary of the key features of postmodern performance, Harris considers that all performance is always already inevitably within quotation marks and it is the visibility or loudness of the citation that determines the style and effect of performance.⁵⁰⁵ The actor shifts between mimicry, mimesis, appropriation, and presentation to reveal the choices available and to locate herself within this citation gauge. The concern that modeling might be seen as reductive or even racist shuts down the transformative positivity of difference, not only in actor training but also in UK schools. Landon-Smith recalls how one teacher in secondary school felt uncomfortable when a white student was asked to imitate her friend's Indian Auntie as this was viewed to be potentially racist. Such anxiety results in race being homogenised. Only by being open to questioning can stereotypes and ignorance be challenged, as Landon-Smith explains: 'You cannot censor in an intra-cultural practice'.⁵⁰⁶ She uses the performativity of their 'cultural self' to guide the actor to experience the tempo rhythms in voice and body that are deeply embedded in the cultural psyche, to 'use that cultural power to find the unpredictable rhythm'.⁵⁰⁷ Butler talks of how 'a hiatus of iterability'⁵⁰⁸ interrupts normativity and allows for the potential for difference. By enabling actors to work with the multiplicity and differences within themselves, as well as between each other, Landon-Smith's CAP makes space for these discoveries. This way of learning illustrates Braidotti's 'affirmative politics', where utilizing the positivity of difference offers an alternative and sustainable way of being together.⁵⁰⁹

Vanessa Ewan: Learning how 'to see' with keys and codes in playing gender

Vanessa Ewan is Head of Movement at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD) where she has developed her pedagogy since 1990. Choosing to

⁵⁰⁵ Harris, p. 77.

⁵⁰⁶ Interview with Kristine Landon-Smith, (17.01.15).

⁵⁰⁷ (17.09.13) *Intra-cultural Actors' Master-class*. Kings Place. King Cross. London.

⁵⁰⁸ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: on the discursive limits of sex*. (London: Routledge, 1993), p.234.

⁵⁰⁹ For a full explanation of this construct see Chapter Two, Braidotti, pp.268-298.

include Ewan's practice in a study orientated to the pedagogy of actor training purposefully resists the separatist divide between the fields of voice, movement and acting to expose transferable critical pedagogies. By this I mean the potentially empowering personal and social knowledge that is interdisciplinary. Ewan, who was trained in the Laban ideology of the 'thinking dancer' and who cites Bonnie Bird⁵¹⁰ and Marion North⁵¹¹ as key influences, teaches actors how to 'see', or to perceive, qualities of movement and performative action. Martha Graham and Pina Bausch are aesthetic influences, and she recalls the trailblazing Maggie Bird and Jean Newlove, who started East 15, as formative in her professional development. Her ideology is rooted in her Laban training where 'difference' was celebrated and any notion of a 'normative' dancer's body was challenged. She supports actors to find a 'unique way of seeing and being in the world' ⁵¹² through the politics of the body, developing the Laban efforts into 'codes and keys', a form of gestic somatic critique.⁵¹³ Alongside technique, she develops the actor's personal and social knowledge, which she explains as 'teaching things that an actor needs to know about human beings and about people and the games that they play themselves'.⁵¹⁴ Ewan's commitment to making pedagogy explicit can be seen in the articulation of her practice in her book, *Actor Movement: Expression of the Physical Being*.⁵¹⁵ Written with long-time colleague Debbie Green, it is designed for actors, movement tutors, choreographers, movement directors and directors.⁵¹⁶ In it, Ewan consistently foregrounds the learning experience with notes for tutors, such as the need for specific and accurate dialogic practice in feedback where,

[R]eference may be made to cultural difference, skin colour and sexuality... The tutor's choice of language can also keep an actor 'on track' as he finds a more sophisticated way of seeing (for example, the tutor might drop in masculine and feminine as clearer descriptors than 'male' and 'female').⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁰ Bonnie Bird (1914-1995) was a member of the original Martha Graham Dance Company and was Director of Dance at Laban from 1974.

⁵¹¹ Marion North (1925-2012) was Principal of Laban from 1973-2003.

⁵¹² Ewan, (15.11.13).

⁵¹³ Vanessa Ewan and Debbie Green, *Actor Movement: Expression of the Physical Being* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015), pp.205-243.

⁵¹⁴ Ewan, (15.11.13).

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., p.xi.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., p.68.

This developed pedagogic awareness may, in part, stem from teaching MA Movement teachers where she makes the learning processes explicit. A thick description of how Ewan teaches actors to 'do gender', offers another illustrative example of CAP for actors in practice. The double vision required of acting, which Elin Diamond, in reference to the female performer, terms 'looking-at-being-looked-at-ness',⁵¹⁸ is clearly illustrated in Ewan's practice.

Double vision: 'Drop the work!'

Ewan teaches actors how 'to see', or how to observe the body, to develop a critically reflexive awareness of its politics. Brecht posits: 'Observation is a major part of acting'⁵¹⁹ as the actor observes the social, cultural and political gestus, in order to demonstrate the character with a critical attitude. Ewan comments, 'So many exercises that the actor encounters develop his eye and ability to read the body'⁵²⁰ and I locate this learning as a 'transferable skill',⁵²¹ or 'dispositional quality'⁵²² in the hidden curriculum of acting. Ewan explains observation as 'more than seeing', as a bodily memory that can be usefully stored by the actor. She pinpoints three stages: 'The actor starts by looking outwards: he looks at the world, then at the influence of the world on the person and finally at the person himself'.⁵²³ In this way the actor learns to read the socially inscribed and performative movement of the body. Ewan reflects on observation from a gendered perspective:

It might be that they [girls] haven't been brought up to watch the other. I held the watches at the football matches when I was a child. I was so happy to hold all the boys' watches! But that was a place where I learnt some things. Maybe they [girls] are not watching any more, maybe they are there doing? They literally do not know how to see. I think it's really important that the actors have that. Partly because a lot of their time is spent in the

⁵¹⁸ Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis*. (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), p.52.

⁵¹⁹ Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (London: Methuen, 1978), p.196.

⁵²⁰ Ewan, p.101.

⁵²¹ Wangh, op.cit.

⁵²² Murray, op.cit.

⁵²³ Ewan, p.102.

rehearsal room at the edge and so they can be really investigating and understanding. You know, most of their lives is sat on the sidelines.⁵²⁴

Here Ewan references the quality of close observation that she particularly observed in her female teachers at Laban where she was aware of certain gendered characteristics. The female teachers seemed less concerned with 'performing themselves' and more able to watch the class. She notes: 'I was very aware of Bonnie Bird's acute understanding of watchfulness and that very much influenced me'.⁵²⁵ Ewan positions the individual as being both the perceiver and the perceived and in this way she can be seen to inhabit Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological position where the body is both object and subject.⁵²⁶ Actors are taught to exist simultaneously in these two states, with a double vision, which in part comes from learning how to observe the other. Dialogic scaffolding is established through the vocabulary of Laban Motion Forces (Breath, Weight, Time and Space - BWTS)⁵²⁷ and the eight Efforts of Action Drive (dabbing, gliding, floating, thrusting, flicking, wringing, pressing, slashing).⁵²⁸ This, along with the language of metaphor, enables the actor to put into words the somatic translations they are experiencing. They undertake 'live' research through the observation of place, people or animals, noting observations and recognising patterns in movement and the way in which everything is interconnected, socially enactive and relational.⁵²⁹ Moving beyond Laban, Ewan has developed a system of 'codes and keys' as a way of looking at how to play types of behaviour. This reflexively interrogates performative action. 'Codes' refers to states of being 'instantly recognised through physical expression',⁵³⁰ for instance 'old age' and 'drunk'. 'Keys' access 'codes', for example the key to playing old age might be 'bound energy' or 'doing one thing at a time'. There are social codes which belong to the world of the play and will reflect the historical, political and social landscape and

⁵²⁴ Ewan. (15.11.13).

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964), pp.162-3.

⁵²⁷ Ewan, p.104.

⁵²⁸ Ibid., p.229.

⁵²⁹ Ibid., p. 229.

⁵³⁰ Ibid., pp. 229-243.

physical codes, which belong to the character's movement and are more universal but still specific and relational.

Imogen Hale studied for three years with Ewan and she reflects on how Ewan's pedagogy opened up her ways of seeing. In her first year after leaving drama school, Hale was cast as the lead role in Kneehigh's production of *Rebecca*, an adaptation of the novel by Daphne du Maurier. Her explanation of her movement choices in creating the character Mrs. de Winter evidence how she has worked with codes and keys to author her performance:

I'm working with her being not balanced physically as a kind of metaphor...she's ringing inside and she's heavy, but it's like a full woman and she's not yet in her power and she's lighter than that, so quite flicky and light and she's kind of not able to fully sink into her power until half way through the show.⁵³¹

Hale's dialogue here illustrates the learnt Laban language. However, she also reflects that Ewan's pedagogy moves beyond technique acquisition in order to help actors to see the value of 'not working', 'day dreaming' and to trust that the knowledge of movement can be used 'effortlessly'. She concludes: 'the biggest thing that I got from her is to drop the work and to trust that if I understood the pattern or the being that I was in, then it would be there effortlessly'.⁵³² This points again to the idea of learning through pleasure, *the via positiva*, rather than through extreme effort, pain or fear.

*Critical acting pedagogy: 'doing' gender*⁵³³

A close description of how Ewan works with keys and codes in the playing of gender illustrates a critical pedagogy, where actors experience the politics of gendered action. In a workshop at RCSSD with sixteen second year BA actors,⁵³⁴ Ewan locates her investigation of gender in the 1950s, 'because it's a very performative extreme of stereotypical male/females'.⁵³⁵ As Elin Diamond identifies

⁵³¹ Interview with Hale, Bristol, (30.01.15).

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ Ewan, (15.11.13).

⁵³⁴ Gender workshop with second year BA actors at the RCSSD, (06.06.14).

⁵³⁵ Ewan, (15.11.13).

in her overview of a gestic feminist criticism, historicisation allows actors to examine situational gendered positions obliquely and so choose to what extent to draw comparisons with their contemporary experience.⁵³⁶ The three-hour workshop moves through a number of exercises to examine gendered behaviour through action. The first exercise takes the action of fighting in a playground and compares the gendered behaviour codes of boys and girls play fighting. Boys are not encouraged to touch each other and so in fight they use contact as an opportunity for a 'gathering' drive or effort, which engages the whole body. In comparison, girls are more conditioned to touch each other as part of their socialised behaviour, yet less habitualised to physically connect in fight, so the code they are given to lead their efforts is 'scattering' and they connect more in the upper body. Both gender groups, equal in this case, play their own gender, then observe the playing of the other, then swap to mimic the observed behaviour, reflecting on the shift in experience. In this way the actors begin to observe how certain performative acts construct perceptions of gender.

In theorising Ewan's teaching of visibility and gender, I apply the thinking of feminist theorists Judith Butler and Jacqueline Rose, in particular their readings of Lacan.⁵³⁷ First I offer my observation of the class, with particular focus on the dialogic practice, to explain key exercises and the ways that Ewan structures the learning. She introduces the first exercise in distanced, historicised terms:

So I'm saying males and females. I'm saying that in terms of masculinity in the 1950s. So the females – I'm going to give you a very simple thing. You are a 'thing'. We're going to take this a step further. So this is a very simple thing. Your relationship with your object.⁵³⁸

She moves around the room and points to an object and then back to herself, 'This is me – this is a chair- this is me – this is a door – this is me – I've got an outline – this is a chair – it has an outline'.⁵³⁹ The actors tentatively move around the room doing the exercise. There is a sense of doubt and certainly some resistance to naming themselves as an object. Vanessa encourages them, 'Don't fight against it.

⁵³⁶ Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997).

⁵³⁷ Jacqueline Rose and Judith Butler's particular readings of Lacan, visuality and gender are examined in Chapter Three.

⁵³⁸ Ewan, (06.06.14).

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*

Do it! This is not nice...because it's actually true!' ⁵⁴⁰ Then the male actors are asked to join in to build an improvisation,

So we're going to do a slightly different game. What do you think your role will be? Your key is 'the guardian'. So one person is going to leave the room and basically one of you is going to be the threat. I'm going to find out if this is still in your make up. ⁵⁴¹

She models for the actor who was about to go outside. A bar situation is set up with the girls playing 'objects' and the boys playing the Guardians of their 'she objects'. Ewan's dialogue is interesting in the way that she subtly invites a comparison between historicised behaviour and the present. She provokes, 'We already have very different forms in the room. Maybe some things haven't changed?' ⁵⁴² The male actor exits and she arranges the room, placing one male actor behind the door. Some actors are watching and the actor enters and she tells him, after about three seconds, to close his eyes, then asks him what he can see. He is able to pick out the main threat of the person watching behind the door. Ewan then repeats this improvisation, but layering detail in the behavioural actions of the genders at play. Firstly she turns her attention to the girls.

So females – you're going to be objects – The male can get you the chair – an object for an object. [to the males] You can look at them. They are there. They are the object. You can look with great respect... You can look at them as if they were an intelligent thing – an encyclopedia. ⁵⁴³

The males start to walk around the room looking at the females who are seated. Suddenly the atmosphere changes from the relaxed joviality to a sense of unease. The females are immediately under the threat of the gaze. They shift in their seats and try to disappear, closing themselves off and there is a strong sense of discomfort.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

Look at one object at a time. You are allowed to look and this is not comfortable. So does this look a bit real. Does this feel a bit normal? This is the difference – when you are looking at the object you are not looking at them in a rude way – because you are a guardian. If we are ‘doing’ gender, all the men are guardians, all the females are objects. We are not ‘doing’ characters.⁵⁴⁴

Ewan’s practice maps the Butlerian notion of ‘doing’ gender⁵⁴⁵ where performative actions are interrogated as an acting technique. In this workshop the female is explicitly objectified as an object and the masquerade is deconstructed, which reflects Butler and Rose’s notion of socially constructed performative acts. The female actors found this uncomfortable because, as they recognised in discussion, it felt rather too close to their reality. The restricted female body of the 1950s drew parallels with contemporary inscriptions of Botoxed faces, tattooed eyebrows and body altering fashion. By asking the females to perform their ‘outline’, the ‘doubleness’ of being, which Rose refers to as ‘being as being divided’,⁵⁴⁶ the actors experienced the double vision of being both the perceiver and the perceived. Applying a feminist reading of Lacan, we could situate the females as seeming to have the power. The male gaze of the guardians positioned the females as having the phallus, which the males were guarding and competing for. The females performed their acts of femininity, their masquerade, in order to manipulate the male behaviour. However, the invisibility of the males, in comparison to the females, referenced their privilege to move through life with the choice of visibility denied to the females existing under the male gaze. Ewan drew attention to the comparative freedom of the males and the way that they were conditioned to perform their ‘bravado’, their ‘gathering’, in physical activities, be it fighting or football. As the actors were invited to experience and observe the cross-sex playing to see and feel the performative acts from the other’s point of view, they explored, reflexively, what it might be like to be in the other sexed body and to perform the gender of that body. The learning sparked energetic discussion and some shock, particularly amongst the female students, one of whom, as a British

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁵⁴⁶ Rose, pp.62-64.

Muslim, recognised the exaggerated masquerade as inherent in the oppressive structures of her community.

This workshop was pre-rehearsal for a production in which some actors were to play cross gender. In a class of sixteen there was only the opportunity to mix some of the casting as opposed to single-sex casting in two separate productions. Ewan bemoaned the loss of this opportunity for actors in their training, 'because it liberates several things and one of them is the clarity of actions and meaning because the stakes are different'.⁵⁴⁷ She used the example of the act of kissing and how, playing cross gender, allows the actor to think about kissing as 'a political thing — as in who is in charge here?'⁵⁴⁸ Ewan's feminist position interrogates the ways that women continue to be objectified and she demonstrates a concern for the potential exploitation of the female body. In *Personal Safety in Movement*,⁵⁴⁹ she addresses the sexual exploitation that can render the actor vulnerable. For example, she discusses the irony that fight scenes necessitate a movement expert for the protection of the actor whilst sex scenes do not and she cautions that being 'open' should not make one vulnerable: 'Being available to discovery does not mean being sexually open, or open to unnecessary criticism or manipulation'.⁵⁵⁰ Whilst actor training frequently references the psychophysical experience for the performer, I have yet to see the gendered implications of the psychosexual considered. It is in the realm of movement teaching, a field dominated by female practitioners, that the actor develops awareness of the gendered and particular self. Movement teaching explicitly works to 'soften' the male body and find the power in the female body. Shona Morris, former Head of Acting at Drama Centre, considers the implications of 'feminising' the male body in movement training for actors:

I absolutely know in my gut that what I am doing is feminine... my way of getting the men to get in touch with the side of them that is vulnerable is to bring them into the female space and they're terrified, because they feel very, very vulnerable, especially young men today ... Any time you're working with the spine, you're working basically with a movement which comes from the pelvis and the thing about working with the core is that if

⁵⁴⁷ Ewan, (15.11.13).

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ Ewan, pp.245-255.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., p.250.

it's got muscle in it, then the spine is locked. But if you are working with a core and its got fluidity in it, then the spine is very fluid and for a man that feels very, very scary. Because for a woman that's where our power is, but for a man that's where they lose control.⁵⁵¹

Ewan also positions certain features of her practice as female. For example, she essentialises the female orientation for affirmation, citing the maternal experience, whilst recognising the limiting objectification of 'the mother figure'.⁵⁵² In teaching the female MA Movement students, many of whom have come from dance backgrounds, she explicitly coaches them to think about their own gendered performativity as a teacher and to expand their communicative range beyond feminine aesthetics 'They have to be able to play a deep note, do something loud, substantial in their movement', she explains.⁵⁵³ In this way Ewan guides her students to think about the power play of gender in relationships between teacher/student and in the work place, so they might critically resist perpetuating normative appropriations.

In *Volatile Bodies*, Elizabeth Grosz considers the possibilities and limitations of a corporeal feminism and examines the ways that both inside (the lived body) and outside (the social body) operate beside each other.⁵⁵⁴ Ewan's critical performative practice allows the actor to reflexively inhabit the space between inside-out and outside-in and this personal and social knowledge develops an understanding of the politics of the body. Illustrating the previously examined feminist perspectives, she enables the double vision of 'looking-at-being-looked-at-ness' and the double gesture of Diamond's feminist gestic criticism.⁵⁵⁵ Ewan's pedagogy teaches actors 'to see' the gendered games that people play and to explore the potential of their multiple bodies.

⁵⁵¹ Morris, (01.11.13).

⁵⁵² Ewan, (15.11.13).

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (USA: Indiana University Press, 1994).

⁵⁵⁵ Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997).

Alison Hodge: Learning how ‘to feel’ with *Core Training for the Relational Actor*⁵⁵⁶

Alison Hodge has been described as ‘one of the most original actor trainers working today’.⁵⁵⁷ She is artistic director of The Quick and the Dead, a European ensemble that began in 2005 with postgraduate students at Royal Holloway University, where she taught from 1996-2013 while leading actor training workshops in UK drama schools and internationally. Her scholarship, *Twentieth Century Actor Training*⁵⁵⁸ and *Core Training for the Relational Actor*⁵⁵⁹ has made an important contribution to the field. She now works freelance and continues to develop Core Training through ongoing work with her company of five female performers from Spain, Italy, Turkey, Greece, and the UK. Hodge’s first company, Theatre Alibi, travelled to Poland in the 1990s to train with Gardzienice and her collaboration with Wlodimir Staniewski is a well documented formative influence.⁵⁶⁰ Less considered are the female influences on Hodge’s teaching, which can be traced through a genealogy of Scaravelli yoga trainers (Diane Long, Sophie Hall and Caroline Lang)⁵⁶¹ and through the legacy of Joan Littlewood.⁵⁶² Hodge’s training is built on principles of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology which explores the inter-relational experience of being in the world⁵⁶³ and she helps actors develop their relational awareness and their capacity for reciprocity.⁵⁶⁴ The discussion here is the result of five days as participant/observer of Core Training at RCSSD between 2013-2015, and an extended interview with Hodge and two of the company actors. In framing the context and ideology of this practice, I consider the ways in which it maps the previously examined female ontology of acting.

⁵⁵⁶ Alison Hodge, *Core Training for the Relational Actor* (London & New York: Routledge, 2013).

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., Front piece.

⁵⁵⁸ Alison Hodge: *Twentieth Century Actor Training* (London & New York: Routledge, 2010).

⁵⁵⁹ Hodge, 2013.

⁵⁶⁰ Wlodimir Staniewski and Alison Hodge, *Hidden Territories: The Theatre of Gardzienice* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁵⁶¹ Hodge, (21.03.15)

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Eranston: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

⁵⁶⁴ Hodge, p.4.

It is interesting to note how Hodge, as a woman, has met and re-interpreted the 'great, white male' Polish training lineages of the twentieth century.⁵⁶⁵ She reflects on the dominant masculine body in the laboratory theatres of the 1960s and 70s and how, whilst women such as Anna Dabrowska, Eder Roderich, Dorota Kolodziej were part of the company, 'Gardzienice's work is extremely dominated by men ... it was a masculine world...it's a male director talking about his perspective on life. That was for me possibly the hardest thing to connect with'.⁵⁶⁶ Hodge left Poland to address a number of 'silences' she perceived in the landscape of actor training: the absence of the female body, the neutralising of gender and the lack of women in the lineages of training. She elucidates:

The thing that I was really interested in is how the female body and the notion of the female actor is incredibly under researched and under celebrated. I was really sure when I'd seen it in drama schools here [in the UK], that there were sort of quite clichéd notions of what a female actress is, whether it's the old crone or the character actor or whatever... [T]here was an absence of the female body and female presence in a lot of actor training full stop...I think it's very interesting, the space for women and that needs to be looked at. I think one of the impulses for the work was to celebrate the female body and to celebrate female ugliness, female imperfections, the non-traditional archetypical female stuff and try to find ways of exploring femaleness in artistic ways that are not traditional.⁵⁶⁷

Whilst the work is built on a feminist ideology which challenges limiting representations and tries to understand the female condition, Hodge wants to avoid it being pigeon-holed as a solely female training practice. The central features of the practice – touch, breath, physical contact and rhythm – are universal, but she recognises the female domain of the work. For example, how it is inherently gendered as she is female; how working with a company of women has orientated the concerns; and how they work through instinct as opposed to intellectual design or theory which might be considered to be a female approach.⁵⁶⁸ One of the actors in the company, Daniela García Casilda, reflects:

⁵⁶⁵ Maria Kapsali, 'Training in a Cold Climate: Edited Transcript of Roundtable Discussion', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*. 5(2), (2014), p.231.

⁵⁶⁶ Hodge (21.03.15).

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

I think Ali pays a lot of attention to femininity. The training is useful to everybody, men and women, but it embraces the feminine universe. I remember at some point working with skirts as if they were a mask, almost a mask of femininity. You had to feel the skirt and work physically with it. And of course it was bringing many issues, physical and emotional about being a female.⁵⁶⁹

This enables the actor to interrogate the constructions of what Grosz refers to as the 'social body' alongside the 'lived body,' so the actor can develop their double consciousness.⁵⁷⁰ Grosz's project, to examine a corporeal feminism considers the constitutive articulations between the biological and the psychological, the inside and the outside of the body which she proposes must work 'not in opposition to each other but as necessarily interactive'.⁵⁷¹ Hodge's practice enables actors to explore the interactive dimension of both states. Another company member, Tatiana Bre, sees the practice not as a 'feminine universe', but as one that enables the actor to move away from preconceptions and connect to their personal and emotional landscape. 'So, in that sense, all sorts of preconceptions or stereotypes related to sex are questioned and pure female or male qualities can occur'.⁵⁷²

Since 2015, Hodge has led sessions internationally in 'Women and Leadership'.⁵⁷³ Working with a specifically gendered pedagogical focus outside of actor training and theatre-making has enabled an objective observation of certain traits which she essentialises as female such as 'the use of touch, learning to take your space and feel alright about it, being supported by other women and making that easier'.⁵⁷⁴ However, she recognises the potential limitations of adopting such an essentialist position to reflect,

It would be very dangerous if it was some sort of "exploring, touchy, feeling, let's all be nice", because that would be very boring and nothing would

⁵⁶⁹ Casilda, (16.04.15).

⁵⁷⁰ Grosz, op.cit.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., p.23.

⁵⁷² Bre, (20.04.15).

⁵⁷³ This is with Dramatic Resources, a company working with drama techniques in industry training.

⁵⁷⁴ Hodge, (21.03.15).

happen! But I think these aspects of sensuality and touch and feeling have been our starting point.⁵⁷⁵

Following Hodge's thinking, I identify 'sensuality, touch and feeling' as female traits within the hidden curriculum of acting and in the following section I consider the ways that these skills and attitudes are taught.

'A distillate of between-ness'⁵⁷⁶: the relational self of the actor

Many features of feminist knowledge construction underpin Hodge's ideology, her approach to actor training and to making work. For example, she resists naming her practice as a 'methodology' but explains it as an organic process, constantly in flux, fluid and liminal - 'chora-like'.⁵⁷⁷ Bodies are not to be 'trained' through a set regime to display a particular skill. As she says, 'We don't want to perfect, or correct our bodies, or hone a particular aesthetic body but to celebrate their uniqueness and the particularity of each encounter'.⁵⁷⁸ This encounter is different each time the company meet, as individual lives have moved on. 'We always start from where we are and who we are'.⁵⁷⁹ Hodge teaches actors to experience how consciousness exists in relation to others, as opposed to an individual sense of self, which, she suggests, dominates traditions of Western actor training.⁵⁸⁰ Reflecting Gardzienice's practice of mutuality,⁵⁸¹ where the state of being exists through the inter-relational action with the other(s), Hodge works on the self as 'a fundamentally relational understanding'.⁵⁸² This moves beyond dualistic notions of the self and other, to focus on the space between, the inter-relational connection between the self, space, object or other people.

In this way Hodge's ideology reflects the three E's of cognitive consciousness – embedded, enactive, embodied – to theorise her approach through

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Hodge, p.10.

⁵⁷⁷ Kristeva, op.cit.

⁵⁷⁸ Hodge, p.28.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁰ Here I am thinking of the 'Work on the Self' in Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work* (London & New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁵⁸¹ Staniewski, p.74.

⁵⁸² Hodge, (16.01.13).

socio-scientific paradigms.⁵⁸³ She dismantles dualisms to present a lived body as an integrated organism and explains how 'our definition of self is becoming more porous, more fluid, that we are less easily divisible from each other and our environment. It is a fundamentally relational understanding of ourselves'.⁵⁸⁴ This self exists in relationship with the 'external I' in the space and the 'external eye' of the audience. In this way Hodge reflects Rose's view that we are both the perceiver and the perceived and 'being is an affect of division'.⁵⁸⁵ In training, she works to develop an actor's awareness to all elements of 'other' including space, time and objects, explaining in interview:

[T]here isn't such a thing as an object. They each have their own quality and presence so nothing is finite. We are all in relation to things that are changing. That's a much bigger conversation about capitalism and about products and how we choose to see the world, but actually it's all alive... things are in a process as we are.⁵⁸⁶

This approach encompasses the particular knowledge of the hidden curriculum - empathy, listening, impulse, instinct and sensitivity. Hodge cites Evan Thompson to assert: 'One's consciousness of oneself as an embodied individual in the world is founded on empathy'.⁵⁸⁷ Empathy has been situated as a gendered behaviour, with females tending to show more development in the neurological connections of the right brain.⁵⁸⁸ The right and left sides of the brain offer different types of attention with the left more focused and the right more holistic, responsible for the capacities that help us form bonds with others, emotional intelligence and empathy. Ian McGilchrist, a psychiatrist who observed *The Quick and the Dead* in 2011, recognised 'a distillate of between-ness, in enabl[ing] the actors' practical

⁵⁸³ Phillip Zarrilli, Jerri Daboo and Rebecca Loukes, *Acting: Psychophysical Phenomenon and Process* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp.1-50.

⁵⁸⁴ Hodge, p.4.

⁵⁸⁵ Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality and the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986), p.65.

⁵⁸⁶ Interview with Alison Hodge (21.03.15).

⁵⁸⁷ Hodge, p.3, citing Evan Thompson, 'Empathy and Consciousness', *Journal of Consciousness Studies*. Vol 8 (5-7), (2001), pp.1-32.

⁵⁸⁸ Nicole Karafyllis and Gotlind Ulshofer, *Sexualised Brains: Scientific Modelling of Emotional Intelligence from a Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: The MIT Press, 2008), pp.1-13.

engagement of right and left brain activities'.⁵⁸⁹ Hodge explains the particular form of attention as 'polyphonic', which allows single-minded attention, where we are thinking about ourselves and double-minded attention, where we also keep someone else's thoughts in mind. This double attention can be seen to enable what Eve Sedgwick, in her alternative to dualistic thinking, describes as 'thinking beside'.⁵⁹⁰

Hodge's practice feels immediately 'other' to psychologically orientated acting approaches with its focus on mutuality of bodies, song, rhythm, impulse and encounter. The Polish training lineage from Grotowski to Gardzienice and Song of The Goat, has infiltrated the curricula of drama schools and universities since the 1970s, offering an 'otherness' in the approach to ensemble theatre-making. There is a spiritual quality to this work, reflecting its Polish Catholic foundations, which attends to the interconnections between nature, life, and humanity. The emotional affect is both empathetic and political, as it ignites responsibility for the other; as Hodge explains, 'The individual is dead. It's all about the relationship'.⁵⁹¹ The movement from 'I to thou'⁵⁹² is inherent in the encounter with others, as actors explore themselves through seeing, listening and navigating time and space. In considering this shift Hodge posits: 'It's not 'me' or 'she' or 'I am' and 'me,' it's 'me and you' somehow. I never see you as an object but always as someone who has everything to say to me too'.⁵⁹³ This moves towards what Phelan describes as a 'reciprocal gaze',⁵⁹⁴ to develop empathy through a critical shared somatic pedagogy. When one thinks of the term 'Core', the association of core muscles tends to direct thinking towards the body, however Hodge points to the etymological meaning of the term, which has the double referent to body and emotion. Learning how to feel, places the body as the 'locus for one's feelings'.⁵⁹⁵ This awareness of interdependency and co-creation enables a critical somatic pedagogy. Observing Hodge's work, the atmosphere and dynamic changes in the

⁵⁸⁹ Hodge, p.10.

⁵⁹⁰ Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), p.8.

⁵⁹¹ Hodge, (16.01.13).

⁵⁹² Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004)

⁵⁹³ Hodge (16.01.13).

⁵⁹⁴ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), p.17.

⁵⁹⁵ Hodge, p.7.

room. People appear to become more careful with each other, more caring, with a potential for greater understanding.

*Foundational practices: 'Sensuality, touch and feeling'*⁵⁹⁶

In the overview of her practice, Hodge identifies four strands: Attention and Attending; The Porous Body; The Feeling Body; Working with Time and Space.⁵⁹⁷ Here, I focus on the Feeling Body and consider how Hodge scaffolds the teaching and learning through touch to include: polyphonic attention; tempo-rhythm, which is a 'felt state' and explored through the body; breath and voice; impulse work; caretaking, which scaffolds impulse work and allows the actors to work with absolute attention to the others' needs. Hodge acknowledges the centrality of touch as a way of learning in her practice. 'One of the big things in training that we neglect is touch. Touch forces you to connect with sensation and rhythm'.⁵⁹⁸ Restoring touch as central to a sensory engagement with the world presents the body as 'porous', the skin not as a boundary, but a place where one makes contact with the other. Anthropologist Timothy Ingold repositions touch as being as important as sight and hearing, as a bodily attitude that helps us make sense of the world.⁵⁹⁹ Touch unlocks sensuality and feeling, which might be essentialised as a more female domain.⁶⁰⁰ Studies have examined the relationship between touch and gender and identified certain types of touch, notably empathetic touch, as being more prevalent in female communication.⁶⁰¹

Hodge and participants work barefoot and the practice recognises that tactility is not just through the hands, but also, most importantly, through the feet. Touch through the feet, hands, spine, body is the reciprocity which teaches an actor to move beyond the complex language of the social space to listen to 'the quieter areas of the body'.⁶⁰² Neuroscientist Damasio points to how 'physiological

⁵⁹⁶ Hodge, (21.03.15).

⁵⁹⁷ Hodge, p.7.

⁵⁹⁸ Hodge (21.03.15).

⁵⁹⁹ Hodge, p.19.

⁶⁰⁰ Hodge, (21.03.15).

⁶⁰¹ Matthew Hertenstein and Dacher Keltner, 'Gender and the Communication of Emotion Via Touch', *Sex Roles*. 64, (2010), pp.70-80. Published online.

⁶⁰² Hodge., p. 20.

responses are what initiates an emotional reaction'.⁶⁰³ As such, emotion and feeling are embodied with a biological core, and physical experiences shape our thoughts. Hodge identifies two key influences on her work with touch. The first is Christian Jaker, who practised on her whilst training to become a Shiatsu master practitioner, prompting her understanding of touch as a pedagogical tool. The second influence is the somatic touch practised by Gardzienice. She increasingly sees touch as central to her critical somatic pedagogy. As she explains, '[T]ouch has this enormous capacity to open feelings in the body and I think that's a whole work that needs to be developed'.⁶⁰⁴ In the women's leadership workshops touch immediately enables participants to 'soften and open'.⁶⁰⁵

The pedagogical use of touch recognises that what is felt is not subordinate to what is heard or made visible, the immediate forms of communication which can cut us off from the relational nature of ourselves. Movement practitioner Shapiro, in her call for a critical somatic pedagogy in dance training, cites Heidegger's suggestion that touch is a way of thinking:

Touching is the extension of human consciousness; sensing through the hand materialises the life world. Language is the abstraction of touch... All the work of the hand is rooted in thinking.⁶⁰⁶

A consideration of touch recognises that it is more than one single sense and that the act of touching enables a complex range of understandings, which involves a number of different skin sensations such as pressure, temperature or pain. 'Haptics', meaning the active affect of touch from the Greek *haptein* 'to touch', is 'an umbrella term for a variety of sensory perceptions'.⁶⁰⁷ When vision is taken away, haptic sense takes over and unlike vision and hearing, which correspond to memory and certain geometric principles, haptic sense is always read as an experience of the now, arguably more live and responsive than the other senses. Touch enables sensation, proprioception, kinesthetic learning and importantly affect. In this way 'touching' and 'being touched' exist beside each other with 'being

⁶⁰³ Ibid., p. 22.

⁶⁰⁴ Hodge, (21.03.15).

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁶ Shelly Shapiro, *Pedagogy and the Politics of the Body: A Critical Praxis* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), p.35, citing Heidegger, (1968), p.16.

⁶⁰⁷ Martin Welton, 'Once More With Feeling', *Performance Research: A Journal of Performing Arts*, 10(1), (2005), pp.100-112.

touched by something' pointing to the emotional connection between the act and the affect. Eve Sedgwick, in her seminal collection of essays *Touching, Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* elucidates:

If texture and affect, touching and feeling belong together, then, it is not because they share a particular delicacy of scale, as would necessarily call for a close reading or a thick description. What they have in common is that at whatever scale they are attended to, both are irreducibly phenomenological.⁶⁰⁸

Texture and affect are revealed as forms of hidden knowledge, which enable a deeper form of feeling, learning and higher order questioning. Sedgwick suggests that we move from thinking 'What is it like? How does it impinge on me?' to consider 'How did it get that way and what can I do with it?'⁶⁰⁹ She examines how perception is also sensory and makes the link between touch and vision and the hidden knowledge of affect, emotion and intuition central to Core Training. Martin Welton, in his position as performer, considers this knowledge in the context of acting, reflecting on the modality of touch he experienced in performance where both actors and audience were in the dark.⁶¹⁰ From this perspective he is able to interrogate the joint haptic-affective sense, where his own feeling and sense of being was heightened, pointing to the central tenet of Hodge's practice:

If touch (in a joint haptic- affective sense) becomes as important to acting as visual appearance, then the condition of the actor's self becomes as important a consideration as the condition that she or he enacts upon or within the spectator. Touch then, in both haptic and affective senses, tells us both how and where we are, and, as such, provides an experiential base for a wider sense of being.⁶¹¹

This sense of being is relational and reciprocal. It is through the experience of touching and being touched that we can appear to each other through a felt sense and experience an immediate mutuality.

⁶⁰⁸ Sedgwick, p.21.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid. p.22.

⁶¹⁰ Welton, op.cit.

⁶¹¹ Welton, p.108.

Hodge uses touch to explore the body in time and space, with others and objects. At a foundational level the actor is coached to attend to the connections the body makes to surface and space. Whether lying on the floor, running, or touching another, Hodge draws attention to the spaces between: the space behind the ankle; behind the knees; between two spines; between hands. An awareness of weight, gravity and connection to the floor extends from the self, to giving one's weight to another and meeting through the spine. The spine is the starting point for connection between actors as it goes behind the social space of vision to a more subtle form of seeing through listening. Actors encounter each other in meeting spine to spine, giving and receiving the weight of their partner. In practice Hodge coaches through questioning: 'What do you notice?'; 'How can you speak to each other through the spine?'; 'How does your body fit with this body?'; 'What's the presence of this body in relation to you?'; 'What's the temperature of the body?'; 'How soft is the spine in relation to yours?'⁶¹² The connection between spines extends into exploring weight and balance where two actors work in constant flow of giving and receiving weight. The actors listen to each others' tiny shifts in movement and breath to discover a shared tempo rhythm where they are communing through impulse with responsibility for the other, where the feeling of being off balance demands you support and adjust to and for the other. This touch through the spine extends to the hands, the arms and then the whole body. Two exercises illustrate this. The first, 'Flying', involves two actors supporting a third in the center with their arms and taking their weight. The actors on the outside hold the arms of the third very carefully. Their job is to enable the actor in the middle to move as freely as they want in whatever way, listening and reading their breath, impulse and rhythm. It offers freedom for the actor in the middle who almost has a sense of flying. In the other exercise, 'Caretaking', one actor, wearing a veil, gives their weight to those around them, freely exploring impulse, space and rhythm by allowing herself to be fully supported by the group. They work with a veil to remove facial communication, and the transaction of the social body. Each actor brings a totally unique personality to the exercise and everyone adjusts to the individual. On the outside the actors are always on the edge of movement, not crowding the actor in the middle, but caretaking her, catching, guiding, lifting,

⁶¹² Taken from observation notes RCSSD (21.03.15).

directing, balancing and supporting. 'Her freedom and risk is made possible by the group'.⁶¹³ In practice, there is a shared responsibility to the other and the touch and attention generates a feeling of empathy and plurality.

Extending haptic understanding to include breath reflects the 'felt sense' of Scaravelli yoga. Hodge positions breath as central to connecting to feeling:

I have found that working with my breath helps me access emotions more easily... It is the breath that is leading the actor and is teaching them about their experience. The feeling of the breath affects you. ⁶¹⁴

In the first stages the actor focuses on her own breath through somatic breathing where she feels the tempo of the breath throughout the whole body, allowing the breath to release the emotion. In rhythmic breathing the actors work with connection and find a shared rhythm and working in pairs they breathe into hands, one actor holds the other's rib cage, to feel the rhythm, the pause between in-breath and outbreath and the quality of the breath. Another exercise asks one actor to support the other through the lower spine, whilst listening to the rhythm of the breath. At the point of the pause between inbreath and outbreath, the partner gives a direction to the other through the pressure of their hand on the spine, which offers an impulse for movement. This connection between touch, breath, weight, rhythm and impulse sets concrete technical demands for the actor and enables a heightened polyphonic listening.

The use of touch in relation to objects is another aspect of Core Training where actors work with a broom handle to manipulate the object in space, keeping the space between themselves and the stick alive and dynamic, allowing it to fall, catching it and maintaining flow and energy. Extending from this, actors pass the stick to each other, allowing each throw and catch to exchange a particular question and answer. Hodge warns that: 'The conversation is more precise when the questions are clear'.⁶¹⁵ Working with rhythm, breath and connection with object the space between becomes alive and this work extends to exploration of other objects, chairs, costumes and props. The touch and affect enables the actor to

⁶¹³ Ibid., p.16.

⁶¹⁴ Hodge (21.03.15).

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

create a responsive and relational score where they animate the inanimate. This work then extends into theatre-making processes where actors can generate powerful images and archetypal patterns. Welton considers how the relationship between objects can become as real as the objects themselves, as it is these 'behavioural units' which give meaning to the object.⁶¹⁶ Consequently how one sits on the chair or throws the stick affects how one is moved and touched by it. Like the heightened awareness of touch and the floor at the start of the practice, the connection to a chair can offer the actor a rich and endless variety of choice, impulse and feeling.

The foundational practice of touch and breath offers actors a way to connect into feeling through their relation to the other. Two things are particularly striking when observing or participating in this work. Firstly, the expression of emotional intensity generated through the technical challenges. Participants wear the same expression — a kind of intensity, which is immediately emotionally involved — whilst maintaining a whole body openness to the other. This work is orientated to awakening the senses of the impulse and of the emotion, described by Bre:

[C]ultivating a sensitive body and body/mind awareness by keeping contact with all sorts of impulses that give rise to spontaneous, direct reactions and generate feelings at the same time.⁶¹⁷

Secondly, there is a palpable shift in the way that participants embrace touch. They start to touch themselves more, as well as others, which changes the dynamic in a room. Learning through touch in Core Training enables actors to develop their capacity to feel.

Critical acting pedagogy: the relational actor

I'm not sure you can teach anything to anybody. If I said do it in a precise way, you would never take ownership. Work with it until you find the way that it makes sense, the way that it works for you.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁶ Welton, p.111.

⁶¹⁷ Tatiana Bre, (20.04.15).

⁶¹⁸ Hodge, (16.01.13).

Like other female practitioners, Hodge is wary of branding training as a product, encouraging actors to get lost in the experience of the process and to 'Try to think about how it really works'.⁶¹⁹ This situated pedagogy enables people to learn through each other which 'depends on the group of people'⁶²⁰ and Hodge, like Landon-Smith and Ewan, explains her approach as diagnostic and relational:

The more you see who is in the room, the amount of bodies you have looked at, after a while you begin to understand what people need or what needs encouraging. I am very instinctive. I work with who's in the room. I work with what I see.⁶²¹

In practice, Hodge establishes a calm and respectful space and she does not present herself as having the answers. She works with a 'follow me' structure, where she models an exercise, but the action is always in relation to another, she is never presenting an individual technical score to be perfected (unlike Eastern training structures).⁶²² Whilst she demonstrates the technical way to do an exercise, *how* you do it depends on who you are working with and what qualities you bring to the task together. By setting specific and technical physical challenges, Hodge wants the participants to be totally immersed — to lose themselves in the experience. The structure of learning is through 'follow me' and then 'joint experimentation'⁶²³ and Hodge talks throughout the class, coaching and questioning. She partners when needed, moving around the room and touching the bodies to shift positions, or pointing to where attention should be. The language is encouraging and specific, for example: 'Notice people – don't just glaze – really notice – that's the energy you want'; 'Don't get heavy – lift your centre'; 'Use the energy from your partner'; 'Keep the space alive between you'; 'Don't be polite, just negotiate'.⁶²⁴

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ Ibid.

⁶²¹ Hodge, (21.03.15).

⁶²² Here I am thinking of Phillip Zarrilli's practice with Kalari Piat see Phillip Zarrilli, *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach after Stanislavski* (London & New York: Routledge, 2009).

⁶²³ In 'Follow me' the teacher models and the student copies; 'joint experimentation' has teacher and student working out solutions together. Both are explained in Chapter Two.

⁶²⁴ Taken from observation notes: Hodge, (21.03.15).

In this work, the challenge is less about an individual confronting psychophysical blocks through the *via negativa*,⁶²⁵ but the subtle psychophysical possibilities investigated together. Therefore the learning is framed as positive, shared and operates within Braidotti's 'positivity of difference'.⁶²⁶ Hodge enables discussion throughout and, just as she helps people attend to the moments of pause (sats),⁶²⁷ between breath and impulse, she scaffolds the learning through moments of reflection, following the practice of educationalist Schön,⁶²⁸ allowing for regular mini plenaries. In interview she comments on how she has come to this approach,

I'm a great believer in immersive work and then reflection, because I think it can become either precious or one particular note if you don't allow for pauses. I think that sometimes people do need to let off a little steam. They want to share it and if you silence it...making notes an hour later is no good, sometimes you have to name it at the time.⁶²⁹

Unlike Staniewski, Hodge welcomes discussion into the room,⁶³⁰ encouraging critique and comment to enable a liberatory pedagogy where actors take ownership of their learning. Following the thinking of Shapiro, using the body as a way to better understand our relationships allows participants to also consider possible sites of resistance, to enable 'a more liberated and erotic way of being in the world'.⁶³¹ In the training I have participated in and observed with postgraduate actors in a drama school, discussion has stopped short of moving from personal reflexivity to social critique. However in Hodge's work with *The Quick and the Dead*, a critical pedagogy is established.⁶³² With this group of five women Hodge

⁶²⁵ Grotowski and Le Coq use the term *via negativa* in different ways. This is explained in Chapter Two.

⁶²⁶ I refer to this concept in Chapter Two.

⁶²⁷ Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *The Secret Art of the Performer* (London & New York: Routledge, 1991), p.236.

⁶²⁸ Donald Schön, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1987)

⁶²⁹ Hodge (21.03.15).

⁶³⁰ In interview Emma Rice notes how Staniewski preferred silence during training. (29.01.15).

⁶³¹ Shapiro, p.4.

⁶³² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th anniversary edn. (New York, Great Britain: Continuum, 2000).

has been able to foreground an interrogation of the female body in training and this is evident in the both form and the content of the work.

Towards a female ontology of acting

Real 'acting out' occurs when the man is able to break through the limitations of his male conditions and assumptions to reach the secret and the enigma of the female body. Of course you cannot get it without identifying with the female soul and vice versa. This is the old knowledge of Eastern theatre and of ancient Greek theatre, but now it is extremely difficult to reach it. Through transcending your own state and culture, you have much more knowledge about what you have just broken through.⁶³³

Returning to Wlodimir Staniewski's allusion, which provided an impetus for a consideration of the female ontology of acting in Chapter Three, it is interesting to consider how Hodge has re-interpreted this knowledge from a female position. Hodge views Staniewski's statement as referring to the gender transcendence seen in Eastern performance, such as Kabuki or Mei Lanfang who inspired Brecht.⁶³⁴ She comments on the vulnerability of the male actor when playing female which 'shows you the possibility of being human, be that masculine or feminine'.⁶³⁵ It is this possibility for transformation and vulnerability that best characterises her work. In this way Hodge reflects Gilson's previously examined thinking about strength in vulnerability, its 'gift of changeability' and 'force in fragility'.⁶³⁶ In interview she explains the liminal space of vulnerability, particularly referring to her most recent work *The Rego Project*:

So I wouldn't want to be pigeon-holed that this is female training and feminine. I'm interested in that liminal space where you are becoming and where you see vulnerability and possibility. I just think that women have not always had the opportunities to break through the clichés and stereotypes into something more liminal, like these wonderful male actors who play female. It is that possibility that seems to be a little bit limited, so

⁶³³ Staniewski, p.97.

⁶³⁴ Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (London: Methuen, 1964), p.99.

⁶³⁵ Hodge, (21.03.15).

⁶³⁶ Erinn Gilson, *The Ethics of Vulnerability: A Feminist Analysis of Social Life and Practice*. (London and New York; Routledge, 2014), p.88.

I'm not looking for 'femaleness' per/se. I'm looking for opening the door on that possibility.⁶³⁷

Because the company is all female and because touch is foregrounded as a learning process, female sensuality becomes a feature of the practice. This is most noticeable when watching film footage of Hodge's company,⁶³⁸ with its artistic framing, fragmented screens, dual perspectives, close ups of body parts and intermittent sounds of breath. The shots and edit present a liminal and sensual effect as moments of touch are highlighted with moments of silence. As Hodge acknowledges, being a woman and working with five women with a focus on the female body has inevitably created a female domain. In practice, working with touch in the pair work inevitably changes depending on with whom you are working and is affected by the gender of your partner. In a mixed gender partnership, one immediately sees and feels the power play of gender, sexuality and the clichés of representation, recalling Phelan's observation that seeing is gendered.⁶³⁹ When working with the same gender the archetypal images are more open, nuanced and contradictory. Impulse work connects to desire and this, in itself, is inevitably read as gendered. Shapiro explains desire as lacks, gaps or needs, felt to complete our subjectivity. Forms of desire can be linked historically to modes of production.⁶⁴⁰ The representation of gendered desire affects how we observe a sexed encounter, but this reading of desire opens up when the group is the same sex. In Hodge's company female desire is complex and surprising and this aspect of the female body moves beyond issues of objectification to an expression of female consciousness.

The two works by the company, *The House of Bernarda Alba*⁶⁴¹ and *The Rego Project*,⁶⁴² foreground the complexity of female desire and same sex power structures. Hodge was looking for some sort of text that allowed for an investigation of the female body 'that was not confining women to the usual

⁶³⁷ Hodge, (21.03.15).

⁶³⁸ Hodge, (2013).

⁶³⁹ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), p.17.

⁶⁴⁰ Shapiro, p.44.

⁶⁴¹ *The Quick and The Dead*, archive recording.

⁶⁴² A recording of this work was shown to the author by Hodge, (21.03.15).

categories'⁶⁴³ and she found her source in Paula Rego's paintings, where women become 'something other, which isn't any notion of 'femaleness'.⁶⁴⁴ In Rego's work, women are seen transforming into animals or confined in different ways, such as their dress or behaviour. Hodge explains:

[W]hat's so beautiful in Rego's work is that she shows you the contradictions. So she shows you the powerful woman in the vulnerable position, or the child that has grown up too quickly. She's always looking at these wonderful, truthful contradictions of the external image of the female body and what is actually going on inside that woman's feelings. She's talking about submission, not just aggression. She's talking about all sorts of states that women find themselves in.⁶⁴⁵

The transformative and transgressive subject matter enables Hodge and the company to investigate what Braidotti terms the 'vital materialism' of the body — its state of constant becoming.⁶⁴⁶ The female body is not only revealed as inscribed and inscribing but as able to change, mutate, evolve and become other. The work consists of four films, devised in response to four paintings that Hodge chose with each actor who worked to find a score where they responded to the painting and during the course of the score transform into *Dog Woman* and then back into the world of the painting. Each film was shot in The Master Builder's House in Deptford on a hand-held camera by Molly Dineen and then edited by Hodge and archivist Peter Hulton. The work premiered in London in 2014 and was shown in Lisbon from January 2016. Each film is presented on a huge projection screen in one room and played simultaneously, with the audience experiencing their own encounter as they move between the rooms. In Lisbon the original Rego painting was in each room, in conversation with the film. The only sound in each film is breath, the sound of heels on the floor, chairs scraping, skirts rustling and the women barking. This sound spills between the rooms. The training practice is immediately recognizable:

We applied the training exercises as we began to inhabit the images. You can see how the actor uses her breath, the sensory encounter with her

⁶⁴³ Interview with Hodge, (21.03.15).

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁶ Braidotti, p 161.

environment whilst she is holding the images of the painting in her mind...a wonderful tension between the social body and the response to the environment. Part of this is the camera and the actors are starting to confront the images of the paintings, just as the characters in Rego's paintings confront the viewer in the frame.⁶⁴⁷

At moments in each film the actor directly looks at the camera, defiantly confronting the male gaze, even though in practice she is looking at Dineen. Hodge wanted the actors to explore an awareness of the audience and did not want the audience to be 'let off the hook' through the experience of viewing these women. In this way she aims to give the power back to the female performer or enable a 'reciprocal gaze'.⁶⁴⁸ The images show girls in surprising positions: *Dog Woman* shows a woman being a dog, *The Little Murderess* shows a girl about to murder a cat, *The Salmon Coloured Dress* shows a girl at various stages of sliding down a wall in a party frock. *The Rego Project* brings all the aspects of Hodge's practice together, in the way that you can see the training within the work as an ongoing part of the process. This work presents a challenge to clichéd representations of the female body in order to expose the complexity and power of female consciousness behind the social body. In this way Hodge's practice with her company celebrates and interrogates the female ontology of acting through a critical acting pedagogy.

Conrad Alexandrowicz, in a recent edition of *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, problematised the culture of self-objectification, which pervades the industry and oppresses the bodies' of actors, particularly affecting female students. He cautions:

We need, as theatre practitioners and instructors, to ask ourselves whether we are training artists and citizens with the capacity for critical thinking, or crop after crop of willing, able and enthusiastic consumers.⁶⁴⁹

I speculate that women practitioners work from a minoritarian position to find ways to challenge reductive and homogenising representations in their teaching.

⁶⁴⁷ Interview with Hodge, (21.03.15).

⁶⁴⁸ Phelan, p.18.

⁶⁴⁹ Conrad Alexandrowicz, 'Pretty/Sexy: Impacts of the Sexualisation of Young Women on Theatre Pedagogy', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 3(3), (2012), p.298.

Placing the work of these three practitioners in conversation with each other draws attention to the hidden curriculum in training practices and the potential for actor training to operate as a critical pedagogy. Whilst the practices of Landon-Smith, Ewan and Hodge are distinct and particular to their respective context, aesthetic, and the specific issues they are working to solve, they share a concern to build 'dispositional qualities',⁶⁵⁰ 'transferable skills'⁶⁵¹ and attend to notions of difference and identity. Qualities of relationality, empathy, impulse and vulnerability are made explicit in the learning process and it is fascinating to note the ways that different sensory approaches emerge as dominant scaffolding structures. Landon-Smith works to help the actor explore her hybrid identity with a focus on voice. Ewan guides the actor to explore the double vision of acting with a focus on observation. Hodge develops an actor's capacity to feel through touch. Certain commonalities might be usefully noted. They all work somatically and diagnostically to respond to the needs of the individual and the group. They scaffold the learning to expose the space between performative action and performance as a critical space of choice. This enables the actor to author their work and resist clichéd representation. They orientate the acquisition of learning toward pleasure and affirmation — *via positiva* — as opposed to pain and failure, to establish authority based on a shared responsibility. Their pedagogy enables the actor to explore his/her multiple self from a position of the positivity of difference, making learning explicit through reflective and reflexive discussion. These approaches can be seen to illustrate CAP in practice, where the personal and social knowledge of the actor is privileged. In this way acting can, either explicitly or more implicitly, politicise the actor.

In these limited snapshots of practice we can perceive an underpinning female ontology of acting. The practitioners operate in an in-between, diagnostic and relational space to examine notions of doubling and division. Landon-Smith's approach reminds us of Kristeva's semiotic chora, where semiotic and symbolic language intersects and collides.⁶⁵² In Hodge's practice we can see the disruption of scopical regimes and Ewan can be seen to teach 'looking at being-looked-at-

⁶⁵⁰ Murray, p.229.

⁶⁵¹ Wangh, p.139.

⁶⁵² The semiotic chora is examined in Chapter Three.

ness'.⁶⁵³ I propose that these features of female practice, where pedagogy engages with intersectional feminism, start to map a female genealogy of acting as an alternative to traditional male lineages. In the final chapter, I look beyond the structured training environment to investigate how critical pedagogy has developed in the processes of theatre-making. Through the work of Katie Mitchell and Emma Rice, I examine the work of the feminist director as pedagogue.

⁶⁵³ Diamond's feminist consideration of visibility in theatre is examined in Chapter Three.

Chapter Five

The Feminist Director as Pedagogue

Director - noun

A person who supervises the actors and other staff in a film, play or similar production

Pedagogue – noun

A teacher or educator⁶⁵⁴

This chapter considers the intersections between directing and pedagogy and the ways in which gender impacts on this practice. At a panel discussion in 2012 entitled 'Renaming the Director', eight directors considered how the role might be re-articulated for the twenty-first century.⁶⁵⁵ The absent voice of the actor limited the conversation to a top-down perspective. The three female directors aligned with the role of 'facilitator', whilst the males were more comfortable with the role of 'controller', with one asserting, 'actors want directors to tell them what to do'.⁶⁵⁶ This appeared to indicate a gendered approach to directing, an attitude which was reiterated by actor Fiona Shaw in interview. She commented that 'director' suggests instruction or command, which might be considered to be a more male approach, whilst women are perceived as more 'collaborative', which might suggest that they are less willing (or able) to take control.⁶⁵⁷ At a workshop in 2015 entitled 'Women as Artists', director Katie Mitchell guided fifteen female directors to consider the ways that their gender impacted on their practice and how they might define the role.⁶⁵⁸ Certain autocratic ways of thinking about directing such as 'driver, author, controller', were seen to perpetuate a traditional patriarchal understanding of the role and to be unhelpful in practice. A preference emerged for terms such as, 'artist, precise coordinator, analyst, and facilitator'.⁶⁵⁹ This chapter considers the ways in which directorial approaches facilitate the creative process and an actor's development.

⁶⁵⁴ Oxford English Dictionary.

⁶⁵⁵ 'Re-Naming the Director', Rose Bruford College, (05.05.12).

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁷ Interview with Fiona Shaw, Glyndebourne, East Sussex, (24.09.13).

⁶⁵⁸ Katie Mitchell. 'Women as Artists', The Young Vic, (02.03.15 – 06.03.15).

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid.

Here, I position the director as ‘pedagogue’, an educator in a vocational context working with a critical pedagogy. Director Kristine Landon-Smith posits: ‘A director has the responsibility of teaching, bringing a whole group of people to a shared understanding of something that is new and laying down the language’.⁶⁶⁰ Jonathan Cole considers the pedagogical implications for directing in universities and he looks at the intersections between liberatory practice⁶⁶¹ and what he terms ‘activated directing’ where, ‘the conditions in the class-room bear marked similarities to the conditions found in many rehearsal halls’.⁶⁶² I have observed the transferable skills of teaching and directing in my own practice and in fieldwork. Following Phillip Zarrilli’s premise that actor training originated with master/directors,⁶⁶³ I consider the role of the director as it impacts on the life-long learning of the actor to explore the possibility that directorial practices might be more gendered than we may have assumed.

The practices of UK directors Katie Mitchell and Emma Rice form the case studies to develop this thesis and I draw on three years of rehearsal observations and interviews, which included the actors involved. Whilst each practitioner’s work is distinct and comparison may be reductive, both have worked in the mainstream UK theatre industry and I consider their work alongside one another. Driving my enquiry are the two overarching questions which have underpinned this thesis: How might these practitioners be positioned as pedagogues and what pedagogic constructs operate in their theatre-making processes? In what ways does gender impact on their career, their practice and the work they make?

⁶⁶⁰ Kristine Landon-Smith, (07.03.13).

⁶⁶¹ Paulo Freire’s ‘liberatory pedagogy’ empowers learners to take control of their own learning process and is explained in Chapter Two.

⁶⁶² Jonathan Cole, ‘Liberatory Pedagogy and Activated Directing: Restructuring the College Rehearsal Room’, *Theatre Topics*. 18(2), (2008), p.192.

⁶⁶³ Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work*. ed. Jean Benedetti (London & New York: Routledge, 2008).

Katie Mitchell

Katie Mitchell has been described as ‘the closest thing Britain has to a genuine auteur’,⁶⁶⁴ with some critics describing her experimental work as ‘genre defining’⁶⁶⁵ and others dismissing it as ‘wacky’.⁶⁶⁶ In order to consider her pedagogic practice I draw upon rehearsal observation between 2011 and 2013 across four productions, including two large-scale classical texts, new writing, ‘live cinema’,⁶⁶⁷ a week’s training workshop, ‘Women as Artists’,⁶⁶⁸ two extended interviews with Mitchell and interviews with actors. The range and breadth of this data enables me to analyse Mitchell’s pedagogic practice, its nuances, shifts and developments over time. Readers will recall that in Chapter One, I overviewed the position of female directors in the UK. A contextual overview of Mitchell’s career here illuminates this territory. Mitchell has been situated as an ‘auteur’ as opposed to a director. The term ‘auteur’ originates from European traditions of film and theatre-making, where the director displaces the writer and usurps textual authority. Theatre scholar Dan Rebellato suggests this is symptomatic of the directorial traditions of Continental Europe.⁶⁶⁹ The term was used by theatre critic Michael Billington in 2009 as a pejorative label to admonish UK female directors in particular.⁶⁷⁰ Former Artistic Director of the National Theatre Nicolas Hytner⁶⁷¹ reacted in defence, referring to UK theatre critics as ‘dead white males’ with ‘misogynistic reviews’.⁶⁷² This resulted in a call to arms where the gender fault lines in UK mainstream theatre were exposed, with *Telegraph* critic Charles Spencer deriding the ‘overweening arrogance... of a group of mostly female directors such as Katie Mitchell, Deborah Warner and Emma Rice’.⁶⁷³ His comment

⁶⁶⁴ Phillip Oltermann, ‘Katie Mitchell, British Theatre’s True Auteur: On Being Embraced by Europe’, *The Guardian*, (9.02.14).

⁶⁶⁵ Charles Spencer, ‘Women of Troy: Euripides All Roughed Up’. (30.11.07) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/drama/3669609/Women-of-Troy-Euripides-all-roughed-up.html> [accessed 12.05.12].

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid. Libby Purvis, *The Times*.

⁶⁶⁷ Mitchell uses the term ‘live cinema’ as a generic description for this body of work.

⁶⁶⁸ Mitchell, *Women as Artists*, the Young Vic, London, (02.03.15 – 06.03.15).

⁶⁶⁹ Maria Delgado and Dan Rebellato, *Contemporary European Theatre Directors* (London & New York: Routledge, 2010), p.317.

⁶⁷⁰ Michael Billington, *Don’t Let Auteurs Take over in Theatre*.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2009/apr/14/auteur-> [accessed 16.07.11]

⁶⁷¹ Hytner was Artistic Director of the National Theatre from 2003-2015.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

⁶⁷³ Spencer, op.cit.

points to the way that female directors in the UK are positioned as 'other' to the middle class, university-educated white males who continue to dominate the industry.

In interview, Mitchell reflects on the 'otherness' of her work and suggests that her gender and her feminism have alienated some UK critics:

I mean it would be very interesting to analyse the tone of the reviews. The tone is very different. I'm like a naughty daughter or a bad girl — very, very naughty little girl who should really be doing something else. I think the cocktail of radicalism, pro-Europeanism, my gender, plus my feminism is a real cocktail and it's in every inch of the work.⁶⁷⁴

Mitchell's trajectory into directing and theatre-making was rapid and followed the tradition of Oxbridge-educated male directors. She was President of the Oxford University's Drama Society and after graduating, gained an assistant directorship at Paines Plough and then with the RSC. During the 1980s she assisted directors Di Trevis and Deborah Warner and this network points to a genealogy of female directors in the UK learning from each other.⁶⁷⁵ In response to a feeling that 'there was something absent'⁶⁷⁶ in the British theatre tradition, she was facilitated by a Churchill fellowship to study how directors were trained in Russia, Poland, Lithuania and Georgia. In Russia she saw a greater emphasis on constructing behaviour accurately, beyond the spoken text, to consider issues of 'time, place, intention and obstacle'.⁶⁷⁷ In Poland, the physical ensemble practice of Gardzienice became a formative influence.⁶⁷⁸ From 1990-1993 she directed her company Classics on a Shoestring and in the decade that followed she was appointed as an Associate Director to the Royal Court, the RSC and the National Theatre, where Hytner claimed '[I]t was one of my first priorities to make it a home for Katie Mitchell'.⁶⁷⁹ Yet, in spite of directing seventeen productions at the National Theatre under three different artistic directors, her work did not feature in the 2014

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁵ Both Di Trevis and Deborah Warner were interviewed for this study and are referenced in Chapter Two. At the time I was not aware that Mitchell had assisted both of them.

⁶⁷⁶ Rebellato op.cit.

⁶⁷⁷ Interview with Katie Mitchell, the National Theatre, (09.10.11).

⁶⁷⁸ Alison Hodge and Emma Rice were also influenced by Gardzienice.

⁶⁷⁹ Hytner in Katie Mitchell, *The Directors Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre* (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), p.2.

retrospective for its 50th anniversary'.⁶⁸⁰ Indeed, not a single female director was represented in the programme; the apparent blindness to this 'writing out' of women's contribution, despite Hytner's 2009 defence of female directors, shone a spotlight on the gendered bias in the industry.

Over the last decade Mitchell has made more work in Germany, Austria and France, countries which champion experimental work. In his overview, Rebellato divides her practice into four phases: Europe; Anthropological; the limits of the text; Digital Media Performance.⁶⁸¹ Mitchell, however, reflects on her own learning trajectory in three parts: the craft of acting and Stanislavski; the Golden Age of art history; and the feminist phase, which continues to search for new forms.⁶⁸² It is this latest phase that I focus on. In the last decade Mitchell's concerns have shifted from the themes of war and family to a determined concern to prioritise women. She considers how, aged fifty, she commits more explicitly to discovering what a feminist position might mean. In the body of work she has developed over the last decade she consistently foregrounds the female perspective and she reflects:

I have a commitment to women's experience being made a central part of everything. I used to hide my feminism because I thought it wouldn't help my career/work, but having experienced patches of quite intense sexism, which in some cases stopped me from doing the work that I wanted to do, I realised that there was no point hiding it, so I decided to really investigate it.⁶⁸³

Mitchell cites Pina Bausch, Liz LeCompte, Jane Campion, Marion Jerez and Francesca Woodman as formative influences.⁶⁸⁴ In various and particular ways these artists foreground the female body and focus on gender politics. Her body of work engages with writers who attend to the marginalised female position: tragedies by Euripides; early twentieth-century European naturalism; adaptations of feminist literature such as Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*. When an Austrian journalist commented that her

⁶⁸⁰ Ottermann, op.cit.

⁶⁸¹ Dan Rebellato, *Contemporary European Theatre Directors* (London & New York: Routledge, 2010), pp.317-337.

⁶⁸² Mitchell, 'Women as Artists', the Young Vic, (02.03.15 – 06.03.15).

⁶⁸³ Mitchell, interviewed at the Young Vic, (10.10.14).

⁶⁸⁴ Maria Shevstova, 'On Directing: A Conversation with Katie Mitchell', *New Theatre Quarterly*. 22:1, (2006) p.17.

work always explores women and death, Mitchell pointed to *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear* to posit, 'There just isn't a canon of plays where women are constantly the protagonists and if you do tragedies people die!'⁶⁸⁵ Feminist theorists and writers such as Simone de Beauvoir, Hélène Cixous, Hannah Arendt and Friederike Mayröcker⁶⁸⁶ influence her thinking, their writing sometimes directly appearing in her scripts.⁶⁸⁷ Equally, the work of female writers often appears as commentary or counterpoint, for example Inger Christensen whose poetry appeared in *Fräulein Julie* as a counterpoint to Strindberg's sparsely used original text.⁶⁸⁸ Her 'feminist phase' of experimental work excavates and exposes a female consciousness in both form and content, even from within problematically 'male' and sometimes misogynist texts.⁶⁸⁹ Mitchell's production of more than seventy works over the last three decades has made a seminal contribution to twenty-first century theatre-making. Throughout her career she has pushed against the boundaries of theatre pedagogies to discover new ways of making work.

*'Blow, blow, blow. Push!'*⁶⁹⁰: pedagogy and leading from behind

The pedagogical impact and value of Mitchell's work has attracted less critical consideration, but can be seen in her commitment to lifelong learning as a director, to the education of early career directors⁶⁹¹ and in the community of practice she has built. The first time I observed Mitchell in rehearsal I felt an affinity with her practice as a teacher, drawing to mind Cole's previously mentioned comparison between the rehearsal room and the classroom.⁶⁹² Actor Benedict Cumberbatch states that she offers 'a schooling in acting'.⁶⁹³ Mitchell prefers the term 'translator' to 'teacher', but she acknowledges her consistent commitment to 'translating the

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁶ Mitchell, Young Vic, (10.10.14).

⁶⁸⁷ *The Forbidden Zone* (2014), commissioned by the Schaubühne Berlin to commemorate the centenary of the first world war, told the story of Clara Immerwahr, the German chemist who committed suicide on the night of the first gas attack on the Russians.

⁶⁸⁸ *Fräulein Julie*, Schaubühne Berlin, (2013).

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁹¹ 'Women as Artists', op.cit.

⁶⁹² Cole, op.cit.

⁶⁹³ Charlotte Higgins, 'Katie Mitchell, British Theatre's Queen in Exile', (14.01.16) <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jan/14/british-theatre-queen-exile-katie-mitchell>, [accessed 20.02.16].

tools for people who are either amateurs, or in education or starting out in their careers'.⁶⁹⁴

Her developed pedagogy allows her to facilitate a critical exploratory process, which empowers the ensemble to take control of the work. The way that power operates in her theatre-making practice is subtle and complex. Her early formative experiences of Russian director training 'and the attendant master-teacher relationship that underpins that history'⁶⁹⁵ have influenced her agency as pedagogue, where there is no notion of flattened hierarchy within a collaborative process. In fact, Mitchell maintains that because of the complexity of performance-making she is 'into clear roles... You don't want to have discussions about job descriptions'.⁶⁹⁶ However, a closer consideration of Mitchell's process from a feminist perspective illuminates the empowering collaboration that Schehker describes as operating less like a pyramid and more as interceptive spheres with each person 'responsible for her or his special circularity'.⁶⁹⁷ In practice, clear roles and a rigorous structure allow power to be shared, so that she simultaneously facilitates and leads.

Over time Mitchell has worked to develop a community of practice, which enables artists to train and develop work together over extended periods. She has worked with the same core group of collaborators over the last three decades: Pippa Meyer, stage manager, has managed over 67 shows and is described by Mitchell as her 'bastion';⁶⁹⁸ Vicki Mortimer has designed sets since the 1980s; Leo Warner has designed films since the 1990s; Gareth Fry has designed sound and Paul Clarke has composed music since the 1990s. Mitchell also repeatedly works with the same actors to enable a shared pedagogical enquiry, as Rebellato details:

Kate Duchêne, Anastasia Hille, Michael Gould, Ben Whishaw, Angus Wright, Justin Salinger, Dominic Rowan, Hattie Morahan, Sean Jackson, Paul Hilton and others, form a kind of informal repertory company continually training

⁶⁹⁴ Interview with Katie Mitchell, the National Theatre, (09.10.11).

⁶⁹⁵ Jonathan Pitches, *Russians in Britain*. (London & New York: Routledge, 2012), p.201.

⁶⁹⁶ 'A Conversation About Making', Katie Mitchell in conversation with Paul Clarke and Siobhan Davies, July 2009.

<http://www.siobhandavies.com/conversations/events/mitchell-clark.php> [accessed 29.12.14].

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.256.

⁶⁹⁸ Interview with Mitchell, the Young Vic, (10.10.14).

themselves and each other as part of a larger creative process that overflows and exceeds any individual production.⁶⁹⁹

Mitchell describes these long-standing collaborations, which include the writers Martin Crimp and Simon Stephens, as 'well established marriages'.⁷⁰⁰ She justifies her preference for working with the same team: 'You waste a lot of rehearsal time learning someone and sharing with them how you want to work'.⁷⁰¹ In practice this familiarity establishes a trust and a directness which is central to Mitchell's analytically demanding process. Younger actors learn from 'veterans' and this familial apostology is 'a really nice shorthand'.⁷⁰² Like Cumberbatch, many actors acknowledge that her practice has offered them a training at whatever stage in their career. Actor Esther McAuley reflects on Mitchell's process as, 'the drama school experience that I never had',⁷⁰³ and Sandy Mcdade explains, 'Actors who try really hard to put their ego to one side and enjoy the creative discovery get to do things they haven't done before'.⁷⁰⁴ Mitchell's commitment to developing the pedagogy of theatre-making also extends to directors, who she believes are significantly disadvantaged by the lack of training in the UK. She has helped to mentor and support the careers of female directors and has been assisted by Carrie Cracknell, Lyndsey Turner and Lucy Kerbel. Her guide to directing, *The Director's Craft*,⁷⁰⁵ makes a significant contribution to the pedagogy of directing. Sarah Davey-Hull, a director who trained with Mitchell reflects: 'I'm not there to tell an actor what to do, but to lead an actor'.⁷⁰⁶ This idea of 'leading' as opposed to 'controlling' is a more accurate way to consider Mitchell's authority. 'Control' suggests that the actor is told what to do and is passive in the process. However, the clear and explicit scaffolding structures that Mitchell has developed, whether giving an actor feedback, developing the ideas structure of a play, or pinning down action, offers the actor choice within defined parameters and facilitates a critical pedagogy. The actor is liberated to take command of the process, because the

⁶⁹⁹ Rebellato, p328.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid.

⁷⁰² Interview with Catrin Stewart, Natalie Klamar, Sarah Ridgeway, *The Young Vic* (23.09.14).

⁷⁰³ Interview with Esther McAuley, *The National Theatre*, (14.05.12).

⁷⁰⁴ Interview with Sandy Mcdade, *Hampstead Theatre*, (17.01.11).

⁷⁰⁵ Mitchell, op.cit.

⁷⁰⁶ Interview with Sarah Davey-Hull, *Central School of Speech and Drama*, (17.11.11).

process is made explicit. I suggest that her approach, which Cumberbatch describes as ‘an acting gym’,⁷⁰⁷ has made a significant contribution to developing acting and directing pedagogies in the UK and in Europe.

Mitchell’s theatre-making process is structured differently depending on the form of the piece, whether play, devised or ‘live cinema’, but can be broadly divided into two stages: pre-rehearsal preparation with the creative team to discover the ‘ideas structure’ of the work and rehearsal with actors. She has explained her methodology at length elsewhere,⁷⁰⁸ but here I will focus on the constructivist structures of the learning and foreground her role as pedagogue, drawing on my observation of rehearsals for *The Cherry Orchard* in 2014.

In Mitchell’s practice every action choice is the result of a democratic negotiation, with each action analysed as socially, historically and politically constructed. The company creates a unified understanding of the period, through identifying facts and questions, which are researched and shared, enabling the group to become the experts. In rehearsal, Mitchell first shared her timeline, which charted key events and their relationship to the politics and context of the period. This allowed facts and questions to be identified, researched and shared by the company to build a detailed and comprehensive through-line of action for the events in the play. The list of facts and questions was exhaustive, with as many as 400 to be shared amongst the actors as homework. Setting homework tasks is a pedagogic feature of Mitchell’s practice which enables the company to become the experts as they educate each other to construct a collective imaginative understanding of the world of the play. This is developed through shared construction of place. In rehearsals for *The Cherry Orchard* the ensemble located the Gayev estate accurately in Russia, to map the geography of the estate itself, the building and the layout of the rooms. Physical maps were created and along with images of locations and portraits of secondary characters, this information was pinned around the rehearsal room. These tasks require everyone to know the distances and directions of the lake where Grisha drowned in relation to the cherry orchard, the train distance from Suni to Moscow and the distance from the village when walking or travelling by carriage. Independently detailed autobiographies

⁷⁰⁷ Higgins, op.cit.

⁷⁰⁸ Mitchell, op cit.

and timelines were developed and then jointly navigated to create a collective history. Through this shared research the company construct a world together so that time and place, the social domain and habitus, can be accurately played through bodily data.⁷⁰⁹

Central to Mitchell's process is leading the actor to discover their action choices. 'Round the table analysis',⁷¹⁰ which happens in-between other tasks, deconstructs action moment to moment. There are two forms of action: the action of event, which changes the situation, e.g. a gunman enters the room; and the action of intention (or 'objective' or 'want'), which is played by each individual in response to that event until the next event. The intention is played to affect everyone else on the stage (e.g. I want to keep everyone safe), which ensures action is always relational. Some events can take place in one moment and some last for longer sections of time. For example, actors might identify the first intention to happen on the event and then, in what is termed a 'slow burn event', this might change and become a second intention. In this way the intentions are marked in the script as intention 'on the event' and intention 'in the event'.⁷¹¹ Recalling Loukes' situational en-action theory,⁷¹² these actions are phenomenological responses to the situation, the environment and the other characters and so are externally (socially) and internally (psychologically) drawn. In this way, Mitchell guides actors to reflexively consider 'the three-dimensional structure of the play and the character, so that they 'play everything, not just one little muscle of it'.⁷¹³ Playing 'everything' means that bodies are politicised and action responds to a complex network of power structures.

The actors then learn their events and intentions rather than the text and get the piece 'up on its feet' by improvising the events and intentions in each section, receiving notes and testing their logic and accuracy in relation to each other. Once tested in practice, the text is 'laid on top' of the action and in this way

⁷⁰⁹ I go on to explain what Mitchell means by 'data'. Sociologist Bourdieu's examination of habitus is useful when thinking about Time and Place. Phillip Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (UK: Polity Press, 1990).

⁷¹⁰ This term which originates from Stanislavski is explained by Bella Merlin, *Konstantin Stanislavsky: Performance Practitioners* (London & New York, 2003), p.15-16.

⁷¹¹ Mitchell, (2009), pp. 64-65.

⁷¹² Rebecca Loukes in Phillip Zarrilli and Jerri Daboo, *Acting: Psychophysical Phenomenon and Process* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 46-63).

⁷¹³ Shvetsova, p.17.

they move through the whole text, from analysis to improvisation; working with text, receiving direction, repeating and so forth.

Mitchell's theatre-making pedagogy is enabled through these stages, which she calls 'constructions', to build a democratised and critical learning process. Every member of the company is supported and guided to negotiate, navigate and take responsibility for every action decision and this results in a sense of shared ownership. Sandy McDade, an actor who works repeatedly with Mitchell, explains the plurality of this learning:

I think if you accept you're a fish in a shoal or a bird in a flock you are absolutely fine, but you mustn't try to move away from that image... Actors are often cast because they have a certain charisma. Katie doesn't do that. You are there for the group.⁷¹⁴

Mitchell's work, whether classical naturalism, theatre for children, large-scale operas or what she describes as 'live cinema' celebrates the power of the ensemble. The rigour and challenge of the shared group learning process flattens hierarchical divisions. The actor finds it harder to retreat into their own imagination or psychological tendencies, which Mitchell terms 'affinities',⁷¹⁵ because every decision has been negotiated with everyone else and 'by fixing certain aspects of the character, the actor is freed to do their own work'.⁷¹⁶ Once the 'ideas structures' have been fixed, actors can play freely within these parameters, which Mitchell necessarily monitors. Some actors find this approach to pinning down decisions too controlling, as Rebellato observes, 'It is very demanding; bad theatrical habits are dismantled, approximations and short cuts are exposed'.⁷¹⁷ However, in interview, actors repeatedly reflect how the structure enables more freedom. Nick Fletcher explained, 'I've felt much more suffocated and controlled by other directors, mainly because there's not proper communication between us. But it's [Mitchell's process] a unified understanding and it's the result of a detailed discussion'.⁷¹⁸ The detailed research, discussion and off text improvisations allow the actors to have a shared imaginative picture of the

⁷¹⁴ Interview with Sandy McDade, Hampstead Theatre, (17.01.11).

⁷¹⁵ Mitchell, p.59.

⁷¹⁶ Rebellato, p.328.

⁷¹⁷ Rebellato, p.329.

⁷¹⁸ Interview with Nick Fletcher and Esther McAuley, The National Theatre, (14.05.12).

world they inhabit and the web of relationships which they are part of. McAuley reflected: 'You don't ever have to make anything up. You've just done it all'.⁷¹⁹ Kate Duchêne, who has worked repeatedly with Mitchell, observed: 'Sometimes I've felt that working with other directors I tend to flail about and resort to doing things I've done before, whereas all the improvisation means you know what your reactions to things are'.⁷²⁰ The detailed architecture of back-story and given circumstance built through the ensemble process supports the actor to be spontaneous within the idea structures of the play.

It is useful to recall Milde's structure for rehearsal analysis or spoken artistic discourse as we consider the ways that Mitchell's liberatory pedagogy operates through dialogic interactions.⁷²¹ Milde breaks down modes of dialogic exchange as: providing feedback, providing explanations, using improvisations, providing keys (meaning spontaneous coaching or 'side coaching') and framing one's own activity.⁷²² Interestingly, Milde does not specify questioning as a discrete dialogic exchange, which I suggest is central to Mitchell's critical pedagogy. The constant application of guided questions, in homework tasks building time and place, or in defining intentions foregrounds choice for the actor, who is invested in the multiple construction of ideas. Actors value Mitchell's specificity in feedback. Duchêne notes, 'Katie doesn't like words like 'good' or 'bad' and that is liberating'.⁷²³ She has a clarity in her interactions with actors which maintains her authority. Events, intentions, time and place are the constructs though which feedback is given. In discussion, certain phrases emerge which might be seen as the second order of rehearsal dialogue. Mitchell cautions actors against playing 'affinities', the imaginative leaps an actor might make, which are not drawn from evidence within the text; she avoids choices which she describes as 'blurry' or 'muddy' and guards against 'acting clichés,' striving to anticipate 'acting corners' and to 'land' or 'park' an action choice. 'Acting corners' refer to difficult moments

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

⁷²⁰ Interview with Kate Duchêne, The National Theatre, (14.05.12).

⁷²¹ This was explained in Chapter Two. Andrea Milde, 'Spoken Language and Doing Drama'. *Working Papers in Urban Language & Literacies* Paper 89, (2012a), <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/education/research/ldc/publications/workingpapers/the-papers/WP89.pdf> [accessed 23.04.14].

⁷²² Ibid.

⁷²³ Duchêne, (14.05.12).

for the actor where she might find herself without a logical action choice and resorting to a clichéd appropriation. The need to 'land' a 'simple' or 'clear' action choice is at the heart of the process as Mitchell guides actors away from psychological interpretation to focus on behavioural action, which she calls 'data'.

Whilst scaffolding and dialogic structures play a large part in enabling a more equally shared collaborative process, Mitchell has had to learn how to delegate. In the workshop 'Women As Artists' she considered authority from a gendered perspective, stressing the importance of establishing a shared goal with the company and an agreement about what that means; to find a 'lightness of touch'; a 'cool, calmer location'; less of 'a close up relationship; and more of a long shot'. These terms suggest the need to remain objective and measured in communication. Mitchell relayed how an actor had once described this process to her as 'Blow, blow, blow, push'.⁷²⁴ This seems particularly pertinent to a female practice with its allusion to female labour and recalls Tristan Sturrock's observation in Chapter One that female directors 'push softer but harder'.⁷²⁵ In this way Mitchell can be seen to 'lead from behind',⁷²⁶ which evidences a reflexive practice where she is able to conserve her emotional and physical stamina, moving to 'full frontal energy' when needed.⁷²⁷ Mitchell's level of self awareness is partly the result of two years of training with Ellen Bowman at Living Pictures⁷²⁸ to identify 'things that stood in the way of me clearly organising lots of people'.⁷²⁹ Females tend to dominate the production team and Mitchell describes it as a 'matriarchy',⁷³⁰ acknowledging the influence of Meyer who has stage-managed over 60 shows with military authority and huge presence. The long-standing relationships between female collaborators (Mitchell, Meyer and designer Vicki Mortimer) generates a multifarious and magnified female authority in her practice.

The pedagogic structures that underpin the foundations, architecture and fabric of the work allow the company to progress with clarity and direction

⁷²⁴ Mitchell, 'Women as Artists', the Young Vic, (02.03.15 – 06.03.15).

⁷²⁵ Interview with Tristan Sturrock, Bristol, (30.01.15).

⁷²⁶ Mitchell, The Young Vic, (04.03.15).

⁷²⁷ Ibid.

⁷²⁸ Elen and Robert Bowman set up Living Pictures in 1995 to provide training for directors. <http://www.livingpictures.org.uk/>

⁷²⁹ Mitchell, The Young Vic, (10.10.14).

⁷³⁰ Ibid.

without her physical presence. During rehearsal for *The Cherry Orchard*, Mitchell was ill for a week, and it was interesting to observe how her authority functioned in her absence. The stage management, assistant directors and actors were able to run rehearsals with precision, due to the shared ownership of the ideas structure and the established dialogic practice. Mitchell was able to watch recordings of rehearsal at home and then send notes on each act/section. In her absence her pedagogy was most present, as the company embodied it.

Towards a 'method of feminist action'

In Mitchell's 'schooling for actors'⁷³¹ one can perceive a feminist approach in the way that she actively resists normative representation, guides actors to author their choices and foregrounds the female body. While she acknowledges the influence of Stanislavski's system on her work,⁷³² I consider her practice through feminist constructs of materialism, specifically Braidotti's ideas about 'vital materialism'.⁷³³ Braidotti points to the way that feminist philosophy has moved beyond historical materialism to recognise the potential of bodies to be both embedded and embodied — inscribed and inscribing. Turning to developments in science she explains, 'a new brand of "materialism" is current in our scientific practices, which reinstates the vital, self-organising capacities of what was previously seen as inert matter'.⁷³⁴ This, she believes, offers a creative alternative to limiting post structuralist linguistics.⁷³⁵ Braidotti exhorts a 'matter realist feminism' which 'fights matter with matter',⁷³⁶ drawing on developments in science and technology to shatter notions of fixity and to recognise bodies as vital, plastic and in states of becoming.⁷³⁷ Mitchell's work with actors responds to these concerns to interrogate the full complexity of bodily action, moving beyond the

⁷³¹ Higgins, op.cit.

⁷³² Mitchell, p.227.

⁷³³ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (New York & Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2011), p.16.

⁷³⁴ Ibid.

⁷³⁵ I introduce vital materialism in Chapter Two. Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (New York & Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2011), p.16.

⁷³⁶ Ibid., pp.127-149.

⁷³⁷ I am thinking about Donna Haraway's cyborg, which seems relevant when thinking about Mitchell's 'live cinema', where technology extends the human body. Donna Haraway, 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism for the 1980s', *Socialist Review* 80, vol.15, 2 (1985), pp.65-107.

historical materialist constructs of Stanislavski's 'method of physical action'.⁷³⁸ Mitchell's forensic approach considers the ways that the biological, psychological and relational operate alongside the historical, geographical and sociopolitical to affect action. She recognises bodies as sexed and particular and guides actors to be critical of generalised or cliché action choices. Reflecting the female ontology of acting and its constructs of female visibility,⁷³⁹ Mitchell teaches actors to 'look at being-looked-at-ness',⁷⁴⁰ observing action as physical data. Playing on Stanislavski's terminology I present Mitchell's approach as a 'method of feminist action'.

Rosemary Malague, reflecting on the production *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, describes Mitchell's realism as 'feminist intervention', where actors 'created a performance hybrid: they spoke in verse, were "realistic" in their portrayals, and yet their "authorship" of the characters was visible'.⁷⁴¹ The visible authoring of character is mostly associated with Brechtian gestus. Elin Diamond, in her seminal project *Unmaking Mimesis*, identifies this as a way to reclaim a feminist acting approach.⁷⁴² She explains this as an alternative to mimesis where the relation to the real is 'productive not referential, geared to change, not to reproducing the same'.⁷⁴³ In *Performing Feminisms, Performativity and Performance*,⁷⁴⁴ Harris develops Diamond's thesis in relation to performing gender and she places Butler in conversation with Brecht to problematise the similarities and differences in their thinking. In Chapter 3 I considered the ways that female practices might disrupt scopoc regimes and returning to Harris' thinking helps us to understand Mitchell's practice as 'a method of feminist action' from a social constructivist position. Harris considers Brecht's 'not... but', where the actor marks the potential opposite choice of an action, in relation to Butler's difference between 'performative acts', the repeated actions, which establish gender and

⁷³⁸ Bella Merlin, *Konstantin Stanislavsky: Routledge Performance Practitioners* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), pp.28-30.

⁷³⁹ I explain this in Chapter Three.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁴¹ Rosemary Malague, 'Theatrical Realism as Feminist Intervention: Katie Mitchell's 2011 Staging of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*', *Shakespeare Bulletin*. Vol 31, No4, (2013).

⁷⁴² Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997).

⁷⁴³ Diamond, p.xiv.

⁷⁴⁴ Geraldine Harris, *Staging Femininities: Performance and Performativity* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp.55-81.

‘performance’, which is a ‘bounded action’ and by its nature ‘a quotation’.⁷⁴⁵ By drawing on Derrida’s concept of difference, Butler notes the inevitable citationality of performative acts and how, in repetition, there will be shifts, turns and distortions. This opens up the possibility that in any action choice there is the potential to challenge normative gendered behaviour. Harris, citing Butler, explains:

[A] notion of political agency can be posited in terms of ‘performativity rethought as the force of citationality’, which operates by accepting that ‘it is necessary to learn a double movement’... to provisionally institute an identity but at the same time open up this identity category as ‘a permanent site of political contest’.⁷⁴⁶

Relating this idea to acting, the space between the performative action and the bounded action of performance becomes a place of reflexive authorship, as every action choice has been a negotiated decision based on the social, cultural, historical and geographical context. Mitchell’s process sharpens the actor’s ability to recognise performative actions as ‘the data’ of socially inscribed bodies and allows for political agency.

Alongside this way of thinking about action is the recognition that the body as matter is vital and in a constant state of becoming. Mitchell’s pedagogy considers bodies in conversation with science and technology and here I consider Mitchell’s fascination with bodily conditions. A shift from psychology to biology can be seen in the way she is alert to all physical manifestations including medical conditions. For instance, in *The Cherry Orchard* actors worked with the condition of narcolepsy (Pishchik), the autistic spectrum (Gaev), depression (Varya), post-natal depression (Ranevskaya), stroke (Fiers) and agoraphobia (Pishchik’s daughter).⁷⁴⁷ These conditions were researched and the minutiae of physical symptoms examined. In this way ‘mimesis’ becomes the forensic deconstruction and reconstruction of physical data.

⁷⁴⁵ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), p.12.

⁷⁴⁶ Harris, p.72.

⁷⁴⁷ *The Cherry Orchard*, the Young Vic (25.08.14 – 19.09.14).

In *Reconsidering Stanislavski: Feeling, Feminism and The Actor*, Rhonda Blair draws attention to how feminist scientists have ‘significantly advanced our knowledge of, or raised fruitful questions about cognition, behavior and sexuality and how these might be embodied in the brain’.⁷⁴⁸ She cites Antonio Damasio, a neuroscientist who has also influenced Mitchell, to highlight how the self is actualised through en-minded action, which is always relational.⁷⁴⁹ Blair works at ‘the intersections of theory, practice, history, and science’ and she challenges ‘feminist actors and acting teachers to be more rigorous in their understanding of bodies, consciousness, and feelings ...with the awareness that these processes are reflective of brain structure and function’.⁷⁵⁰ Behaviour is determined through intention and action and this enables feminists to re-think how to teach acting in a more precise and accurate way, combining phenomenological theory of embodiment with Marxist and post-structuralist considerations of bodies and power. Working in this way the actress recognises how, through detailed analysis, she might author her action as a possible site of resistance within the constructs of realism. For example, in rehearsal for *The Cherry Orchard*, Duchêne, playing Ranevskaya, discovered that her legs literally gave way when she was in a heightened state of emotion. This unbalancing gave physical expression to her grief at the loss of her child and brought the body to the fore to recognise Ranevskaya as a victim of both her social circumstance and her maternal body.

Like Blair, Mitchell has engaged with developments in neuroscience to more accurately understand sexualised brain/body function and how to observe physical data. At the National Theatre in 2010, she invited actors to work with a neuroscientist for The Emotion Workshop. They connected the phenomenology of action, emotion and cognition and identified seven dominant emotional states to investigate the body/brain response. Mitchell’s actors explored the delay response that happens in-between an event and the corresponding emotional reaction. In this moment, unless the actor is clear about what is happening, the action they communicate can be ‘muddy’ and the audience is not able to read the moment clearly. Mitchell guides the actor to critically observe the physical data of bodies so

⁷⁴⁸ Rhonda Blair, ‘Liberating the Young Actor: Feminist Pedagogy and Performance’, *Theatre Topics*, 2(1), (1995), pp.13-23.

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.188.

⁷⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.189.

they might be specific and accurate in their action choices. For example, in rehearsals for *The Cherry Orchard* actors shared 'slice of life' improvisations on unrequited love. Working to recreate this moment from their own lives, the improvisation was observed 'not for judgment' but 'as scientists'⁷⁵¹ and Mitchell led the forensic analysis. Obviously each individual body experiences and performs emotional states in different ways, but by teaching actors to observe physical data accurately, she develops a reflexive awareness and specificity in her performers. One should note that Mitchell's intention is not that the actor *experience* the emotion, but that they learn to accurately *show* it, so that the audience can feel it. In this way her practice is very much in line with a post-Brechtian approach. She explains this:

Any investigation of emotion as it is etched on the body, is an investigation in order to re-construct the shape so that the audience can feel something — it's not about the actor feeling something, because sometimes when the actor feels something, what we look at is quite opaque.⁷⁵²

As we shall see, however, this directorial intention is not necessarily what the actor experiences. The structural process of working with events and intentions foregrounds the changeability of emotion which means that performances are emotionally charged, often with a frenetic tempo that can provoke a feeling of anxiety. It is important to note the way that Mitchell's 'method of feminist action' aims to make the audience 'feel something'. By foregrounding extreme emotion and endurance through the female body she explores theatre's ability to alter the bodies of the audience.

Mitchell's 'feminist phase' maintains a commitment to privilege the female perspective. She reflects in interview on her cultural responsibility to 'represent women really carefully'⁷⁵³ and her practice enables actresses to interrogate female characters in their full complexity. Reflecting on *The Cherry Orchard*, she explained how she had moved away from the limiting representations of playing Anya as infantilised, which have been established through production history, to mine the text, 'So we really attend to the detail to construct a character that is by modern

⁷⁵¹ *The Cherry Orchard*, The Young Vic, (25.08.14 – 19.09.14).

⁷⁵² Mitchell, (09.10.11)

⁷⁵³ Ibid.

day standards, psychologically credible'.⁷⁵⁴ Mitchell presents the female body as both vulnerable and powerfully enduring, performing its biological condition whilst inflicted with patriarchal and self-imposed violence. The preoccupation with female suffering has earned her the self imposed title 'Queen of Despair'.⁷⁵⁵ In *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, Anne Frankford bleeds as a result of her lost virginity and finally starves herself to death; *Women of Troy* and *Iphigenia at Aulis* show women waiting for the off stage violence of war to play itself out on their bodies⁷⁵⁶; in *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams* the mother's self-imposed violence is shown with chilling accuracy as she puts on three pairs of menstruation pants for the potential loss of bowel control in suicide; In *The Forbidden Zone* Clara Immerwahr commits suicide, to foreshadow her granddaughter's action thirty years later; in *Five Truths* Ophelia drowns herself and in *Ophelias Zimmer* she slits her own throat.⁷⁵⁷ The female body is repeatedly shown to endure sexual violence, birth, murder and suicide.

Motherhood is a theme of the work and Mitchell expresses how her feminism has shifted since becoming a mother: 'I have a debt to represent women carefully for my child who is female'.⁷⁵⁸ In *Small Hours* the audience enters through a hallway, removes shoes and observes a young mother in her front room trying to manage her postnatal depression as her baby cries in the room above. *Iphigenia at Aulis* tackles genocide and *Women of Troy* child murder. In *The Cherry Orchard*, Mitchell shifts the focus to Ranyevskaya's grief at the loss of her drowned son and in *Ophelias Zimmer*, Ophelia's absent mother is given a presence. The repeated narrative of female suicide in Mitchell's work can be seen as the ultimate act of feminist protest. In *Ophelias Zimmer*, Ophelia, played by Jenny König, is a prisoner locked in her room, objectified, drugged and enslaved by her father and by Hamlet's sexual desire. The numerous dresses repeatedly placed upon her can be seen as the layers of patriarchal oppression, which straitjacket and condemn her to

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁵ Duchêne, interviewed at the Young Vic, (07.10.14).

⁷⁵⁶ *Iphigenia at Aulis* (2004) and *Women of Troy* (2007) both premiered at the National Theatre.

⁷⁵⁷ *Five Truths*, a video installation commissioned by the Victoria and Albert Museum, (2011). *Ophelias Zimmer*, a collaboration between the Schaubühne, Berlin and the Royal Court, premiered at the Royal Court, London (2016).

⁷⁵⁸ Duchêne, (07.10.14).

her fate as a bloated drowned body. Her suicide is seen as an urgent act of emancipation.

Duchêne has repeatedly played 'weeping women' and she reflects on the habitual vulnerability she performs:

She wants me to go much further in what we know to be real emotions that women experience. And not only about simply suffering, I mean there's a culpability to these women too. Katie wants precision, accurate intellectual analysis and the emotion to go as far as it needs to – which is often extreme.

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She reflects that the extremity of female emotion may be one reason why male critics have felt alienated by Mitchell's work. Duchêne has played numerous protagonists who face death and/or the loss of a child: Clytemestra in *Iphigenia et Aulis*, Hecuba in *Woman of Troy* and Ranyevskaya in *The Cherry Orchard*. What is interesting to note is that whilst Mitchell might want to avoid the actor experiencing the emotion, in practice this may not be the case. Duchêne reflected that *Iphigenia* and *Women of Troy* were the two productions where she had learnt the most as an actor, but whilst the first was a positive experience, she found it impossible to use Mitchell's process in *Women of Troy* 'on something so cataclysmic'. She reflected, 'It was a bit of a nemesis for me... I'm not very good at pretending to feel things'.⁷⁶⁰ What this reveals is that any approach to acting cannot determine *how* an actor experiences the work. Mitchell's 'method of feminist action' offers actors a process but ultimately individuals will experience performance in their own way.

*'A gentle reminder that it is a lie'*⁷⁶¹: 'live cinema' and *écriture féminine*⁷⁶²

Over the last decade, excavating 'inside/outside' action has developed from expressionistic movement punctuating naturalistic work,⁷⁶³ to 'live cinema', where

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁶¹ Mitchell, op. cit. (04.05.14).

⁷⁶² Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', *Signs*, The University Chicago Press. 1(4), (1976), pp.875-893.

the visibility of feeling is structurally interrogated and exposed. Mitchell's 'live cinema' shows the doubleness of artistic construction, 'so I do not only see *what* is being created but *how* it is created'.⁷⁶⁴ The actors are doubles of themselves as creator and created, subject and artist, and 'the between' becomes a democratic space of becoming. In Chapter Three, 'A Female Ontology of Acting' I presented constructs of doubling, the in-between and 'looking-at-being-looked-at-ness' as female knowledges. In Mitchell's 'live cinema', these constructs become defining features which develop her feminist pedagogy as actors learn to make theatre in a different way. Paradoxically, in the space between construction and deconstruction Mitchell's theatre produces a more radical form of naturalism.

In order to extend consideration of Mitchell's pedagogy it is helpful to consider how her aesthetic choices, particularly in 'live cinema', have developed the ways that actors make theatre. It is also interesting to consider the breadth of Mitchell's pedagogy beyond theatre-making processes to educating audiences, which Turner explains as 'shifting culture'.⁷⁶⁵ In her most recent 'feminist phase' she foregrounds the female experience in both form and content and I consider the extent to which this produces a form of *écriture féminine* in theatre-making. Hélène Cixous coined the term to describe the female consciousness in writing. Using this as a springboard, in this section I consider the ways that Mitchell's work shifts culture in pursuing a female consciousness. I focus on certain recurring features of her work: the attention given to liminal spaces, the notion of doubling, the hybridised and relational identity and the reciprocal gaze.⁷⁶⁶

An attention to between-ness characterises Mitchell's approach to theatre-making where, in every aspect of production, the liminal or 'between space' is foregrounded. These spaces between are materially constructed in design where worlds tend to be located in the arteries of a building, the hallways and corridors, or places of interruption. In interview Mitchell notes, 'I would tend to do that in the

⁷⁶³ In *Small Hours* (Hampstead Theatre, 2011), Sandy McDade breaks the realism with an expressionistic slow motion gesture, which suggests her attempt to physically connect with her own body in her postnatal disconnected state.

⁷⁶⁴ Janis Jefferies, '...some trace of her: Katie Mitchell's Waves in Multimedia Performance', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 22(4), (2011), p.405.

⁷⁶⁵ Higgins, op.cit.

⁷⁶⁶ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), p.17.

case of late nineteenth-century plays because it creates more pressure'.⁷⁶⁷ Actions are the intentions *between* events, *between* people, expressed in the momentary shift *between* one action and the next. Scene changes are highlighted and in the 'live cinema', states of between-ness are palpable in every facet of the work. Mitchell explains this work as being, 'on the edge of theatre',⁷⁶⁸ and its inter-medial form allows theatre and cinema to exist beside each other where the space between the two becomes a third productive medium. Mitchell was influenced by the work of seminal New York experimental theatre ensemble the Wooster Group⁷⁶⁹ and when she saw them in 2002, she had already been experimenting in ways that might enable the audience a closer connection to the physical body of actor. Her adaptation of Virginia Woolf's novel *Waves* at the National in 2006 was seen as radical in its genre-defying approach and she has continued to refine and develop the complexity of this form over the last decade, which she now describes as her 'feminist phase'.⁷⁷⁰ Most of these works are adaptations of period novels or short stories,⁷⁷¹ either devised by the company or by a writer, sometimes drawn from feminist literature or re-orientations of male authored works to a female centered perspective, where the form invites the audience into the consciousness of the female protagonist. Whilst in the UK critical reception to the 'live cinema' has been mixed, in France, Germany and Austria, audiences have tended to revel in its technical complexity.

This inter-medial form has developed Mitchell's acting pedagogy. By the time of *...some trace of her* at the National in 2008, a company devised adaptation of Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*, the fragmented narrative moved out from behind tables, to be more fluid and physical. The actors appeared to dance around the stage as camera cables weaved in and out of each other, one minute acting in character within a shot, the next creating the Foley sound, narrating the text or setting up and filming the image. Duchêne reflects, 'I love the multi-media stuff

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁸ Platform discussion with Katie Mitchell and Dan Rebellato, *Miss Julie*, The Barbican Centre, (04.05.14).

⁷⁶⁹ Benjamin Fowler, *Creating Continuity out of Fragmentation: Katie Mitchell's Live Cinema Work*. (2015), unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick.

⁷⁷⁰ Mitchell, (10.10.14).

⁷⁷¹ Six of the seven live cinema pieces made for theatre since 2006 have been set before 1950.

because I am interested in different ways of acting...I like the feeling of construction around it in a different more technical way'.⁷⁷²In this work, the actors doubled their roles to create a second role as a camera operators, constantly switching between worlds; the real temporal world of filming and the constructed temporality of the fragmentary narrative. Mitchell explains: 'the actor is working with a double role. They have an additional character. They are not just themselves – that's a very subtle level of performance'.⁷⁷³ Notions of doubleness or beside-ness are inherent in the production of the work, which is itself its own process. The audience observe the making and the product simultaneously and the labour and tools of production are displayed with the insides outside and construction and deconstruction happening simultaneously.

Mitchell's venture into this form was prompted by desire to make theatre more aligned to the way she experienced the world. She wanted to see the 'subtleties of expressions I see in the rehearsal room'⁷⁷⁴and how life is experienced moment by moment, in a fragmented and multi-sensed reality. This can be easily compared to Cixous' elaboration of a *écriture féminine* in the way that it invites audiences into the consciousness of both the female protagonist at the center of the drama and into Mitchell's own consciousness.⁷⁷⁵ Mitchell reflects on the influence of Cixous' thinking on her work in the way that the self is constantly re-invented. She explains:

[T]here's nothing stable in who we are or how we perceive. The idea of capturing that in live performance is interesting. And I suppose trying to question how it is to look out on the world and to perceive it? It's sort of not neat and tidy like a linear narrative, it's much more chaotic.⁷⁷⁶

Her live cinema work lay bare the constructed-ness of both theatre and cinema, which simultaneously operate beside each other. *Waves* had actors sitting at tables with microphones, narrating Woolf's fragmented novel whilst constructing and filming shots, which were projected on a huge wide screen above the stage. This

⁷⁷² Duchêne, (07.10.14).

⁷⁷³ Rebellato and Mitchell, (04.05.14).

⁷⁷⁴ Mitchell cited by Jefferies, (2011), p. 403.

⁷⁷⁵ Cixous, op.cit.

⁷⁷⁶ Mitchell, (10.10.14).

doubling, which separates voice from presence, is described by Lehmann as 'resulting in the creation of a kind of voice mask that 'ghosts the character' and renders him/her a spoken 'it' as opposed to a speaking 'I'.⁷⁷⁷ Viewed as a feminist project, the live cinema exposes the hybridity of the individual, with 'being' presented as division, to resist the limiting structures which inhibit and oppress women in particular. Louise Le Page, in her analysis of *Waves*, observes how identity is not defined by psychological type but 'according to what the body *does*, not what it *is*'.⁷⁷⁸ By separating character and human elements — body, voice, sound — 'a *schizo* subject'⁷⁷⁹ emerges that resists phallogocentric notions of truth and fixed identity. Bodies are liminal, shifting states of becoming and possibility.

Gendered assumptions are shattered as dialogue is passed between ensemble members in the performance. The actor's doubling makes the authoring of performance the subject of performance, as they present themselves as both subject and object. From a feminist perspective, this allows the actress to take charge of the constructions of female representation through the manipulation of the camera in order to resist the male gaze. In her iconic 1975 essay, Laura Mulvey used this term to describe the way that film fetishises female representation and becomes a form, or presence through representation, of hegemonic control, denying the possibility of a female consciousness.⁷⁸⁰ When the camera is in the hands of an actress, costumed in restrictive period clothing, setting up her own shot or setting up the shot and filming an other, the female gaze and women's shifting historical agency is foregrounded. This becomes magnified in moments where mirrors are used. Indeed, the mirror becomes a repeated feature of Mitchell's stagecraft and is used to stage questions of identity. For example, in *Waves*, Liz Kettle gazes at her image in a two way mirror, whilst another actor voices her spoken thoughts. In *...some trace of her*, Hattie Moran's distorted reflection and the eventual breaking of the mirror foreshadows the tragedy; in *Ophelias Zimmer*, the absent mirror of the dressing table underlines its presence. In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger maps female representation in art, focusing on the

⁷⁷⁷ Louise Le Page, 'Posthuman Perspectives and Postdramatic Theatre: the Theory and Practice of Hybrid Ontology in Katie Mitchell's *Waves*', *Culture, Language and Representation*. 4, (2008), p.142.

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁰ Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*. 16(3), (1975), pp.6–18.

classical nude. He points to how positioning a woman looking at herself in a mirror adopts female vanity as a scapegoat for the male gaze of the artist. Berger presents, 'the surveyor and the surveyed' as two 'constituent yet always distinct elements' of female identity.⁷⁸¹ In Mitchell's doubling strategy, women author 'looking at being looked-at-ness', to be the agents of their own production. Jacqueline Rose's feminist position of decentering the gaze in the viscosity of performance⁷⁸² can be seen in Mitchell's framing of viscosity as contradictory, liminal and shifting. In interview, Mitchell explained how, through the study of impressionism, she consciously offers the audience perceptual choice:

[T]he idea that the eye is free to select comes from a study of painting and impressionism which made the canvas fair —so it wasn't the most important person in the center and the least important out to the side. Every bit of the canvas is the same as every other bit of the canvas — so intellectually that really appealed to me.⁷⁸³

The audience simultaneously watch the live action and the screen action to share the space of seeing and being seen with the actor.⁷⁸⁴ In the liminal space between 'watching' an image or a sound being constructed and 'seeing' the effect, room is made for mis-seeing and mis-hearing. Particularly in the work with Foley sound, the space between absence and presence is felt. When we hear the sound of footsteps accompanying the image on the screen of a man walking and yet at the same time see the Foley artist crunching an empty shoe onto a tray of gravel, our senses are disorientated and we work harder to bring together the elements that are deconstructed. Through this investment we are drawn physiologically into the action.

In 2014, I observed the making of one of Mitchell's 'live cinema' pieces *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams*.⁷⁸⁵ The production was an adaptation of Peter Handke's harrowing short novel recording his own reaction to his mother's suicide. It was a collaboration between UK, Austrian and German artists. Like many of Mitchell's more recent works the set was highly complex, consisting of a four room three-

⁷⁸¹ Berger, (1972), p.51.

⁷⁸² Mitchell, (10.10.14).

⁷⁸³ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁴ Phelan, p.17.

⁷⁸⁵ *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams* premiered at Kasino Theatre, Vienna, (2014).

dimensional apartment, with two pods either side of the stage, one for a Foley artist and the other for voice artists. It was fascinating to observe a reimagined theatrical ensemble through this form. Time seems to become thicker in the making of this work, where there are up to 30 people working simultaneously in a confined set to construct a perfectly timed 'dance' relying on technology, which inevitably fails at different points and so halts the process. The highly pressurised time management is taken on by the stage management, who co-ordinate the different parts of the team and move the project steadily forward, second by second. The shared human endeavour to master and control the technology is palpable and opens up an alternative way of being which Le Page describes as 'post human' with 'flatter structures of mutuality'.⁷⁸⁶ The cameras are an extension of the actor's body and illustrate the extended phenomenology of McLuhan,⁷⁸⁷ who considered shifting perception when the handheld technological device becomes part of an extended bodily felt sense. This blurring between body and technology recalls Haraway's post-feminist cyborg.⁷⁸⁸ Haraway's cyborg feminism explores what it means to be embodied in a high-tech world without gender divisions and how feminism must engage with technological development to recognise the pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and borders. Mitchell's vital materialist position can be seen to extend beyond the biology of the body to interrogate the body in relation to technology. The camera lens allows for a microscopic gaze, as the actors manipulate the tripod, wires and focusing, moving over and under each other to perform their score. The cables, which must be successfully threaded in and out of each other in order to achieve the journey through the piece, start to resemble the tendons and veins of the body of the work. When the technology stops, all motion stops, like blood clotting. The technology is part of the corporeal structure and becomes the eyes of the actor and the audience. As the gaze of the camera is the gaze constructed by an actor filming another actor, the power of the acting position is shifted from 'looking at' to 'looking at being looked at'. Like the de-gendered voice, the gaze is neither male or female as the camera passes

⁷⁸⁶ Le Page, p.149.

⁷⁸⁷ Martin McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extension of the Man* (USA: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

⁷⁸⁸ Donna Haraway, 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism for the 1980s', *Socialist Review* 80, 15(2), (1985), pp.65-107.

between actors under the exchange of the audience's gaze. This democratised visibility reminds us of Phelan's call for a 'reciprocal gaze'.⁷⁸⁹ This work 'shifts culture' in the way that it challenges the ideas that there is one (male) privileged point of view to show that perception is shifting, reciprocal and that we exist together in states of becoming.

Mitchell's ongoing feminist project invites creative collaborators and audience to experience an expression of female consciousness 'in every inch of the work'.⁷⁹⁰ Her hugely varied body of work has made a seminal contribution to the development of theatre-making pedagogy in the UK and in Europe. Charlotte Higgins, writing for *The Guardian* described her as 'The most important British director of theatre and opera at work today – indeed, among the greatest in the world'.⁷⁹¹ For over three decades she has explored the ways that actors, directors and audience can make work together through approaches which foreground her feminism. Her work seeks to understand the female condition. In her practice bodies are seen to be in relation to each other, time, place, object, science and technology. She explores the body as vital and material, fluid and transformative which shatters acting conventions and limiting representations of mimesis. As feminist pedagogue, Mitchell can be seen to have shifted the culture of theatre-making⁷⁹² in the ways she challenges artists and audiences to perceive acting, theatre and constructs of gender differently.

Emma Rice

Emma Rice was born in Oxford in 1967, trained as an actor at Guildhall and from 2005 worked with Mike Shepherd as the joint Artistic Director of the internationally renowned Kneehigh, a company originating and based in Cornwall. In May 2015, the Globe Theatre announced her appointment as Artistic Director

⁷⁸⁹ Phelan, (1993), p.17.

⁷⁹⁰ Mitchell, (10.10.14).

⁷⁹¹ Charlotte Higgins, 'Katie Mitchell, British Theatre's Queen in Exile'. *The Guardian*, (14.01.16) <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jan/14/british-theatre-queen-exile-katie-mitchell> [accessed 02.02.16].

⁷⁹² Higgins, op.cit.

and Rice took up the post in April 2016, which positions her at the vanguard of the UK's theatre landscape. Her first season has been described as 'a feminist makeover', as Rice has pledged to aim for gender equality in casting.⁷⁹³ She has consistently presented her work as feminist, citing Tracey Emin, Louise Bourgeois, Pina Bausch and Joan Littlewood as key influences.⁷⁹⁴ Like Mitchell, she has been dubbed a female 'auteur' and suffered vitriolic reviews from male critics.⁷⁹⁵ She wryly reflects that when Hytner pointed to the unspoken patriarchy in theatre criticism 'it gave the critics another chance to say, "No, we're not dead white men, we just hate Emma Rice!"'⁷⁹⁶ However, unlike Mitchell, Rice maintains a commitment to make theatre that is 'uncynical... without any barrier of cleverness and intellect coming between the performance and the audience. I want there to be vulnerability and foolishness'.⁷⁹⁷ Her trajectory from acting to directing offers an interesting contrast to Mitchell's pedagogic practice.

Rice joined Kneehigh as an actor in 1994 and then full time in 2000. Her approach to theatre-making has evolved in response to and within the company. Kneehigh's aesthetic is borne from rough theatre and storytelling practices; anarchic, often in the open air, responding to the geography, myths and folkloric traditions of Cornwall. Kneehigh founders Shepherd and Bill Mitchell encouraged her to direct and in 2000 she won Best Director in the Barclays Theatre Management Association awards for *The Red Shoes*. Following this, there was a run of successes, with Rice making up to three shows each year.⁷⁹⁸ This body of work, adaptations of films, fairy tales and myths, adapted by Rice with or without a

⁷⁹³ Hannah Furness, 'Noisy Audiences, Magical Forests and More Women in New-Look Shakespeare's Globe', *The Telegraph*. 05.01.16.
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/celebritynews/12082858/Noisy-audiences-magical-forests-and-more-women-in-new-look-Shakespeares-Globe.html> [accessed 14.05.16]

⁷⁹⁴ Emma Rice interviewed in Bristol, (29.01.15).

⁷⁹⁵ I am particularly thinking of the reaction to *A Matter of Life and Death* (2011).

⁷⁹⁶ Hilary Whitney, 'The Arts Desk Q and A: Director Emma Rice', (2011),
<http://www.theartsdesk.com/theatre/theartsdesk-qa-director-emma-rice>
 [accessed 14.07.15]

⁷⁹⁷ Lyn Gardner, 'We Like our Plays to be Foolish', *The Guardian* (19.07.04).
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2004/jul/19/theatre> [accessed 02.06.15]

⁷⁹⁸ *The Wooden Frock* (2004), *The Bacchae* (2005), *Tristan and Yseult* (2006) in collaboration with The National Theatre, which continues to tour internationally, *Cymbeline* (2006) with the RSC, *Rapunzel* (2006), *Brief Encounter* (2008) which transferred to Broadway, *Don Juan*, in collaboration with the RSC in (2008), *A Matter of Life and Death*, in collaboration with the National Theatre (2011), *The Wild Bride* (2011), *Midnight's Pumpkin*, with the BAC (2012), *Steptoe and Son* (2013) which toured nationally.

writer and/or devised with the company, has established an aesthetic of highly visual and musical storytelling which is irreverent, passionate and populist. Duska Radosavljevic refers to it as 'subversive populism' as opposed to 'explicit radicalism',⁷⁹⁹ arguing that through appealing to the audience with commercially successful adaptations which are then re-authored, the work becomes a 'continuous political act that has provoked and challenged some established models of theatre-making'.⁸⁰⁰ In this section I consider the ways that Rice's work, as a feminist act, has developed the pedagogy in mainstream UK theatre. In analysing her approach, I draw on rehearsal observations between 2014 and 2015 across two shows, *Tristan and Yseult*, a new adaptation of Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* and interviews with Rice, Shepherd and actors from the ensemble.

Rice's theatre-making pedagogy developed as an antidote to her own training experience. Her most developmental creative training took place before drama school studying for a BTEC in Performing Arts at Harrington Further Education College. Here she credits her teacher, Marielaine Church, as a formative influence, recalling how each week they would take turns to direct, light, design, act or run the sound.⁸⁰¹ She trained as an actor at Guildhall School of Music and Drama, which she describes as 'a skills camp'⁸⁰² where '[w]e were learning how to deliver to the industry, not really to be creative ourselves'.⁸⁰³ In the early 1990s she joined Theatre Alibi, the Essex-based company founded by Alison Hodge and Tim Spicer. Touring schools with the theatre-in-education program allowed Rice to shift from drama school constructions of character and fourth-wall naturalism, to focus on the story. She explains: 'Children care about what happens next and whether its interesting or not, the two basic principles of storytelling'.⁸⁰⁴ Theatre Alibi brought Rice into contact with a different set of references: Kantor, Grotowski, Wilson and Gardzienice. Most importantly, it put her in a position where she was developing a creative voice, 'discussing the work as well as doing

⁷⁹⁹ Duska Radosavljevic in Liz Tomlin, *British Theatre Companies 1995-2014* (London, New York Bloomsbury, 2015), p.156.

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid. p.158.

⁸⁰¹ Rice, (29.01.15).

⁸⁰² Ibid.

⁸⁰³ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.

the work'.⁸⁰⁵ In 1993, Alibi received an education grant to develop their training practices with Gardzienice. Rice was subsequently invited to join the company as an actor and, like Mitchell and Hodge, Gardzienice has been a formative influence. As Rice explains, 'We all had an unspoken bond. It was like a survivors' group'.⁸⁰⁶ She returned to the UK and worked for Mitchell as an actor and choreographer in the mid 1990s. Her collaboration with both Hodge and Mitchell maps a genealogy of UK women learning from and with each other.

The paradoxical nature of her training experience in Poland instilled an almost spiritual engagement with theatre-making. She comments, 'As a performer I felt cracked open by Gardzienice in a way that three years at drama school had not touched me. I feel that I was sort of born out there in many ways'.⁸⁰⁷ The negative experience of the masculine, 'authoritarian' training regime, which was 'punishing', 'controlling', 'full of fear which gets results',⁸⁰⁸ cemented her own ideology about the ways that she did and did not want to work. Unlike Hodge and Mitchell who experienced the training with the agency of visiting director or collaborator, Rice experienced it as an actor and found it overwhelmingly oppressive and disorientating:

Everything about it disarms you...It's a very physical, European, autocratic system. Staniewski, the leader of the troupe, is amazing but he does shout at you and some things you can never get right...It was terrifying.⁸⁰⁹

Through working with Kneehigh, Rice found a way of making theatre through affirmation and pleasure as opposed to anxiety. She reflects, 'It was a bit like being in Poland because it was rural and people ate together, but it was happy. Instead of creating pain to make something beautiful there was laughter creating something beautiful'.⁸¹⁰ Unlike Mitchell, Rice has not documented her practice as an educational tool, however she does describe it as a form of training to offer 'something a bit different from other directors, where you come in and you get

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁹ Whitney, op.cit.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid.

your script. I train actors in the way that I like to make theatre, building an ensemble'.⁸¹¹ Whilst she has explained her methodology in interviews⁸¹² and recently led workshops on her practice, I consider Rice as a pedagogue and look at the way that her teaching/directing facilitates what she describes as 'the collective imagination'.⁸¹³

'Enabling, guiding and suggesting'⁸¹⁴: pedagogy for the collective imagination

So all I can do is take my team marching alongside me and I'm a little bit in front and I'm absolutely telling them which way to go, but I'm picking them up if they fall, not leaving them, so none of it particularly feels like a choice. I feel I've built a process around my experience, my personality and my aesthetic, that results in what I know best.⁸¹⁵

Katie Mitchell, who has worked with Rice as an actor and as choreographer, said in conversation, 'Emma leads from the front and I lead from behind'.⁸¹⁶ This is an interesting perspective from which to consider the ways that these two pedagogues broker their authority, which in neither case reflects a flattened hierarchy, but nonetheless enables collaboration. To consider the way that Rice's authority operates one must first unpick the problematic use of the word 'collective', as Kneehigh operates as a company with two artistic directors who decide on the artistic programme and direct the ensemble. The idea of the 'collective imagination' suggests equally shared decision-making, however Shepherd stipulates: 'The notion that we are all chipping in with ideas and that there is a sort of woolly, collaborative process is not the case'.⁸¹⁷ Rice uses the term 'collective' to indicate what I consider as the plural imagination,⁸¹⁸ where leadership isn't equally shared, but power is passed between the ensemble who take a collective responsibility in the creative process. This approach reflects Peggy Phelan's call for a pedagogy where power is 'less monolithic, more local and

⁸¹¹ Ibid.

⁸¹² Radoslavjevic, op.cit.

⁸¹³ Rice, (29.01.15).

⁸¹⁴ Ibid.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid.

⁸¹⁶ Mitchell, (02.03.15 – 06.03.15).

⁸¹⁷ Shepherd, (05.11.14).

⁸¹⁸ In discussing this I consider the work of Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p.244.

in perpetual motion'.⁸¹⁹ In the context of Rice's formative theatre-making with Kneehigh the 'local' is a defining feature of this community of practice. Like Gardzienice, the company work and live together in an isolated rural location – a number of barns on the cliffs of Goran Haven. The shared living rituals create the necessary conditions for a community, which as Rice explains, 'is when an ensemble takes on a life of its own'.⁸²⁰ The Kneehigh community is built on a shared ideology. Hannah Arendt's definition of plurality as the 'force of mutual promise or contract'⁸²¹ is useful when thinking about the nature of this ideology. The mutual promise is made manifest in a collection of words written on one red painted wall of the barn at Goran Haven, which appear as a type of creed or contract - 'generosity, wonder, joy, naughtiness, irreverence, anarchy'.⁸²² These dispositional qualities characterise this community of practice whose way of being is familial through dwelling together. The notion of 'family' is repeatedly used by Rice to explain the nature of the company relationships and its familial structures. In rehearsal, Maddy Costa describes Rice as 'not the matriarch, but the elder sister, aware that someone needs to exercise a modicum of responsibility'.⁸²³ Sisterly authority, as opposed to maternal authority, suggests an agency which is more equal.

Kneehigh's ensemble is a core group of collaborators including Rice, Shepherd and Mitchell, along with creative associates who have worked regularly with the company over the last two decades: sound designer Simon Baker, writers Carl Grose, Simon Harvey, and Anna Maria Murphey, composers and musicians Stu Barker and Ian Ross, choreographer Etta Murfitt, lighting designer Malcombe Rippeth, photographer Steve Tanner and puppet maker Sarah Wright. Due to their long associations they share an aesthetic, dialogue and knowledge of each other's ways of working and these relationships have developed beyond theatre-making

⁸¹⁹ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), p.173.

⁸²⁰ Radosavljevic, (2013), p.100.

⁸²¹ Arendt, p.244.

⁸²² Maddy Costa, 'Troupe Therapy', *The Guardian* (01.12.15).

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2008/dec/01/kneehigh-theatre-cornwall-maddy-costa> [accessed 08.02.16].

⁸²³ Ibid.

so that the ensemble resembles a family,⁸²⁴ with people developing similar traits and qualities as performers. Both Rice and Shepherd agree that they look for playfulness and a lack of ego in their actors. 'We don't do very well with 'proper' actors...The people that suit us are a little bit what I call "left-handed",' she observes.⁸²⁵ Many performers work repeatedly with Kneehigh and are multi-skilled musicians, singers, dancers and actors. Some have day jobs, only performing with the company, as Rice enjoys seeing 'untrained bodies doing extraordinary things'.⁸²⁶ As a result the work challenges normative casting and situates itself 'on the margins' geographically and through the way it celebrates what Braidotti refers to as the 'positivity of difference'.⁸²⁷ It is useful to turn to Arendt's explanation of plurality when thinking about Kneehigh's work. She explains that the power of plurality is the way that it allows for individual uniqueness.⁸²⁸ This quality is repeatedly recognised, as critic Dominic Cavendish comments, 'Few companies combine such ensemble zest with such individual truth'.⁸²⁹ In this way the 'collective imagination' is simultaneously plural and unique.

Like Mitchell, Rice acknowledges her leadership within the theatre-making process where she carries the responsibility for the vision of the work, its quality and its potential for success. She explains that 'the way I've been successful is when I've felt happy and confident, so I make every effort to find the best in everybody in the room'.⁸³⁰ Rice achieves this by taking 'control' of the process, so that the actors 'have the space to be free'⁸³¹ and her shared agency as an actor immediately gives her authority. She is able to facilitate joint experimentation, which simultaneously harnesses the plurality of the ensemble whilst releasing individuality. Actor Tristan Sturrock comments on her ability to work with 'the

⁸²⁴ Rice, (29.01.15).

⁸²⁵ Costa, op.cit.

⁸²⁶ Ibid.

⁸²⁷ Rosi Braidotti, *By way of Nomadism* (New York & Chichester: Colombia University Press, 1994), p.161.

⁸²⁸ Arendt, op.cit.

⁸²⁹ Dominic Cavendish, 'A Shot in the Arm for the Junkie King.' *The Telegraph*. (26.09.06) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/drama/3655572/A-shot-in-the-arm-from-the-junkie-king.html> [accessed 01.06.15].

⁸³⁰ Emma Rice, Bristol, (29.01.15).

⁸³¹ Radosavljevic, (2013), p.101.

energies and the rhythms of how people work together and that's what causes a really exciting company'.⁸³² Enabling the 'best of everybody' requires playfulness and risk taking and like Mitchell, Rice confronts fear, vulnerability and failure with the actor, repositioning them as strengths in the creative process. This way of learning is commented on by actress Lizzie Winkler who has worked repeatedly with Rice: 'She often says, "Strong but wrong!" so I think, "I'm just going to give it a go!"'⁸³³ This coupling of positive encouragement and direct critique has emerged as a trait of female directorial practice, which has been described as 'hard but soft'⁸³⁴ or 'blow, blow, blow, push'.⁸³⁵ Affirmation and failure operate beside each other like a Möbius strip. As a result, there is a reorientation towards pleasure in the learning process. In Chapter Two this is explained as a movement from the *via negativa* (learning through confronting blocks, which is the dominant form of learning Rice experienced with Gardzienice), to the '*via positiva*'⁸³⁶ (learning through supported affirmation) and this can be seen as a feature of female pedagogy. Rice's authority is orientated towards affirmation, as she reflects:

I think fear does work, but I think you need an awful lot of confidence to use that tactic and I don't have that...there are things that have to be found in the gap between me and an actor... I function better in a happy room.⁸³⁷

The way of achieving a 'happy room' is impossible to qualify, but a close consideration of the way that Rice scaffolds this gap between herself and her actors through task and dialogue, further illuminates her pedagogy in practice.

Alongside the *via positiva*, 'play' is a central way of learning. Rice's practice operates with two forms of play, identified by Kendrick in her interrogation of Callois' play theory— *ludus* (the structure of the game) and *paida* (the play instinct), which operate beside each other throughout the process.⁸³⁸ It is through playing well together that the action, characters and eventually the text emerges.

⁸³² Tristan Sturrock, Bristol, (30.01.15).

⁸³³ Lizzi Winkler, Bristol, (30.01.15).

⁸³⁴ Sturrock, op.cit.

⁸³⁵ Mitchell, op.cit.

⁸³⁶ This is a gendered reworking of the *via negativa* that I explain in Chapter 2.

⁸³⁷ Emma Rice, (29.01.15).

⁸³⁸ Lynne Kendrick, 'A Paidic Aesthetic: An Analysis of Games in the Ludic Pedagogy of Philippe Gaullier', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*. 2(1), (2011), pp.72-85.

Rehearsals always begin with various games such as 'keepy uppy', forms of volleyball, or grandmother's footsteps and Rice will join in as a player and a referee. These games have been developed and the rules adulterated over the years to become part of a shared family shorthand. For example, when playing volleyball the third hit must be with an alternative body part; penalties are given for over aggressive playing, 'a wanker shot', 'double dibbs' or being 'too bad' and through this child-like game the group are bonded, alert and playfully competitive. Like Landon-Smith, Rice reflects that she finds it easier to encourage males to be playful and that she sees this dispositional quality as gendered:

I have a theory that boys are brought up to be greedy and to be naughty. You sort of say, "He's a lad!" "That's really funny!" and girls are brought up to be good and restrained and you're talking about your earliest blueprinting, "Isn't she good!" "Isn't she neat!" "Isn't she polite?" ⁸³⁹

She acknowledges that in her early career 'It was easier to pull the serious out of funny men than I have found to pull the funny out of serious women. It's a harder job'.⁸⁴⁰ However, over the years she has developed this playful relationship with a group of 'top birds' including Annette McLoughlin, Dot Atkinson, Lizzie Winkler, Katie Owen and Tamzin Griffin. It is interesting to note this repeated reference to 'playing the fool' as a masculine trait and the comparative difficulty for females to access this. Landon-Smith suggests that males are more likely to perform 'playful' with a female director.⁸⁴¹ The tendency for males to be more physically playful can be seen as a gendered trait, which research suggests is rooted in early female body confidence that inhibits freedom or playfulness in physical games and sports.⁸⁴²

At times Rice's dialogic practice resembles the motivational speech of a sports coach. She side coaches throughout rehearsal, which creates the dynamic of one continuous team game using phrases such as: 'Make me an offer!'; 'What don't we do? Show!'; 'Looking out! Always looking out!'; 'What should we do? We'll try it in, we'll try it out!'; 'What are we? We are strong and stable, we are bright and

⁸³⁹ Emma Rice, (29.01.15). Like Landon-Smith in Chapter 4, Rice identifies gendered behaviour.

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁴¹ Landon-Smith, op.cit.

⁸⁴² Iris Young, 'Throwing Like a Girl: Self-Objectification Predicts Adolescent Girls' Motor Performance', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*. 29:79 (2005), pp.79-101.

flexible!'; 'Stagecraft! Nothing to see! Nothing to see!'; 'Do it again, but be better!'; 'Strong but wrong!'⁸⁴³ Rice's dialogue is simultaneously playful and bonding, demanding and instructive. Shared responsibility through game playing continues into vocal warm-ups led by one of the company, where the ensemble will practice tongue twisters and sing together. In all rehearsals the musical director and musicians are working alongside the actors and any distinction is blurred as singing is a feature of the rehearsal room. This brings great unity to the group, as Rice notes 'Singing is a great leveler'.⁸⁴⁴ The Balkan singing that she learnt with Gardzienice, collides with folk, punk and Barker's distinctive composition. The blended voices enable a strong sense of mutuality, allowing the ensemble to develop a polyphonic attention to each other and a shared rhythm. This mutuality is evident in the physical warm-up, led by Rice, who models stretches, massages and stamina building exercises.⁸⁴⁵ Rice's agency as an actor means that she is the expert, leading her peers and learning with them as opposed to having a hierarchical divide between actor and director. This position of authority responds to the feminist pedagogy explored in Chapter Three.

Rice has explained her rehearsal processes in interview with Radosavljevic,⁸⁴⁶ but I focus here on the scaffolding structures and ways she interacts with actors to generate a 'collective imagination'. She describes the process of liberating actors in the following way:

You teach the ensemble, you teach the team and then you go, "Go! Be brilliant!" and the actors I work with, almost without fault, will be brilliant. If you hold them strongly and tightly and then you go, "Your go!" they'll fly and spin and delight and it's a thing of great beauty of which I have no control over. What you've done is you've enabled and guided and suggested.⁸⁴⁷

Enabling, guiding and suggesting are the ways that Rice facilitates the shared discovery of the best way to tell the story. I consider Rice's storytelling as a female domain due to its autobiographical and iterative constructions. Her devising

⁸⁴³ Rice. (04-08.14 – 06.09.14).

⁸⁴⁴ Rice. (29.01.15).

⁸⁴⁵ Rice was movement director for Katie Mitchell on *A Women Killed with Kindness* (1992).

⁸⁴⁶ Radosavljevic, op.cit.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid.

approach does not start from a concept or an idea, it re-imagines and adapts stories that have been told before. Radosavljevic frames the process of adaptation as politically subversive in its iteration, as the ultimate authority rests with the audience.⁸⁴⁸ Rice refers to 'the itch'⁸⁴⁹ that will lead her to a story and how she relies on her emotional connection and memory of the story (as opposed to research), to lead her re-imagining. She explains, '[M]y foundation will be my memory. And I am sure that is one of the reasons why I want to do adaptations – I want to work with that emotional memory'.⁸⁵⁰ She values the process of un-making the story or to 'remember wrongly',⁸⁵¹ as it is through the inaccuracy of remembering that one's unique vision is revealed. In Rice's practice the ultimate authority is claimed by the story, which she explains, 'puts us all in our place because we all have the responsibility to tell it ... You take your bits, you take your turn, you support'.⁸⁵² Before working with actors Rice explores the story with a composer and designer to find its palette, textures, colours, themes and emotions. She then harnesses the collective imagination of the company to realise it. Shepherd explains how Rice facilitates this: 'Emma demands that people work instinctively and make offers that she can then harvest, select, edit and craft'.⁸⁵³ The play impulse, which has been developed through games and joint experimentation with the permission to try things out, underpins the process. Rice's use of questioning and instruction — 'Make me an offer!'⁸⁵⁴ — provokes the imagination of actor or musician to offer instinctive solutions to staging decisions which she will immediately either accept, refuse or edit. She asks each actor to respond to the story through their own associations, what they like about it, what they don't and how it relates to their own lives or memories. In this way her practice can be seen to reflect the critical and engaged pedagogies examined in Chapter Three, as she starts with the personal responses of the individuals in the ensemble.⁸⁵⁵ They record their responses on big sheets of paper that remain in

⁸⁴⁸ Radosavljevic, p. 174.

⁸⁴⁹ Emma Rice, *The Kneehigh Anthology: Volume 1* (London: Oberon Books, 2011), p.9.

⁸⁵⁰ Radosavljevic, p.103.

⁸⁵¹ Whitney, op.cit.

⁸⁵² Emma Rice, (29.01.15).

⁸⁵³ Mike Shepherd, (05.11.14).

⁸⁵⁴ Observation notes *Rebecca*, (28.01.15 - 30.01.15).

⁸⁵⁵ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994).

the rehearsal room, reminding everyone of their first impressions and keeping them on track. Rice rarely gives actors research during the process as she feels it creates 'a school like attitude, where working harder automatically makes you work better, which isn't necessarily the case in a creative environment'.⁸⁵⁶ This approach is in marked contrast to Mitchell's.

Rice's agency as an actor gives her an innate understanding of how to enable others to work instinctively and playfully. This can be seen in the way she facilitates the joint construction of characters. The ensemble share descriptors for each character, looking for contradictions or surprising interpretations and then collectively perform each one, observing each other's playing. Through this Brechtian approach the potential of the characters to surprise and work against type is discovered. Rice dresses each actor up in items of costume, moving through improvisation tasks, side coaching and provoking with questions and tasks. She describes this as a 'magical moment of alchemy... of chemistry when I know the heart of the person playing the character, and that will guide how that character sits within the structure of that work'.⁸⁵⁷ The creation happens in the 'gap' between actor and director where 'flights of fancy'⁸⁵⁸, breaking rules, exaggeration and play is encouraged as it liberates the anarchic possibilities of the playing.

By the second week of a five-week rehearsal the ensemble has started staging scenes and has already learnt a number of songs and choreographed sequences (dances or scene setting) and at that point the work builds quickly and the script is authored by Rice, sometimes in collaboration with writer(s).⁸⁵⁹ Action choices come from the practical and logical staging of the story as opposed to fixing a psychological score. The actor may have to multi-role, play an instrument, dance, sing, set a scene or operate a puppet in any ten minutes on stage and whilst there may be attention given to the objective being played, it is always in the interest of sharpening and animating the story. The final stage of Rice's theatre-making is pinning down the script and working on the text. Rice's subversion of the text reflects a feminist practice which privileges emotional connection, impulse and relational somatic discovery. She explains:

⁸⁵⁶ Theatre Royal. Haymarket. Masterclass, (06.02.14).

⁸⁵⁷ Radosavljevic, p.102.

⁸⁵⁸ Mitchell, op.cit.

⁸⁵⁹ Rice has worked repeatedly with writers Carl Gosse and Anna Maria Murphy.

I work on the iceberg and the words are the sprinkle on top of the point. And I think that most theatre works the other way round — you work on the words and then you keep finding meaning. I would die a death working like that.⁸⁶⁰

Rice is not bound by fixed text as she works with adaptation. However, one wonders how her approach will be challenged in her new role at The Globe. Her only foray into directing Shakespeare, *Cymbeline* at Stratford in 2006, used barely 200 lines of the original text and outraged purists.⁸⁶¹ As actress Lizzie Winkler points out, Rice's process isn't 'about the script, but the feeling and the flavours and the music and that feels quite unique'.⁸⁶² This subversion of the word in favour of somatic communication has been previously identified as a female domain. A consideration of Rice's body of work and her aesthetic allows us to identify a feminist acting pedagogy, which operates in a different way to Mitchell's textually orientated approach.

*Selkies and Sirens: the 'feminine masquerade'*⁸⁶³

Rice's body of work maps repeated feminist threads: the vulnerability of the female body, female objectification, female sexual desire, the family, female duty, bodily violence and physical, emotional, transformation. She explains how the trajectory of the work maps her own experience:

The only way that I can analyse them [the plays] is the way they reflect my development as a person. In the way that I am interested in the female condition, the human condition, at different parts of my life. So it is no mistake that *The Red Shoes*, which was all about freedom and personal freedom and the cost of freedom was at the time of my divorce. It's also when I started directing, so it was a great explosion of rage and upset and

⁸⁶⁰ Duska Radosavljevic, 'Emma Rice in interview with Duska Radosavljevic', *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance*, 3(1), (2010), p.93.

⁸⁶¹ Christian Billing, 'New Seed from Old Corn: Review of *Cymbeline* (directed by Emma Rice for Kneehigh Theatre) at the Swan, September 2006', *Shakespeare*, 3(2), (2007), pp.220-23.

⁸⁶² Walker, (30.01.15).

⁸⁶³ Joan Riviere, 'Womanliness as a Masquerade' in *Formations of Fantasy*, ed. Burgin, V, Donald, J, Kaplan, C. (London & New York: Routledge, 1985), pp.33-45.

creativity and loss. Then you go onto *The Wooden Frock*, which was how do you heal? How do you armour yourself against what hurts you? And then *The Wild Bride* is how do you endure and mature? ⁸⁶⁴

Rice's fairytales reflect a focus on archetypes and myths, which have been identified as traits of feminist theatre practice.⁸⁶⁵ Her protagonists 'explore female freedom... the battle to walk your own path, to be in your own skin, to grab life'.⁸⁶⁶ They struggle to escape incest, rape, murder and enslavement in structures of marriage and motherhood. Physical confinement is presented as both a curse and a remedy and Rice highlights the bargain that is made in order to save the self, often necessitating physical mutilation: In *The Red Shoes* The Girl begs The Butcher to cut off her feet to stop her dancing; in *The Wild Bride*, her hands are cut off; *Rapunzel* loses her hair; in *The Wooden Frock*, The Girl is locked in the equivalent of chastity armour, to prevent her bereaved father from taking advantage of her. Rice's work highlights the value and sacrifice of the female body and how the transaction for freedom pivots on choice to present surprising images of female transformation and representation, stressing the hybridity of identity and states of becoming. In *The Wild Bride*, 'a feminist fairy tale',⁸⁶⁷ the necessity to endure and to transform oneself in order to survive, is made manifest in the casting where three different women play The Girl at three different stages of life: The Bride, The Wild and The Woman. Fluid mutability and change are presented as necessary for survival. The transformative potential of the female body is celebrated, recalling Braidotti's 'vital materialism', where bodies exist in states of becoming.⁸⁶⁸ In *The Wild Bride* The Girl is given mechanical hands, in *The Red Shoes* the protagonist has wooden feet and in *Nights at the Circus*, an adaptation of Angela Carter's novel, the protagonist Fevvers, an aerialist, has wings. Rice is drawn to stories which replace normative female representation with transformation such as the folk stories of selkies. Selkies are seal women who shed their seal skin to marry a human and

⁸⁶⁴ Rice, Bristol, (29.01.15).

⁸⁶⁵ Elaine Aston, *An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre*. (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), p.70.

⁸⁶⁶ Chloe Rickard, 'Kneehigh's Emma Rice on Directing *Steptoe and Son*'. (04.04.13) http://community.nationaltheatrewales.org/profiles/blogs/kneehigh-s-emma-rice-on-directing-steptoe-and-son?xg_source=activity [accessed 04.06.15].

⁸⁶⁷ The character The Devil says this at the end of the play.

⁸⁶⁸ Braidotti, p. 16.

then end up returning to their instinctive self and the ocean, reclaiming their rightful skin and leaving human duty behind. This idea of shedding layers to expose the skin is a repeated feature of her work. She is fascinated with 'being in your own skin', ⁸⁶⁹ the physicality of the female body, the beauty of imperfections and she resists stereotypical casting. She comments: 'I love women to be beautiful for what they are. So I try very hard to portray women truthfully, so not turned out and not fully toned. All shapes and sizes and natural'.⁸⁷⁰ Rice's 'top birds' can challenge representations of femininity, with their extreme physical presence, their strength, their gangling clumsiness or their unabashed exuberance.

She identifies a second investigation into the female condition in what she terms 'the bad girl' plays. In works like *Pandora's Box*, *Bacchae* and *Rebecca* she poses the questions: 'What would you forgive? What would you do? What happens when you break the law and what stops you?'⁸⁷¹ This strand of work deals with female sexual desire, with women as sirens, sexually empowered and defiant. In *Tristan and Yseult*, Yseult loves two people at the same time. *Pandora's Box*, an adaptation of Wedekind's *Lulu* plays, sees Lulu, as both femme fatale and victim, seduce and destroy countless lovers and husbands before she is finally murdered by Jack The Ripper. Rice herself played Lulu and critics were challenged by the casting, describing her as 'a kind of anti-Lulu —almost the precise opposite of the composite male fantasy one has come to expect'.⁸⁷² Rice's portrayal, 'replacing a glittering Gustav Klimt model with a scowling Egon Schiele hooker'⁸⁷³ was more manipulator than victim. *Don John*, a reworking of Mozart and Da Ponte's *Don Giovanni*, allowed Rice to 'reclaim the story for the female characters'⁸⁷⁴ — an elegant woman, an alcoholic vicar's wife, and a Polish cleaner. When the lothario

⁸⁶⁹ Rice, Bristol, (29.01.15).

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁷¹ Ibid.

⁸⁷² Alfred Hickling, 'Pandora's Box'. *The Guardian*. (27.03.02)
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2002/mar/27/theatre.artsfeatures> [accessed 06.04.15]

⁸⁷³ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁴ Michael Billington, 'Don John.' *The Guardian*. (20.01.08)
<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2008/dec/20/kneehigh-don-john-review> [accessed 08.05.15]

meets his end hell fire, he is called to account by his conquests who watch him die with the final image suggesting, 'hell has no fury like a woman scorned'.⁸⁷⁵

A repeated concern in her work is the performativity of gender. Drawing on Irigaray's reading of 'feminine mimicry'⁸⁷⁶ in relation to Diamond's 'feminist gestic criticism'⁸⁷⁷ we can understand Rice's approach to female representation as a feature of her 'subversive populism'.⁸⁷⁸ In Chapters Three and Four, I considered the performativity of gender in the context of actor training and revisiting the construct of masquerade allows me to theorise Rice's approach. Joan Riviere's influential study identified womanliness as a mask, performed in response to male desires.⁸⁷⁹ Following this precept, Luce Irigaray viewed the female masquerade negatively but developed a strategy of resistance through the construct of feminine mimicry.⁸⁸⁰ Irigaray suggested that women, '[M]ust play with mimesis...must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus begin to thwart it'.⁸⁸¹ The excess of performed femininity turns masquerade into mimicry and so ironises the constructed feminine ideal. The deliberate acting out of prescribed femininity reveals its hidden mechanisms. Diamond explains this as a form of feminist gestic criticism in theatre-making. In this way, a feminist acting approach emerges where feminine mimicry is played as an 'ironic disturbance' and constructions of gender are subversively critiqued. Rice's work takes feminine performance, in theatrical and performative contexts, as recurring themes: *The Wah Wah Girls* in 2011, a collaboration with Tanika Gupta, explores the stories of Asian women who perform as Mujra dancers; *Nights at the Circus* considers the ageing female circus performer.⁸⁸² In the 2014 production of *Rebecca*, which Rice describes as 'a feminist work [where] all the characters explore different aspects of femininity',⁸⁸³

⁸⁷⁵ This saying is based on lines from *The Mourning Bride* by William Congreve (1697) 'Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned'.

⁸⁷⁶ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One* (USA: Cornell University Press, 1985), p.77.

⁸⁷⁷ Diamond, pp.44-55.

⁸⁷⁸ Radosavljevic, op.cit.

⁸⁷⁹ Riviere, op.cit.

⁸⁸⁰ Diamond, op.cit.

⁸⁸¹ Irigaray, p.77.

⁸⁸² *Nights at the Circus*. Education Pack <http://www.kneehigh.co.uk/show/rebecca.php> [accessed 06.05.15].

⁸⁸³ *Rebecca*. Education Pack. <http://www.kneehigh.co.uk/show/rebecca.php> [accessed 06.05.15].

Mrs De Winter, a dutiful young bride, casts off her naivety to discover her feminine power. In the last scene, as she performs a false fainting fit, she whispers to her husband, 'See what a fine little actress I've become'.⁸⁸⁴ Hale, the actress who played the role, described in interview the way that the character discovers her 'power' through learning how to perform her femininity.⁸⁸⁵ From this perspective, Rice celebrates the doubleness of the female condition, both being and being seen, as a positive difference which might be used to resist male hegemony.

Another exploration of the feminine masquerade occurs in Rice's use of cross-gender casting from male to female. This, in part, was a practical response to Kneehigh having more easy access to male actors who can tour and because multi-role is a feature and a necessity of the work. However, drag can operate on the knife-edge between critique and collusion and as Butler explains in 'Critically Queer': 'there is no guarantee that exposing the naturalised status of heterosexuality will lead to its subversion'.⁸⁸⁶ In interview, Rice acknowledges that, particularly in the US, the transgender community have questioned the way she uses drag as humorous and whilst she remains resolved to continue to cross gender she has decided to also cast female to male.⁸⁸⁷ In *Rebecca* and *946*,⁸⁸⁸ females multi-role as male characters.⁸⁸⁹ In this way Rice ironises inscribed gender constructions, delighting in the performativity of gender, affirming the possibility of difference and 'converting subordination into affirmation'.⁸⁹⁰

Rice's practice seems eminently suited to the challenges at the Globe with the fairy tale quality of Shakespeare's late works, the visual and visceral nature of storytelling and the outdoor and relational sharing with the audience. It will be interesting to see to what extent she is able to redress the imbalance for women in this canon which, as Elizabeth Freestone argues, has determined and continues to maintain the inequality for female actors in the UK. Rice observes: 'If anyone

⁸⁸⁴ Taken from observation notes, *Rebecca*, Bristol, (28.01.15 - 30.01.15).

⁸⁸⁵ Interview with Imogen Hale, Bristol, (30.01.15).

⁸⁸⁶ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.231.

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁸ *946*, adapted by Michael Morpurgo and Emma Rice from *The Amazing Story of Adolpho Tips*, premiered at The Asylum in July 2015.

⁸⁸⁹ *A Midsummer Night's Dream* premiered at the Globe in May 2016.

⁸⁹⁰ Irigaray, op.cit.

bended gender it was Shakespeare'⁸⁹¹ and she has made a commitment to 50/50 gender equality on the Globe stage. She states: 'As somebody who has got custody of this canon for a while, I think it is quite interesting to say, yes, it is a target. How can we get the female voices through? How can we change the mould?' ⁸⁹² Her first season, *The Wonder Season*, aims to foreground the female experience, for example *Cymbeline* is renamed *Imogen* addressing the dominance of the female protagonist in the original play. In her inaugural production, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, she achieved greater gender equality with nine female and seven male actors. The rude mechanicals, apart from Bottom, were played as female, whilst Helena, played by Aknur Bahl, became Helenus. As Dominic Cavendish comments, the casting, 'sheds fresh light on the play's manifold sexual confusions'. ⁸⁹³ In her position at the Globe Rice has the opportunity to activate a feminist intervention in the canon of Early Modern texts, working at the hegemonic heart of UK theatre and challenging notions of gender from the eye of the storm.

When we think about the intersections between directing and teaching we can reconsider theatre-making processes as developmental pedagogies. Mitchell and Rice's praxis illustrate the ways in which feminist directors, working in mainstream UK theatre, impact on the lifelong learning of actors, creative collaborators and audiences. Whilst these practices are wholly distinct they open up the idea that a directing practice is gendered to outline critical acting pedagogies where the authority of teacher/director operates in subtle and complex ways. This pedagogical enquiry unites research, ideology and praxis. In Mitchell and Rice's work feminist interventions in acting pedagogy and the female ontology of acting operate beside each other, offering different perspectives on theatre-making. To conclude this thesis I propose a female genealogy of actor training as an alternative to male lineages.

⁸⁹¹ Mark Brown, 'The Globe's Emma Rice. "If anyone bended gender it was Shakespeare."' *The Guardian*, (05.01.16).

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jan/05/shakespeares-globe-emma-rice-if-anybody-bended-gender> [accessed 07.02.16].

⁸⁹² Ibid.

⁸⁹³ Dominic Cavendish, 'Emma Rice's revolutionary *Midsummer Night's Dream* had me transfixed at The Globe.' *The Telegraph*, (06.05.16).

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/theatre/what-to-see/emma-rices-revolutionary-midsummer-nights-dream-had-me-transfixe/> [accessed 11.07.16].

Conclusion

Towards a Female Genealogy of Acting

Speaking at RCSSD in 2016, Rosemary Malague returned to the precepts of her thesis, *An Actress Prepares*, to outline her current project which has the working title, 'Act Like a Feminist: Empowering Strategies for Actresses and their Teachers'.⁸⁹⁴ Malague is examining what a feminist actor training approach might look like. Her starting point is to problematise the extent to which sexist practices are woven into 'guru models' of teaching where the male teacher is the arbitrator of 'truth' for the actress. She indicates that exercises meant to reveal natural female behaviour are predicated on gendered appropriations to ask 'Are we training victims and objects?'⁸⁹⁵ Malague points to the deeply ingrained patriarchal structures in training where 'females feel fearful' whilst 'males are feeling positive'.⁸⁹⁶ In supporting young actors to deal with the inherent sexism in the industry she suggests that they become familiar with feminist thinking, work with plays that offer equal opportunities, and apply rigorous script analysis. A close consideration of the pedagogy of female practitioners, and the specific and practical strategies used in studios and rehearsal rooms allows us to respond to these concerns.

The dual nature of this project — considering the work of women 'beside' and in conversation with pedagogy in actor training — has led me to look at the intersections between educational and feminist theories. Actor training increasingly looks to scientific paradigms to develop practices, but rarely interrogates the nature of the learning experience through the interactions and choices made by teachers/directors with actors. When we look at the ways that the processes of learning happen, we can develop a more refined understanding of what a female pedagogy might be. Whilst this pedagogy might be termed feminist in the way that it foregrounds gender and strives for equality, I am primarily interested in what might be gained by recognising the female sexed state as a

⁸⁹⁴ Rosemary Malague, 'Act Like A Feminist: Empowering Strategies for Actresses and their Teachers', RCSSD, (15.03.16).

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁶ Ibid.

positive difference from the neutered, by which I mean 'male I', position in training. This interrogation of pedagogy challenges the mysticism of acting, which perpetuates a potentially oppressive learning environment where, as Malague reminds us, females are particularly vulnerable.⁸⁹⁷

At the start of this project I drew on three research questions, identified to be important for the future of feminism and performance, as a springboard for my thinking: What institutional practices are needed in order to advance feminism in performance? What critical theories are most current and useful in tackling the cultural moment? What practices are most important at this time?⁸⁹⁸ My project appeared to speak directly to their tripartite strategy. However, at the conclusion of my thesis, I refine and redirect these questions to ask: In what ways can drama schools and the mainstream theatre industry recognise and support the development of a female genealogy of practice? What are the ideological frameworks underpinning a female pedagogy in theatre-making? What are the specific traits of this pedagogy in practice?

Supporting a female genealogy

When we survey the landscape for women in UK theatre the inequities of training and employment are brought to account. However, mining below the surface to the foundations of actor training and then deeper still to its geological structures, we can trace a credible and significant genealogy of acting. This genealogy maps power relationships between people and through the development of ideas. It offers an alternative to the visibly dominant male tradition, which sees the master or guru teacher/director passing his knowledge to those below who pass it down the line. So what might a female genealogy look like? A female genealogy is non-linear, fragmented and with a flattened hierarchy, forming a cartography of interconnecting and overlapping shapes. Catherine Alexander, who leads the Devised and Theatre Education (DATE) course at RCSSD, worked for many years with Simon McBurney as a member of Complicité. In an interview she reflected on

⁸⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁸ 'Congruence and Contestation: Feminism and Performance', Roehampton University, (04.09.15).

the shapes that each had drawn in order to illustrate their approaches.⁸⁹⁹ McBurney's was a series of intricate lines, boxes and arrows, meticulous and detailed, moving forward in a linear sequence and direction. In contrast, Alexander described hers as resembling a flower, with overlapping petals spanning and circling outwards from a central stamen. She suggests that their responses demonstrate the difference between their sexed body-minds, with her 'femaleness' more predisposed to resist linear and directional structures, but to work in spirals, circling, returning to the start and revealing the spaces between. This reminds us of Kristeva's 'semiotic chora' and *Women's Time* examined in Chapter Three.⁹⁰⁰ Alexander's image is useful when considering what topography a female genealogy of acting might take.

What recurring themes, traits or qualities mark the interconnecting shapes of this genealogy? In desiring to pin down ideas, I have become increasingly aware that much is inevitably lost through such attempts. Many aspects of teaching and learning in acting and theatre-making are esoteric and complex, resisting easy explanation or indeed justification. Additionally, as Aston and Harris problematised in their use of square brackets around the title '[Women] practitioners',⁹⁰¹ situating a gendered practice might foreclose what it attempts to open up. By offering an alternative to the 'male I' assumed in training practices it is not my intention to replace it with a 'female I'. However, from the start this thesis has announced its strategic essentialism in its intention to highlight an alternative way of thinking about actor training and certain contextual and contingent features might be usefully recognised as defining traits.

Looking at the pedagogic practices of women practitioners working in UK theatre-making since 1970, a female genealogy might be described as a passing between, as opposed to a passing down, lineage. Women have been seen to value collaboration and are committed to a shared and ongoing learning process as a more sustainable way of developing both the individual and the group. Operating from a marginal position, women find value in the potential that the in-between space offers them and this has radically changed the way that theatre is made.

⁸⁹⁹ Catherine Alexander, (15.07.15).

⁹⁰⁰ Julia Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1986).

⁹⁰¹ Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris, *Performance Practice and Process: Contemporary [Women] Practitioners* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

Women practitioners have been foundational in the development of ensemble practices and in the introduction of devising as a way of making theatre, where alternative models to hierarchical power structures have been explored.⁹⁰² Whilst leading and taking responsibility for a creative process, women appear to be less willing to be seen as the arbiter of truth, with a recognition that they don't have the answers and that facilitating and shared problem solving is preferable to taking on the role of the guru. They have often worked in creative partnerships over many years and supported the careers of other women, for example Jean Newlove and Maggie Bird at East 15, or Katie Mitchell and stage manager Pippa Meyer. The power relations in women's work, either as teacher or director, operate more as a series of interconnecting shapes where each individual takes responsibility for his/her own role, as opposed to a top down authority. Delegating and encouraging a reflexive and shared ownership of the creative learning process is embedded in pedagogical practices.

Women have shown a commitment to developing explicit pedagogic approaches within their theatre-making, often balancing teaching alongside an artistic practice. The early establishment of UK drama schools shows women pioneering 'beside' training practices for actors and drama teachers. At its foundations, pedagogy was foregrounded in the practices of actor training. However, women have been comparatively absent in authoring or branding their approaches. It is in the fields of voice and movement, which many regard to be formative in UK actor training, where women's developmental pedagogy is most visible and dominates practice. The tenor of this authorship evidences more of a self-help format, with an onus on self-regulated and reflexive learning. Due to the nature of UK actor training, which positions acting, voice and movement as separate strands, the women working in these fields are necessarily navigating an in-between space —between actor and director.

It may be that these corporeal strands, which start with the unique body of the actor as the subject as opposed to the technique or method of acting, are more concerned with developing personal and social knowledge. This feature of learning

⁹⁰² Alexandra Mermikides, *Negotiating Creativity: An Analytical Framework for the Study of Group Theatre-Making Processes*. Unpublished thesis. Goldsmiths College, University of London (2006), p.86.

in actor training is difficult to articulate and pin down and yet a consideration of how these 'transferable skills'⁹⁰³ or 'dispositional qualities'⁹⁰⁴ are taught offers much to benefit education in its broadest context. For example: developing the potential to work both individually and as an ensemble with impulse, empathy and instinct; learning to listen with your whole body; developing relational awareness; learning how to accept and give critique; being simultaneously reflective and reflexive; learning discipline and being self motivated; learning to be an autodidact. These knowledges form what I have called the hidden curriculum of acting. Developing such self-awareness can politicise the actor through a liberatory and critical pedagogy, where the scaffolding of choice is made explicit. I suggest that women's position, which Braidotti describes as 'being minoritarian',⁹⁰⁵ is receptive to unequal positions of power and questions the normative, looking to the particular knowledge of the individual.

How might this genealogy be recognised, nurtured and mined for its pedagogical value? Women's work has developed in response to their marginalised position in the industry. Let us consider this narrative in light of the data. When a young woman decides that she wants to enter the profession and train as an actor she will be competing with three times as many females than males for a place. This inequity will continue should she enter the profession in any field (writer, director, producer, actor), where her male peer is twice as likely to gain employment. If she does get work it will be unlikely that she will perform in a play written by a woman and she is three times as likely to be directed by a male. As her career progresses she will find it difficult to balance the possibility of a family life with the working structures of theatre-making and performing. If she is able to continue working through her forties she will struggle to maintain a career, as the number of female parts become increasingly limited. It may be that at some point she considers teaching as an option, or directing. Finding more secure employment allows for greater stability of family life and the possibility for more control of

⁹⁰³ Stephen Wagh, *The Heart of Teaching: Empowering Students in the Performing Arts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 139.

⁹⁰⁴ Simon Murray cited by Maria Kapsali, 'Training for a Cold Climate', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 2, (2014), p.231.

⁹⁰⁵ Rosi Braidotti, *By Way of Nomadism* (New York & Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1994), p.114.

one's work. In the case of teaching, she is most likely to work in the fields of voice or movement. If she does teach acting, it is unlikely that she will become the head of a department and effect changes to the curriculum. As a director, she will be a more risky proposition for theatres and if she does achieve early success, it will be a challenge to maintain her career through her later years. She is likely to earn less than her male peers doing exactly the same job.

In spite of a number of recent high profile female appointments in theatre and repeated avowals that the landscape is changing, this narrative continues to be played out.⁹⁰⁶ As a cultural industry, theatre presents itself as creative and progressive yet continues to exist in a state of 'organised forgetting',⁹⁰⁷ which perpetuates inequality whilst continuing to attract a female majority to train in the field. However, there are signs that institutional practices are starting to shift in policy and practice. Within the last decade drama schools have changed their recruitment policy to address gender balance in admissions and there is an increasing recognition that traditional notions of industry are no longer fit for purpose. Research initiatives by Drama UK are attempting to address the changing landscape for the actor.⁹⁰⁸ Alternative actor training courses such as RCSSD's DATE strand, situate actors as creative artists, making their own work with politicised agency as cultural workers.⁹⁰⁹ Programmes are looking at ways to allow a greater range for females in the roles they are offered, considering cross-casting or devising work to create their own material. In the industry, there is an ongoing effort by organisations like Sphinx and most recently Advance to move beyond debate and to affect policies. Advance has made headway in trying to change policy on a national level and to support theatres to find their own ways to resist the continued inequity in the field. More theatres are looking critically at what they can do to improve working conditions for women, such as programming an equal number of plays written by female writers, or ensuring gender balance in casting across the season. There are a growing number of women in senior positions, whether producers or artistic directors, which indicates a sea change. However,

⁹⁰⁶ This is overviewed in Chapter One.

⁹⁰⁷ Julie Wilkinson speaking at *Advance* (RCSSD), 2014. Platform transcript at Tonic Theatre. <http://www.tonictheatre.co.uk> [accessed 12.08.15].

⁹⁰⁸ 'The Changing Landscape', Drama UK, Birkbeck University, (26.11.14).

⁹⁰⁹ Catherine Alexander interviewed in London, (15.07.15).

policy needs to change at a national level. Here we might look to the film industry in Sweden, where funding structures regulate gender equality ensuring that women's stories are represented on screen. At the heart of the problem may be an acceptance that male focused narratives are more popular. Vicky Featherstone asks, 'Do we know how to write and watch plays that have complex, flawed female characters?' ⁹¹⁰ Might it be that within our collective cultural consciousness we are less prepared for women to fail, be flawed, be foolish, or to be more than 'victims and objects?' ⁹¹¹ Turning to feminist thinking as a way to articulate the positivity of difference seems to be vital for the cultural moment.

What shifts in institutional practices might support a female genealogy of practice? Drama schools need to maintain gender equality in recruitment and in staffing so that no particular field is perceived as gendered. Curricula might be developed to ensure that the work of women is featured in all strands of training practices. Drama schools should look to new ways for actors to train as artists who make their own work and reshape their own industry. The ways that the actor explores the politics of her role might be foregrounded to develop her agency as cultural worker. Ensuring that pedagogical processes are made explicit would challenge problematic ethical questions within the training ground at policy and curriculum level. Hidden histories evidence the way that women's training practices have been formative in the development of pedagogy in theatre-making and they should continue to be researched and documented. Within the curriculum, the plays chosen should ensure equal opportunities with cross-gendered casting whenever possible. The particular and sexed body should be acknowledged within a training approach, so that the positivity of difference might be mined and alternative ways of being examined. In this way actor training moves beyond outmoded notions of mimesis to be recognised as a critically engaged learning practice.

⁹¹⁰ Sarah Compton, 'Sexism On the Stage – Meet the Women Tearing Up the Script'. *The Guardian*. (17.01.16) <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jan/17/sexism-stage-female-playwrights-royal-court-theatre>, [accessed 04.02.16]

⁹¹¹ Malague, op.cit.

Theoretical constructs for a female pedagogy of acting

What might be the value of a pedagogical approach that acknowledges the gendered particularity of both teacher/director and actor, and what, as Irigaray asks, may be hidden by the neuter?⁹¹² Critical feminist theories intersecting with educational theory can offer us an ideological framework to underpin a female pedagogy of acting.

Female pedagogy resists universalising the bodily experience, recognising that bodies are unique and that learning is personalised. Woman is a contingent category, with every body uniquely inscribed and inscribing, enacted and enacting. As opposed to having fixed identities we exist in states of becoming, so that we not only recognise the differences between women but within every woman. This position allows us to move beyond feminisms that box us into particular camps — radical, social materialist or essentialist — and to enable different perspectives to collide, overlap and intersect. Notions of doubling and the female body have preoccupied feminist thinking. Harris suggests that all women simultaneously exist in two states — the sexed female body and the socially inscribed body.⁹¹³ In the last decade, Marxist notions of the power constructions of the body have collided with phenomenological states of being and this reminds us of what Grosz referred to as the double body — the ‘social’ and the ‘lived’ body.⁹¹⁴ This doubling of the body, perceived as a feature of the female state, is the condition of acting.

Sedgwick’s ‘beside thinking’⁹¹⁵ offers an alternative paradigm to the perpetual dualisms that dominate acting (mind/body, inner/outer, self/other). This study has pursued the value of considering acting pedagogy and women’s practices beside each other. Working from a position of doubling and existing in the between space offers an alternative to phallogentric structures and dualistic thinking, to enable a freedom of movement and the shifting possibility of our multiple selves. A female ontology of acting, considered in Chapter Three, highlights a number of features: the in-between as a space of creative

⁹¹² Irigaray, (1993), p.171.

⁹¹³ Geraldine Harris, *Staging Femininities: Performance and Performativity* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.17.

⁹¹⁴ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).

⁹¹⁵ Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003).

transformation; female visibility and constructs of doubling; and the force in vulnerability. In this way, the marginal position of being female can be seen to be a positive advantage in the types of knowledge necessary in acting. Phelan identifies that visibility is gendered and that the female, like the performer, is in an unequal position of power. Female pedagogy is alert to the male gaze and strives for a mutual or reciprocal gaze, where actors might reflexively resist the appropriation of stereotypes.

Braidotti's consideration of vital materialism sees the body in a continual state of becoming and offers a way of thinking about bodies, irrespective of sex, as able to reconfigure inscriptions.⁹¹⁶ This position acknowledges advancements in science, where the 'body as matter' is plastic in its possibility to reform and adapt and be resilient. For acting pedagogy, this offers an alternative to fixed outlines dividing the self and other. When we start to recognise that the self can only exist in the relational space between our body and space, another person, or an object, and that this cannot be determined as it is spontaneous, reactive and affecting, we can understand that we come into being through relational notions of difference. This acknowledgement of difference and our innate ability to transform ourselves are features of a female acting pedagogy.

Braidotti's 'positivity of difference'⁹¹⁷ seeks to establish an affirmative politics. By viewing difference as liberating, enriching and politically productive we can find ways to move beyond notions of normativity. Braidotti points to 'joyful affirmation' as a way of reconfiguring the architecture of being together and from this positive position we can operate in a more useful, productive and kinder way. Rather than viewing failure as negative and anxiety or struggle as the most productive way to exert change or to learn, we might recognise the enhanced benefits of the positive position. Another useful theoretical construct to propose an alternative to the negative paranoid theories of affect is Sedgwick's reparative reading.⁹¹⁸ Sedgwick points out that by constantly trying to avoid negative affects they are re-affirmed and self-reinforcing. These theories are not utopian or idealistic. Both Braidotti's affirmative politics and Sedgwick's reparative position recognise that moving towards the positive demands a reassembling of the

⁹¹⁶ Braidotti, p.161.

⁹¹⁷ Ibid.

⁹¹⁸ Sedgwick, pp.124-136.

negative depressive position which is demanding and complex. However, these theoretical constructs acknowledge hope and pleasure as necessary productive and mobilising forces. This affirmative politics seems more important than ever as we seek alternatives to the xenophobia, fear and revenge culture that dominate structures of advanced capitalism. For acting pedagogy, this offers an alternative to traditional male-dominated training practices, which tend to rely on negation without explicit explanation that can teeter precariously on the edge of abuse.

What educational models best reflect this way of learning? Looking at acting as a process of becoming, where the actor is presented with a series of choices, allows us to locate intersectional feminism in the realm of critical pedagogies. Critical pedagogies, which have developed from Freire's liberatory pedagogy,⁹¹⁹ foreground choice and difference to empower and liberate the actor to take control of the productive processes of their learning. By situating acting as a form of critical pedagogy the body of the actor is politicised and acting acquires emancipatory potential. This shifts the agency of the actor from passive servitude to cultural worker, able to reflect the world back on itself in ways that might offer the possibility of a more inclusive way of being.

This educational position, intersecting with feminist critical theories, offers us an ideological underpinning for a female pedagogy of acting which looks beyond replicated methodologies. This way of teaching and learning actively resists mysticism to be pragmatic and explicit, acknowledging the sexed body, the power structures of teaching and learning and politicises the actor through scaffolding choice. It offers training grounds a critical acting pedagogy which foregrounds and celebrates difference.

Female pedagogy in practice

How do these theoretical positions manifest in practice and what defining traits of female pedagogic practices have emerged through this study? By teasing out certain commonalities we can mine the differences of a sexed practice. A consideration of female authority emerged when observing the work of the

⁹¹⁹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

practitioners in this study. Women have been seen to prefer to work collaboratively and the radical work of women's theatre companies in the 1970s contributed to a shift towards devising as a way of theatre-making. When learning to act has been hierarchically defined by a guru/master teacher power dynamics, how can this idea of female collaboration, which suggests some form of collective or equal power, operate in the learning process between teacher/director and actor? In practice, the five practitioners discussed in this thesis create a dynamic where there is a shared, as opposed to equal, responsibility for the learning. In these practices power is passed between participants as opposed to flattening any idea of hierarchy. This enables a feeling of plurality, or group responsibility, whilst recognising the distinct and particular contributions of individuals within the group. A joint experimentation process is facilitated, with the teacher/director holding the authority but as an expert learner working alongside the actor, as opposed to a master who holds all the answers. This facilitating authority is created in diverse ways: through explicit and transparent explanations; through direct and honest interactions; through allowing people choice; through creating a dynamic where people are made to feel that they can take risks and fail, knowing that they will be supported; through delegation. This integrity and trust in the learning relationship enables practitioners to lead either from the front, in the case of Emma Rice or from behind, as is the case with Katie Mitchell.

Another common trait is the way that actors are supported to experience failure or 'flopping' in the learning process. In Chapter Two, I outlined how a dominant way of learning to act was through the *via negativa*, a marked feature of certain male pedagogies, where one learns by failing and then, through one's own diagnosis and problem-solving, one becomes an autodidact and learns how to succeed. I have observed this approach managed in different ways by the women in this study and in the work of others outside of this research. The process of learning is facilitated as an affirming process, even when experienced through failure, as it is supported and made explicit as opposed to leaving the actor to feel exposed in a negative state of defeat. I offer the term *via positiva* to suggest a feature of female pedagogy that is built on an affirmative politics. This points to how the experience of endurance or sustaining effort can be facilitated as positive in learning to act. Further research might interrogate how this pleasure might be

articulated, experienced and enabled. Indeed, a gendered consideration of pleasure through the Lacanian construct of 'jouissance' would be a fascinating elaboration. *Via positiva* allows for learning in a supported environment through the dynamic of play and shared experimentation, which involves explicit dialogue about the choices being made through reflexive and diagnostic analysis. This way of learning is inclusive and liberatory in the way that the actor becomes her own teacher with an orientation towards affirmation. This pedagogy might offer education a radical alternative to structures dominated by testing and results, fuelled with anxiety and fear. Teaching the value of not knowing and what can be gained from learning through pleasure as opposed to pain can be seen as defining practices of a female pedagogy.

In focusing on the ways that an actor learns, I have tried to capture the direct moments of interaction with teacher/director, as this is where the learning is most directly experienced. Learning is organised in different ways depending on the aesthetic and particular concern of the practice. The three teachers discussed in Chapter Four, demonstrate certain commonalities in their approaches. They focus on the somatic knowledge of the body and how the senses can be used to scaffold the learning. Working through the voice, sight or touch they enable and develop the actor's relational awareness of her/himself and other. The double-ness of every aspect of this work emerges as a 'beside knowledge' construction as the life body is explored alongside the social body. The actor works with a double gesture and a double vision that enables agency, habitus and power. All the teacher/directors in this study make this explicit in specific ways. For the actress, already doubled as both object and subject, learning in this way reveals her choices as she comes to a greater knowledge of the inscriptions she is representing, appropriating or resisting. This understanding comes from a heightened awareness of visibility and looking-at-being-looked-at-ness has emerged as a feature of a female ontology of acting. In this process actors come to recognise the performativity in their own behaviour patterns, so that they can self reflexively check, monitor and consciously observe unconscious actions.

When considered from this perspective female acting pedagogy can be seen as a performative pedagogy, which foregrounds the body as a site of inscription, challenges power structures and interrogates performative constructs. By 'acting

out' or role playing scenarios participants come to understand the social structures they inhabit. Elyse Pineau characterises critical performative pedagogy (CPP) as a formative way of learning in Performance Studies.⁹²⁰ CPP enables participants to learn through the social body. By extending this learning to what Grosz refers to as 'the lived body',⁹²¹ to include the phenomenological knowledge of acting, practitioners can develop this form of pedagogy in actor training. I explain this as critical acting pedagogy (CAP). This way of teaching and learning recognises that existence is created in the space between (people, space, object), whilst simultaneously exploring the doubleness of acting (subject/object, inner/outer, reflexive/reflective). These constructs operate beside each other within a critically engaged learning process. This extends our thinking about acting beyond limiting ideas of mimesis, which relegates the field to 'theatre as museum', to attend to the politics of the body.

Female pedagogy focuses on the particularity of the body. The approaches of female directors/teachers working in mainstream theatre are rarely analysed, in part due to the challenge of gaining access to the rehearsal room. Drawing on approximately two hundred hours of observation and 25 interviews has allowed me to reflect on the particularities of work in practice. Looking at the ways that directors Katie Mitchell and Emma Rice foreground the female body outlines what I have called a method of feminist action, which offers an alternative to Diamond's feminist gestic criticism for acting.⁹²² Diamond identified a Brechtian approach in the work of feminist direction, where women were played from the first or second remove. Playing on Stanislavski's method of physical action approach, Mitchell has developed an interpretation which foregrounds the politics of the body through rigorous textual analysis whilst remaining in the realm of naturalism. Through the intense scrutiny of action choices, Mitchell enables the actors to consider the way that the body is inscribed by time and place and how events and intentions materialise through physical action. The negotiation of determining every action choice ensures that the double-ness of the gesture and visibility is built into this

⁹²⁰ Elyse Pineau, 'Critical Performative Pedagogy: Fleshing Out the Politics of Liberatory Education', in Nathan Stucky and Cynthia Wimmer, (eds.), *Teaching Performance Studies*. (USA: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002).

⁹²¹ Grosz, op.cit.

⁹²² Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. x-xiii.

rigorous process. In this way the acting is authored through forensic realism as opposed to through Brechtian alienation. An alternative feminist acting approach can be seen in Emma Rice's female masquerade, where Rice explores what Irigaray terms 'the double gesture' through a form of mimicry. Through exaggerated appropriation the actress subverts normative behaviour, pointing to the mask she wears. This approach examines femaleness in all its multiplicity. Like Alison Hodge and Vanessa Ewan, Rice and Mitchell enable a way of learning which offers 'something particular'⁹²³ for women, allowing constructs of femaleness and femininity to become powerful sites of choice for the actress. They resist representing females as 'victims or objects' to present the sexed body as multiple, changing and powerfully complex. Their practices can be seen to answer Malague's call, illustrating ways that actors and teachers learn to 'Act Like a Feminist'.⁹²⁴ However, might it be more pertinent to demand that actors 'Act As a Feminist'?

By critically examining its pedagogy we can develop thinking about acting. bell hooks maintains that advancing approaches to teaching and learning can 'create a new language, rupturing disciplinary boundaries, decentering authority and rewriting institutions and discursive borderlands.'⁹²⁵ Following this premise, new possibilities for feminism in performance materialise through women's acting and theatre-making pedagogies— a shift towards an affirmative, critical approach that resists universalising categories. The ideologies and practices explored in this study begin to collectively map a female genealogy of actor training as an alternative to male-dominated lineages. Looking beyond the confines of theatre, the emancipatory potential of this pedagogy has much to offer education in its broadest and more specific contexts.

⁹²³ Alison Hodge, (21.03.15).

⁹²⁴ Malague, op.cit.

⁹²⁵ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994) p.129.

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