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## Playing with History: personal accounts of the political and cultural self in actor training through movement

Mark Evans

Through a critical examination of my own experiences of teaching movement practices I aim to address some of the issues involved in the relationship between cultural values and movement practices. I seek to relate the personal experience of teaching and learning movement to its political significance, because I wish to suggest that this is where an important challenge in movement training for actors lies. Reflecting on the exercises that I know, have experienced, and have used and taught myself, I consider what assumptions about embodied culture and the teaching of movement might be embedded in these exercises and the manner in which they operate in the training of performers. In reflecting on the kinds of interventions that might be possible in movement training in order to address these issues, I seek to begin a conversation about how the theoretical issues raised might affect practice.

Becoming mindful of movement: telling the cultural history of movement to myself

I have engaged with a wide variety of movement practices over the years. All these have, to some extent, written their effects on my body – I variously enact, reference, challenge, adapt, question and celebrate them in my teaching, in my practice and in my everyday life. In engaging in these practices, I effectively encapsulate in my embodied experience the affects of globalization, interculturalism, and the commodification of craft over the last hundred years. Though I remain interested in the ways that movement practice relates to my individual experience of embodiment, I have as a teacher and as an academic become interested in the ways in which training practices embody sets of cultural and political values, attitudes and experiences, as well as representing particular operations of power and knowledge through the/my body. I have come to realize that my personal experience of movement is shaped and given meaning by the ways in which movement operates within the cultural spheres I inhabit. I also recognize that movement training has been historically structured and organized in such a way as effectively to inhibit an understanding of the political and cultural processes through which it works.

Growing up as a white, able-bodied, middle class male, I did not initially question the ways in which I engaged with movement practice. Pleasure, presence and self-knowledge through physical activity seemed to be available in an uncomplicated way – injury, disappointment and failure, when they occurred, seemed to be personal set-backs and unrelated to any wider context. At no

point was I encouraged to consider why I felt what I felt when I moved or what meaning it might have beyond the sphere of my own somatic experience. My relatively privileged position meant that I acquired technique without questioning it and developed confidence in my ability without considering how it was acquired or to what ends it might be employed. My early movement experiences, in this sense, were what Ric Knowles (2010) describes as 'ordinary', in the sense that they were culturally indistinguishable from other experiences and did not draw attention to themselves. For the most part my body was recessive and unobtrusive until it hurt or failed (became clumsy, tired, ill or old). In that same way, those powers that operated upon my body were only evident when discipline was necessary or applied. Discipline was typically exercised so as to promote conformity and to emphasize my clumsiness, failure, injury or reluctance as an individualized problem rather than something that had wider implications and political resonances. If I failed it was because I was not 'man' enough, or I was not talented enough; I never questioned why training was structured such that the impact of failure was always directed inwards towards the individual.

What happened to me over a period of several years was a gradual appreciation of the histories and knowledges that had formed the practices that I was engaging with and that had consequentially formed my own body and its capabilities. My confidence in my body was an expression, even a form of

celebration, of the effectiveness of the cultural inscription of power. Realising this, it became clear to me that injuries were no longer simply physiological or even psychological (and hence in both cases individual and personal) events, they represented points at which my body shifted its cultural status, moved me from one cultural sphere to another. The concepts of illness and injury can for instance be understood as social constructions that categorize certain behaviours and ways of being in relation to other social norms of embodiment. Injuries enabled me to observe the way my body was being constructed and even sometimes to place the injury, and the cultural construction of my body, within the context of my body's own social history.

Most professional training regimes, and perhaps more University courses and modules on actor training than we might like to admit, do not focus on their histories in anything other than terms of lineage and provenance. Although there is often no overt attempt to conceal these aspects, it is, in my experience, exceptional that consideration is given to the wider political and cultural implications of movement work. Much European and American training practice, in contrast to the prolonged and rigorous approaches of training approaches from other cultures (ie. Japanese Noh), places a heavy emphasis on spontaneity and improvisation, on the phenomenological or somatic nature of movement work. Such an approach leaves little time for reflection in (as opposed to after) the moment, and offers no guidance for the direction and nature of that

reflection. History and theory become problematic for the teacher and the student when movement training prioritizes spontaneity and improvisation over historical and cultural awareness. Should lived and somatic experience of movement practice be taken as a reality that can be prioritized just because it is more immediate? Of course, awareness of how we are in the world can be a powerful instrument in bringing us to consciousness of the way in which our perceptions are a 'culturally ingrained interpretation of being' (Rouhiainen 2008: 244). But this is not a process that the student and teacher are used to, that training and education typically provides, or that we are encouraged to feel is 'natural' or professionally desirable.

Somatic practices have emphasized the experience of movement in the moment, the sensory qualities of movement, and the ways in which alignment, integration of body and mind, and efficient body use, can all enhance the expressive capabilities of the performer. I have argued previously that somatic practice needs to be clear about both the kinds of things it tells about the body and the context of those things it seeks to tell if it is to have a wider importance:

what we might mean by telling the truth through dance is that the student can realize and reveal what is created and normalized and how, and that doing this through their dance practice is part of building and sustaining a harmony between words and deeds. Whilst the knowledge

that they make can never be neutral and will always be contingent, the telling of truth in this way is an important political act even and as it is performed through the body.

(Evans 2011: 124)

The multiplicity of texts and workshops that aim to instruct the performer how to be 'in the moment' suggests that this is a strongly felt need for many performers. I want to suggest that the diversity of movement practices indicates that notions of mind and body and of the best relationship between mind and body are not absolute, but are socially and culturally contingent. That is to say that 'mind' and 'body', and even 'bodymind', are understood differently at different times and in different societies. Mindfulness, presence and spontaneity therefore also represent concepts of the relationship between mind and body that are culturally determined and whose value is social, political and economic as much as it is personal. It is for these reasons that I find the idea that the body never lies problematic; not because of any implied mind-body dualism or somatic authenticity, but because the notion of truth about/in/of the body is often unquestioned.

### The encultured classroom: movement training practices

#### *The Warm-up*

The warm-up is a liminal space in the classroom – often considered as a personal space for students to prepare their bodies for work prior to the start of the class proper. Warm ups are often ignored as culturally constructed activities. Routines such as warm-ups can, through their repetition of practices, both perform and reveal the inscription of power on our bodies. When I teach new groups I like to ask them to start by doing their own warm-up. Two things are immediately evident as I watch them undertake this task. Firstly participants almost always retreat into their own private space and engage only with themselves in that space. They are respectful of others in terms of space, energy, noise and interaction (e.g. touch, or rather lack of it), but their warm-ups are generally private activities, sometimes quite self-consciously so. Secondly, all participants run through, usually in a slow, thoughtful, sometimes even introspective manner, a sequence of warm-up exercises and routines that they have learnt from previous workshops, classes and movement practices (dance, sports, martial arts, yoga). When I question students or participants after this task it is usually clear that they have not questioned their warm-up routine or considered its history or political construction. For them it is a personal process, intended only to loosen muscles, increase focus and stimulate blood flow. It reinforces the participant's sense that their focus should be on themselves, it reassures them of their individuality rather than their social presence. It constructs the performer's work as personal and technical. Choices are justified against



physiological criteria – ‘I need to warm up these sets of muscles’ – rather than exercises openly reflecting class, ethnicity, and other cultural aspects of their sense of self. This is generally because to do so requires engagement with others and with the space in ways that are not just physical; knowledge is required – understanding of the ways in which personal and cultural histories will effect how co-participants move and how the movements engaged in might, through playfulness and thoughtfulness, challenged and change attitudes and behaviours. Students are sometimes nervous of displaying embodied knowledge through their warm-up; there is often an implicit understanding that such overt statements of capability are not desirable in warm-up situations.

One starting point I use to provoke a better critical engagement with the warm-up is to ask participants to ‘forget’ their routine and just to listen to what their bodies want to do to warm-up. Though such a ‘forgetting’ is not actually achievable, the instruction/permission to ‘forget’ creates a space in which the participant notices the urge to conform and can playfully resist it. In this context play becomes much more possible, and the energies within the room become more social, confident and adventurous. Students start to run, roll, jump, walk, stretch in more organic ways. The instruction is a form of *via negativa*, implicitly drawing attention not only to individual movement habits (as the student recognizes the urge to fall back on what their body already knows) but also potentially to their cultural origins, force and operation (why do they want to fall

back on what they know, why does it feel comfortable). Equally valuable is the use of practices such as games, dancing, and singing; all of which can come from a range of cultural traditions and carry multiple significances, but function most interestingly when they take the students into an unfamiliar space and set of movement experiences (both individually and as a group).

How many people ever examine their own routine in this way, or actively seek to develop a warm-up language from their own everyday social and cultural embodied histories, such as working class movement traditions (e.g. folk dance, street games) or ethnic traditions? In the 1960s and the early 1970s Peter Cheeseman encouraged his actors at the New Vic Theatre in Stoke to use working class dances and games as they prepared for work on documentary dramas about local people's lives and histories. He did so not to get them more 'in the moment', but in order to bring in an awareness of the *physical* histories of the people whose lives they would present. When cultural borders are crossed (as, of course, they should be), little attention is paid to the resonances such crossings create? With each exercise, even in warm ups, we move across and between cultural borders; acknowledging, knowing and celebrating that we do so enables us to understand the cultural significance of the skills we learn and of their affects upon our bodies. For the twenty-first century, the challenge is to work out how we deal with an increasingly digital culture, in which the body is less active and our gestures become smaller, less disruptive, less celebratory

and more closely determined by technology. However contemporary practices such as *parkour* offer exciting possibilities and demonstrate that new embodied practice has not disappeared.

***Being in the moment/moving through history: Lecoq and sports.***

In 1982 I began studying at the École Jacques Lecoq in Paris. The first year of the course included sessions called *Analyse du Mouvement* (Movement Analysis), during which we would learn various sets . A set of these movement exercises was referred to as *Les Vingt Mouvements* (The Twenty Movements). These movements included several sports exercises: some relating to Georges Hébert's system of natural gymnastics (Evans 2012: 166-167); some drawing on nineteenth century sports activities, such as the action of the passeur (ferryman, or punter) and the swinging of Indian clubs (Evans 2009: 60-63). The cultural history of these exercises, their roots in European physical training, gymnastics, the revival of interest in Ancient Greek physical culture and the development of modern physical education, was not made evident to us as we strove to learn the exercises. It was only much later, as I researched the cultural history of European movement training, that I realized how deep the connection between the cultural history of the European body in sports and gymnastics training and the exercises I had learnt was. What I now realize is that what I was experiencing was mediated through a late nineteenth/early twentieth century construction of the

efficient body, within which sports had played a significant part. I realize now that as I performed those exercises I was writing upon my body movement patterns that reached back to historical determinations of efficient movement. Thus I experienced and understood the making of my body as efficient. Furthermore by aestheticizing the re-enactment of those historical and cultural movements practices, I was taking part in a political act: the re-constitution and abstraction of labour as sport, leisure or entertainment. It is in this respect that Dario Fo disagrees with Lecoq's teaching: 'Lecoq's method [according to Fo] encourages performers to exist in a historical vacuum, to take no responsibility for the effects they create' (Farrell 2001: 278). For Lecoq, the neutral body provides a space where the student can learn exercises and techniques that they can then re-interpret in the making of their own theatre. Fo perceives this as a moral and political neutrality, but it could equally well be seen as a necessary pre-condition for understanding how and in what ways power does operate on our bodies. The difference lies in how explicit this process is made for the student.

### *Foundational practices*

Reflecting on the ways in which our histories as movement trainers shape our practices, I realized that many of the practices I have studied have developed from what I call foundational practices, practices that underpins the techniques,

methods and approaches of practitioners. What I mean by foundational practice is not activity driven by a personal psychological impulse; I see foundational practices as representing the embodied social practices from which the systems are derived. In this sense, the foundational practice for Lecoq's work is sport, evidenced in the way that sports activities variously underpin his exercises, inform his sense of the dynamics of the human body in performance, influence his rejection of the psychological in theatre, and support his notion of play or *le jeu* (see Evans 2012). The foundational practice is not simply a 'seed' for the imaginative creation of a system or technique, rather it mediates its development and passes on (like a form of cultural genetics) ideological assumptions to the system or techniques that emerge from it. I argue elsewhere (Evans 2009) that the concept of the neutral body and the neutral mask is for instance deeply informed by the ideologies of efficiency and political neutrality that underpin Post-Second World War sports and physical training for sports. The challenge for the trainer therefore is to identify the foundational practices that underpin the systems and techniques that they use. One way of exposing this process is to investigate the nature of our own foundational practices and use them as a starting point for the development of new methods or sets of practices. In doing so, it also then becomes necessary to decide whether the connection between the foundational practices, the ideologies embedded in them, and the methods, systems, techniques or practices that they produce are

revealed or not. For Fo (who worked with Lecoq in Italy after the Second World War), they are generally made explicit.

A key exercise in the first year of training at the Lecoq School is the Fundamental Journey. In this exercise, the student wears the neutral mask and enacts an imaginary walk; the student starts in the sea, from where s/he progresses onto the beach, through a forest, up and down a mountain, across a river, into a desert where it finishes with the student lying down to rest. The exercise draws heavily on the natural gymnastics of Georges Hébert (1875-1957). It sets up a foundational experience for the student that is individual, physical and linked to the experience of the 'natural world'. It is counter-balanced in the School's pedagogy by the *auto-cours*, in which students work in groups to create their own response to a theme set by the teachers. The first year *auto-cours* culminate in an *Inquête*, in which groups of students investigate a particular milieu that they then attempt to present as theatre at the end of the first year. The metaphor underpinning these exercises is that of a journey and a return, both individual and ensemble. Such a metaphor has its historical and political resonances. After the massive upheaval of the Second World War and the resultant devastation of the natural environment, the idea of a journey through nature and a return to rest, of revisiting that which is familiar and representing it afresh, clearly has appeal for the twentieth century European psyche. If the student experiences this journey without understanding the

foundational practice and the social and political context from which it was created, then the exercise becomes increasingly abstracted in a manner that ultimately denies the importance of the political and social life of the body.

My notion of foundational practices draws on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (Bourdieu 1984) and Bertolt Brecht's idea of *gest*. *Habitus* can be understood as a persistent or taught disposition towards certain behaviours and ways of acting in the world, which shapes and guides future actions and practice. It is typically a social, rather than individual, process. *Habitus*, according to Bourdieu, tends to be created and reproduced unconsciously, 'without any deliberate pursuit of coherence... without any conscious concentration' (1984: 170). It is in this way, that bodies become regulated and socially determined; for instance Iris Young (1998) discusses how women throw in a particular way not because they cannot throw like a man but because society regulates how women throw. In this manner, authorized and established movement practice is seen as having prestige; moving like an actor, and learning to do so at drama school, is thus a way of becoming an actor, of being viewed as an actor. Social values of what it means to be an actor are imprinted on the actor's body through this process. If the student only imitates the teacher without question then, no matter how deep the training is for the student, challenge to those social values is probably not possible. The teacher needs to challenge the student and the student the teacher such that social values are revealed and

choices are made in an informed way. Foundational practice must not therefore simply replicate the students' or teachers' *habitus*, but must reveal and interrogate it.

Brecht uses the concept of *gest* (1978: 104-105) to describe how behaviours are understood as signs that indicate the power relations that we are forced to adopt and the attitude that we have towards the world. Brecht uses *gest* as a representational idea – a way that the actor can show the social roles the character they are playing is required to enact – but he gives little indication as to how *gest* might be applied in training, and is not primarily concerned with how the embodying of such behaviours actually takes place. The idea of foundational practice is not purely representational, it is also productive. It differs from *gest* in seeking to describe, analyse and *enable* the relationship between cultural history/experience and training practice. If Brecht seeks to defamiliarise the social construction of behaviour, Eugenio Barba attempts to remove the performer from their native cultural embodiment and through a thorough exploration of other cultural practices to abstract cultural embodiment and displace the performer to a third condition, a *habitus* of the performer; this is discussed below in some more detail. Acting students can experience a sense of crisis as they confront the social construction of their bodies and their movement. They can also be drawn into a *habitus* of the performer that lacks



the empowerment intended by Barba and instead values their body and its skills as aesthetic capital<sup>1</sup>.

### Keep moving: cultural difference and movement practice

We can recognize the diaspora of embodied cultural practices represented in the diversity of movement practices as a feature of modern colonialism and late twentieth and early twenty-first century global capitalism. This diversity, coupled with the ease of global transmission, might suggest that we can all now be considered diasporic bodies – our embodied cultural histories increasingly dislocated from their various ‘points of origin’, whether cultural or historical. Histories of practice, in this sense, are becoming less and less linear. We literally carry our movement studio with us – we can practice what movement we like whenever we find our bodies in places that enable movement, and, more importantly, historical and cultural movement practices accumulate and accrete to us, moving with us and adhering to our sense of self. We move through different practices, many of us less and less able in a complex, fluid, digitized and globalized culture, to rest within one set of practices for long.

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<sup>1</sup> This aspect of actor training is currently being researched by Roanna Mitchell (University of Kent).

Our dispersed, diverse, dynamic bodies are evolving in relation to a context that is itself in flux. Our bodies, throughout our lives, have to settle into new cultural environments, along with the coming-in-to-being and the letting-go of other practices that that involves. Though deeply conditioned within our own cultural contexts, we are all also increasingly active in our struggles for agency, and aware of the need to be so. I contend elsewhere (Evans 2009) that a rigorous, even unruly, playfulness can offer ways of undermining and questioning the effects of power/knowledge. This might mean that rather than absorbing, incorporating or commodifying practices from other cultures, we can engage with them playfully in a way that maintains an appropriate relationship whilst still recognizing the immediacy, sensuality and seductiveness of the moment of en/action. I can playfully explore how to move between, for instance, tai chi and my own movement practice using the dynamics of physical action to locate points of migration back and forth. Through playfulness and reflection all practices can become 'other' while still remaining embodied in our work. We can thus, 'meet' with other cultural practices in a process that recognizes an equal exchange.

As I attend workshops on movement practices from different cultures, nations and traditions, I am mindful of Nascimento's questioning of the basis on which we assume a correlation between practice and region (or history, class, gender or ability) that attributes a particular region's cultural practice exclusively to its

native people (2010: 49). If we are peoples of complex ethnic, national, political and cultural histories, recognizing and engaging with diverse cultural practices becomes part of recognizing our own cultural complexity and is an inevitable process that has its own history. Though this process has been driven by particular politicized agendas in the past, to assume that it is always so is to essentialize the relationship between our bodies, our cultures, our politics and our nativities. If this were the case, then 'the long process of embodiment' would not be able to transform 'seemingly "foreign" exercises into a familiar and "owned" practice' (Nascimento 2010: 52); nor would change be possible.

Citizenship is in this sense performative. Nascimento suggests, following Barba, that a long process of training creates a particular professional identity for the student/actor, 'a second nature that forever affects not only her way of performing but also of relating to the world offstage' (2010: 54). The ability of the actor to 'simultaneously [embody] different cultural elements' is, she suggests, what enables the actor to 'actively [question] socially prescribed boundaries, making visible how unstable they are' (Nascimento 2010: 53). She effectively suggests that it is through learning the practices of other cultures that we better understand how cultures operate on our own bodies and that we are enabled potentially to critique that operation. The logical conclusion of this argument is that 'staying still' is not an option: the best way for us as performers to resist cultural hegemony in our practice is by playing with other cultural practices in a manner that maintains dignity and difference, enables awareness,

and promotes a sense of selfhood. In doing so, we inevitably locate ourselves in, indeed create for ourselves, a different *habitus* – that of the performer. Barba suggests that performers and trainers are then able to take ownership of that space and ‘through continuous work to individualize their own area, seeking what for them is essential and trying to force others to respect this diversity’ (1986: 194).

### The role of the teacher

If the student is not simply to ingest the cultural practices of the teacher, then they must be given space to reflect on and contextualize the training that they are receiving. They need to be able to understand the social and cultural history of these practices, and also to place the practices they learn in relation to the practices that are part of their own cultural identity and history. For Foucault (1999), ‘The truth about the disciple [or student] emerges from a personal relation which he (*sic*) establishes with himself’. Foucault suggests that the attitude the disciple should take towards him- or herself might be that of the technician ‘who – from time to time – stops working, examines what he is doing, reminds himself of the rule of his art, and compares these rules with what he has achieved so far’ (ibid.). The emphasis for Foucault is thus on critical but caring reflection. It is in this way that the student can begin to take control of the ways in and extent to which the training inscribes on their body. In doing so, they not

only develop their technique but also understand the effects of that technique – on themselves, on their discipline and on others.

In our society there is often a dominant and largely naturalized assumption that the relationship involved in teaching is one of instruction and direction, rather than discussion and meeting. If the director/teacher paradigm is too dominant then it risks reducing the student/actor's sense of agency, it simply becomes part of the system and process through which the actor/performer is professionalized and through which their body can become trained to be professionally 'biddable' and malleable (Evans 2009). But an effective director/teacher can enable a form of Socratic dialogue, or a set of provocations and invitations, that enable the actor/student to realize and examine their assumptions regarding their embodied cultural identity in ways that are affirming, provocative and enabling. As Freire states, such dialogue is only possible with humility and an openness to the contribution of others (Freire 1996: 71). Returning the student in a reflective way to movement practices that are foundational in respect of their own cultural identities, rather than moving them swiftly away towards established professional practices, can, for instance, provide an empowering point of reference for the student. In Freire's terms, neutral mask work can, for instance, be used to help the student identify 'limit-situations' within the student's training environment; points at which the student does not feel able to do something which they have every right to expect to be

able to do – to occupy space, to project through space, to be physically present. These are not simply personal ‘problems’ for the student, but the effect of what Freire calls ‘generative themes’. I suggest using the notion of foundational practices to unpick the relationship between actually embodied activity and Freire’s ‘generative themes’. The student then better understands the relationship between movement practice, personal history and social history, and understands it as a relationship that is creative and generative. Although the student might in this way experience their body as strange, they are not required to dislocate from the lived experience of their body. The role of the teacher can change from that of the provider of a given foundational practice to the facilitator of the discovery and interrogation of the student’s own foundational practice, based on a realization of the ways in which they have been constructed by their own circumstances. For the teacher, such an approach demands a high level of reflection and cultural awareness and also the creation of an environment in which the student can ‘tell the truth’ about their experiences; acting, in Socratic terms, as a *parrhesiastes*. It becomes necessary to admit that students do know things about their bodies. Such touch points are important in ensuring that the value systems underpinning teaching are in meaningful relation to the lived experience of our students. As Robert Gordon states:

Acting teachers who are [...] serious in the aim of cultivating their students' wholeness of body, mind, and feelings are in danger of arbitrarily imposing an ideology at the most fundamental level of identity formation. Wholeness or balance are in practice words that conceal a speaker's complex of unconsciously determined feelings and prejudices that are never free of personal and social values.

(2005: 127)

Although Boal goes some way towards addressing such issues in his writings, he does not directly address the training of the actor's body and their movement practice other than in very general terms. Even somatic practices, such as Feldenkrais Method and Alexander Technique, which seek to enable the student to question habitual movement patterns and to decondition their bodies, do not necessarily expand such practices beyond the purely somatic in ways that might open awareness of the values and forces acting upon the student's body.

Alexander's notion of 'inhibition' and Feldenkrais' of 'reversibility' could provide interesting starting points from which to investigate a critical and politically empowering re-education of the body, and Boal's disjunctive techniques may offer ways of identifying when movement is able to participate in redefining how power operates on the body; both will require further research and development to be fully effective classroom strategies for this purpose.

Failure to address the responsibility for us as teachers to engage with the cultural and political context of our work can, in Paulo Freire's terms, dehumanize the student and objectify them and their experience, removing from them the possibility of real agency, as they are constructed within the ideological frame of the teacher's sense of truth and authenticity, which they are not encouraged to challenge or question overtly.

### Conclusion

Jan Cohen-Cruz speaks of the need for craft (skills), scholarship (knowledge and reflective awareness) and social awareness and experience in the training of the engaged performer (2010: 166). Traditional conservatoire actor training deals predominantly with the first of these, university theatre degrees with the second, and applied theatre courses with the third. In the UK, the closest form of training to a coherent blend of all three might possibly have been Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop: where skills were understood historically, where study informed the work, and where social purpose drove practice. Today in the UK, increased emphasis on vocationalism and training for work has eroded the value of a training that challenges and questions the theatre industry and the cultures and societies within which that industry sits.



In order to create a training system that allows embodied cultural values and processes to be enabling, empowering and open to critique, we also need to create a system in which pleasure, confidence, expressivity, discipline, meaningfulness and authority must all be allowed to reside not only in the dominant cultural bodies, but also in those that are marginalized (whether by ethnicity, gender, disability, age). I have written previously that, 'What enables the body perceived as different to tell the truth (...) is that the difference is consciously manipulated by the subject, who retains some level of control over the ways in which power operates on her body' (Evans 2011: 122). Movement training must remain open to other forms of movement than those prioritized by industry norms and cultural standards; it must be centred on critical reflection and not only on the acquisition of skills and techniques.

I like the concept of cultural infection as a metaphor for the transmission of embodied practices – the right conditions are required for transmission, and there is no substantive change but rather an adaptation and realignment that persists after the initial contact. The cultural practices I engage with are not simply tools for me to use, but themselves agents of change and transformation. This means that the body's semiotic potential and its phenomenal capacities are both present in the moment of training and are both referred to throughout. For Lecoq, for instance, the neutral mask is not constructed as a means to remove the student from the semiotic realm, rather neutral mask training develops a

clearer sense of the physical self, its potential to communicate, and the layers of social construction on the student's body (Evans 2009). One of Lecoq's exhortations to his students was, 'Do like everybody else, and if you are different we'll see it.' The mask was, in this sense, key to the recognition and creative use of difference.

Nascimento suggests that through my practice I present a semiotic text that maps my own embodied cultivation onto the different cultural practice(s) I am engaging with, and vice-versa. She also suggests (2010: 57-58) that this can function to disrupt naturalized processes of learning in productive ways. Acting is, as she states, about simultaneously being both Self and Other, about creating a hybrid identity; but it can also be about being both in the present moment and in the history of your practice, being both culturally readable and culturally disruptive, being both spontaneous and critical at the same time. I agree with Nascimento (2010: 58) that 'cultural border crossing in acting is not any less authentic or natural than one's relation to her original culture'; it is what actors do and we should be wary of pressures to reduce this role for the actor.

The trick is both to cross cultural borders and to 'penetrate' our own native cultures. Doing so disturbs absolute notions of culture, politics and history and recognizes the fluidity and instability of our embodied selves in the early twenty-first century. We have a duty to help our students to avoid passively defining

their embodied cultural practices against what is already constructed by the industry, and by society, assisting them to forge their own identities as citizens as well as performers. We must also be alert to the play of new 'histories' upon our bodies – the digital, the neuro-scientific, the post-industrial. The Socratic role of the teacher is to determine 'the degree of accord between a person's life and its principle's of intelligibility or logos' (Foucault 1999). What we seek to communicate and the bodies through which we seek to do so should be in ontological harmony. At the heart of this process, as I argue elsewhere (Evans 2011), is the development of a specific relationship to the self – that of self-possession and self-sovereignty – enabling us to confront the world in an ethical and political manner. The ultimate touchstone for the teaching of movement practices must then be the extent to which they enable us to understand and communicate how we have come into being as subjects.

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