TO THE UNCONSCIOUS BY CONSCIOUS MEANS: EMOTION, SCIENCE AND MYSTERY IN THE UK CONSERVATOIRE

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ABSTRACT

The need to embody emotion, in a manner that seems convincing and 'truthful' to an audience, is a perennial challenge for the professional actor, regardless of era or style of performance. Most teachers and students, at least in Western traditions of theatre, assume that to meet this challenge, it is essential to activate the actor's own feelings. But deliberate arousal of strong emotions can have unpredictable results and is, arguably, a threat to the emotional and physical health of the actor. The ethics of actor pedagogy have been brought into even sharper focus by recent events.

Over the last five years, higher education in general, and the conservatoire sector in particular, have faced significant challenges. A demand for change has emerged from the combined impact of the #MeToo and Time's Up movements, the Black Lives Matter protests and the Covid epidemic. These events accelerated the existing drive towards Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, founded on the Equality Act of 2010. In response, several schools have implemented major overhauls of staffing, curriculum and teaching style. At a time of rapid change and unprecedented concern for the wellbeing of students, it is vital to ensure that teaching methods intended to manipulate emotions are deployed responsibly.

The aim of this thesis is to identify approaches to the emotional dimension of actor training that are fit for purpose in the twenty-first century, in terms of both ethics and effectiveness. It argues that, as a human activity, theatre must necessarily be underpinned by the biology of the body, and acted emotion, in turn, must be underpinned by the biology of the emotions. Therefore, a renewed understanding of what might be called the 'pedagogy of acted emotion' must be informed by an examination of three intersecting theoretical areas. Firstly, I consider 'life emotion', from the perspective of contemporary psychology and neurology. Secondly, I discuss theories of 'acted emotion', the conscious attempt to embody an apparently lifelike episode on stage or screen. Thirdly, I analyse philosophies of actor training. In short, I undertake an investigation of practice in the context of embodied cognition. This approach places the project in the tranche of scholarship known as the 'cognitive turn'.

One of the key features of cognitive turn scholarship is a scepticism towards binaries. Part One of the thesis is informed by this stance: it identifies and interrogates a dominant binary in all three theoretical fields. I trace the historical debate between Basic Emotion and Appraisal theorists, with a view to developing a working definition of life emotion. I propose a synthesis of the two opposing views, arguing that emotion is a product of both human evolution and cultural conditioning. I then examine the debate between what William

Archer has dubbed the 'Emotionalists' and 'Anti-Emotionalists', who claim, respectively, that actors must feel the same emotions as their characters and that they must, on the contrary, only represent the outward appearance of emotion. To resolve this debate, I offer a novel hypothesis that unites acting theory and neurology. I draw on Evgeny Vakhtangov's notion of 'affective emotion' and Antonio Damasio's idea of the 'as-if body loop', to develop the concept of 'Scenic Emotion'. Finally, I consider how actor trainers have approached the challenge of emotion in British drama schools. I coin the terms *Mysterians* and *Scientists* to describe two contrasting pedagogical philosophies. *Mysterians* believe that aspects of acting are ineffable, and therefore cannot be usefully discussed or taught. *Scientists*, however, insist that, like any other human activity, acting is subject to principles that can be understood, taught and learned. This thesis makes a case for the *Scientific* position.

In order to test the efficacy of the theoretical framework as a critical tool, Part Two applies it to a cross-section of training practices that attach particular importance to the embodiment of acted emotion: Konstantin Stanislavsky's 'System' (KSS), Lee Strasberg's 'Method' (LSM) and Susana Bloch's Alba Emoting, now known as Alba Method (Alba). Each chapter traces the artistic and scientific ideas that have influenced these 'emotion specialists'. The argument then analyses the extent to which developments in the science challenge or validate the approaches discussed. It considers the practice in relation to my theory of Scenic Emotion and assesses both the impact of the training to date and its future potential in drama schools.

I account for the longevity and prevalence of Stanislavskian practice in terms of its underlying dependence on an association between action and emotion. LSM, particularly its exploration of sense and emotional memory, is repositioned in the light of both updated science and the ethical requirements of contemporary higher education. The argument considers Alba as a somatic practice that pays particularly close attention to student well-being, but which has had negligible impact on the conservatoire to date.

Part Three of the thesis consists of a practice-based enquiry that compares the impact of emotion memory exercises with Alba techniques, followed by a conclusion. I identify a potential role for interoception in the selection of students for drama schools and introduce the notion of 'emotional learning styles' as a strategy for inclusive learning.

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A PhD is always something of an epic journey and mine was no exception. I changed institutions, carried out research part-time and had to take several suspensions of study. Over a long period, I worked with various supervisors. At the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, my first supervisor (on a temporary basis) was Simon Shepherd, who helped get me started. I've also thoroughly appreciated Peter McAllister's passion for expanding his knowledge of actor training and for countless conversations about practice. At the University of Birmingham, Adam Ledger has contributed some vital comments and guidance. But above all, I'd like to thank my main supervisor, Rose Whyman, whose patience and erudition has kept me on track through many delays and setbacks, and who has provided unfailing support and positivity.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Alba	The actor training tradition that uses the 'effector patterns', developed primarily by Susana Bloch. It includes the 'BOS' method, Alba Emoting, Alba Method and Emotional Body.
ANS	Autonomic nervous system, bodily functions that operate independently of conscious control
AT	Appraisal theories of emotion
BET	Basic emotion theory
CNS	Central nervous system
HPC	Richard Boyd's 'homeostatic property cluster'
IA	Interoceptive awareness, the ability to be aware of what is happening inside the body
KSS	The system of training developed by Konstantin Stanislavsky
LSM	Lee Strasberg's method, as distinct from other American interpretations of the KSS
MAIA	Wolf Mehling's Multidimensional Assessment of Interoceptive Awareness
PE	A 'performance experiment' conducted at the Birmingham School of Acting (now the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire)
PNS	Peripheral nervous system
PRT	Ivan Pavlov's reflex theory

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

It is passion that interests and moves us; therefore the reproduction of passion is the actor's highest and most essential task. By what methods, then, can this reproduction be most fitly accomplished?[1]

1.1 A Puzzle from Three Perspectives

An actor playing King Lear staggers onto the stage, carrying a colleague playing Cordelia in his arms. We, the spectators, see that Lear is crushed by the loss of a loving daughter. Previously, we have witnessed their poignant reconciliation accompanied by his painful awareness of having done her wrong. Their brief period of reunion only serves to intensify the suffering caused by her death. The repeated open vowels in Shakespeare's text invite the actor to express Lear's grief with a primal lament:

> Howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones!
> Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
> That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone forever.[2]

How might the audience respond to this depiction of intense emotion? Assuming it is a competent professional production, the spectator might, at the very least, be able to understand the 'target' emotion, i.e. which emotion the actor intends to portray. Beyond the level of narrative clarity, if the spectator is absorbed by the play and is convinced by the actors' responses to the fictional circumstances, they might appreciate the acting or even be moved by it. At a particularly good performance, when the actor is on form and the audience are in responsive mood, the spectator might even forget they are watching a play

[1] William Archer in Denis Diderot and William Archer, *The Paradox of Acting* and *Masks or Faces?*, intro. by Lee Strasberg, pref. by Henry Irving, trans. by Walter Herries Pollock (Hill and Wang, 1957), pp. 218-19, hereafter *Paradox/Masks.*

[2] Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. by Kenneth Muir, 9th edn (Methuen, 1972), V.3.256-58.

and react, not as if the display of emotion were fictional, but as they would to an event encountered in life. They might, in some sense, share Lear's grief.

Pondering a good performance after the event, the curious spectator might be both puzzled and intrigued by what they have seen. Was the emotion real? How did the actor manage to reproduce that level of apparent suffering? By what alchemy was that communicated to the audience? The average theatre-goer is not likely to be familiar with the literature on empathy and audience perception.[3] But they might well make some empirical observations. There is the represented emotion. There is the emotion of the actor. The actor's emotion might coincide with the character's or be similar to it, perhaps in the form of a faint echo, an analogy or a parallel experience; or the actor's emotion may be utterly at variance with that of the character, relating to the job of performing or their private life. The average spectator might enjoy mulling over these questions, but they are under no obligation to answer any of them. Addressing them is, however, the very stuff of professional acting.

Like any other actor, I had the responsibility of finding ways to embody and communicate an emotional response to imaginary situations. My early training had little to say about this

[3] A full investigation of empathy and how emotion is communicated to an audience is outside the scope of this thesis. However, there is a voluminous literature on kinesthetic empathy and audience perception that illuminates the topic. See, for example, Shantel Ehrenberg and Karen Wood, 'Kinesthetic Empathy: Concepts and Contexts, University of Manchester, England, April 22–23, 2010', *Dance Research Journal*, 43.2 (2011), pp. 113-18, doi:10.1017/S0149767711000167; Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (eds), *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices* (Intellect, 2012); Celia Vara, 'Kinesthetic Empathy as Embodied Research', *Performance Research*, 26.4 (2021) pp. 130-36, doi:10.1080/13528165.2021.2005973. For a sample of studies of audience perception (including communication of emotion), see Bruce McConachie, *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Henri Schoenmakers, 'Aesthetic Emotions and Aestheticised Emotions in Theatrical Situations', *Tijdschrift Voor Theaterwetenschap* (1992), pp. 39-58; Ed Tan, *Emotion and the Structure of Narrative Film* (Abingdon, 2011).

vital vocational requirement. After an undergraduate degree in drama, I trained at the Mime Centre, London, and worked in what was known, in the 1980s, as 'Physical Theatre'. I have vivid memories of rehearsing and performing an adaptation of *The Mill on the Floss*, with Red Shift Theatre Company. Rehearsals were often dedicated to developing what we called 'coups', meaning inventive and spectacular images created with the actors' bodies. It was a critically successful and popular show, performed over one hundred times, but I was troubled by what I perceived to be a lack of inner response. Should I be feeling more? During the run, I remember executing the coups, transforming into a thorny bush, tumbling from an imaginary horse in slow motion and confronting a rival in the manner of a sumo wrestler, with an uncomfortable awareness that I was experiencing absolutely nothing on the inside. I found this a highly unpleasant sensation and could not escape the conviction that I was somehow 'short-changing' the audience. Without finding better ways of igniting some inner spark, I wasn't interested in going on stage again and I temporarily abandoned the theatre to train as a teacher. Solving the puzzle of acted emotion, from my point of view as an actor, would have to wait.

This conundrum can also be viewed from the perspective of the actor trainer. I have taught in a wide variety of institutions, including further education, university acting departments and drama schools. In my experience, students are frequently preoccupied with the challenge of how to 'act emotion'. Actors in training usually assume that they will have to find a way to arouse their own feelings in order to produce convincing performances. They wonder whether they will be able to generate the unmistakable physiological symptoms of

real emotion, an anxiety that often crystallises in a dread of having to cry on cue. Their anxiety seems well founded.

In an era when documentary footage of cataclysmic events is readily available and 'Reality TV' shows structure human experience as drama, I suggest there is more pressure than ever on professional actors to produce lifelike performances, and a convincing performance often means an emotional one. An anecdote I heard from acting teacher Rocco Dal Vera illustrates the point. As an audition coach in Hollywood, Dal Vera helped prepare actors for castings. He explained that film scripts frequently depict characters in the most extreme circumstances imaginable, and that casting directors invariably expect the auditionees to play the scenes with the highest stakes, with little or no preparation. The script might demand, for example, that the actor react like a mother whose child is snatched from her arms, or a loving husband who comes home to find his home has burned to the ground, killing his entire family.[4] In such circumstances, the actor is required to produce instantaneous and intense emotional displays.

The conservatoire sector is well aware of what is required of actors and the emotional component of the training is written into the curricula. To cite just one example, from the specifications for the BA Acting course at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, students are expected to 'apply techniques and imagination in response to dramatic situation [*sic*],

[4] Rocco Dal Vera, 'Alba Emoting', training workshop for actors and teachers (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, August 2014).

demonstrating authenticity and emotional connection in acting'.[5] As Rhonda Blair puts it, in 'conventional Western theatre' a primary goal of the actor is to make 'strong, emotionally charged, and specific choices'.[6] Although written in very different terms, her remark echoes William Archer's view, quoted in the epigraph above, suggesting that despite the passage of time, some aspects of the actor's profession have changed very little. Acting styles may vary, change and evolve, but the requirement to embody emotion remains a constant in the professional theatre.

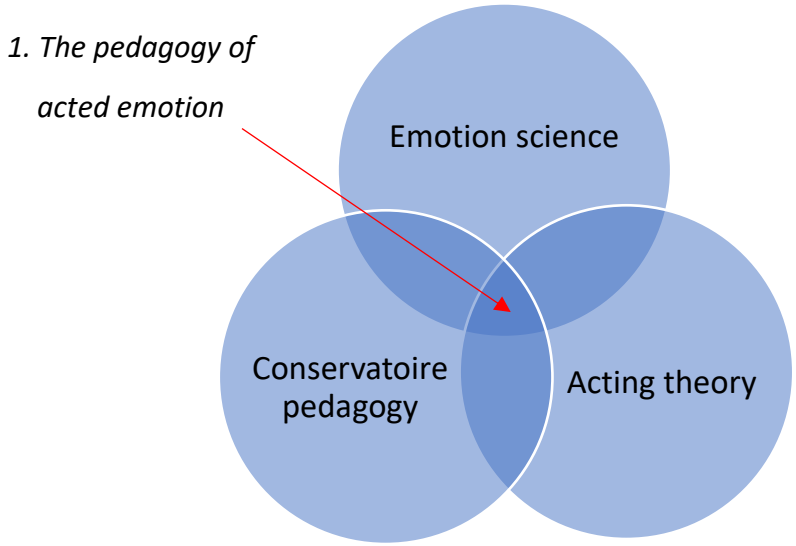
These reflections on the puzzle of acted emotion, from the perspectives of audience, actor and teacher, activate this investigation. Despite hundreds of years of debate and practice, it is a puzzle that is yet to be solved. This conundrum generates the research questions that prompt the first steps in the journey of the thesis: could a better understanding of the emotion experienced spontaneously in life, which I call 'life emotion', throw light on acted emotion? What is acted emotion and how, if at all, does it differ from life emotion? What methods for arousing and expressing emotion are currently available to acting students and their teachers and are they still fit for purpose in the twenty-first century conservatoire? This thesis aims to develop critical tools for examining the emotional component of actor pedagogy and to test these tools by applying them to a cross-section of training practice. It aspires to make a contribution to what might be called the 'pedagogy of the emotions', for

[5] 'BA in Acting: Programme & module specifications & assessment criteria for 2021-2022', Guildhall School of Music and Drama, n.d., p. 11, <https://www.gsmd.ac.uk/study-with-guildhall/drama/ba-acting> [accessed 7 August 2022].
[6] Rhonda Blair, 'The Actor, Image and Action: Cognitive Neuroscience and Actor-Training', in *Performance and Cognition: Theatre Studies and the Cognitive Turn*, ed. by Bruce McConachie and F. Elizabeth Hart (Routledge, 2006), pp. 167-85 (p. 167).

the benefit of professional actors, students and their teachers. The first step is to gauge the scale of the task.

1.2 Problematising the Topic

The research questions that initiate the investigation immediately connect it to three theoretical areas: emotion science, conceptions of acted emotion and actor pedagogy, particularly in the conservatoire sector. This section analyses these interconnected and contested areas, in order to establish the complexity of the territory and to begin the process of building a critical framework. I contend that in order to arrive at a renewed vision of the pedagogy of acted emotion, it is necessary to explore the area where the three fields overlap. The intersection can be represented in the form of a Venn diagram:



One reason the process of embodying emotional response continues to present a significant challenge for practitioners, is that a conflicting binary debate can be identified in all three of

the conceptual areas implicated in the study. Historically, scientists are divided into Basic Emotion and Appraisal theorists, theatre critics are divided into the 'Emotionalist' and 'Anti-Emotionalist' camps and acting pedagogues take up the position of what I call 'Scientists' and 'Mysterians'. This thesis reviews emotion theory, models of acted emotion and conservatoire pedagogy through the lens of these binaries (2, 3, 4). A key aim of Part One is to propose a new model of acted emotion that unites ideas from science and the arts, which I call Scenic Emotion (3.7).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, psychologist William James famously posed the question, 'what is an emotion?'.[7] It is one of the paradoxes of this topic that such an apparently simple question, about a commonplace experience, is so difficult to answer. The scientists who have investigated James's question have come to a bewildering variety of conclusions, and despite more than one hundred and twenty years of research, there is little consensus on a definitive answer.[8] Responses to James's challenge frequently exhibit the features of either Basic Emotion Theory (BET) or Appraisal Theory (AT).

BET is rooted in Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.[9] It posits that there are a limited number of primary emotions, such as anger, fear, sadness and joy. The neural and

[7] William James, 'What is an Emotion?' *Mind*, 9.34 (1884), pp. 188-205.
[8] Elaine Fox provides a useful overview of the 'broad frameworks that have been influential in the scientific study of emotions', in *Emotion Science* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 2, hereafter *Emotion Science.* Fox lists the frameworks and a sample of scientists working in each category: 'emotions are biologically given' (Ekman, Öhman and Birbaumer, Tomkins, Tooby and Cosmides); 'emotions are socially constructed' (Averill, Harré, Kitayama and Markus, Mesquita, Wierzbicka); 'emotions are the result of perception of bodily changes' (James, Lange, Damasio); 'emotions are the result of cognitive appraisals' (Arnold and Gasson, Lazarus), pp. 2-9. Also in the appraisal category are Schachter and Singer (2.3) and Frijda (2.6). Fox herself concentrates on neuroscientific and cognitive approaches.
[9] Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Natural Selection* (Murray, 1860).

physiological systems associated with each of these emotions have evolved through natural selection to generate rapid responses to prototypical situations relevant to survival, such as a threat, mating opportunity or occasion of loss.[10] Such events set in motion a cascade of physiological responses, including hormone release, changes in heart rate, body temperature and muscle tone, which prepare the body for appropriate action.[11] This implies that emotions can be identified by their characteristic pattern of visceral response and that they are universal. Since heritable characteristics take thousands of years to evolve, they are common to an entire species, regardless of how individual members might have migrated around the globe over comparatively short time-spans. Therefore, emotional response and its modes of expression are common to all homosapien cultures.[12]

Prominent Basic Emotion theorists include psychologist Paul Ekman and neurologists, Jaak Panksepp and Antonio Damasio. A collection of essays edited by Ekman and Richard Davidson, *The Nature of Emotion: Fundamental Questions*, provides a snapshot of the debate at the end of twentieth century.[13] In response to the question 'Are There Basic Emotions', Ekman answers 'yes', citing four distinctive patterns of autonomic nervous system activity for fear, anger, disgust and sadness.[14] Neurologist Jaak Panksepp agrees,

[10] See Fox, *Emotion Science*, p. 2.
[11] For a description of this process, see Antonio Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind* (Vintage, 2012), pp. 111-14, hereafter *Self.*
[12] The similarities in emotional expression across species and human cultures has been explored by Charles Darwin, in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (Murray, 1872), hereafter *Expression of Emotions.* The topic has been explored more recently by Paul Ekman and William V. Friesen, in 'Constants Across Cultures in the Face and Emotion', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 17.2 (1971), 124–129, doi:10.1037/h0030377.
[13] Paul Ekman and Richard J. Davidson (eds), *The Nature of Emotion: Fundamental Questions* (Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 5-47, hereafter *Nature of Emotion.*
[14] Paul Ekman, 'All Emotions are Basic', in *Nature of Emotion*, pp. 15-19.

drawing on animal studies to argue that the presence of similar neurological systems in different species provides strong evidence that specific emotional processes are linked to identifiable brain architecture.[15] Damasio discusses the set of physical actions associated with emotional response: 'the so-called universal emotions […] are certainly produced across cultures and are easily recognized because one part of their action program – their facial expressions – is quite characteristic'.[16] He accepts Darwin's proposition that emotional expression is universal, but also acknowledges that there is considerable scope for individual and cultural variation.[17]

Appraisal theorists reject the notion of 'basic emotions', on a variety of grounds.[18] They point out that comprehensive efforts to link patterns of physiological response with particular emotions have met with limited success.[19] Some scholars reject the term 'basic' as a meaningful conceptual category and highlight the failure of researchers to agree on a definitive list of basic emotions. Psychologist Andrew Ortony and anthropologist Terence Turner illustrate the point. In a paper of 1990, they include a table which demonstrates that there is no stable list of basic emotions among theorists, nor even agreement on the number of basic emotions.[20] Appraisal theorists also draw on linguistic and cultural studies that demonstrate significant variations in emotion terms and concepts to contest the notion of

[15] Jaak Panksepp, 'The Basics of Basic Emotion', in *Nature of Emotion*, pp. 20-24.
[16] Damasio, *Self*, p. 123.
[17] Ibid., pp. 122-25.
[18] Appraisal theory was established in 1960 by Canadian psychologist Magda Arnold. See Arvid Kappas, 'Appraisals Are Direct, Immediate, Intuitive, and Unwitting…and Some Are Reflective', *Cognition and Emotion*, 2006-11, 20.7 (2006), pp. 952-75, doi:10.1080/02699930600616080.
[19] Lisa Feldman Barrett is particularly scathing on this topic. She asserts that 'emotion fingerprints are a myth'. See *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain* (Pan, 2018), p. 23, hereafter *How Emotions Are Made.*
[20] Andrew Ortony and Terence J. Turner, 'What's Basic About Basic Emotions', *Psychological Review*, 97.3 (1990), pp. 315-31 (p. 316), hereafter 'Basic Emotions'.

universal emotions.[21] AT asserts that emotions are constructed by the individual, according to our appraisal of the meaning of bodily responses and social context.

Among the many scholars who challenge BET are psychologist James Averill, cultural anthropologist Richard Shweder and Lisa Feldman Barrett, who is both a psychologist and neurologist. In response to Ekman and Davidson's question, Averill discusses the principles of taxonomy in general and highlights the difficulty of categorising emotions as 'basic' in any meaningful or productive way. He poses the question, from which perspective should emotion be viewed, the biological, social or individual? He argues that each viewpoint would generate a different mode of classification. He concludes that 'basic emotions have no more place in psychology than basic animals in zoology or basic diseases in medicine'.[22] Shweder also answers 'no', arguing that emotions are a culturally specific way of interpreting a somatic response.[23] Updating the debate, Barrett points to a paucity of evidence for physiological 'fingerprints' which are alleged to accompany each emotion.[24] She reframes the BET-AT binary as a clash between the 'classical view' and the 'theory of constructed emotion'.[25] This thesis incorporates some proposals for resolving this long-standing dispute (2.9, 2.10).

[21] One rich source of research is linguist Anna Wierzbicka's, *Emotions Across Languages and Cultures: Diversity and Universals* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), a cross-cultural study of emotional language, concepts and behaviour.
[22] James R. Averill 'In the Eyes of the Beholder', in *Nature of Emotion*, pp. 7-14 (p. 14).
[23] Richard A. Shweder '"You're not Sick. You're just in Love": Emotion as an Interpretive System', in *Nature of Emotion*, pp. 32-44.
[24] Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, pp. 1-24.
[25] Ibid., pp. ix-xv.

In *A Dream of Passion*, Lee Strasberg identifies what he regarded as a central issue in acting theory, 'does the actor actually experience the emotion he is portraying, or should he demonstrate the emotion without experiencing it?'.[26] His investigation of this question introduced him to the nineteenth century debate between the actors Henry Irving and Constant Coquelin. Strasberg placed them in opposite camps: 'Irving believed in the value of experience, Coquelin in the value of demonstration'.[27] Strasberg was startled to discover a virtually identical conflict took place in the eighteenth century, symbolised by the rivalry between two popular French actors, Mme Dumesnil and La Clairon. Dumesnil was famous for her moments of inspiration but, according to some observers, she was inconsistent. Conversely, Clairon insisted on the importance of reliable craft.[28] Famously, her approach was championed by her contemporary, the polymath Denis Diderot.

The contrasting approaches of Dumesnil and Clairon provided Diderot with the key example in his analysis of acting, including his celebrated paradox of the actor: 'his talent depends not, as you think, upon feeling, but upon rendering so exactly the outward signs of feeling, that you fall into the trap'.[29] Strasberg dissects Diderot's argument in some detail, and touches on critic William Archer's riposte, published in the late nineteenth century.[30] It is Archer who coined the terms 'emotionalist' and 'anti-emotionalist' to define the binary opposites characteristic of the debate.

[26] Lee Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion* (Plume, 1988), p. 30.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Diderot vividly describes the contrast between the rival actors. See Diderot and Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, pp. 15-17.
[29] Diderot in Diderot and Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 19.
[30] Strasberg, *Dream*, pp. 33-36.

For the emotionalist, it is axiomatic that in order to move an audience, the actor must be moved themselves.[31] Emotionalists also assume that the actor must in some sense share in or reproduce the emotion experienced by the character that they play. Actor Luigi Riccoboni, for example, remarks that affected or forced tears are either '*disgustful* or *ridiculous*', while tears that flow naturally win the sympathy of spectators (3.2).[32] Two actors idolised by Stanislavsky were committed emotionalists. Mikhail Shchepkin, the lead actor of the Maly Theatre, makes a clear distinction between the competent actor who uses reason and the 'actor of feeling', who has a 'flaming soul' (5.3.5).[33] The Italian actor Tommaso Salvini insists that only a physiological response from the actor, appropriate to the role, is sufficient to truly touch an audience (3.4).[34]

Anti-emotionalists challenge this 'common sense' point of view and argue that it is impossible or undesirable, or both, for the actor to be consumed with the same passion as the character in performance. Writing in the nineteenth century, Constant Coquelin asserts that the actor 'must not experience a shadow of the sentiments he is expressing – at that very moment when he is expressing them with the greatest truthfulness and power'.[35]

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[31] This idea is at least two thousand years old. In book VI of his *Institutions of Oratory*, Horace wrote that 'if you wish to move others, that which is most essential, to my mind, is to be moved yourself'. See Jean Benedetti, *The Art of the Actor: The Essential History of Acting from Classical Times to the Present Day* (Methuen, 2005), p. 21.

[32] Lewis Riccoboni, 'Reflections upon Declamation, or, The Art of Speaking in Public', in *An Historical and Critical Account of the Theatres in Europe,* trans. by R. Dodsley (Waller and Dodsley, 1741), pp. 1-36 (p. 15), italics and roman type in the original.

[33] Michael Shchepkin, 'Feeling and Pretense', in *Actors on Acting*, ed. by Toby Cole and Helen Crich Chinoy, rev. edn (Crown, 1970), pp. 482-84 (p. 483).

[34] Tommaso Salvini in Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 112.

[35] Constant Coquelin, *The Art of the Actor*, trans. by Elsie Fogerty (Allen & Unwin, 1932), p. 71.

Another notable anti-emotionalist is the playwright, David Mamet. In his robust rejection of the orthodoxies of the Stanislavsky System and its Method derivations, Mamet remarks that in order to create the illusion of character, 'the actor has to undergo nothing whatever. He or she is as free of the necessity of "feeling" as the magician is free of the necessity of actually summoning supernormal powers'.[36] Director Katie Mitchell makes comparable remarks. Her reading of Damasio's *The Feeling of What Happens* transformed her approach to emotion in the rehearsal room: 'it was no longer essential for the actors to feel the emotions; now what mattered was that the audience felt them. What was essential was that the actors replicated them precisely with their bodies'.[37] Chapter three examines previous attempts to resolve Diderot's paradox and concludes with an exposition of the Scenic Emotion model, which supersedes the Emotionalist – Anti-Emotionalist binary (3.5, 3.6, 3.7).

This thesis borrows the term 'mysterian' from cognitive philosophy, to encapsulate a particular approach to actor education. Philosopher and neurobiologist Owen Flanagan uses the term 'mysterian' to denote scientists who accept that the problem of consciousness, i.e. how mind arises from brain, defies explanation because of the limitations of human cognitive powers. He quotes his peer, Colin McGinn, as an example: 'we have been trying for a long time to solve the mind-body problem. It has stubbornly resisted our best efforts.

[36] David Mamet, *True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor* (Faber and Faber, 1998).
[37] Katie Mitchell, *The Director's Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre*, (Routledge, 2009), p. 232. See also Nicola Shaughnessy, 'Wreaking Havoc: The Feeling of What Happens in Katie Mitchell's *Cleansed*', *Performance Research*, 24.5 (2019), pp. 123-31 (pp.126-27), doi:10.1080/13528165.2019.1671729; Maria Shevtsova, 'On Directing: A Conversation with Katie Mitchell', *NTQ*, 22.1 (2006), pp. 3-18 (pp. 10-11), doi:10.1017/s0266464x06000261.

The mystery persists. I think the time has come to admit candidly that we cannot resolve the mystery'.[38] In a reference to this discourse, Damasio expresses sympathy for those who believe that the secrets of the mind are likely to 'elude science forever', but remains optimistic that they will be uncovered in the future.[39] I adapt the term *Mysterian*, italicized to distinguish it from its use in cognitive philosophy, to describe actors, directors and educators who insist that there are aspects of their craft that cannot be understood rationally and are therefore impossible to teach. This group of intangible qualities might include charisma, charm, and stage presence. Moreover, any attempt to quantify or explain these qualities might, in fact, be counter-productive, undermining the actor's ability to demonstrate them in performance.[40] Therefore, *Mysterians* resist attempts to analyse their process.

One feature of the *Mysterian* position is a refrain that is surprisingly common in the context of UK training: 'acting cannot be taught'. Paradoxically, the founder of Britain's first specialist drama school, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA), took this view. According to his widow Maud, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree

> …did not believe that acting could be taught. Of course, it cannot be, any more than a poet, a painter, a musician can be made. But he believed in stage training – believed in giving opportunity for the *feu sacré* to burn.[41]

[38] Colin McGinn in Owen J. Flanagan, *Consciousness Reconsidered* (MIT Press, 1992), p. 9. See also Owen J. Flanagan, *The Science of the Mind* (MIT Press, 1991).
[39] Antonio Damasio, *Descartes Error* (Vintage, 2006), pp. xxviii-ix, 270 (note 4).
[40] Mamet objects to the notion that all aspects of the actor's art should be measurable. He protests at the 'academic fallacy that, yes, yes, inspiration, bravery, and invention are very well, but they are not quantifiable for the purposes of the university, and so, cannot be art. What nonsense.' See *True and False*, p. 80.
[41] Maud Tree in Max Tree, *Herbert Beerbohm Tree* (Hutchinson, 1917), p. 130.

At the other end of the twentieth century, actor Jane Lapotaire came to a similar conclusion. Despite her training at the Bristol Old Vic, she insists that 'you cannot teach acting, you *cannot'*.[42] Michael Redgrave agreed, notwithstanding his admiration for Stanislavsky.[43] He associated the difficulty of teaching acting with the notion of 'sensibility', defined as the ability to understand a play on an emotional rather than intellectual level. To Redgrave, acting requires a balance of intelligence and sensibility, but he believes that sensibility cannot be learned consciously. Therefore, acting cannot be taught.[44] He places emotion at the centre of the challenge of acting pedagogy.

In opposition to the *Mysterians*, *Scientists* believe that acting is no different from any other human activity, such as astronomy, the study of evolution or carpentry.[45] It is determined by consistent laws or principles and is open to investigation, even if its principles are difficult to determine. Once these principles have been discovered, acting then becomes easier to teach. *Scientists* object to the mantra that 'acting cannot be taught' on the grounds that it infantilises actors and demeans theatre as a profession. One example can be found in the American producer and writer, John Belasco, who was a near contemporary of Stanislavsky. He discusses acting as a science and remarks that the idea that acting cannot be taught as

[42] Jane Lapotaire in *In the Company of Actors: Reflections on the Craft of Acting,* ed. by Carole Zucker (A & C Black, 1999), p. 79.
[43] Redgrave describes himself as a 'disciple of Stanislavsky'. See *In My Mind's Eye* (Coronet, 1983), p. 153.
[44] Michael Redgrave, 'The Stanislavsky Myth', in *Actors on Acting: The Theories, Techniques, and Practices of the World's Great Actors, Told in Their Own Words*, ed. by Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy (Crown, 1970), pp. 403-08, (p. 406), hereafter *Actors on Acting.*
[45] Sam Kogan, the Russian-born founder of The School of the Science of Acting is a case in point. Kogan dislikes the air of mystery in actor training. He compares his experiences of drama school unfavourably with his education at a technical college for students planning to enter the building trade. At the college, he could, for example, ask why a mix of cement did not set properly and get a clear explanation. At drama school, if he asked why an exercise was not working, he was told 'don't ask questions like this'. See Sam Kogan, *The Science of Acting,* ed by Helen Kogan (Routledge, 2010), p. 1. See also pp. xxiv-xxv, 9-11.

'subversive of reason'.[46] Uta Hagen rejects the notion that 'acting can't be taught' as one of those phrases that 'spring from ignorance and the kind of prejudice that once again relegates the actor to the position of a gifted, rather unintelligent child' (4.2).[47] This thesis takes a *Scientific* position and seeks to shift the boundary of what is knowable in actor training (4.2).

1.3 Methodology

The findings of this project are encapsulated in an 80,000-word thesis. Although no practice will be submitted as part of the PhD, it is informed by decades of performance and studio work, including my own experience as an actor, teacher and director. It is a forensic examination of actor pedagogy, culminating in an interdisciplinary practice-based experiment. In short, it is an extended reflection on emotion in acting intended to influence future training. The theory infuses the practice and the practice infuses the theory, so the thesis might be categorized as a 'praxis-based enquiry'. In this section, I consider the question, what methodology might best facilitate an exploration of the complex territory implicated in the project?

A dialogue between emotion science, acting theory and conservatoire pedagogy points to an interdisciplinary approach. An additional factor is the importance of embodied cognition. I argue that, as a human activity, theatre must necessarily be underpinned by the biology of the body, and acted emotion, in turn, must be underpinned by the biology of the emotions.

[46] John Belasco, 'Acting as a Science', in *Actors on Acting*, ed. by Cole and Chinoy, pp. 577-83, (p. 577).
[47] Uta Hagen, *A Challenge for the Actor* (Simon & Shuster, 1991), p. 35.

So, it follows that advances in physiological science can be used to illuminate the processes of acting. In my experience, voice specialists routinely teach students about the anatomy of sound production, in order to establish a common language for discussing vocal issues and to support the work with an understanding of the organs of speech. An understanding of the biology of emotions would provide the equivalent knowledge in acting classes.[48] Insofar as drama is a portrait of life experiences, an understanding of emotional processes also supports a 'naturalistic' approach, in the sense that the actors' work might be informed by empirical observations, of self and others.

So far, the argument has identified a significant role for science in the project, a need to interrogate binaries and the advantages of an interdisciplinary approach. A methodology rooted in what performance scholar Bruce McConachie calls the 'cognitive turn' appears to be a compelling choice. McConachie's essay, 'Falsifiable Theories for Theatre and Performance Studies', makes a case for basing humanities research on cognitive science, rather than the theories that dominated the 1990s and early 2000s, such as psychoanalysis and poststructuralism.[49] John Lutterbie's review of the field, published in 2019, cites three studies with a particularly strong influence: *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience,* by Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, which views the body as a site of both biological processes and phenomenological experience; Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By*, which explores 'the role of the body in the shaping of mind'; and Fauconnier and Turner's work on conceptual blending, which argues that the

[48] Rhonda Blair makes a similar point. See 1.5.
[49] Bruce McConachie, 'Falsifiable Theories for Theatre and Performance Studies', *Theatre Journal*, 59 (2007), pp. 553-78.

process of blending contrasting concepts to create a third element is a ubiquitous and unconscious cognitive process.[50] Performance scholarship that has taken the cognitive turn does not have a single approach, but this project uses three methodological elements that are widely employed: using embodied cognition as a foundation for the investigation, challenging binaries, and the employment of scientific insights as a critical tool.

McConachie articulates the epistemological basis of many studies in the field, proposing that performance scholars ground their investigations on the relatively secure foundation of current science. He draws on Popper's idea of 'falsifiability', i.e. the proposition that a strength of scientific method is that its investigations are based on empirical evidence, and that its conclusions are open to challenge. A theory can be updated or replaced, if further research can identify shortcomings in an experimental method, or present contradictory data. McConachie remarks, 'we must use scientifically validated theories when we can'.[51] He asserts that the process of 'falsification', which helps ensure the robustness of scientific knowledge, is one that the performing arts would do well to emulate.

Performance scholars are, however, careful to avoid the naive assumption that science can provide an easy route to objective knowledge. McConachie remarks that science cannot deliver '*Truth* with a capital "T"'.[52] Similarly, Experience Bryon considers the epistemological

[50] John Lutterbie, *An Introduction to Theatre, Performance and the Cognitive Sciences* (Methuen Drama, 2020), hereafter *Performance and Cognitive Sciences*; Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience,* rev. edn (MIT Press, 2017); George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 243; Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (Basic Books, 2002), pp. 17-38.
[51] McConachie, 'Falsifiable Theories', p. 556.
[52] Ibid., p. 570.

battles between two branches of science, traditional realism and social constructivists. The former camp insists that science is an objective study of the external world, while the latter views science as a cultural practice rather than the value-free discovery of facts.[53] This thesis accepts the general principle that science, including emotion science, is a contested area that provides provisional, but relatively reliable epistemological foundations, because of the falsifiable nature of its theories. Studies of the biology of emotion are used to inform a study of theories of acted emotion and actor pedagogy.

In a keynote speech, delivered at the Affective Science and Performance Symposium at Kent University, McConachie cited C.P. Snow as the inspiration for a rapprochement between the arts and the sciences.[54] In his celebrated Rede lecture of 1959, Snow argued that Britain's intellectual life was polarized into two camps, the humanities and the sciences.[55] His binary analysis is a convenient tool for reviewing the gulf between what he calls the 'two cultures', but he expresses reservations about the over-simplification of a complex topic, 'the number 2 is a very dangerous number: that is why the dialectic is a dangerous process. Attempts to divide anything into two ought to be regarded with much suspicion'.[56] Snow's distrust of binary divisions seems justified by later discoveries in cognitive science. Lakoff and Johnson, for example, critique the opposition of 'subjective' and 'objective'. They argue that both

[53] Experience Bryon, 'Transdisciplinary and Interdisciplinary Exchanges between Embodied Cognition and Performance Practice: Working across Disciplines in a Climate of Divisive Knowledge Cultures', *Connection Science*, 29.1 (2017), pp. 2-20 (pp. 2-7).
[54] Bruce McConachie, ''The Survival of Performance Studies in the 21st Century', unpublished keynote delivered at the conference *Affective Science and Performance* (University of Kent, 7 September 2012). The conference proceedings were published as *Affective Performance and Cognitive Science,* ed. by Nicola Shaughnessy (Bloomsbury, 2013), hereafter *Affective Performance*.
[55] C.P. Snow, *The Two Cultures* (Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[56] Ibid., p. 9.

'objectivism', the idea that there is an objective reality 'out there' waiting to be discovered, and 'subjectivism', the notion that our conceptual system is entirely the result of individual imagination and cultural context, are both inadequate. Furthermore, they suggest that 'what the myths of objectivism and subjectivism both miss is the way we *understand* the world through our *interactions* with it'.[57] Lakoff and Johnson coin the term 'Experientialist Synthesis' to redefine what they regard as outdated terms and to propose a more satisfactory 'third way'.

The interrogation of binaries in pursuit of new insights is a common feature of cognitive turn scholarship. Rhonda Blair and Amy Cook remark that although the field is varied, it is commonly assumed that Cartesian Dualism, the idea that mind and body can be conceived and discussed as separate, is obsolete.[58] In his study of embodied acting, Rick Kemp goes further, suggesting that the terms 'inner' and 'outer' are a variation on Cartesian Dualism: 'The idea of experiences that are "internal" or "external" rests on a conceptual separation of the mind and body that is now disproved by cognitive science'.[59] I review these studies further below (1.5).

This thesis also takes a sceptical view of binaries, particularly in the construction of my conceptual framework in Part One. It identifies oppositional debates in the three theoretical areas, in order to navigate complex fields, but then interrogates those binaries in the pursuit

[57] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By,* p. 194, italics in the original.
[58] Rhonda Blair and Amy Cook, 'Introduction', in *Theatre, Performance and Cognition: Languages, Bodies and Ecologies*, ed. by Rhonda Blair and Amy Cook (Methuen, 2016), pp. 1-19 (p. 1).
[59] Rick Kemp, *Embodied Acting: What Neuroscience Tells Us About Performance* (Routledge, 2012), p. xv, hereafter *Embodied Acting.*

of more nuanced and satisfactory 'third way'. Chapter two, for example, proposes a working definition of life emotion that is a synthesis of BET and AT. Chapter three connects models of emotion in neurology with acting theory, offering an original hypothesis to resolve the Emotionalist – Anti-Emotionalist debate. Chapter four, on actor pedagogy, takes a different approach. While the argument acknowledges the *Mysterian* position, I argue that, because the task of academic research is to extend knowledge, and that of a teacher is to explain and clarify, this study must necessarily adopt a *Scientific* stance, which aims to dispel some of the mystery around the pedagogy of acted emotion.

In a discussion of cognitive turn scholarship, Blair embraces the potential of interdisciplinary studies, but issues a timely warning about the pitfalls attendant on non-specialists seeking to ground their work in scientific ideas: 'it is easy to misappropriate complex material such as that produced by scientific research; we must be mindful of being non-expert, and of the dangers of misunderstanding or mistranslating what we read'.[60] In order to mitigate the risk of misappropriation, this thesis responds to Blair's warning with a precise articulation of the four principal ways the science is deployed.

Firstly, the argument highlights synergies between insights from emotion science and acting. Secondly, the science is used to contextualise the evolution of selected actor training practice, in order to understand how it was shaped by the scientific culture of its day. Thirdly, it is used as a critical tool. Blair observes that aspects of actor training, in North

[60] Rhonda Blair, 'Introduction: The Multimodal Practitioner', in *Affective Performance,* ed. by Shaughnessy (Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 135-58 (p. 136).

America at least, has lagged behind the science: 'text centered actor training in the US has tended to remain grounded in mid-twentieth century versions of Stanislavsky-derived approaches, the science on which these approaches were premised has continued to move ahead'.[61] The implication of Blair's remark is that the emotion science that underpins actor training theory and practice may have been falsified by subsequent developments. This could explain why some approaches have notable longevity and why others have fallen into disuse. Understanding how the science has shifted may illuminate both 'tried and tested' methods and how neglected methods may be revitalised. Finally, the science is used in an experimental, interdisciplinary project discussed in chapter eight. It summarises the findings of my innovative collaboration with psychologist Kate Muir, a pilot study that investigates techniques for embodying emotion. It combines the methodology of the social sciences with the practical investigations of the acting studio. The study, which we call the 'Performance Experiment', compares the impact of contrasting approaches to consciously undertaken emotional arousal.[62]

1.4 Rationale and Scope

The strategy used in this study, to develop new knowledge of the emotional component of actor training, divides into three parts. Firstly, it builds a tri-partite conceptual framework designed to interrogate pedagogical practice, incorporating elements of psychology and neurology. Secondly, it examines selected training methods in the light of that framework,

[61] Rhonda Blair, *The Actor, Image, and Action: Acting and Cognitive Neuroscience* (Routledge, 2008), p. 10, hereafter *Actor, Image, Action.*

[62] David Jackson and Kate Muir, 'Individual Differences in Acted Emotions: An Exploratory Study into the Role of Interoceptive Awareness in Feelings Prompted by Emotion Eliciting Acting Techniques', *PsyArXiv Preprints* (2019), doi:10.31234/osf.io/shf72.

in order to both generate new perspectives and to test the efficacy of the frame as a critical tool. Finally, the study culminates in a practice-based enquiry that compares the impact of two contrasting approaches to acted emotion. Because of the scale and complexity of the theoretical areas implicated in such a project, it is essential to delimit the investigation. Emotion science can offer insights, but which emotion science? Of all the teaching approaches available to the UK conservatoire, which practices will be examined and why? For what style of drama does this training prepare the actors? This section articulates the rationale for the choices made.

In order to outline the history of the BET-AT debate, and to establish the scientific context for the actor training practices considered, it is necessary to incorporate reference to a broad range of research. However, the thesis focusses on three researchers in particular whose work bridges the gap between emotion science and acting, psychologist Nico Frijda, Antonio Damasio and Lisa Feldman Barrett (1.2).

Frijda's 'Laws of Emotion' articulate the interconnections between emotion and action, a matter of keen interest for actors and their trainers. In Frijda's account, the function of emotion is to 'potentiate' physical actions that might be executed in the interests of the individual. Frijda, therefore, posits a profound link between action and emotion (2.6). Damasio's numerous works provide an invaluable account that makes a distinction between emotion and feeling. His work is rich in theatrical metaphors and he makes a case for an evolutionary function for the arts. In particular, his identification of the 'body loop' and 'as if body loop' helps explain a phenomenon that has long puzzled scholars of the arts, emotion

felt in the theatre that seems connected to, but distinct from, life emotion (2.7, 3.7). Barrett's account emphasises the predictive function of the brain. She proposes that people are active agents in the construction of their own experience, including emotional episodes. Her work also illuminates the process of emotional memory, a key factor in many approaches to acting (2.8). Although it is a small group, these three scientists represent a diverse range of contemporary perspectives, both neurological and psychological, on the topic of embodied emotion.

There are numerous distinctive approaches to emotion used in UK drama schools which I do not examine in depth. For example, Nick Moseley, Course Leader for BA Acting at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD), from 2006 to 2021, employed Meisner technique, which treats emotion as a by-product of repetition exercises and intense focus on a partner.[63] Yat Malmgren's Character Analysis was a core discipline of the Drama Centre London throughout its history. This little-known approach synthesises Jungian archetypes, Laban 'efforts' and Stanislavskian practice. It explores six character types, including 'Mobile', a complex psychophysical state associated with emotional volatility.[64] Additionally, Peter McAllister, a long-standing acting tutor at RCSSD, has experimented with the Perdekamp system of accessing emotion by physical means.[65] The scope of this study, however, is restricted to Stanislavskian practice, Lee Strasberg's Method and Susana Bloch's approach, now known as Alba Method, because of the distinctive role acted emotion plays in each

[63] Nick Moseley, *Meisner in Practice: A Guide for Actors, Directors and Teachers* (Nick Hern, 2012).
[64] Vladimir Mirodan, 'The Way of Transformation: the Laban-Malmgren System of Dramatic Character Analysis', 2 vols (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 1997), II, pp. 366-524.
[65] 'Authentic Emotion on Demand', KALLISO, 'PEM ACTING™', n.d. <https://pem-acting.com/> [accessed 6 July 2024].

mode of training. In this thesis, the three practitioners are labelled collectively as the 'emotion specialists'.

Although united by placing emotion at the centre of their practice, the emotion specialists exemplify a variety of approaches. In the case of the Stanislavsky System (KSS), I argue that emotion has a multi-faceted role (5.3). Stanislavsky shared Tolstoy's belief that the purpose of art is to 'infect' the audience with emotion. It is therefore the content of art (5.3.2). Stanislavsky also regards feeling as a touchstone for what is valid in acting practice, asserting that subjective response is every bit as valuable a guide as scientific forms of verification. Awareness of feeling is a guide and a methodology (5.3.1). Emotion ignites the creative process, so arousing it is essential to the artist (5.3.3).

Strasberg asserts that he extended the exploration of emotional memory beyond the basic discoveries made by Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov (6.1). A near fanatical pursuit of what Method practitioners regarded as 'true' or 'real' emotion became a cornerstone of Strasberg's training practice. I argue that, within the Method tradition, 'real' emotion is defined as acted emotion accompanied by physiological indicators that typically accompany similar episodes in life (6.5). This thesis follows Krasner's definition of 'Method' acting, identifying Stella Adler, Sanford Meisner and Lee Strasberg as its principal teachers.[66] Krasner argues that the investigations of the KSS formed the foundation for all Method teaching, but notes that a considerable diversity of approach evolved.[67] The term Method,

[66]David Krasner, 'I Hate Strasberg: Method Bashing in the Academy', in *Method Acting Reconsidered*, ed. by David Krasner (Palgrave, 2000), pp. 3-39 (p. 6), hereafter 'I Hate Strasberg'.
[67] Krasner, 'I Hate Strasberg', p. 6.

then, is a useful shorthand for distinguishing the Stanislavsky System from its American interpretations. I refer to Lee Strasberg's version of the Method by the initials LSM.

The training method developed by Susana Bloch consists entirely of strategies for reproducing apparently real expressions of emotion through conscious control of breathing patterns, facial expression and body posture. Her training tradition has undergone various name changes, including the 'BOS' method, Alba Emoting and Alba Method (7.1). For simplicity, I refer to its various manifestations as 'Alba' throughout the thesis. Although Bloch does not mention Strasberg explicitly, she appears to have LSM in mind when she expresses anxiety about over-identification with a character and Alba undoubtedly pursues strategies for embodying real-seeming emotional states without recourse to emotional memory (7.1).

The emotion specialists constitute a particularly instructive group of case studies, because of their interconnections and differences. To a degree, there is a dialogue between the practices. Strasberg was strongly influenced by the KSS and focussed on the element of emotional memory in particular. Bloch reacted against some features of LSM. The work encompasses several generations and a range of approaches. Stanislavsky's discoveries belong to the first four decades of the twentieth century, while Strasberg's influence was at its height mid-century. Bloch's work in actor training began in the 1970s and continued into the twenty-first century. The specialists' teaching is therefore synchronous with the entire history of the UK (acting) conservatoire. As a trio, their work includes a wide spectrum of techniques from introspective approaches to the entirely technical and somatic. The three

practitioners have had varied degrees of impact on UK drama schools. The KSS and its derivatives have had a pervasive influence, while Alba has had almost none (4, 6.5, 7.4). The practitioners are chosen to support the twin aims of the thesis: to test the usefulness of my critical framework and to recondition existing methods of training, in order to enable students to meet the perennial challenge of acting emotion.

The focus of the argument is on training methods designed for professional actors in the Western tradition. This choice has a number of implications in terms of the scope of the discussion, notably the locus of the training experience and the style of acting that implies. In the twenty-first century, the routes to professional acting are many and varied, including university, drama school, further education colleges, secondary schools and no training at all. There are independent acting studios and an abundance of coaches offering private lessons. The thesis is relevant to all these training environments, but is intended primarily as a contribution to curriculum development in the conservatoire sector, because it exists to provide systematic training for professional performers over an extended period. In the UK, conservatoire training typically consists of courses lasting between one and three years of full-time study.

This is not a thesis about theatrical style. Nor does it attempt to engage with the historical genres of Naturalism and Realism. However, the argument does propose that, although contemporary professional actors work in a wide variety of media and styles, including post-dramatic, movement-based and stylised theatre, they are most frequently required to work in a manner that the audience perceives as realistic (1.1). The practice discussed is

therefore preoccupied with the representation of emotion that closely resembles, or is identical to, the spontaneous expression of emotion in life. Often, the pedagogical techniques used aim to reproduce or stimulate a physiological response to imaginary circumstances. This emphasis evokes the problematic notions of 'naturalism' and 'realism'.

Christopher Innes asserts the long-term influence of the nineteenth century artistic movement of Naturalism on Western styles of theatre. Writing on the cusp of the twenty-first century, he states it is the 'basis for mainstream plays and performances throughout the modern period, and is still the dominant theatrical form today'.[68] He also argues that both Naturalism and Realism are associated with what 'appears true to the spectator or reader's actual experience'.[69] Innes analyses the complexities of the terminology. Firstly, he points out the terms 'Naturalism' and 'Realism' are used to indicate both the theatrical genres belonging to a specific era, and also more generally to describe the dominant forms of contemporary theatre that are founded on these movements. Both terms are derived from common expressions with multiple meanings. 'Natural', for example, has been associated with an innate sense of right and wrong ('natural justice') and a way of being devoid of spiritual influence. Moreover, Naturalism is associated with scientific observation and a belief that human behaviour is shaped by the environment. Such is the confusion, that a key play, such as Ibsen's *Ghosts*, can be categorized differently by two critical sources. Innes cites the example of Theodore W. Hatlen, who regards the play as Naturalistic, because of its pessimistic tone, and that of the *Cambridge Guide to Theatre*, which argues the play is

[68] Christopher Innes, 'Introduction', in *A Sourcebook on Naturalist Theatre*, ed. by Christopher Innes (Routledge, 2000), pp. 1-27 (p. 1), hereafter *Naturalist Theatre*.
[69] Ibid., p. 4.

quintessentially Realistic.[70] Competing definitions of 'realism' and 'naturalism' render these terms particularly ambiguous and they therefore must be handled with caution.

In order to minimize the pitfalls of employing problematic terms, this thesis avoids the use of 'natural' or 'real' where possible. In some cases, alternative technical terms are useful. For example, it is possible to state that the emphasis is on mimetic forms rather than traditions such as Noh and Kathakali, in which emotion is represented by a highly codified theatrical language, synthesising gesture, text, elaborate make-up, costume and music. But as Innes points out, theatrical conventions are superimposed on imitations of observed behaviour: 'theatrical performance, in which the basis of representation is the human body, has always been to a large degree mimetic. Yet it is still highly conventionalized [….] the key factor is that [the conventions] are unnoticed by the audience'.[71] In short, what an audience perceives as 'natural' shifts between eras and cultures. Where the argument refers to practitioners' use of contested terms, such as 'truth' or 'realism', I include a concise working definition.

1.5 Sources and Selective Literature Review

The thesis is informed by works of psychology and neurology intended for both a general audience and papers published in specialist journals. A substantial archive of acting theory is also readily available. I have made full use of the resources at the British Library, including the Rare Books section, and the libraries of the Universities of Birmingham and London. I

[70] Innes, *Naturalist Theatre*, pp. 4-6.
[71] Ibid., p. 15.

have consulted a variety of unpublished doctoral and MA theses, plus some material that is difficult to access. These include works on Yat Malmgren's Character Analysis (1.4), Alba Method (7) and the UK Conservatoire (4). My thinking has also been enriched by my engagement with a variety of academic symposia and conferences at, for example, the universities of Kent, Lincoln, London, the Sorbonne and the Kapodistrian University of Athens.[72]

The scope of the literature review here is limited to key texts that explore the connections between acting and science, rather than the full range of references used throughout. In particular, there are a number of important antecedents to this project that investigate the topics of acted emotion and/or actor training. Most of the relevant scholarship can be divided into two broad categories. Some studies use the history of science to illuminate the evolution of acting. Others can be more tightly defined as scholarship of the cognitive turn, because of the specific concepts deployed. This review acknowledges a selection of the pertinent insights to date and identifies the new areas and perspectives investigated here. The remainder of the literature review is distributed throughout the thesis.

Joseph Roach draws on Thomas Kuhn's concept of the 'paradigm' and Foucault's of the 'episteme', to frame his study of evolving conceptions of acted emotion.[73] He suggests that

[72] 'Not a Dry Eye in the House: Tears in Performance' (Paris-Sorbonne Universite, 21 March 2014); 'Embodied Cognition and Acting', *AISB 50th Annual Convention* (University of London, Goldsmith's College, 1-4 April 2014); 'Performing Science: Dialogues Across Cultures' (University of Lincoln, 23-25 April 2014); 'Embodied Cognition, Acting and Performance', *AISB 51st Annual Convention* (University of Kent, 20-22 April 2015); 'The S Word: Stanislavski and the Future of Acting' (Rose Bruford College, 18-20 March 2016); 'Stanislavsky: Director, Trainer, Pedagogue' (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 9-11 November 2023).
[73] Joseph R. Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (University of Michigan Press, 1993), hereafter *Player's Passion*.

Kuhn and Foucault proposed a similar view of scientific development. Rather than a steady, incremental process of change, dominant sets of ideas are gradually subjected to more and more pressure until they collapse, to be replaced by a radically different body of knowledge.[74] Roach then develops an analogy with theatre theory. Specifically, he investigates 'how the inner workings of the actor's body have been variously understood by critics and theorists who knew something about the physiology of emotion'.[75] In a comparable project, Jonathan Pitches analyses twentieth-century actor trainers in the context of a variety of scientific developments, including Newtonian physics, Pavlov's reflex theory and Frederick Winslow Taylor's ideas about systematic and efficient business management.[76] This thesis uses similar methods, placing selected approaches to emotion training in the context of the science that has conditioned their development. In addition, the argument uses advances in scientific thinking to challenge some of the persistent assumptions underlying actor-training practice.

Ellie Konijn's study, *Acting Emotions*, is not located in the context of the history of science, nor is it directly inspired by the cognitive turn.[77] However, her work does draw on the work of Nico Frijda to develop a new model of acted emotion.[78] Konijn argues that actors build a convincing portrait of the character's passions by re-shaping the actual emotions they experience as a result of doing their jobs, a type of emotion she refers to as 'Task Emotion'.[79]

[74] Roach, *Player's Passion*, p. 13.
[75] Ibid., p. 12.
[76] Pitches, *Science and Stanislavsky.*
[77] Elly A. Konijn, *Acting Emotions: Shaping Emotions on Stage* (Amsterdam University Press, 2000).
[78] Nico Frijda, *The Laws of Emotion* (Psychology Press, 2017)
[79] See, for example, Konijn, *Acting Emotions,* pp. 33-34 and 51-53.

I argue Konijn makes a valuable theoretical contribution, including a reframing of Diderot's paradox, which she calls 'The Actor's Dilemma'. However, I suggest she takes too little account of the role of the imagination in acting (3.6). Furthermore, Konijn's study is informed by the insights of a single psychologist, while I assert it is beneficial to take a broader range of ideas from emotion science into account.

John Lutterbie summarises some of the core ideas of the cognitive turn. For example, he cites Rosch, Thompson and Varela's influential analysis of embodied cognition, known as the 'four Es':

> The brain is inextricably integrated into and dependent on the body. The brain is embodied. Cognition is part and parcel of all that we do. It is enacted. We gather information from events happening around us and off-load some cognitive activities into the world, such as onto computers and cell phones. It is extended. Finally, the world is our home and we are part of it. Even if we travel to the far reaches of space, we cannot escape our dependence on the environment we live in. It is embedded.[80]

The argument makes relatively few explicit references to the 4Es. However, it draws on a combination of psychologists and neurologists who investigate cognition and emotion as embodied, enacted and embedded processes, particularly Joseph LeDoux, Nico Frijda, Antonio Damasio and Lisa Feldman Barrett. Some of these researchers are also cited by other arts scholars, but this thesis uses a sub-set of cognitive science with a different emphasis to the majority of cognitive turn investigations, because of its particular focus on emotion.

[80] Lutterbie, *Performance and Cognitive Sciences*, pp. 4-5, 26-31. See Varela, Thompson and Rosch, *The Embodied Mind*, pp. 172-80, 205-12.

In *The Actor, Image and Action*, Rhonda Blair applies cognitive science to studio work, in order to increase our understanding of creativity and to develop a precise language for practice. I concur with her argument that, just as a knowledge of anatomy facilitates effective vocal and physical training, understanding the biology of thought and feeling paves the way for developing reliable methods of cultivating the actor's internal life: 'just as good vocal and physical technique – good bio-science, if you will – liberates us as actors, so too can a more accurate technique for other aspects of the actor's craft'.[81] Blair uses a wide range of reference, including Lakoff and Johnson, Fauconnier and Turner, LeDoux and Damasio. This thesis shares a number of Blair's aspirations, applied specifically to the UK training environment: establishing a sound understanding of the biology of the emotions as a foundation for creative teaching; discovering methods of approaching the training of acted emotion that are as reliable as possible; and distinguishing relatively stable insights about acting from those that are contingent on a particular historical era.[82]

Rich Kemp's *Embodied Acting* works towards a vision for an actor training informed by cognitive science.[83] His chapter on emotion includes references to Lakoff and Johnson, LeDoux, Damasio and psychologist Paul Ekman.[84] The three scientists cited are all Basic Emotion theorists. He also includes a brief section on Susana Bloch. Kemp remarks of her Alba method that 'it seems best to consider Bloch's work as theatrical practice that is

[81] Blair, *Actor, Image, Action*, p. 7.
[82] Blair remarks, 'It is important to distinguish between what is (relatively) "unchanging" about acting and views of acting that are the products of particular historical moments', *Actor, Image, Action,* p. 23.
[83] Kemp, *Embodied Acting*, pp. 209-12.
[84] Ibid., pp. 156-96. He discusses, for example, Paul Ekman's nine causes of emotion, outlined in 'What We Become Emotional About', in *Feelings and Emotions: The Amsterdam Symposium,* ed. by Anthony S.R. Manstead, Nico Frijda and Agneta Fischer (Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 119-35.

informed by a scientific perspective, rather than as an empirically derived data'.[85] This thesis contests Kemp's view of Bloch and argues that his account significantly underrates Bloch's contribution.

Kemp assumes there is a general agreement on the list of basic emotions nominated by Paul Ekman, i.e. anger, fear, joy, sadness, disgust and surprise. His criticism of Bloch is partly based on her alternative list, which substitutes eroticism and tenderness for Ekman's surprise and disgust.[86] However, Ortony and Turner, demonstrate that there is no such consensus (1.2, 7.2).[87] Many scientists do not accept the existence of basic emotions at all. Barrett, for example, argues that basic emotion theory is based on an essentialism for which there is no evidence. In her view, although scientists have been searching for over a hundred years, it has proved impossible to consistently match a specific emotion to a characteristic pattern of physiological response (2.8). Kemp is sceptical of Bloch's scientific credentials and of the value of her actor training practice. I argue, however, that a broader understanding of BET and more detailed knowledge of Bloch's experimental practice supports a more positive view of the potential of Alba for the conservatoire.

1.6 Translation

The argument is dependent on translations of a range of sources, particularly from French and Russian originals. The French translations are mine, but not the Russian, so it is necessary to acknowledge some of the complexities of translation and transliteration. Some

[85] Kemp, *Embodied Acting*, p. 185.
[86] Ibid, p. 185.
[87] Ortony and Turner, 'Basic Emotions', pp. 315-16.

of these complexities exist even before the translator begins their task, especially in the case of Stanislavsky's oeuvre. Anatoly Smeliansky, Associate Artistic Director of the Moscow Art Theatre, comments drily on the difficulty of understanding the KSS, even in its home country. He points out that multiple interpretations of the system coexist, so 'the problem is not to translate from Russian into English but the equally complex problem of translating from Russian into Russian'.[88] Both source material and its first English-language versions are problematic.

Henry Schnitzler's concerns about the accuracy of Elizabeth Reynold Hapgood's translations emerged as early as 1954. Similar reservations were later expressed by Mel Gordon, David Magarshack and Eric Bentley.[89] Sharon Carnicke argues that the transmission of Stanislavsky's ideas was distorted in both West and East. Hapgood's translations were conditioned by the demands of the American market, while in the Soviet Union, the Stalinist regime censored the work of theatre artists and enforced a political orthodoxy, excluding nebulous concepts of 'soul' or any mention of internal psychology.[90] In the foreword to his updated translation, *An Actor's Work*, Benedetti explains some of the issues he sought to address: the wide time gaps between publication of Stanislavsky's work; the verbosity of the original manuscripts; and Stanislavsky's attempts to create a vocabulary for acting, by fusing everyday language, neologisms and technical terms from science and yoga.[91] However

[88] Smeliansky in Stanislavski, *AAW,* p. 690.
[89] Carnicke, Sharon Marie, *Stanislavsky in Focus: An Acting Master for the Twenty-First Century*, 2nd edn (Routledge, 2009), pp. 76-77.
[90] Ibid., pp. 61-109.
[91] Jean Benedetti in Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work: A Student's Diary*, trans. and ed. by Jean Benedetti (Routledge, 2008), pp. xvi-xvii. There was a thirteen-year gap between the publication dates of the first and second volume of Hapgood's translations and an eleven-year gap between the second and third, thus creating a separation of aspects of the training that Stanislavsky envisaged as unified. See Constantin

successfully Benedetti may have dealt with these challenges, no translation is perfect. Bella Merlin, in turn, questions the absence of the terms 'soul' and 'spirit' from his versions.[92] This thesis takes the view that while there are some contentious issues in Benedetti's versions, they are more recent and accurate than the alternatives and are therefore the best available resource for an English-speaking scholar.

I follow MHRA guidelines for transliteration of Cyrillic Russian, using the ALA-LC system without diacritics, common English forms and simplified spellings. For example, recent scholarship transliterates the masculine ending '-ий' as '-y' rather than 'ii' or 'iy'. Therefore '*Станиславский*' becomes 'Stanislavsky' rather than 'Stanislavskii' or 'Stanislavskiy'. For the sake of consistency, less well-known names with the same ending are also rendered with a simple 'y'. However, where alternative transliterations are used in titles of works referenced, I retain the original spelling.

1.7 Some Neurological Terms

One implication of the cognitive turn is that humanities scholars must grapple with some unfamiliar terms and topics. In the case of a project that seeks to ground a new understanding of acted emotion in the biology of the body, this means developing at least some familiarity with the fundamental apparatus and systems that govern emotional

Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (Bles, 1937), Constantin Stanislavski, *Building a Character*, trans. by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (Reinhardt, 1950) and Constantin Stanislavski, *Creating a Role*, trans. by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (Bles, 1961).

[92] Bella Merlin, ''Where's the Spirit Gone?' The Complexities of Translation and the Nuances of Terminology in *An Actor's Work* and an Actor's Work', *Stanislavski Studies*, 1.1 (2012), pp. 43-86 (p. 55), doi:10.1080/20567790.2012.11428583.

response. In a discussion of the use of physiology to illuminate the actor's 'means of expression', Roach remarks that 'Diderot became the first to explain, in light of the science of his day, how nature had placed certain limitations on those means through the internal structures of the body itself'.[93] Roach emphasises Diderot's originality. Indirectly, he also highlights a general principle guiding this thesis. What the actor is capable of is determined by the nature of the organism, therefore, some understanding of the physiology of emotion is essential.

Emotional response is one of the manifold processes mediated by the nervous system. The nervous system is divided into two physical networks: the central nervous system (CNS), which consists of the brain and spinal cord; and the peripheral nervous system (PNS), which connects the CNS to all other parts of the body. In the course of the argument, references to brain anatomy are kept to a minimum and explained in context where necessary. The PNS is subdivided into three parts, the somatic, autonomic and enteric nervous systems. The enteric system governs gastrointestinal functions and is not relevant here. The other two subdivisions are important because I explore the territory where conscious and unconscious activity interact. The somatic nervous system (SNS) deals with voluntary actions. The autonomic nervous system (ANS) deals with a wide range of involuntary, automated functions of the body, such as heart rate, blood pressure, respiration and sexual arousal. The SNS and ANS are not, however, discrete systems. They can influence and reinforce each other. The ANS is further subdivided into the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. The former prepares the body for emergency action, such as the 'fight or flight'

[93] Roach, *Player's Passion*, p. 118.

response. The latter is responsible for homeostasis, a concept that is referenced throughout the thesis, so needs some explanation (2.9, 6.6, 7.3, 8.1).[94]

Homeostasis has a vital role to play in the biology of emotion regulation. In the context of contemporary actor training, any study of pedagogy must include an assessment of the risks involved in the conscious arousal of intense emotion. It is a dimension of professional ethics. Therefore, if teachers lead exercises intended to stimulate emotions, they must also have some knowledge of how to facilitate the homeostatic process, and help students return to a state of mental and physical equilibrium. The term homeostasis, coined by physician Walter Cannon in the 1930s, is derived from the Greek for 'same' and 'steady'.[95] Cell biologist George Billman explains:

> Homeostasis has become the central unifying concept of physiology and is defined as a self-regulating process by which an organism can maintain internal stability while adjusting to changing external conditions. Homeostasis is not static and unvarying; it is a dynamic process that can change internal conditions as required to survive external challenges. [….] The health and vitality of the organism can be said to be the end result of homeostatic regulation.[96]

Emotional response involves a cascade of bodily reactions, which can include abrupt changes in heart-rate, body temperature, breathing, hormone release and muscular response. In this sense, emotions are disruptive to the body and a drain on its stocks of energy. Homeostasis, then, is the automatic process which enables the body to rest, recover and return to its optimum level of non-emergency functioning.

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[94] Poonam Sachdev, 'Visual Guide to your Nervous System', WebMD, 27 August 2023 <https://www.webmd.com/brain/ss/slideshow-nervous-system-overview> [accessed 10 January 2025].
[95] Kelvin Rodolfo, 'What is Homeostasis?', *Scientific American*, 3 Jan 2000 <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/what-is-homeostasis/> [accessed 10 January 2025].
[96] George E. Billman, 'Homeostasis: The Underappreciated and Far Too Often Ignored Central Organizing Principle of Physiology', *Frontiers in Physiology*, 10 March 2020, doi:10.3389/fphys.2020.00200.

The ANS system is crucial to scientific investigations of emotion for methodological reasons. Firstly, an emotion must be aroused under controlled conditions so it can be studied. Secondly, the subjective component of emotion can only be examined through self-report, which is vulnerable to manipulation and misinterpretation. However, measurements of ANS response circumvent the conscious mind and therefore avoid the unreliability of subjective data. For this reason, techniques for recording involuntary response are important features of emotion research (2.3). Actors share the scientists' problem of arousing emotion at fixed times in specified places. Stanislavsky set himself and his successors the goal of finding ways to stimulate the unconscious by conscious means (5.3). He would not have used these terms, but he was, in effect, recruiting both the imagination and the somatic nervous system to trigger the ANS. Investigations of emotion in psycho-physiology and acting face the same challenge: how do you stimulate something that is not under voluntary control? For this reason, the two disciplines share an interest in the borderland between the voluntary and involuntary. Therefore, any processes subject to both SNS and ANS are of particular interest. These include respiration, facial expression and skeletal muscle, which controls body posture. The core neurological ideas outlined here inform the content of the argument, summarised in the next section.

1.8 Thesis Structure and Contents

To conclude the general introduction, this section maps the structure of the thesis. Part One consists of three chapters, each of which address one of the theoretical areas implicated in

the study. The overall aim is to construct a conceptual lens through which it is possible to take a fresh view of selected actor training practice in Part Two.

In order to lay the foundations for a robust definition of life emotion, chapter two reviews the history of emotion science in terms of the debate between BET/Classical and Appraisal/ Constructivist theory. It has three other subsidiary aims. I explore the key scientific ideas that influenced Stanislavsky, Strasberg and Bloch and, to varying degrees, provided a foundation for their practice. The argument also incorporates developments in psychology and neurology that challenge or update earlier understanding of emotion, and therefore provide a means of interrogating the currency of training practice. Finally, the chapter highlights any insights from the science that illuminate the acting process. It concludes with a working definition of life emotion that synthesises the BET/Classical and Appraisal/Constructivist perspectives.

Chapter three reviews the long-standing debate between Emotionalists and Anti-Emotionalists, with a view to developing a new model of acted emotion. I establish the content of the opposing views, then analyse two theoretical innovations that offer contrasting resolutions to Diderot's paradox. I examine Evgeny Vakhtangov's notion of 'Affective Emotion', defined as a special type of emotion peculiar to the stage (3.5). I also consider Konijn's reframing of the paradox as 'The Actor's Dilemma', and her argument that actors do not feel the emotions of their character, but adapt their 'task emotions' to the fictional circumstances of a play or film (1.5, 3.6). The chapter concludes with a novel hypothesis that connects theoretical models from acting and science: Vakhtangov's Affective

Emotion and Damasio's concept of the 'as if body loop', re-formulated as 'Scenic Emotion'. It is a strategy for explaining the phenomenon of acted emotion and generating a tool for a re-interpretation of acting training practice.

Chapter four focusses on developments in drama school pedagogy, in order to establish an understanding of the contemporary conservatoire landscape, informed by an historical perspective. The argument proposes that the establishment of the Drama Centre London in 1961 constitutes a watershed in approaches to acted emotion. I argue that prior to this date, innovations in UK training practice were inspired either by pedagogues from mainland Europe or maverick English practitioners who had little impact on drama schools. After this turning point, the Stanislavskian tradition evolved to dominate the language and practice of professional training. I also argue that, despite some major overhauls in conservatoire curricula in recent years, triggered by the practical and ethical challenges of the Covid lockdowns, the EDI agenda, the #MeToo movement and the Black Lives Matter protests, the Stanislavskian tradition remains the dominant paradigm in actor training. The analysis is filtered through the lens of the *Mystery* and *Science* binary and incorporates the claim that, for teachers and academics, the only tenable position is that of the *Scientist*, with a commitment to pushing back the boundaries of what is knowable about performance.

Part Two is also divided into three chapters, each one focussing on examples of pedagogy that place emotion at the centre of the acting process, namely the approaches of Konstantin Stanislavsky (5), Lee Strasberg (6) and Susanna Bloch (7). In each case, I interrogate the practice in the light of the theoretical framework, in order to re-assess its validity and

potential for the future. The argument reviews the evidence for the influence of science on the practice and considers how developments in psychology and neurology might undermine its original foundations and assumptions. It incorporates a forensic examination of the distinctive view of emotion that characterises each training practice and how this relates to the new model of Scenic Emotion developed in chapter three. Finally, I assess the extent to which each approach has penetrated the curricula of drama schools and offer an evaluation of how useful they might be in the future.

Chapter five analyses Stanislavsky's highly complex view of emotion in the theatre. I discuss tactics in the System for arousing emotion, emotion as an epistemological tool and as a key factor in creativity. In the final phase of Stanislavsky's work, at the Opera-Dramatic studio, emotion remains a central preoccupation, but is fully embedded in the work rather than approached explicitly. The chapter also contributes to the extant literature that investigates scientific influences, particularly the role of Théodule Ribot and reflex theory. I argue that the relative accuracy of some of Ribot's insights help explain the continuing usefulness of the KSS for professional actors (5.5). The chapter concludes with an account of some innovations in the technique of Active Analysis, developed by the celebrated director, Anatoly Vassiliev. It also includes some suggestions for how his practice might migrate to UK drama schools (5.6).

Chapter six explores Strasberg's training methods, placing the well-known, or perhaps notorious, emotion memory exercise in the context of the programme he developed over decades of pedagogy. In common with the KSS, Strasberg's Method has been extensively

analysed in terms of its scientific influences, particularly the competing claims of two highly influential branches of psychology, Freudian psycho-analysis and behaviourism. I review these arguments and suggest an additional parallel, rarely considered in the literature: the ideas of a maverick figure who was trained by Freud himself, Wilhelm Reich. I argue widespread reservations about LSM may explain its limited use in the UK conservatoire. The chapter aims to separate the mythology from the reality, in order to identify under what conditions elements of the training might be used ethically and productively in the future.

Susana Bloch occupies a unique position in the field, as the only trained scientist who has also developed a comprehensive approach to the emotional component of actor training. In order to develop an understanding of the theory and practice of Alba, chapter seven outlines the key points in its development, from an interdisciplinary experiment in the psychology department of Santiago University, to an evolved system of actor training that focusses exclusively on emotional expression. Bloch's use of the physical manifestations of emotional response that are under conscious control contrasts with work that depends on emotion memory. Therefore, the chapter explores an alternative to the dominant paradigms in the conservatoire, which arguably affords greater protection to the mental health and wellbeing of students.

Part Three of the thesis represents the culmination of the project and is divided into two chapters. Chapter eight is the output of a practice-based enquiry undertaken with psychologist Kate Muir. This investigation, which took place at the Birmingham School of Acting, (now the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire), contributes to the literature in three

ways. It investigates the responses of drama school students to basic Alba training. It also compares the impact of 'effector pattern' exercises with emotional memory work. Thirdly, the tools used to measure student response are drawn from experimental psychology. Specifically, we use Wolf Mehling's Multidimensional Assessment of Interoceptive Awareness (MAIA) and a Likert-type scale to gauge intensity of emotion.[97] In short, what we call the 'Performance Experiment' explores the application of social science methods to performance research. What emerges is the intriguing possibility of using the MAIA as an element of the audition process and a means of identifying students' emotional learning styles (8).

In the concluding chapter, I summarise the findings of the project and evaluate the efficacy of my conceptual framework, as a tool for the critique of the emotional dimension of actor training practice. I note the limitations of the study and propose future areas for research (9).

[97] Wolf Mehling and others, 'The Multidimensional Assessment of Interoceptive Awareness (MAIA)', *Plos One*, 7.11 (2012), pp. 1-22, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0048230, hereafter 'Multidimensional Assessment'; Susan Jamieson, 'Likert Scale', *Britannica*, 20 September 2024 https://www.britannica.com/topic/Likert-Scale [accessed 28 October 2024].

PART ONE: THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

BINARIES IN SCIENCE, ACTING THEORY AND THE CONSERVATOIRE

CHAPTER TWO: WHAT IS AN EMOTION?

Everyone knows what an emotion is until they are asked to define it.
Then, it seems, no-one knows.[1]

2.1 Emotion Science for the Actor Trainer

The overarching aim of this chapter is to develop a reliable working definition of life emotion that might underpin the work of actors and their trainers. To achieve this, the argument incorporates a detailed analysis of the binary debate between Basic Emotion and Appraisal theorists, including proposals for synthesizing the opposing views. I propose that, just as a knowledge of the organs of speech underpins voice training, an understanding of the anatomy of emotion facilitates an effective and safe engagement with the emotional dimension of training.

The discussion is also driven by three tasks that occupy a subsidiary position in the chapter, but are vital to the thesis as a whole. Firstly, I elucidate the key scientific ideas that shaped the approaches considered in Part Two, namely the Stanislavsky System (KSS), Lee Strasberg's Method (LSM) and Susana Bloch's Alba Method (Alba). I then examine the work of three contemporary researchers who have specialized in the psychology and biology of emotion, Nico Frijda, Antonio Damasio and Lisa Feldman Barrett. Both tasks are essential to the thesis, which uses continuities and shifts in emotion science as a means of testing the continuing validity of the practice. Finally, I highlight any additional discoveries that seem to illuminate actor training. Emotion science is a rich source of insights with the potential to contribute to a reconditioned pedagogy of the emotions.

[1] Beverley Fehr and James Russell, 'Concept of Emotion Viewed from a Prototype Perspective', *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 113.3 (1984), pp. 464-86 (p. 464), doi:10.1037/0096-3445.113.3.464.

In order to navigate the complex history of emotion science, I have drawn on two works in particular. Neurologist Joseph LeDoux provides a concise history of the Basic Emotion – Appraisal Theory debate, which I use to generate the working definition of emotion (2.10).[2] I use the abbreviation 'BET-AT' to refer to this discourse. I also take advantage of William Baum's analysis of the methodologies employed by twentieth-century psychology, in order to frame the discussion. He identifies three primary approaches, introspection, comparative and objective psychology.[3] The introspective approach accepts self-report as a valid scientific procedure. Comparative psychology is dependent on evolutionary theory. If humans have evolved from other mammals, then it follows that animal studies can generate insights about human psychology. Objective psychology focuses on experiments capable of generating observable, measurable data, from which inferences about the human mind can be drawn.

The chapter is organised in historical sequence. Sections 2-5 address investigations that have shaped the BET-AT debate and, to varying degrees, conditioned the selected training practices. Sections 6-10 examine a cross-section of contemporary scientific perspectives.

Section 2 discusses three figures who have played significant roles in setting the agenda for emotion research in both psychology and actor training, Charles Darwin, William James and Théodule Ribot. Darwin established the idea of emotional behaviour as an evolutionary

[2] Joseph LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain* (Simon & Schuster, 1996), pp. 42-72, hereafter *Emotional Brain.*
[3] William M. Baum, *Understanding Behaviorism: Behavior, Culture, and Evolution*, 3rd edn (Wiley, 2017), pp. 6-8, hereafter *Understanding Behaviorism.*

adaptation and that there are a limited number of basic emotions that are universal in their expression. James's ground-breaking contention that the subjective experience of emotion followed the physiological response to a stimulus, rather than the other way around, provided the impetus for both BET and AT. James famously illustrates his thesis by asserting that, in the common-sense view, we see a bear, are frightened, tremble and run. In fact, he suggests, the sequence should be reversed: we see a bear, run and feel frightened because we are trembling.[4] Ribot may not have had such a far-reaching impact as Darwin or James, but his influence on actor training is significant. His role in shaping elements of the Stanislavsky system is thoroughly documented, particularly his study of emotional memory.[5] Taken as an elite group of three, these ground-breaking scientists can be seen as the 'founding fathers' of emotion research.

In section 3, I outline some key contributions to the development of affective science in general and the BET-AT debate in particular. Also in this section, I incorporate discussion of LeDoux's investigation of the neurology of fear, which, I argue, illuminates aspects of acting practice, particularly the relationship between conscious and unconscious emotional activation (2.3). Sections 4 and 5 move outside the confines of the binary debate in order to contextualize the development of the KSS and LSM. Conditioning theory and Freud have been widely discussed in relation to LSM. Jonathan Pitches, for example, positions

[4] William James, 'What is an Emotion?', *Mind*, 9.34 (1884), pp. 188-205 (p. 190).
[5] See Sharon Marie Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus: An Acting Master for the Twenty-First Century*, 2nd edn (Routledge, 2009), hereafter *Stanislavsky in Focus*; David Jackson, 'Ribot, Emotion and the Actor's Creative State', *Stanislavski Studies*, 3 (2013), 246-54; Jonathan Pitches, *Science and the Stanislavsky Tradition of Acting* (Routledge, 2006), pp. 100-02, hereafter *Science and Stanislavsky*; Rose Whyman, *The Stanislavsky System of Acting* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 52-60.

psychoanalysis and behaviourism as the twin poles of American psychology, during Strasberg's formative years.[6] It is therefore necessary to consider some of the influential ideas in these disciplines, so that in later chapters it is possible to interrogate claims for their influence on the KSS and LSM (6.4). At the end of section 4, I begin a discussion of some under-reported parallels between LSM and the work of maverick psychoanalyst, Wilhelm Reich.

The latter half of the chapter introduces some perspectives that update and challenge the ideas of previous generations of emotion scientists. Frijda conceives emotion as a mechanism for preparing the body for action. His account is of interest to actors because it suggests that emotion and action are not opposites, but are intrinsically linked (2.6). Damasio offers a range of ideas relevant to studio work, in the context of a broad interest in both arts and science. He develops a precise terminology that distinguishes between emotion and feeling.[7] He introduces the 'somatic marker hypothesis', which provides a fresh understanding of emotional memory. He also contributes the idea of the 'as if' body loop, used here to build an original model of acted emotion, which I call 'Scenic Emotion' (2.7, 3.6). Barrett offers a comprehensive critique of BET, undermining many of its core assumptions. In particular, she contests the notion that each emotion has a unique physiological 'fingerprint'. She also discusses the power of the brain to construct experience and posits that we have a greater degree of agency over emotional reactions than is

[6] Pitches, *Science and Stanislavsky*, pp.96-100.
[7] Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness* (Vintage, 2000), pp. 36-37, hereafter *Feeling.*

commonly assumed (2.8). I propose her challenge to BET orthodoxy can usefully be taken into account in the development of a relatively stable definition of life emotion.

To conclude the chapter, I consider some possible resolutions of the BET-AT debate, particularly Scarantino and Griffiths' application of Richard Boyd's concept of the 'Homeostatic Property Cluster' to emotion. I then offer a working definition of emotion that synthesises the opposing sides of the binary debate, designed to underpin the work of actor trainers (2.9, 2.10).

2.2 Darwin, James and Ribot: the 'Founding Fathers'

Psychologist James Russell suggests that Darwin's importance to contemporary emotion science cannot be overestimated. He asserts that 'all theories of emotion today assume Darwinian evolution'.[8] Evolutionary biologist, Olivia Judson, explains Darwin's huge impact in terms of a radically new methodology. She argues that before Darwin, biology was essentially descriptive, an accumulation of unconnected facts known as 'natural history'. Darwin, however, not only identified patterns in nature, but posited underlying principles which explained the super-abundance of life on the planet.[9] He describes three principles that govern the expression of emotion:

The principle of serviceable associated Habits

[8] James A. Russell, 'Introduction: William James and his Legacy', *Emotion Review*, 6.1 (2014), p. 3 (p. 3).
[9] Olivia Judson in Daniel Duzdevich, *Darwin's on the Origin of Species: A Modern Rendition* (Indiana University Press, 2014), ix.

This principle refers to action or behaviour which has a practical purpose, in response to a desire or sensation. It includes attempts to restrain such expressions, which often result in involuntary physical responses.[10]

The principle of Antithesis

Darwin elucidates this idea using the example of a dog that hears a human approach and adopts a threatening posture, characterised by an upright, stiff body and exposure of its teeth. The dog then recognises its master and switches to an 'antithetical' posture expressive of affection, including flexible movements, tail wagging and a closed mouth.[11]

The principle of actions due to the constitution of the Nervous System

Darwin posits a category of actions, expressive of a particular state of mind, that are largely independent of will-power and habit. They are, rather, the result of an excess of 'nerve-force'. Presumably, he is referring to what would now be thought of as the operation of the autonomic nervous system (ANS), such as blushing, sweating or changes in heart rate (1.7).[12]

It is possible to detect the influence of the sea-change in methodology ushered in by Darwin in the world of actor training. Where Darwin searched for the principles driving diversity in the natural world, Stanislavsky searched for the general principles underlying creativity. His frequent invocations of 'nature' as a guide locate his search in the organic growth of animals

[10] Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (Murray, 1872), pp. 28-49, hereafter *Expression of Emotions.*
[11] Ibid., pp. 50-55.
[12] Ibid., pp. 66-82.

and plants. His aphorism, 'there is no "system". There is nature' is typical.[13] In this sense, his pursuit of 'natural' governing principles for acting is characteristic of the era (5.4).

Some of the core ideas of BET are rooted in Darwin's investigation of emotional expression. He gathered data from correspondents in Australasia, India, America, Africa, Borneo and Malaya. His analysis of the replies convinced him that 'all the chief expressions exhibited by man are the same throughout the world'.[14] He enumerates the six emotions that, he argues, are innate and are universally recognisable in their expression: enjoyment, fear, grief, rage, disgust and shame.[15] This conclusion was consistent with his overarching thesis that all humans were descended from a common ancestor. If emotions are innate, then evolutionary theorists would expect their expression to be consistent across the species, regardless of geographical distribution. BET, then, derives two tenets from Darwin's research: there is a restricted range of basic or primary emotions and despite some cultural variation, emotional expression is universally recognizable.[16]

Science historian, Michael Sokal, emphasises that James's *Psychology: Briefer Course* was written in the wake of evolutionary theory: 'the most interesting and enriching aspect of this text was (and is) James's approach to psychology as a Darwinian natural science'.[17] James

[13] Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work: A Student's Diary,* trans. and ed. by Jean Benedetti (Routledge, 2008), p. 612. Further references to 'nature' occur on pp. xxvii, 201-02 & 391.
[14] Darwin, *Expression of Emotions*, p. 361.
[15] Ibid., pp. 15-17, 361-65.
[16] Lists of basic or primary emotions often have six items, but not invariably. In addition to Darwin, Ekman and Bloch, for example, identify six (1.5, 7.2). However, Andrew Ortony and Terence J. Turner demonstrate that there is considerable variation among researchers. See 'What's Basic About Basic Emotions?', *Psychological Review*, 97.3 (1990), pp. 315-31 (p. 316).
[17] Michael Sokal in William James, *Psychology: Briefer Course* (Harvard University Press, 1984), p. xii, hereafter *Briefer*.

himself locates psychology in the natural sciences by stating some axiomatic principles: the material world exists independently of perception; psychology accepts the conclusions of other natural sciences; products of the mind, such as thoughts and feelings, constitute legitimate data for the discipline. In short, introspection and observation of others are regarded as reliable methodological tools.[18]

James also follows Darwin's rejection of description and cataloguing of facts as an adequate procedure. He remarks that 'classification and description are the lowest stage of science'.[19] His approach is to pursue a deeper order of inquiry, searching for explanatory principles that address the 'causes, conditions, and immediate consequences' of states of consciousness, including emotions.[20] James, then, was a man of his time in the sense that he embraced the Darwinian revolution, but his interest in emotion, and his introspective methodology, resonated well into the future. Psychologists Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer remark that 'James and his critics set in train two modes of enquiry – searching for physiological patterns that could be mapped onto emotions and the investigation of cognitive and situational factors that determine emotion'.[21] James's work, and the responses to it, can therefore be seen to lay the foundations for both BET and Appraisal theory.

[18] James mentions that his reflections are a product of introspection in his seminal article, 'What is an Emotion?' *Mind*, 9, 34 (1884), 188-205 (pp. 189 & 202).
[19] James, *Briefer*, p. 331.
[20] Ibid., p. 9.
[21] Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer, 'Cognitive, Social, and Physiological Determinants of Emotional State', *Psychological Review*, 69.5 (1962), pp. 379-99 (p. 379).

Among James's many insights, the two most relevant here are his discussion of emotion as a functional, adaptive feature, and his insistence that what constitutes an emotion *is* the array of physiological responses associated with it. He uses the image of a lock and key, to describe how our emotional apparatus is primed to respond to features in our environment, should we encounter them.[22] It is a metaphor which recalls Lutterbie's comment on embedded cognition, 'we cannot escape our dependence on the environment' (1.5). In James's account, the emotional process begins with the perception of an 'interesting' or 'exciting' fact. This 'key' unlocks the 'bodily disturbances' that constitute the emotion. He states that he is only interested in emotions that have a 'distinct bodily expression' and suggests that they have a characteristic pattern of 'disturbance', both within and without. He refers to these distinctive examples as 'standard' emotions.[23] This is one passage that prompts researchers to embark on a search for the physiological 'fingerprints' of specific emotions.

James's notion of 'standard' emotions, with their characteristic pattern of physiological 'disturbance', appears to support the case for BET. However, his account is complex and appraisal theorists might also cite James's authority. For example, James comments on the 'immense number of parts modified' by an emotional episode, whose permutations generate a seemingly infinite number of emotional shades and nuances. James infers it is futile to attempt categorization:

[22] James, 'What is an Emotion?', p. 191.
[23] Ibid., p. 189.

> …*any classification of the emotions is seen to be as true and as 'natural' as any other* […] and such a question as "What is the 'real' or 'typical' expression of anger, or fear?" is seen to have no objective meaning at all.[24]

This observation anticipates the question, do 'standard' or 'basic' emotions exist at all? Furthermore, he lays the groundwork for much later studies of the culturally specific dimension of emotions. He notes that the 'object', or cause, of shame varies according to the conventions of a particular social environment: 'ideas of shame, desire, regret, &c., must first have been attached by education and association to these conventional objects before the bodily changes could possibly be awakened'.[25] He concludes, therefore, that there is a category of emotions that cannot be innate, but must be learned.

Ribot's exploration of emotion memory has been widely discussed and remains a fertile area for research (5.2). Among many insights, he coined analytical terms that remain useful, such as his distinction between 'abstract' and 'concrete' emotion memory. The former denotes the recollection that a strong emotion was aroused and of the sensory details that surrounded the event. The latter refers to the full reproduction of the original physiological response, coupled with its subjective feeling.[26] His case studies, designed to investigate emotional memory, read like a description of an LSM acting class (6.3).

Ribot's study of emotion memory is not his sole contribution to the actor training theory of the twentieth century. His monism anticipates the notion of psychophysical acting and his

[24] James, 'What is an Emotion?', p. 331, italics in the original.
[25] Ibid., p. 195.
[26] Théodule Ribot, *The Psychology of the Emotions* (Walter Scott, 1897), pp. 160-66, hereafter *Psychology of the Emotions.*

analysis of the relationship between action and emotion is still instructive.[27] Ribot locates himself in the 'physiological' school, which views bodily events as the foundation for emotional experience, alongside James and the Danish physiologist, Carl Lange, among others.[28] The similarity between the work of Lange and James gave rise to the notion of the 'James-Lange' theory, although the two men never met.[29] Ribot regards the James-Lange contribution to the physiological school very highly, but distances himself from what he regards as their 'dualist' position. He rejects the idea of a causal relationship between bodily events and the subjective experience of emotion, because of the implied division between the two:

> *No state of consciousness can be dissociated from its physical conditions: they constitute a natural whole, which must be studied as such. Every kind of emotion ought to be considered in this way: all that is objectively expressed by movements of the face and body, by vaso-motor, respiratory, and secretory disturbances, is expressed subjectively by correlative state of consciousness, classed by external observation according to their qualities. It is a single occurrence expressed in two languages.*[30]

In short, events in the body cannot be separated from events in the psyche.

Ribot views the somatic and psychic dimension of emotion as a monist whole. Similarly, his account links action and emotion at a profound, microbiological level. He discusses the 'evolution of affective life', starting with what he calls the 'primitive' or 'simple' emotions, such as fear, anger and the 'affections', presumably referring to love and attachment to a person or thing. These emotions appear in early childhood and are innate and irreducible.

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[27] See, for example, Phillip B. Zarrilli, *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach after Stanislavski* (Routledge, 2009).
[28] Ribot, *Psychology of the Emotions,* p. vi. See also Carl G. Lange and William James, *The Emotions,* trans. by Istar A. Haupt, ed. by Knight Dunlap (Williams & Wilkins, 1922; repr. Hafner, 1967), p. 38.
[29] Whyman, *Stanislavsky System*, p. 60.
[30] Ribot, *Psychology of the Emotions*, pp. 111-12, italics in the original.

Ribot also discusses 'complex' or 'abstract' emotions, which are acquired in adulthood, including aesthetic, religious or moral sentiments.[31] At the deepest level of analysis, Ribot proposes that the attraction and repulsion of microorganisms constitutes the substrate for both simple and complex emotions. The life of feeling consists of a 'tendency' towards movement or arrest of movement. This tendency is 'synonymous with needs, appetites, instincts, inclinations, desires'.[32] His model suggests that the notion of action and emotion as separate entities is a false binary. They should, rather, be seen as an indissoluble whole, an idea pursued later in the twentieth century by theatre artists and scientists, such as Stanislavsky and Frijda (2.6, 5.4).

2.3 The BET-AT Debate: Key Developments

Damasio, remarks that, in the light of the work of Darwin, James and others, the scientific world seemed poised for an investigation of emotion at the end of the nineteenth century. However, he argues that this large-scale investigation did not happen until the end of the twentieth century.[33] Similarly, LeDoux states that emotion was largely ignored by neurology and cognitive science. He observes that the 'new science of the mind' dealt only with thinking and reasoning, not the emotions. Nevertheless, he charts a post-Jamesian history of psychological and physiological studies that were exceptions to the rule.[34]

[31] Ibid., pp. 1-22, 98.
[32] Ibid, p. 2.
[33] Antonio Damasio, *Descartes Error* (Vintage, 2006), pp. xv-xvi, hereafter *Descartes.*
[34] LeDoux, *Emotional Brain*, pp. 24-25, 22-72.

LeDoux's account of the BET-AT debate begins with Walter Cannon's celebrated riposte to the James-Lange theory. Cannon's discoveries undermine some of the core assumptions underpinning BET, particularly the idea that patterns of physiological response distinguish emotions. He acknowledged the impact of James-Lange, but argued that developments in physiology demanded an updating or expansion of their theoretical position.[35] He cites experiments by Sherrington and himself that involved cutting the spinal cords and vagus nerves of dogs and cats. This procedure disrupts the animals' sympathetic nervous systems, the subdivision of the ANS responsible for emergency response, such as the 'fight or flight' mechanism (1.7). The dissection has the effect of cutting off feedback from the peripheral nervous system to the brain. Nevertheless, Cannon found the disconnection from visceral changes did not affect the animals' emotional expression. In addition to questioning the role of peripheral feedback, Cannon argued that visceral response was too general to be linked to specific emotions. Overall, he argued that the James-Lange peripheral feedback theory was incomplete.[36]

From an acting perspective, it is interesting to note Cannon's discussion of two contrasting brain regions implicated in emotional processes. Both have a variety of functions, but the cerebral cortex deals with conscious and deliberate activity, while the thalamus relays sensory and motor signals to the cortex.[37] Cannon remarks that 'a purely cortical mimicry of emotional expression without thalamic involvement would be as cold and unaffective as

[35] Walter Cannon, 'The James-Lange Theory of Emotions: A Critical Examination and an Alternative Theory', *The American Journal of Psychology*, 39 (1927), pp. 106-124, hereafter 'James-Lange Theory'.
[36] Cannon, 'James-Lange Theory', p. 120.
[37] Ananya Mandal, 'What is the Thalamus?', *News-Medical*, 22 December 2022 <https://www.news-medical.net/health/What-is-the-Thalamus.aspx> [accessed 1 June 2024].

some actors have declared it to be'. But he hints at a solution. Cannon suggests that cortical processes might activate the thalamus, thus bridging the gap between conscious and unconscious activity. If a 'typical emotional attitude' is added to this process, then 'under such circumstances the enacted emotion would have reality'.[38] From the perspective of at least one early twentieth-century scientist, the anti-emotionalist position seems unsatisfactory.

Schachter and Singer made a significant contribution to Appraisal Theory in the early 1960s, building on the work of both James and Cannon, in pursuit of a more satisfactory theory of emotion. In a paper published in 1962, they cite James's peripheral feedback theory and also note Cannon's observation that the same visceral states are associated with completely different emotions.[39] They set out to address two lines of enquiry prompted by their predecessors: is it possible to map physiological patterns onto specific emotions and how do cognitive and situational factors determine emotion? Their experimental design incorporated a suggestion of Cannon's, that if bodily changes were artificially induced, this might produce an emotion.[40] In particular, they set out to test the hypothesis that, in the event that there is no clear-cut explanation for physiological arousal, people would use appraisal of their own state plus external cues to interpret and label their emotions. The counter-intuitive results of their experiment are intriguing for both scientists and actors interested in methods of arousing or manipulating emotions.

[38] Cannon, 'James-Lange Theory', p. 121.
[39] Schachter and Singer, 'Determinants of Emotional State', p. 379.
[40] Ibid., pp. 113-14.

Volunteers were injected with either a placebo or adrenalin, which mimics sympathetic nervous system activity typical of emotional arousal. Participants were either informed, not informed or deliberately misinformed about the explanation for their ensuing bodily state. Subsequently, the participants were debriefed by a member of the experimental team or were asked to complete a questionnaire. Both activities were designed to provoke an emotional reaction. The team determined that participants had a very limited ability to interpret their own bodily states correctly, and that they were heavily dependent on situational cues to label the emotion they were feeling. They concluded that emotional response is partly visceral and partly the result of cognitive appraisal, thus synthesising the views of James and Cannon.

Actors might draw their own conclusions from Schachter and Singer's experiment. It demonstrates that the environment and other people are important sources of emotional stimulation. Furthermore, the investigators noticed that if there was no physiological arousal, participants did not recognise the experience as emotional. Similarly, in the Method tradition at least, theatrical 'truth' is defined as the presence or otherwise of physiological indicators of emotional response (6.1).

Schachter and Singer's research raised a methodological issue that had long-term implications for emotion science. If participants had such limited ability to 'diagnose' their own emotional states, how reliable was introspective methodology? It was a question that presaged a new phase of experimentation, that did not rely on self-report, but used new technology to measure emotion-related physiological change. The impetus for alternative

methods grew in the latter half of the twentieth century. LeDoux cites a number of notable contributions that both developed the BET-AT debate and reinforced methodological concerns. Like Schachter and Singer, Stuart Valins demonstrated a disassociation between autonomic arousal and subjective perception of emotion. During Valins's experiment, subjects listened to a sound that they were told was linked to their heart-rate, while looking at erotic photographs. The tempo of the sound varied, but not because of changes in heart-rate. The researchers were adjusting the tempo randomly. The subjects reported that their level of arousal increased, when the tempo increased, apparently deceived by the false feedback.[41] Robert Zajonc found comparable evidence that emotional response can occur independently of cognition. Participants in his experiments expressed a preference for images that they were not consciously aware of having seen.[42] LeDoux explains the vital methodological issue raised by Valins's and Zajonc's investigation of the disassociation of conscious and autonomic processes: what use is self-report if important parts of the emotional process are not available to consciousness? Klaus Scherer challenges his peers in psychology to respond to these difficulties. He 'suggests that appraisal researchers turn to brain science to try to validate mechanisms that psychologists uncover'.[43] What Baum refers to as 'objective psychology' was about to enter a new era of possibilities. Psychologists and neurologists began to deploy a battery of new techniques to investigate emotional processes, including Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scans, Functional Magnetic

[41] LeDoux, *Emotional Brain*, pp., 48-49.
[42] Ibid., pp. 53-55. Zajonc referred to behaviour influenced by subliminal stimuli as the 'mere exposure effect'.
[43] Ibid., p. 67.

Resonance Imaging (fMRI) and measurements of hormone release.[44] LeDoux himself, among many others, answers Scherer's call, by applying the techniques of neurology to the study of emotions.

Most actors who are determined to produce a concrete emotional memory could find helpful insights in LeDoux's work, although some of his remarks indicate the scale of the challenge, rather than providing easy answers. He argues that conscious control over emotions is weak: 'we have little direct control over our emotional reactions. Anyone who has tried to fake an emotion, or who has been the recipient of a faked one, knows all too well the futility of the attempt'.[45] However, a more encouraging strand of thought, from the actor's point of view, is LeDoux's analysis of the 'Remembrance of Emotions Past', which reveals some neurological processes which underpin emotion memory and explain links between conscious, cortical processes and unconscious reactions mediated by the emotional apparatus.[46] In effect, LeDoux provides a biologically accurate explanation for some of Ribot's earlier discoveries and a potentially useful foundation for aspects of actor training.

LeDoux describes two ways that an emotion memory can be formed and two ways it can be evoked.[47] To summarise his account, it is first necessary to define briefly the terms he employs. Memory can be either 'implicit' (unconscious), or 'explicit' (conscious). It can be

[44] Positron Emission Tomography scans radioactive substances to generate three-dimensional image of the body and measure changes in metabolic processes. Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging measures blood flow as an indicator of which parts of the brain are activated when certain tasks are carried out.
[45] LeDoux, *Emotional Brain*, p. 19.
[46] Ibid., p. 179.
[47] Ibid., pp. 138-78.

short or long-term. Working memory is a type of short-term memory that can store and process a small number of items for a very limited time. To add Ribot's term, LeDoux explains how long-term, concrete emotional memories are created, using the example of the fear response.

According to LeDoux's account, fear is stored in the amygdala, which is located deep in the centre of the temporal lobes, close to the hippocampus.[48] An alarming sound, for example, can take a direct route from sensory reception, to thalamus, to amygdala, without pausing for an exact (cortical) identification of the stimulus, resulting in a virtually immediate physiological response. Alternatively, the chain of reactions can take a detour from the thalamus to the auditory cortex, where the sound is first identified, and then continues to the amygdala. This slightly slower process permits a considered reaction. However, both routes create an emotion memory that, if evoked by a present event or an act of the imagination, can generate a visceral response.

Once stored, emotion memory can be activated in two ways. To illustrate the first route, LeDoux cites the example of a person who has experienced a near-fatal collision. The sight of a car-crash immediately triggers the memory of their own experience. He refers to this as a 'primary' emotion memory.[49] Additionally, the conscious memory of an emotion-inducing experience, (an abstract memory in Ribot's terms), can stimulate a co-occurring activation of

[48] LeDoux is persuaded by the evidence that the amygdala retains fear-related memories, see *Emotional Brain*, pp. 200-04 and passim. Damasio agrees (*Feeling*, p. 62). Barret contests this conclusion, arguing that 'the amygdala is not the home of fear in the brain'. See *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain* (Pan, 2018), p. 20, hereafter *How Emotions Are Made*.
[49] LeDoux, *Emotional Brain*, p. 201.

the amygdala. LeDoux calls this indirect evocation of concrete memory 'secondary'. The primary and secondary routes can operate in tandem, with the latter stimulating the former. So, a 'full' or 'true' emotion memory can be stimulated in two, mutually-reinforcing ways. The first depends on implicit (unconscious) memory and engages the amygdala immediately. The second depends on explicit (conscious) memory and initially involves the hippocampus. They meet in working memory and generate a present conscious experience.[50] Using explicit memory to stimulate implicit emotional response is a procedure that is familiar in actor training and is thoroughly explored in the Method tradition (6.1, 6.2).

At this point in my survey of the BET-AT debate, it is unresolved. There are no immediately obvious means of reconciling the two perspectives: 'emotions are culturally conditioned' and 'emotions are rooted in specific anatomical features and biological processes'. LeDoux, for example, has identified patterns of hormone release and brain activation that are associated with specific emotions.[51] Physiology is, therefore, an inseparable part of the emotional experience. But few, if any, definitive patterns of physiological response have been discovered. The search for 'fingerprints' goes on. This strand of the argument will now pause, for an excursion beyond the limits of mainstream psychology.

2.4 Beyond the Core Binary I: Introspection and Psychoanalysis

In order to fully contextualize the practice discussed in Part Two, the next two sections digress from the contrary perspectives of Basic Emotion and Appraisal theory. I examine

[50] Ibid., pp. 200-04.
[51] LeDoux, *Emotional* Brain, pp. 45-49.

some synchronous developments in psychology that influenced actor training in the USA of the first half of the twentieth century. Conditioning theory does not engage with the BET-AT debate because it has little interest in emotional processes. Its specifically American branch, behaviourism, firmly rejected study of the life of the mind or notions of inner life (2.5). From its inception, Freud's psychoanalysis operated outside academic psychology, because of distrust of his methods and repugnance for some of his more controversial ideas. Historian Peter Gay suggests Freud and his work were marginalised in his native Austria, because of a combination of factors, not just rejection of his methods and ideas, but also an element of anti-Semitism.[52] Interestingly, notwithstanding the long history of critique of psychoanalysis, some contemporary neuroscientists actively seek to bridge the gap between Freud's theoretical model and embodied cognition.[53] However, from the point of view of this thesis, conditioning theory and psychoanalysis must be considered in parallel to the core binary.

Using terms derived from Baum's taxonomy, I propose that psychoanalysis and conditioning theory are at the extreme ends of introspective and objective methodology. Doubts about the reliability of self-report emerged in the middle of the twentieth century (2.3). However, psychoanalysis is doubly problematic, because the analysand does not describe conscious experiences, but seeks to provide clues about their unconscious mental activity which is, by definition, difficult to access. An additional complication is that any information supplied is

[52] *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (Random House, 1995), pp. 8, 293, hereafter *Freud Reader.*
[53] See, for example, Jaak Panksepp and Mark Solms, 'What is Neuropsychoanalysis? Clinically Relevant Studies of the Minded Brain', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 16.1 (2012), pp. 6 – 8, doi:10.1016/j.tics.2011.11.005; Giacomo Rizzolatti, Antonio Alberto Semi, Maddalena Fabbri-Destro, 'Linking Psychoanalysis with Neuroscience: The Concept of Ego', *Neuropsychologia*, 55 (2014), pp. 143-48, doi:10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2013.10.003.

subject to the analyst's interpretation, which might vary significantly from one practitioner to another.

However, Freud's introspective methodology was no barrier to extensive influence in a wide variety of fields, including advertising, philology, the history of culture, biology, sociology and aesthetics.[54] I review the evidence for Freud's influence on LSM in detail in Part Two (6.4). Here, I summarise a small selection of ideas from Freud's voluminous oeuvre.

A number of psychoanalytic terms and concepts are embedded in everyday English parlance, such as libido, repression, hysteria, neurosis and the Oedipus Complex. Freud's theory of mind is familiar to both specialists and a more general readership, at least in terms of its primary analysis of mind into Ego, Id and Superego. The complicated interaction between the three components of the Freudian model is beyond the scope of this thesis, so definitions here are necessarily simplified. Briefly, the ego is part of the conscious mind and has the capacity for 'coherent organization of mental processes'.[55] The Id represents the unconscious drive to satisfy basic needs. The Superego, which can be both conscious and unconscious, represents internalised morality. It seeks to control the expression of the Id.[56]

Freud identifies 'repression' as one of the core ideas of psychoanalysis, describing its features in a paper published in 1915.[57] The process of repression begins with an instinctive

[54] Gay, *Freud Reader*, p. xxii.
[55] Freud in Gay, *Freud Reader*, p. 630.
[56] Ibid., pp. 631-45.
[57] Ibid., pp. 569-72.

impulse emerging from the Id. The Superego judges this impulse to be unacceptable and supresses it, blocking its expression. Traumatic experience is one of the sources of repressed ideas, but not the only one. From the perspective of the Ego, repression is a form of self-defence, but one which comes with a high price. A continual expenditure of energy is required to maintain the suppression, a process known as 'cathexis'. It is both exhausting and unhealthy. Richard Hornby's characterisation of Strasberg's Method echoes psychoanalytic language: 'acting is basically a form of emotional release. Actor training is primarily a process of coming to know yourself, and of removing emotional inhibitions'.[58] In Freudian terms, Hornby suggests LSM can be seen as a process of bringing repressed memories to the surface and releasing the urges of the Id.

Wilhelm Reich is rarely mentioned in actor training literature. One of the few exceptions is a short discussion by Joseph Roach, who observes that 'systems of psychophysical improvement share the Reichian premise that the body has to be therapeutically liberated from the tensions and distortions that bind it'.[59] Similarly, acting teacher Peter McAllister mentions Reich briefly.[60] Here, I introduce a more detailed discussion of a neglected topic: Reich's theoretical and clinical innovations that have a bearing on LSM.

As a source of illumination about acting, Reich's work needs to be treated with some caution. If Freud has been marginalised by academic psychologists, then Reich is completely

[58] Richard Hornby, *The End of Acting: A Radical View* (Applause, 1992), p. 6.
[59] Joseph Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (University of Michigan Press, 1993), p. 219.
[60] Peter McAllister, 'Lee Strasberg's Method', *Stanislavski Studies*, 6.1 (2018) pp. 105-10 (p. 108), doi:10.1080/20567790.2018.1446410.

beyond the pale from a scientific perspective, especially where he attempted to move beyond his training in human anatomy and psychology. Among his more controversial ideas were the 'bion' particle, a hypothetical amoeba-like structure that constitutes a transitional phase between living and inert matter; attempts to manipulate the weather by inventing a machine designed to form and disperse clouds; and 'orgone energy', which Reich claimed was a universal energy manifested in temperature and the colour blue.[61] No less a figure than Albert Einstein was briefly interested in orgone energy, but quickly concluded it had no basis in science. Reich's eccentric ideas undermined his status as a scientist, but it was the 'orgone accumulator' that was his downfall. This box-like structure was built to concentrate orgone energy and Reich believed it had the capacity to treat serious illnesses, including cancer. It was also alleged to enhance 'orgastic potency', the uninhibited capacity for sexual expression that Reich believed was the key to psychological health. Such claims attracted the attention of the Federal Drugs Administration (FDA), which ordered Reich to discontinue the manufacture of accumulators. Reich refused and was jailed, dying in Lewisburg prison in 1957.[62]

Despite his ignominious ending, Reich had been a brilliantly promising medical student, whose investigation of therapeutic analysis resonates with LSM. He admired Freud all his life and built on his dynamic model of the unconscious, as well as the concepts of cathexis and repression. His efforts to extend the reach of psychoanalysis included clinical investigations

[61] See Myron Sharaf, *Fury on Earth: A Biography of Wilhelm Reich* (Da Capo, 1994), pp. 217-33 (bion particles), 379-80 (weather manipulation), 293-309 (Orgone Energy and the 'Orgone Energy Accumulator'). Hereafter, *Fury on Earth*.
[62] Sharaf, *Fury on* Earth, pp. 410-34, 468-77.

of a widespread preoccupation in his field: the manifestation of neurosis in body and behaviour. He also explored the connection between psychology and physiology, in an attempt to establish a biological basis for psychoanalysis. Myron Sharaf provides some examples of his therapeutic work. One patient adopted a supercilious stance, as if he were an English Lord. Reich notes that 'his behavior, no matter what was its origins, protected him against violent emotions'. He called this phenomenon 'character armour'.[63] Reich concluded that character traits could be used defensively to 'bind' emotions, especially anxiety.

Another concept of interest to both therapists and actor trainers is that of 'body armour'. In a case study of a masochistic man, Reich detected a link between psychic and somatic disturbance. In this case, a connection between childhood punishment and a pain in the pelvic area, disrupting normal sexual function.[64] In Reich's terminology, muscular tension linked to painful or embarrassing childhood experiences is called 'body armour'. Character armour, combined with muscular spasms, blocks the free expression of emotion. Therefore, 'armour' is an enemy to both psychoanalyst and actor trainer. For the therapist, it prevents the patient from living an emotionally full and satisfying life. For the pedagogue, it prevents the actor from accessing a full palate of emotional expressivity in their professional life.

In view of the theory of 'armour', it is understandable that Reich decided to use a form of therapeutic massage. However, his choice was highly controversial because it necessitated a

[63] Reich in Sharaf, *Fury on Earth,* p. 177.
[64] Sharaf, *Fury on Earth*, pp. 180-82.

departure from psychoanalytic method. His approach involved making direct eye contact with patients and touching them physically, especially in the facial area. He applied pressure to areas of muscular tension to 'release' the trauma stored there, often stimulating intense sobbing. He violated another psychoanalytic taboo, when he asked patients to strip to their underwear or until they were completely naked.[65] The purpose was to see and feel the body more clearly, but left him open to accusations of sexual impropriety. Strasberg was never accused of demanding students remove their clothes, but forms of massage are certainly included in the relaxation phase of LSM. Further parallels between Reich's clinical practice and Method training are analysed in Part Two (6.3).

2.5 Beyond the Core Binary II: Conditioning Theory and Behaviourism

Sonia Moore, the Belarusian-born actor, asserts a link between the KSS and two giants of Russian physiology, Ivan Pavlov and Ivan Sechenov.[66] During a discussion of the Method of Physical Actions, she posits that 'Pavlov and Sechenov confirmed the correctness of Stanislavski's thesis'.[67] Similarly, Strasberg insisted his mode of training was an example of conditioning theory rather than psychoanalysis: 'the emotional thing is not Freud, as people commonly think. Theoretically and actually, it is Pavlov'.[68] In the literature, there is some blurring of the distinction between different branches of conditioning theory. Sharon Carnicke, for example, argues that 'Russia's acting lore promoted the System's overstated

[65] Sharaf, *Fury on Earth*, pp. 24-25.
[66] A brief biographical summary is printed inside the front cover of Sonia Moore, *The Stanislavski System: The Professional Training of an Actor*, 2nd rev. edn (Penguin, 1984). See also p. 5.
[67] Sonia Moore, 'The Method of Physical Actions', *Tulane Drama Review*, 9.4 (1965), pp. 91-94 (p. 91), doi:10.2307/1125034.
[68] Lee Strasberg, 'Working with Live Material', *Tulane Drama Review*, 9.1 (1964), pp. 117-35 (p. 133).

link to behaviorism as common coin. The force of this linkage was so persuasive that the Method too assumes that this scientific heritage is accurate'.[69] Carnicke seems to be conflating Russian reflex theory, developed by Sechenov and Pavlov, with its specifically American variation, behaviourism. To avoid confusion in the discussion, this section seeks to clarify the basic distinctions between Palov's reflex theory, methodological behaviourism and radical behaviourism.

Pavlov's focus on measurable data and his use of animal experiments places his research into the category of both objective and comparative psychology (2.1).[70] The basic terms used in reflex theory can be explained using the example of his most famous experiment. Dogs spontaneously salivate in the presence of meat. This is known as an 'unconditioned response'. Pavlov's team repeatedly introduced an aural stimulus, immediately before feeding the animals. This sound was not, as is often supposed, a bell, but a beating metronome. Eventually, the dogs learned to associate the sound of the metronome with eating and began to salivate as soon as they heard it. This is known as the 'conditioned response'. This is the mode of learning, known as 'classical' or 'respondent' conditioning. It is frequently invoked as a guiding principle of Strasberg's approach (6.3).[71]

[69] Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, p. 163.
[70] I.P. Pavlov, *Conditioned Reflexes: An Investigation of the Physiological Activity of the Cerebral Cortex*, trans. by G.V. Anrep (Oxford University Press, 1927), pp. 16-32 (pp. 22-25).
See also Y.P. Frolov, *Pavlov and his School: The Theory of Conditioned Reflexes*, trans. by C.P. Dutt (Kegan Paul, 1937), pp. 49-54.
[71] For a succinct account of how Method training seeks to use conditioned learning, see Doug Moston, 'Standards and Practices', in *Method Acting Reconsidered: Theory, Practice, Future*, ed. by David Krasner (Palgrave, 2000), pp. 135-46 (p. 137).

Although the Method literature most frequently cites Pavlov, it is behaviourism that dominated American conditioning theory, a discipline whose core idea is that a science of behaviour is possible (6.3). Baum identifies John Watson as its founder.[72] In an article of 1913, Watson rejects introspection in favour of experimental method. He also distanced his work from comparative psychology, on the grounds that speculation about animal consciousness is anthropomorphic and unreliable.[73] Behaviourism can be subdivided into two branches, methodological and radical. Baum distinguishes between them in terms of the epistemology underpinning each branch. Methodological behaviourism is founded on 'realism', the assumption that there is an outer world that generates inner experiences. Knowledge of the outer world is 'objective' and knowledge of the inner world is 'subjective'. Radical behaviourism, developed by B.F. Skinner, depends on 'pragmatism', which 'makes no assumption of an indirectly known real world apart from our experience'.[74] Baum explains that it was Skinner who coined the term 'mentalism':

> Only methodological behaviorism accepts dualism (inner-outer or subjective-objective); the others all reject dualism as inimical to science. The approaches to mental terms—mind, belief, desire, impulse, and the like—vary. Methodological behaviorism accepts mental terms as referring to inner things and events, sometimes called "information processing." Skinner rejected mental terms as explanatory fictions and urged omitting them from scientific discourse.[75]

Skinner, then, asserts that any non-observable concepts that seek to describe or explain inner life cannot be studied by the means of behaviourist methodology. In this sense, radical behaviourism is the antithesis of psychoanalysis, its polar opposite in philosophy and methodology. Similarly, it is difficult to account for Stanislavskian practice in terms of the

[72] Baum, *Understanding Behaviorism*, pp. 8-10.
[73] John Watson, 'Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It', *Psychological Review*, 101.2 (1994), pp. 248-53.
[74] Baum, *Understanding Behaviorism*, p. 31.
[75] Ibid., p. 52.

radical behaviourist model, because it dispenses with a whole raft of terms routinely used in the studio, such 'will', 'intention', 'impulse' and 'spirit'.[76] Notwithstanding this apparent incompatibility, I incorporate Skinner's work in the argument, because of a key theoretical innovation, the idea of 'operant conditioning', which has a bearing on action and actor training.

Operant conditioning is a plausible model for learning in LSM, because it depends on action. Classical conditioning creates an association between a stimulus (the metronome) and an event (the arrival of meat). Operant conditioning creates an association between a specific action and outcome. In Skinner's term, if a particular behaviour renders specific consequences more or less likely, they are said to have a 'contingent' relationship. Contingencies can be 'positive' (making an outcome more likely) or 'negative' (making an outcome less likely). These behaviours can have positive or negative consequences, which are therefore described as 'reinforcers' or 'punishers'. For example, exam success is a reinforcer which has a positively contingent relationship with studying. It encourages 'studying behaviour'. Falling in a freezing pond is a punisher, that discourages the positively contingent behaviour of walking on ice. How far conditioning theory can be applied to the practice of LSM is discussed further in Part Two (6.3).

[76] Pitches positions Psychoanalysis and Behaviourism as conflicting schools of thought in *Science and Stanislavsky*, see pp. 87 and 97. Interestingly, he detects a Newtonian principle underpinning both these branches of psychology. He argues they are both examples of determinism.

2.6 Nico Frijda: Emotion in Action

The discussion in this section introduces the first of a series of perspectives that bring the BET-AT debate into the present and provide updated views on emotion science that illuminate acting practice. Like Ribot, Nico Frijda conceives emotion and action as two aspects of a unified process. His analysis, however, is far more detailed, focusing on the function of emotion. Among Frijda's key ideas are the concepts of 'action readiness' and 'action tendency'. He associates action readiness with mood, seen as an embodied state, priming us for action but without a definite aim. Action tendency, on the other hand, is emotion that is focussed on an objective.[77] Frijda may have Ribot in mind, when he discusses his own use of 'appraisal' and 'concern'. Concerns give events their emotional meaning. Appraisal determines if an event helps or harms our concerns. If it does, the function of emotions is to 'safeguard those concerns'. He echoes Ribot's language when he notes that the equivalents to his concept of 'concerns', in other emotion theories, are 'motives, needs, strivings, desires, and major goals' (2.2).[78] The psychological terminology reads like a precise equivalent of the lingua franca of the rehearsal room, such as 'objectives', 'tasks' or 'intentions'.

Frijda posits that emotions are 'lawful', in the sense that they are governed by identifiable principles, but not in a simple deterministic sense; they are lawful in a manner that allows for considerable irregularities and idiosyncrasies.[79] Frijda identifies nine laws in total. The

[77] Nico Frijda, *The Laws of Emotion* (Psychology Press, 2017), pp. 26-30, hereafter *Laws*.
[78] Ibid., p. 123.
[79] Frijda, *Laws*, pp. 1-19.

selection below identifies Frijda's understanding of appraisal and highlights the relevance of the laws to actor training.

One: The Law of Situational Meaning
Appraisal is the spontaneous assessment of the meaning of an emotion-eliciting event, which determines the subjective response. Since the interpretation of comparable events can vary widely depending on the circumstances, the same or similar instances can provoke different reactions in different individuals, or in the same individual at different times. For the same reason, actors have an almost infinite number of options when interpreting the same role.
Two: The Law of Concern
Emotions can only arise when a situation is appraised to affect the interests of the individual. Actors in rehearsal recreate this process by exploring what is of crucial importance to their characters and learning to adopt their point of view. They may, perhaps, deploy Stanislavsky's 'if', and pose the question, what would I care about, if I were in these circumstances?[80]
Three: The Law of Apparent Reality
Of particular interest to artists, this law dictates that emotions are elicited by events whose meanings are appraised as real, as well as those that occur in reality. The intensity of response corresponds to the extent of the belief. So, the fictive nature of drama, novels and painting does not necessarily inhibit their emotional impact. Following, for example, James, Schachter and Singer, Frijda hypothesises that events are experienced as emotionally real when they alter bodily states. There is a clear parallel between Frijda's third law and Stanislavsky's emphasis on the importance of 'belief and the sense of truth'. In the system, belief in imaginary circumstances is one of the elements that create the conditions for 'experiencing' (5).
Four: The Laws of Change, Habituation, and Comparative Feeling

[80] Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work: A Student's Diary,* trans. and ed. by Jean Benedetti (Routledge, 2008), pp. 37-59, hereafter *AAW*.

Emotions are elicited not so much by the presence of favourable or unfavourable conditions, but by actual or expected changes in conditions. This seems to explain why, in order to maximise impact on an audience, dramatists, directors and actors are so preoccupied with surprise, turning points or 'events', defined as shifts in mood and tempo. Director Katie Mitchell, for example, makes extensive use of 'events' in her practice.[81]

Six: The Law of Conservation of Emotional Momentum

The impact of certain events never really wanes. Repetitive exposure can overwrite a memory to a degree, permitting 'extinction or habituation', but 'the emotional experiences tend to be fresh, as poignant and articulate as they were at the original occasion, or perhaps even more so'. It is a sobering reflection for the general public, but encouraging for actors who wish to exploit the potential of emotional memory.

Seven: The Law of Closure

'Closure' refers to the tendency of a person in the grip of an emotion to ignore the transience or relative importance of their current state. Strong emotion does not admit of doubt and demands action. Frijda cites a Shakespearean example of this phenomenon, also alluding briefly to acted emotion: 'virtual emotions are what an actor experiences. When playing Othello, he is not jealous; that is, his jealousy is gone when meeting Desdemona in the dressing room'. He suggests that 'virtual' emotion is subject to the Law of Closure, but is fleeting.

The Law of Closure has intriguing implications for the actor. Frijda asserts that any task governed by this law is given absolute priority, or 'control precedence'. Furthermore, this precedence is the 'essential feature of emotion', rather than autonomic arousal or subjective experience. What is particularly helpful to the performer, is that concentration is under conscious control, so an intense focus on a particular task can be reproduced at will. Moreover, this law suggests the actor need not be overly preoccupied with generating an emotion that is 'real', in the sense that it is accompanied by physiological response. This may or may not be detectable in the theatre. However, an

[81] Katie Mitchell, *The Director's Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre*, (Routledge, 2009), pp. 55-62.

intense focus on the execution of a task certainly would be. One implication of Frijda's argument, is that single-minded pursuit of a goal is likely to be interpreted by an audience as the product of strong emotion.
Eight: The Law of Care for Consequence
Notwithstanding law seven, not every impulse results in goal-oriented action. Contemplation of consequences and awareness of environment restrain expression. Actors might view this law in two ways. Actors working in the Method tradition may view any kind of inhibition as a hindrance to be overcome (2.4, 6.2). On the other hand, many actors would be familiar with constraint, not as a source of frustration, but as a productive tool, known in Stanislavskian practice as a 'counter action' or 'obstacle'.

2. Frijda's laws of emotion

Finally, Frijda's discussion of the 'principle of passion' supports the contention that emotion and action are not opposites and that to separate them is a false binary. 'Passion' is a word that is rarely used in emotion science, but it resonates with theatre scholars and makers. It arises involuntarily, it dictates actions designed to accomplish an aim, takes precedence over other considerations and resists interference. It frequently occurs in dramatic circumstances (both inside and outside the theatre), establishing, maintaining, terminating or decreasing a relationship to an object or event.[82] This is one reason why focus on on-stage partners is a productive approach in actor training. Other people and turning points in relationships are potent elicitors of emotional response.

[82] Frijda, *Laws*, p. 4.

2.7 Antonio Damasio: Emotion, Feeling and the Body Loop

Antonio Damasio's work demonstrates a broad range of cultural interests, beyond his neurological specialism. His drive to understand human experience transcends disciplinary boundaries, so it is not surprising that his research has uncovered ideas that are of interest to artists. A typical example is his use of a theatrical metaphor to introduce one of the core themes of *The Feeling of What Happens*, the traffic between the unconscious and conscious. A performer waits in the darkness of the wings, on the verge of stepping into the bright lights of the stage, moving, as it were, from the obscurity of unconsciousness to the brightness of consciousness.[83] He is intrigued by the efforts of both Freud and artists to explore this largely inaccessible territory, 'a most interesting tension is at play here: very conscious creators consciously seek the unconscious as a source and, on occasion, as a method for their conscious endeavors'.[84] How to navigate the boundary between these two realms is a preoccupation for both actors and scientists.

Damasio's emphasis on the survival function of emotion, and the importance of somatic feedback to the experience of subjective feelings, places him in the tradition of Darwin and James. He remarks that 'modern research entirely supports' James's best-known idea, that perception of a stimulus causes a response in the body, and the feeling of those changes constitute the emotion (2.2). However, he also points out some shortcomings in James's account, addressed by subsequent researchers, particularly his failure to distinguish between emotion and feeling and his neglect of the role of appraisal.[85]

[83] Damasio, *Feeling*, pp. 3-5.
[84] Damasio, *Self*, p. 177-78.
[85] Antonio Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind* (Vintage, 2012), pp. 114-16, hereafter *Self.*

Damasio does not explicitly endorse BET, but he routinely uses basic emotion terms and argues that emotions have characteristic patterns of physiological response. For instance, he explains the impact of fear on the body. An object that is perceived as threatening activates certain brain regions that invoke the fear response. This alters heart rate, blood pressure, respiration, gut contraction, facial muscles and hormone release. Cortisol is secreted into the bloodstream and changes the metabolic profile of the organism, in preparation for extra energy consumption, such as fight or flight. This example illustrates what Damasio means by an 'emotional cascade'. Such reactions prepare the body for an appropriate response to an event, but they disrupt the optimal functioning of the organism and are expensive in terms of energy consumption.[86]

In everyday life, including the rehearsal room, the terms emotion and feeling are often used interchangeably. Damasio offers a more precise conceptual framework on three levels. His distinctions between emotion, conscious and unconscious feeling provide a biologically grounded language for discussing emotion in science and the arts. He reserves the term 'state of emotion' for the cascade of bodily responses triggered automatically by an 'emotionally competent stimulus', which might be an external object or an internal image.[87] Both the perception of the stimulus and the ensuing cascade can happen non-consciously. So, a 'state of feeling' can occur on a non-conscious level. It is perfectly possible for a non-conscious awareness of the emotion to shape behaviour. Finally, the feelings stimulated by

[86] Ibid., pp. 113-14.
[87] Antonio Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain* (Harcourt, 2003), p. 53; Damasio, *Feeling*, pp. 68-69.

the emotional response can rise to consciousness.[88] It is this third level of response that determines the conscious, qualitative experience of 'emotion'.

Damasio touches on the topic of emotion memory when he coins the term 'somatic marker'. This refers to the sensation caused by the memory of an experience which guides decision-making in the present. Again, we can respond to the somatic marker whether it is perceived consciously or unconsciously.[89] For example, we might encounter a stranger whose behaviour reminds us of someone who has mistreated us in the past. Their presence revives uncomfortable feelings associated with previous experiences, so we instinctively avoid them, without ever making a conscious connection between the two people.

I draw on one further idea of Damasio's to develop an original element of the thesis, a new model for acted emotion. To lay the groundwork for this idea, it is first necessary to summarise Damasio's concept of the 'body loop'. This term describes the process of an emotional episode, which begins when the organism apprehends an object as an inducer of emotion. The inducer activates one or more of the somatosensory systems. For example, the visual cortex, which then generates an image in the brain. The brain appraises this image according to both innate and conditioned responses. The neural sites that 'retain an interest' in this type of object are then activated. These sites send signals both to other parts of the brain and to what Damasio calls the 'body proper', outside the brain. These messages are carried by chemical signals in the bloodstream and electrochemical signals in

[88] Damasio, *Feeling*, p. 37.
[89] The somatic marker hypothesis is most full described in Damasio, *Descartes*, pp. 165-201.

the neural system, and alter the metabolism. These bodily changes are in turn represented in the brain, thus completing the 'body loop'.[90]

Crucially for this thesis, Damasio also proposes a second mechanism, the 'as-if' body loop, which he elucidates with a performance metaphor. He conceives of the body as a 'Theater of the Emotions', with the brain as its captive audience.[91] To elaborate Damasio's image, the 'actors' can convince the brain that the body is in the throes of an emotional experience, even without the full cascade of physiological response. The evolutionary advantage of such a mechanism is that it conserves energy vital to the survival of the organism. Barrett also discusses tactics used by the brain to preserve energy, which she refers to as 'body-budgeting' (2.8). Damasio's idea echoes the language and principle of the 'magic if', routinely referred to in actor training. It also provides the foundation for a key contention in the argument. I propose a synergy between Damasio's 'as-if' body loop and Vakhtangov's notion of 'Affective Emotion', a new model for acting theory which I call Scenic Emotion (3.6). It is a convergence of neurology and acting theory that offers a healthy route to experiencing life-like emotion in performance: it helps explain how theatre actors can avoid exhaustion from repeated performances night after night and can enjoy playing tragic emotions.

[90] Damasio, *Feeling*, 68-69.
[91] Damasio, *Descartes*, pp. 155-58.

2.8 Lisa Feldman Barrett: A Challenge to the Orthodoxy

Barrett's work constitutes a robust challenge to many of the assumptions of BET. It simultaneously has implications for actor education, particularly the widespread belief that emotions are beyond our control.[92] This basic tenet of conservatoire training promotes the idea that emotions are difficult to arouse. It is the reason that teachers frequently encourage their students to 'leave their emotions alone' and focus on action. This section considers some of the ways that Barrett's insights undermine both sets of assumptions.

Barrett reframes the BET-AT debate in terms of what she calls the 'classical' and 'constructionist' positions. On the one hand, 'classicists' are rooted in evolutionary theory and espouse the position pioneered by James-Lange, that bodily feedback plays a critical role in the emotional process. Classicists also accept the idea of universal emotions and embark on efforts to identify them by their physiological signature, or 'fingerprint'. Constructionists argue that, rather than emotions arising from innate processes and identifiable brain structures, they are constructed according to the emotion concepts prevalent in a particular culture and the meaning attributed to what Damasio calls the 'emotionally competent stimulus' (2.7).

Barrett's attack on the BET-classical position begins with an historical review that re-examines some of the territory discussed by LeDoux (2.3). Firstly, she questions scholars who seek to enlist Darwin and James as supporters of the classical view. For example, she

[92] Scientific authority for this view is readily available. See, for example, James, *Briefer*, pp. 328-29 and LeDoux, *Emotional Brain*, p. 19. Damasio's three-level model of emotion and feeling demonstrates how little of the emotional process is under our conscious control (2.7).

suggests that Darwin did not propose that emotions have an evolutionary purpose. She attributes this claim to a misinterpretation by Floyd Allport, a psychologist active in the first part of the twentieth century. Rather than asserting the utility of emotional expression, Barrett points out that Darwin repeatedly wrote the opposite, 'that smiles, frowns, eye-widening, and other expressions were useless, vestigial movements – products of evolution that no longer serve a function'.[93] It is easy to find similar examples, but the name of Darwin's first principle, the 'principle of serviceable associated Habits', points strongly toward a functional account of emotional expression.[94] Barret also offers a critique of Darwin himself, on the basis that he made a fundamental error: while he demolished essentialism in biology, he failed to apply the same principle to his account of emotional expression.[95]

In a comparable challenge to BET orthodoxy, Barrett asserts that the philosopher John Dewey wrongly attributed a belief in emotional fingerprints to William James. As noted above, the debate between James and his critics launched countless investigations to find such physiological patterns (2.3). But, as Barrett has remarked, the results have been disappointing: 'despite tremendous time and investment, research has not revealed a consistent bodily fingerprint for even a single emotion'.[96] In short, this research effort has monopolised vast resources and produced minimal results.

[93] Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, p. 165.
[94] Darwin also discusses dogs that move in circles, as if creating a hollow in the dust or grass to sleep in. In a bed or on a hard surface, the action, of course, makes no difference. Similarly, a drop of clean water stimulated a kitten to engage in a 'cleaning up' gesture, scraping backwards with its paws. The examples illustrate animals retaining behaviour beyond its original utility. See *Expression of Emotion*, pp. 27-49.
[95] Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, pp. 152-66.
[96] Ibid., p. 15.

Barrett contends that, while the case for the BET-classical argument has been overstated, the appraisal-constructionist position has been underrated. She suggests that the considerable body of research, dating from the mid-twentieth century, that challenged the notion of fingerprints was marginalised, because it lacked a fully-formed theory to replace the classical view. She refers to this body of work as the 'lost chorus'.[97] However, she argues that the discovery of the brain's capacity for 'simulation' in the late 90s paved the way for a sea-change, and that psychology and neuroscience are moving away from the search for emotional fingerprints, towards theories of constructed emotion.[98]

Barrett offers an explanation for the widespread belief in basic emotions in terms of energy conservation. As noted above, it is a topic of shared interest with Damasio, which she refers to as 'body budgeting' (2.7). Actors too have a keen interest in energy preservation, because of the exhausting business of acting daily on stage, or during long stints on a film set. Barrett explains that the brain's capacity is not infinite and neuronal activity is energy-intensive, so we need strategies for managing the gigantic volume of sensory data that comes our way every day.[99] One method of conserving brain energy is by grouping together similar objects in a process known as 'statistical learning'. This means the identification of patterns and using learned concepts to categorize the phenomena we encounter.

[97] Ibid., pp. 172-73.
[98] Ibid., pp. 1-22.
[99] Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, pp. 113-16.

Barrett points out that concepts frequently link very disparate objects. So 'things that fly' includes space ships, helicopters, eagles, paper aeroplanes, wasps and balls struck by bats.[100] The implication is that, although various objects might be linked by their function or other property, the instances vary so widely they cannot be said to belong to the same category in objective reality. However, human brains have evolved to organise data in conceptual categories and emotions are no exception to this rule. This explains why the notion of basic emotions has arisen and might be seen as the 'common sense' view.[101] But like many common-sense views, according to Barrett, it has no basis in science.[102] Her account calls for a radically different way for actors (and others) to view emotion, as a construction of their own brains driven by statistical learning.

If emotion concepts are constructed and do not exist in reality, then it follows that 'universal emotions' and their 'fingerprints' must be a myth.[103] Instances of 'anger', for example, are not reliably duplicated across cultures in terms of visceral response, mode of expression and situated meaning. She asserts that *all* the studies that make a case for universality are methodologically flawed: 'there is very little doubt that emotion words have a powerful influence in experiments, instantly casting into doubt the conclusions of *every study ever*

[100] Ibid., p. 91.
[101] Another 'common-sense view' with no basis in science is the notion that colour is an essential property of external objects. Varela and others discuss colour as a paradigmatic example of embodied cognition, arguing that it is neither an inherent property of the objective world, nor the manufactured product of the human brain. It is generated by interaction with the environment. See Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (MIT Press, 1991), pp. 157-71.
[102] Although Barrett insists that emotions do not have an objective existence independent of perception, neither does she regard them as illusions. They have what she calls 'social reality'. See *How Emotions Are Made*, pp. 128-51.
[103] Ibid., pp. 42-55.

performed that used the basic emotion method'.[104] She proposes that such projects do not demonstrate the existence of basic emotions, they simply provide evidence that researchers can inadvertently teach Western emotion concepts to people from diverse cultures. Arguably, actors usually function in a specific theatrical environment, and therefore share both language and emotion concepts with their audience. In this sense, they need not be unduly disturbed by Barrett's critique of the notion of universality. However, in an increasingly diverse society, one implication for actors, directors and trainers is that BET alone cannot provide a comprehensive theory of life emotion.

The idea that perhaps requires the greatest shift for actor trainers is Barrett's conception of emotion as a construction of the brain rather than something that 'happens' to us. Rather than being an inevitable response to external stimuli, emotion is seen as a continual process of active construction of experience: the 'brain is predictive, not reactive'.[105] Her own robustly anti-essentialist account begins with the haunting image of the brain 'entombed in a dark, silent box'.[106] The only way the brain can know the external world is by using interoception and sensory input to gather clues about what is going on. It is engaged in a continuous process of simulation, consisting of dreams, daydreams, imagination, mind-wandering and reveries. The function of simulation is to fill in any gaps in the brain's representation of the world and make sense of our experience. In other words, the pictures in our heads do not necessarily reflect exactly what is happening in external reality.

[104] Ibid., p. 52, italics in the original.
[105] Ibid., p. 154.
[106] Ibid., p. 58.

According to Barrett, the brain's intrinsic activity is to make predictions, that are then tested against sensory input and adjusted: 'through prediction, your brain constructs the world you experience'.[107] Perception, cognition and emotion all operate in a comparable manner. The brain attributes a meaning to internal sensations experienced through interoception. Some of the resulting meanings are instances of emotion and the characteristic function of emotion is to determine the meaning of a situation and to select an appropriate action. [108] Like Ribot and Frijda, Barrett emphasizes that emotion co-exists with the impulse to action, confirming the bond between the two (2.2, 2.6).

Barrett concludes that this insight requires a shift of thought. We are not the victims of our emotions, we have agency. We must therefore take responsibility for our emotional expressions. The theory of constructed emotion 'gives you more control over your feelings and behavior than the classical view does, and it has deep implications for how to live your life. [….] You are an architect of your experience'.[109] Barret's reflections are in the context of an argument for ethical and responsible behaviour. She also does not entirely explain where conscious control ends and unconscious processes begin. But her model, which incorporates the notion of agency in emotional experience, suggests that the actor is not as powerless as some teachers might think. It is a rich source of fresh perspectives on actor training and a radical alternative to orthodox accounts, in the pursuit of a reliable definition of emotion.

[107] Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, p. 59
[108] Ibid., p. 67-68.
[109] Ibid., p. 152.

2.9 Are Basic Emotions 'Natural Kinds'?

Barrett's position is counter-intuitive, but persuasive. At the same time, the claim that emotions can be entirely disassociated from specific brain regions and some frequently occurring patterns of response is contradicted by the findings of several contemporary neurologists. Arne Ohman and Stefan Wiens, for example, marshal clinical evidence that points to a specialised neural circuit for fear housed in the amygdala, which they call a 'module'.[110] As noted above, LeDoux also specialises in the study of fear, investigating the activation of amygdala and thalamus (2.3).[111] Damasio reports other patterns of neural activation: 'sadness consistently activates the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, hypothalamus and brain stem, while anger and fear activate neither the prefrontal cortex nor hypothalamus'. The amygdala is involved in the fear response, but has 'little interest in recognizing or learning about disgust or happiness'.[112] This body of work suggests that the notion of a one-to-one connection between a particular brain region and specific perceptual, cognitive or emotional processes is archaic. Nevertheless, neurons are not infinitely plastic and not all brain regions are involved in all processes.

It would be unwise for an arts scholar to challenge a scientist on their own territory. But there is some scope for a tentative critique of some of Barrett's reasoning. One example of statistical learning and categorization that she discusses in detail is the concept of the 'Golden Retriever'. She proposes that it is a human construction founded on 'a statistical

[110] Arne Ohman and Stefan Wiens, 'The Concept of an Evolved Fear Module and Cognitive Theories of Anxiety', in *Feelings and Emotions: The Amsterdam Symposium,* ed. by Antony Manstead, Nico Frijda and Agneta Fischer (Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 58-80.
[111] LeDoux, *Emotional Brain*, pp. 141-48, 200-04.
[112] Damasio, *Feeling*, pp. 61-62.

summary of many diverse dogs'.[113] It is easy to accept that, within a conceptual category, there will be significant variation, and that the ideal Golden Retriever probably does not exist. However, Barrett's account is less clear on why we include one dog in this category and not another. Presumably there must be some properties or criteria by which a single instance is either included or excluded. Barrett does concede that it may be possible to generate a prototype from diverse instances, even if we have never seen a perfect example.[114] However, to apply the analogy to the issue of emotion, the question remains, what is it that prompts us to group all the diverse instances of anger, for example, if they have no common features? Barrett hints at an answer with reference to situational factors rather than shared properties. Her discussion recalls Varela, Thompson and Rosch's analysis of embodied cognition, particularly the enacted and embedded dimensions (1.3, 1.5). The experience of receiving a real or imagined wound, and feeling the impulse to strike back, would be widely recognised as 'anger'.[115] Similarly, instances of sadness might be connected by 'the loss of something valued'. I propose that it is the prototypical situation that unites the diverse instances. The actors' exploration of the situation might usefully include testing many different possible responses to anger and, in particular, the 'goal selection' of the character, i.e. the chosen course of action in response to the emotion.

Reconciling the two perspectives discussed in this chapter, in pursuit of a relatively stable and comprehensive definition of emotion, is a significant challenge. But some experts in the field suggest that it is a task that needs to be attempted. Robert Levenson, a specialist in

[113] Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made*, p. 159.
[114] Ibid., pp. 88-89
[115] Ibid., pp. 112-13.

psychophysiology and affective neuroscience, argues that the extremes of either pole in the binary debate are unsatisfactory. He asserts that the two positions, 'every emotion is autonomically unique' and 'every emotion is autonomically the same', are equally absurd and untenable.[116] Linguist Anna Wierzbicka, who specialises in comparative studies of emotion, comes to a similar conclusion:

> There is no real conflict between the view that human feelings can be "embodied" and have a biological dimension and the view that they are "socially constructed" and have a cultural dimension. There is also no real conflict between a recognition of cross-cultural differences in the area of "emotions" and a recognition of similarities.[117]

One proposal for resolving the BET-AT debate is offered by philosophers Andrea Scarantino and Paul Griffiths, who discuss whether emotions can be considered 'natural kinds'. Natural kinds are scientific categories that reflect the structure of the external world.[118] From a human perspective, emotions are obviously not part of the external world, but they might have properties that exist independently of human construction. Scarantino and Griffiths argue that basic emotion theorists must abandon an essentialist position: properties of specific emotions cannot be regarded as stable in all circumstances, like the atomic structure of gold. They suggest that in the biological sciences, a more appropriate model is Richard Boyd's 'homeostatic property cluster' (HPC): 'if a set of properties cluster together more or less reliably because of one or more causal homeostatic mechanisms, then the objects that

[116] Robert Levenson, 'Autonomic specificity and emotion', in *Handbook of Affective Sciences,* ed. by Richard J. Davidson, Klaus R. Scherer and H. Hill Goldsmith (Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 212-224 (p. 212).
[117] Anna Wierzbicka, *Emotions Across Languages and Cultures: Diversity and Universals* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 306.
[118] Alexander Bird and Emma Tobin, 'Natural Kinds', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2024, ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2024/entries/natural-kinds/> [accessed 04.06.24].

exhibit that cluster of properties are members of an HPC natural kind'. [119] Here, 'homeostasis' is used in a specialised sense, to indicate the mechanisms which bring about the frequent co-occurrence of a set of properties, rather than the maintenance of a stable internal milieu in the human body (1.7).

Whether the application of Boyd's HPC model to emotions is valid is a matter of ongoing dispute in the philosophy of science. Neuroscientist, Joachim Lipski, for example, mentions Barrett, Scarantino and Griffiths in a discussion of emotion as a natural kind. He links the misconstrual of HPC theory to the debate about whether emotion categories are rooted in distinct mechanisms in the body and brain.[120] It is a complex discourse that is outside the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, the HPC appears to be a useful model for understanding the emotional process, at least from the actor's perspective. It helps explain why instances of anger and sadness, for example, can be astonishingly varied, in terms of eliciting event, interpretation of emotional response, modes of expression and resulting actions. Factors governing this wide range of possible manifestations include both cultural differences and neurodiversity.[121] Nevertheless, frequently recurring properties may unite these diverse instances, such as activation of specific brain regions, situational factors and expressions

[119] Andrea Scarantino and Paul Griffiths, 'Don't give up on Basic Emotions', *Emotion Review,* 3.4 (2011), pp. 444-54 (p. 445).
[120] Joachim Lipski, 'Natural Diversity: A Neo-Essentialist Misconstrual of Homeostatic Property Cluster Theory in Natural Kind Debates', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A*, 82 (2020), pp. 94-103 (pp. 99-100), doi:10.1016/j.shpsa.2020.01.011.
[121] Damian Milton explains one such example, that of the 'double empathy problem'. Milton critiques the tendency to pathologize autism as a deficit in 'theory of mind'. He argues that it is not just autistic people who struggle to read the emotions of non-autistic people, but that the converse is also true. There is an empathy deficit on both sides, so comprehending each other's experience is difficult. See Damian E.M. Milton, 'On the Ontological Status of Autism: The 'Double Empathy Problem', *Disability & Society*, 27.6 (2012), pp. 883-87, doi:10.1080/09687599.2012.710008; Damian Milton, 'The Double Empathy Problem', *National Autistic Society*, 2 March 2018 <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/professional-practice/double-empathy> [accessed 29 May 2025].

typical of a particular culture. So, basic emotion terms remain useful, whether they are understood as HPC natural kinds or examples of what Barrett calls 'social reality' (2.8).

This review of the BET-AT binary concludes that biological patterns cannot be ignored, but neither can the demonstrable variation in emotional concepts, language and expression across cultures and individuals. Therefore, a synthesis of BET and AT seems to reflect current thinking. This conclusion can be placed in an evolutionary frame. Phylogeny, the development of the species, equips humans with sets of tools for rapid appraisal of and response to challenges in our environment. However, these systems are open to ontogenetic and cultural variation, in other words, factors specific to the individual and their social context. A workable definition of emotion requires BET and AT to mesh.

2.10 Emotion: Towards a Working Definition

Emotions are the product of innate biology and cultural conditioning working in tandem. They straddle both unconscious and conscious processes. They can be triggered by an external object or internal image, sometimes known as an 'inducer' or 'emotionally competent stimulus'. In acting terms, 'trigger' is probably the most accessible and frequently used term.

If we perceive an object as relevant to our interests, with implications for our survival needs, then that perception initiates a cascade of reactions. The trigger might be a threat, or an opportunity for food, comfort or reproduction. This assessment is very fast and does not take place at a conscious level. The brain immediately generates a neural 'map' of the

inducer and this representation initiates sets of responses that prepare the body for appropriate action. The brain activates these systems by sending both chemical neurotransmitters via the bloodstream and electrical signals via the nervous system. These changes transform the internal milieu, including hormone release, muscle tone, breathing, heart-rate and skin conductance. The changes are then 'reported back' to the brain by means of interoception, completing an internal feedback loop. Again, the interoceptive report can take place unconsciously, but when it becomes conscious, the feeling of what has happened in the body constitutes the qualitative experience of the emotion. There is theoretical support for the idea of a second feedback mechanism, the 'as-if' body loop. The brain simulates the emotional experience, even though the associated visceral changes have barely been activated.

From the point of view of the mechanics of the process, the subjective 'flavour' of the emotion is its least important dimension, although it is probably the aspect that most preoccupies the individual. This suggests that the actor need not be overly self-critical if they are not 'feeling it'. The purpose of the visceral changes is to prompt action designed to adjust our environment in response to the inducer. Therefore, the actor can recreate a very significant part of the actual emotional process by focussing on effecting change in their fictional environment and, in particular, having an impact on the on-stage partner(s). Action is not a substitute for emotion or the 'real thing', it is a visible aspect of the real thing.

The actor can construct goal-oriented actions on stage or screen that appear to be emotionally driven. In this sense, a preoccupation with one's own inner state is not

necessary to produce a convincing performance and may even be unhelpful. However, 'real' emotion, understood as emotion accompanied by a physiological response, is not irrelevant either. The visceral element of emotional response is automated, so not all its visible features can be reproduced at will. They are difficult, if not impossible, to fake. This can make a difference to a screen performance which might include detailed close-ups of, for instance, tears, blushing or goose-bumps. One of James's observations might give the actor encouragement, 'any voluntary arousal of the so-called manifestations of a special emotion ought to give us the emotion itself'.[122] It is a hint pursued later by Bloch (7.2, 7.3). The subjective feeling of emotion can also be a source of encouragement and motivation to the actor, strongly supporting their belief in the imaginary circumstances and commitment to the high stakes of the drama.

Phylogeny has equipped us with automated systems to deal with prototypical survival challenges. Rapid response has some obvious evolutionary advantages, but may result in an unhelpful and inappropriate response because of a failure to correctly appraise a situation. Therefore, we are also equipped by natural selection to learn a virtually infinite variety of nuanced responses appropriate for our own culture. The factors that condition these responses include individual disposition, biographical experiences, the emotional concepts shared by the society in which we live, our appraisal of the meaning of specific episodes and the etiquette governing expression of emotion in our culture. The multiple variables of an emotional episode means that it is highly unlikely any two instances will be identical,

[122] James, 'What is an Emotion?', p. 197.

although many common features may be discernible. These differences provide a fertile ground for the actor's exploration of the affective life of their character.

Although the process of constructing emotions described by Barrett is largely unconscious, she nevertheless argues that one implication of her model is that individuals must take more responsibility for their emotional choices. How we interpret situations and how we choose to manifest our responses is within our power. The implications for the actor are rather different. The constructionist model challenges a common conservatoire tenet, that emotion cannot be controlled and should be left alone. The actor may have more agency in their emotional life than some theories suggest.

Finally, it seems that energy conservation is a high priority for our inherited metabolism. This could explain why there are a number of examples of experiences which are closely related to emotions but are not characterised by the extreme expenditure of energy caused by the full-scale invocation of a somatic response. These include not just the 'as-if' body loop, but the cognitive recall of an emotional episode, the vicarious experience of a spectator of artistic activity and the phenomenon of acted emotion. In the next chapter, the thesis explores how the humanities have understood the concept of acted emotion, and searches for connections between scientific and artistic models.

CHAPTER THREE: WHAT IS ACTED EMOTION?

3.1 Emotion in the Theatre

I am standing on an open-air stage at Kenilworth Castle in Warwickshire. A large audience sits on deckchairs, blankets and camping stools 'out front'. I am playing Jaques in a touring production of *As You Like It*, approaching one of the most famous speeches in theatre, which begins, 'all the world's a stage'. Trees surround our playing area. The lush grounds of the castle stand in very well for the Forest of Arden.

I have decided to play the character as an intelligent but troubled man. I imagine him as something of a mouthpiece for Shakespeare himself, a character with a sense of humour, experience, erudition and no mean degree of courage, but also afflicted by a melancholy, prompted by his observation of an unkind world. He is a philosopher, with a dash of the clown in him, which is why he is so enamoured of Touchstone.

As a classically-trained actor, I have done my homework. I have worked on the iambic pentameter, clarity of diction, resonance and making a sensory connection with the text. Many years later, I heard the speech is decidedly unoriginal, because it is based on stock ideas of the Seven Ages of Man. But as an actor, my job is to 'new mint' the verse, as if I am improvising on the spot, to entertain the exiled court, without losing touch with the rhythm.

On this particular night, the theatre gods are with me. Instead of me playing the speech, I feel as if the speech is playing me. It drives me to a slightly manic conclusion:

Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, *sans* eyes, *sans* taste, *sans* everything.[1]

I feel a ripple in the audience. It is not a funny line at all, but the manner of delivery wins an appreciative laugh, although it is a complicated moment. The bleak vision at the end of the speech, as Jaques contemplates our inevitable decline, infuses the philosopher-clown's performance with a bittersweet quality that resonates throughout the audience.

The question is, what happened? One way to explain it would be to cite a fortunate conjunction of actor, character, text, location and audience mood. It is, perhaps, what Stanislavsky would have called 'experiencing' (5.3). In contemporary parlance, I was certainly 'in the moment'. And although I had an instant perception of our common mortality, a troubling thought for actor and audience alike, there was a feeling of joy too, of feeling intensely alive. Was that simply the satisfaction of doing the job well, or were there other emotions at play? The primary aim of this chapter is to strive to understand those moments on stage when the actor definitely feels something that seems to be related to the imaginary circumstances, but it is not quite the same as they would feel in life. The research question that guides this phase of the investigation is, what is acted emotion?

The strategy for developing a robust model of acted emotion recapitulates the methodology used in chapter two. Firstly, I identify and interrogate a key binary in the field, the opposition between the 'emotionalist' and 'anti-emotionalist' positions discussed by Archer

[1] Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. by Juliet Dusinberre (Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2006), II.7.164-67.

(1.2, 3.4). To recap briefly, emotionalists believe actors must feel what the character feels. Anti-emotionalists insist actors cannot and should not share the character's emotions, but must imitate them convincingly. I develop an argument comparable to that of Robert Levenson in relation to the BET-AT debate, which rejects the extremes at either end of the spectrum (2.9). I propose that the two contentions, 'the actor in performance feels nothing' and 'the actor's feelings are identical to the character's' are equally untenable, and that the dualism of the emotionalist-anti-emotionalist debate collapses under the weight of its nuances, complexities and contradictions. Therefore, to echo Lakoff and Johnson's expression, I propose a 'third way' in the search for a more satisfactory account of acted emotion (1.3).

The third way that I develop is a new theoretical model, which I call 'Scenic Emotion'. The term was first used by critic William Archer, but is redefined for the purposes of this thesis, drawing primarily on Damasio's concept of the 'as-if' body loop and Evgeny Vakhtangov's idea of 'affective emotion'. Connecting these two ideas, in order to account for the phenomenon of acted emotion, is a hypothesis endorsed by Damasio himself (3.7). I argue Scenic Emotion is a useful way to conceptualize the emotional component of actor training, because it has a secure biological foundation, it provides a healthy route to emotional arousal and it acknowledges the circumstances under which professional actors operate. A subsidiary aim of the chapter is to introduce a theme that is developed further in chapter four: a historical preoccupation with the notion of a *Science* of acting, conceived as an intellectual pursuit, intended to both increase understanding of the art and facilitate acting pedagogy (1.2).

The conundrum of acted emotion is one that preoccupied both Stanislavsky and Strasberg. Both turned to historical acting theory in search of a solution. According to Benedetti, in the summer of 1914, Stanislavsky investigated 'the opposition between what Shchepkin had called the actor of feeling and the actor of reason'.[2] Stanislavsky himself refers to these distinct approaches as '*the art of experiencing and the art of representation*'.[3] His search led him to a rich discourse that took place in the eighteenth century. His reading included the work of father and son actors, Luigi and Francesco Riccoboni, the historian and playwright Pierre Rémond de Sainte Albine, and the philosopher Denis Diderot. Similarly, Strasberg regarded this issue, whether the actor should 'demonstrate' or 'experience' the character's emotions, as 'a central debate in terms of acting'.[4] Following Stanislavsky's lead, he examined a very similar range of material, in an effort to deepen his understanding (6.4).[5]

This thesis is ultimately concerned with contemporary practice. However, in order to identify the roots of what became the emotionalist - anti-emotionalist debate, I examine a selection of the material studied by Stanislavsky and Strasberg, particularly that of the Riccobonis and Sainte Albine (3.2). There are a number of benefits that arise from such a historical survey. Firstly, Diderot's stance on acted emotion was a response to this vigorous eighteenth-century discourse. Therefore, in order to fully understand his position, it is necessary to explore the intellectual climate from which it arose. It is a debate which has a

[2] Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: His Life and Art* (Methuen, 1999), p. 221.
[3] Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work: A Student's Diary,* trans. and ed. by Jean Benedetti (Routledge, 2008), p. 35, hereafter *AAW*, italics in the original.
[4] Lee Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion* (Plume, 1988), p. 30, hereafter *Dream.*
[5] Ibid., pp. 30-36.

surprisingly contemporary resonance, despite the differences in terminology and theatrical eras. The eighteenth-century discussion of 'fire' and 'wit' prefigures a contemporary drive to balance charismatic, emotionally-charged performance with good technique. Francesco Riccoboni acknowledges the role of the actor's feelings that are stimulated by the demands of performance, a factor barely mentioned in the literature until examined by Ellie Konijn in the late twentieth century (3.6). Although acted emotion has been discussed in very different terms, from Diderot's era to the present, its nature remains a puzzle of major concern to practitioners.

From Archer's perspective, it is Diderot who emerges as the most formidable spokesperson for the anti-emotionalist position. Although his work is rooted in the eighteenth century, Diderot's *The Paradox of the Actor* was not published until 1830.[6] The titular paradox is expressed in a passage discussing the importance of vocal practice:

> At the very moment when [the actor] touches your heart he is listening to his own voice; his talent depends not, as you think, upon feeling, but upon rendering so exactly the outward signs of feeling, that you fall into the trap.[7]

Probably no-one is more responsible than Diderot for polarising the debate on acted emotion. Certainly, there is a dualism built into the structure of *The Paradox.* It is written in the form of a Socratic dialogue between 'The First', who adopts what Archer would later call an anti-emotionalist position, and 'The Second', who provides feeble resistance to his arguments. The binary nature of the discourse is reinforced by reference to the famous

[6] Joseph R. Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (University of Michigan Press, 1993), p. 117, hereafter *Player's Passion*. *Le Paradoxe* was published in English in the late nineteenth century: Denis Diderot, *The Paradox of Acting*, trans. by Walter Herries Pollock (Chatto & Windus, 1883).
[7] Diderot, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 19.

rivalry between two eighteenth-century Parisian actors, the mercurial Mme Dumesnil and the methodical La Clairon. In Diderot's view, the latter is the exemplar of good acting practice, while the former is dismissed as erratic and unreliable (3.3).

Even if Diderot can be seen to have over-simplified aspects of the debate, he remains a towering figure. Roach, for example, argues that Diderot ushered in a new paradigm in the understanding of acting, on a par with epoch-defining achievements in science, such as the publication of Newton's *Principia* or Lavoisier's *Chemistry*.[8] He attributes a range of ideas to Diderot that resonate to the present day, including the notion of double consciousness, the idea of the 'fourth wall' and the identification of the actor's spontaneity as a kind of 'second nature' derived from emotional memory and imagination.[9] He measures the impact of Diderot's essay by the inability of his opponents to ignore his ideas: 'whenever Diderot's self-declared foes attack his views, they tend to adopt – sometimes openly, but more often not – his concepts, arguments, and terminology'.[10] It is, perhaps, an indicator of the richness of Diderot's thought that the arch anti-emotionalist can be cited as an antecedent of theory that seeks to resolve Archer's binary. His ideal actor can simultaneously occupy the world of the imagination and yet perform the function of a stage manager. Double consciousness is an element of both Vakhtangov's affective emotion and my Scenic Emotion (3.5, 3.7).

[8] Roach, *Player's Passion*, p. 117.
[9] Ibid., pp. 116-59.
[10] Ibid., p. 158.

Archer's *Masks and Faces* is an explicit challenge to Diderot's position.[11] He criticises the methodology of *The Paradox*, on the grounds that Diderot had little experience of theatre practice, that his Socratic method is too unbalanced to be convincing, and that he needed to consult a wide range of actors to address the issue adequately.[12] As an alternative approach, he imagines what a less docile figure than 'The Second' might have said in reply to 'The First'.[13] But his major response was to conduct a survey of actors' experiences. Among his discoveries is an ambiguous view of the value of life emotion in the theatre. It is variously seen as a powerful means of enhancing performances and a dangerous pit-fall for the actor. Archer develops the idea that theatrical emotion is distinct from life emotion, a proposition explored further in this chapter (3.4). To define this concept, he coins the terms 'mimetic' or 'scenic' emotion.[14] His discussion of ethics, the role of emotion and use of terminology all inform later theoretical developments.

I argue that the nuances of the emotionalist-anti-emotionalist debate pave the way for new proposals for resolving Diderot's paradox. One idea that emerges from the Russian tradition is Vakhtangov's concept of 'affective emotion'. Vakhtangov posits a type of theatrical emotion that is entirely distinct from what is experienced in life. It combines the revival of past experiences with the joy of performance. The actor is therefore neither cold, nor are their emotions identical to those of the character (3.5). Similarly, Ellie Konijn's model of

[11] Archer's study was first published as, *Masks or Faces? A study in the Psychology of Acting* (Longmans Green, 1888).
[12] Denis Diderot and William Archer, *The Paradox of Acting* and *Masks or Faces?*, intro. by Lee Strasberg, pref. by Henry Irving, trans. by Walter Herries Pollock (Hill and Wang, 1957), hereafter *Paradox/Masks*, p. 76.
[13] Ibid., pp. 91-95.
[14] Archer uses 'mimic' or 'mimetic' as a qualifier for emotional states throughout. See *Paradox/Masks*, pp. 137, 146 (mimic); 191, 222-25 (mimetic). He occasionally uses the term 'scenic' as a synonym. See, for example, p. 151.

acted emotion avoids the extremes of the debate. She asserts that actors in performance do experience emotions, but not those of the character, only those aroused by the execution of their professional duties. She argues that actors adapt these so-called 'task emotions' to the fictional circumstances (3.6).

In conclusion, I reframe Strasberg's assertion that the central debate in acting hinges on the choice between demonstrating and experiencing. A more fruitful question might be, is there a meaningful distinction between life and acted emotion? In response, I develop my concept of Scenic Emotion, which draws on historical suggestions of a form of emotion unique to the stage (3.7). It is underpinned by the body's capacity to simulate the physiological response to an emotionally competent stimulus (2.7). Thus, it synthesizes acting theory and contemporary neurology.

3.2 The Debate Begins

Archer describes Luigi Riccoboni as a great actor and 'uncompromising emotionalist'.[15] Benedetti remarks that Francesco Riccoboni, 'rejected the idea of feeling and insisted that acting was a matter of technique'.[16] These comments appear to place father and son in opposite camps. I will argue, however, that both their perspectives are complex and any binary division into 'emotionalist' and 'anti-emotionalist' positions needs qualification. I will also discuss the contribution of Sainte Albine, who Archer places on the extreme end of the

[15] Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 84.
[16] Jean Benedetti, *The Art of the Actor: The Essential History of Acting, from Classical Times to the Present Day* (Methuen, 2005), p. 68, hereafter *Art of the Actor.*

spectrum of opinion because of his 'emotional extravagances'.[17] Although Sainte Albine certainly insists on the importance of 'fire' or 'vehemence' he balances his emotionalism with the need for intelligence and technical control. There are nuances in the perspectives of all three practitioner-theorists.

Luigi Riccoboni's reflections on acting were published as '*Pensées sur la Déclamation*' in 1738.[18] An English translation, by Robert Dodsley, followed in 1741.[19] Dodsley's version provides the translations here. In some respects, Riccoboni takes a straightforwardly emotionalist position. He asserts that the orator's success depends on 'feeling the thing he pronounces' and that the actor must feel 'all that a Man in the Circumstance of the Character he represents may be supposed to feel'.[20] However, these assertions are qualified by a legal illustration. He compares the actor to a counsel, who tries to convince a judge that it is the injured party themselves that is pleading: 'the Illusion becomes then complete, then all that is *said* is *felt*, and every thing passes in the *Language of the Soul*'.[21] Riccoboni, then, does not propose a complete identification between actor and character. Rather, the aim is to convince the audience that the actor feels the emotions of the character. The legal metaphor suggests a model that might be called 'the actor as advocate', with some

[17] Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 87.
[18] Louis Riccoboni, 'Pensées sur la Déclamation', in *Reflexions Historiques et Critiques sur les Differens Theatres de L'Europe*, (Guerin, 1738), pp. 1-45, hereafter 'Pensées'. Luigi moved from Italy to Paris in 1716, for professional reasons, taking his young son, Francesco, with him. Both adopted the French versions of their first names for stage and publication purposes. See Siddhesh Joshi (ed.), 'Luigi Riccoboni', *Alchetron*, 5 December 2023 <https://alchetron.com/Luigi-Riccoboni> [accessed 5 July 2024].
[19] Dodsley anglicized Riccoboni senior's first name, so the work appears as: Lewis Riccoboni, 'Reflections upon Declamation, or, The Art of Speaking in Public', in *An Historical and Critical Account of the Theatres in Europe,* trans. by R. Dodsley ([Waller and Dodsley (?)], 1741), pp. 1-36, hereafter 'Reflections'.
Dodsley also replaces Riccoboni's examples from Racine with passages from Shakespeare. Compare Riccoboni, 'Pensées', pp. 21-23 with Riccoboni 'Reflections', pp. 16-18
[20] Ibid., pp. 29 & 19.
[21] Riccoboni, 'Reflections', p. 27, italics in the original.

professional distance from the 'client'.[22] Emotion is important, but there is also a degree of professional detachment.

Riccoboni's legal metaphor incorporates a concept that is vital to his view of creativity, the 'Language of the Soul'. His explanation of it stresses the key role of primary emotions. He describes a process of profound meditation that enables a writer to connect with emotions such as anger, pity and revenge, in a manner that transcends the world of the senses, transitory customs and petty affairs.[23] He aspires to a kind of artistic universality that is not specific to the concerns of a particular time, location and group of individuals, but which speaks to all eras, places and people. Elsewhere, he adds verisimilitude and the rarefied world of heroes to his grandiose vision for the theatre: 'the great Business of the Stage is…to enchant the Spectators into a Persuasion that the Tragedy they are beholding is no *Fiction*, and that they who speak and act are not *Players*, but *real Heroes*'.[24] The grand ideals of the Language of the Soul and heroic drama do not prevent Riccoboni from taking a pragmatic view of how the illusion of verisimilitude is to be achieved. Part of his answer is a straightforward recommendation to borrow from nature. But he also states that nature can be enhanced in the theatre, so that the actor can reach all the spectators.[25] His account, therefore, combines idealism and passion, but is not above a discussion of the techniques of

[22] Riccoboni may have been aware of Quintilian's discussion of effective advocacy, which requires close identification with the client, including sharing their sense of outrage, while remaining articulate in the courtroom. See Quintilian in Benedetti, *Art of the Actor*, pp. 21-22.
[23] Riccoboni, 'Reflections', pp. 9-11.
[24] Ibid., p. 28, italics in the original. The equivalent passage in French reads, 'Le grand point sur la Scêne…est de faire illusion aux Spectateurs, & de leur persuader, autant qu'on le peut, que la Tragedie n'est point une fiction, mais que ce font les mêmes Heros qui agissent & qui parlent, & non pas les Comediens qui les representent' [*sic*], Riccoboni, 'Pensées', pp. 34-35.
[25] Ibid., pp. 25 & 31.

physical and vocal amplification required by a large auditorium. Any emotionalist tendencies are tempered by an understanding of the actor's craft, and the distance suggested by the model of the actor as advocate.

In his introduction to the English translation, Dodsley concludes that Riccoboni has 'reduced the Knowledge of the Stage itself to a kind of Science'.[26] Dodsley therefore provides an early example of a recurring theme in actor training. He introduces the notion that, in a manner analogous to empirical science, it is possible to identify universal and consistent principles of acting that render it comprehensible and easier to teach. On the subject of pedagogy, Riccoboni does not advocate leaving the actor's development to chance. He laments the lack of training available for orators and asserts that acting skills are no different from those of any other profession. By assiduous study of both theory and practice, the aspiring actor can acquire the appropriate disposition and overcome their limitations. It is not simply a matter of inspiration and genius.[27]

Sainte Albine published *Le Comédien* in 1747, followed by a second edition in 1749.[28] His discussion resonates well beyond the eighteenth century and the details of his argument seed much later proposals in acting theory. According to Roach, Sainte Albine was the first writer to apply the terms '*sensibilité*' (sensibility) and '*sentiment*' (sentiment) to acting.[29] Sainte Albine connects *sensibilité* with virtue, including, for example, the generous

[26] Dodsley in Riccoboni, 'Reflections', p. A3.
[27] Ibid., pp. 2-3.
[28] Rémond de Sainte Albine, *Le Comédien* (Desaint & Saillant, 1747); Rémond de Sainte Albine, *Le Comédien*, 2nd edn (Desaint & Saillant, 1749), hereafter *Le Comédien*.
[29] Roach, *Player's Passion*, pp. 98-99.

compassion we might feel for a hero.[30] It is a term used by his contemporaries, including Diderot and Dr John Hill, who translated and adapted Sainte Albine's work for an English audience.[31] It is also used much more recently in a discussion of why 'acting cannot be taught' by Michael Redgrave. Redgrave takes a similar position to Sainte Albine, asserting that acting is a balance of sensibility (apprehending the emotional content of the play) and intelligence (1.2, 4.2).

Although Sainte Albine discusses *sensibilité*, he uses *sentiment* much more frequently, so that the term develops multiple connotations. For example, the actor with *sentiment* is malleable, like wax, so they can, as it were, receive the imprint of the author. The expression also denotes the ability to experience all the emotions of which a person is capable.[32] The features of *sentiment* suggest it is an ancestor of the contemporary phrase, 'emotional availability'. Furthermore, Sainte Albine expects the accomplished actor to be able to easily manage the transition from one emotion to its opposite, and insists that anyone not able to commit themselves to such transformations is not fit for the stage.[33] It is a quality that might be called 'emotional dexterity'. This is one point on which Sainte Albine and the author of *The Paradox* could agree. Through his avatar, The First, Diderot describes an encounter with Garrick at a Parisian salon in the mid-1760s. He was enthralled by a kind of party-trick performed by the great actor, who 'put his head between two folding-doors'

[30] Sainte Albine, *Le Comédien*, p. 96.
[31] Roach argues that Hill clarified Sainte Albine's terminology, by refining the distinction between 'sensibility' and 'sentiment'. See *Player's Passion*, pp. 100-01.
[32] As Sainte Albine puts it, 'faire succéder dans leur ame les diverses passion, dont l'homme est susceptible' [*sic*] ('make the various passions man is susceptible to follow each other in their soul'), *Le Comédien*, p. 32.
[33] Ibid. 'Si vous ne pouvez vous prêter a ces métamorphoses, ne vous hazardez point sur la scene' [*sic*] ('if you cannot lend yourself to these metamorphoses, do not venture on the stage at all').

and, within a matter of seconds, altered his facial expression to convey a huge range of emotions, including delight, surprise, astonishment, sorrow, fright, horror and despair.[34] The qualities that Sainte Albine demanded, the capacity to experience a full palate of human emotions and to demonstrate emotional dexterity, are prominent in both Diderot's ideal actor and Vakhtangov's definition of 'affective emotion' (3.5).

Sentiment is the minimum requirement for a competent actor in Sainte Albine's taxonomy of emotion in performance. He posits a hierarchy of terms indicating increasing levels of arousal, calibrated to the size of the auditorium, 'sentiment', 'fire' and 'vehemence'. I suggest these 'hot' qualities denote not just passion, but what, in contemporary terms, might be referred to as energy and charisma. Cold or weaker actors, on the other hand, are associated with 'snow' or 'frost'.[35] Without vehemence and 'natural fire', the actor's reputation will be limited. But without *sentiment*, they cannot be an actor at all.

Beyond the minimum requirements for the stage, Sainte Albine asserts that in order to move the audience to tears, the actor must dig even deeper into the mine of *sentiment*. They must excavate an area which he calls the 'entrails': 'celles que se proposent de nous faire répandre des larmes, ont plus besoin que les autres de la partie du **Sentiment**, désignée communément sous le nom d'**Entrailles**' ('those who intend to make us shed tears, have more need than others for the part of feeling, commonly called entrails').[36] He literally calls on actors to use their gut instincts. It is perhaps his use of visceral language and vivid

[34] Diderot, *Paradox/Masks*, pp. 32-33.
[35] Sainte Albine, *Le Comédien*, pp. 41-42.
[36] Ibid., p. 91, italics and bold in the original.

metaphors that prompts Roach to identify him as an extreme defender of emotionality in acting.[37] Sainte Albine presents a demanding vision of the emotional requirements of the stage, but not one that would be unfamiliar to contemporary actors, despite the shifts in performance vocabulary.

Arguably, Sainte Albine's expectations are extravagant. But an account of his vision of acting would not be complete without consideration of his concept of '*esprit*' and his comments on restraint. He uses the metaphor of a captain navigating a ship to define *esprit* as the governing intelligence that guides the 'hot' powers of the actor.[38] It might therefore be translated as 'wit', in the sense of understanding and quick thinking. In terms of restraint, he states that emotional intensity must be justified by the dramatic situation, or the actor will cease to be credible and appear ridiculous.[39] He therefore proposes a balance between *sentiment* and *esprit*, although not, perhaps an equal one.

Riccoboni the younger published his *L'Art du Theatre* in 1750, twelve years after his father's *Pensées* appeared.[40] Francesco Riccoboni's interest in acting pedagogy is revealed by a structural device: *L'Art* is framed as advice to an unnamed woman with theatrical aspirations. He also reiterates his father's point that there is a dearth of written manuals relating to their craft, which means that young actors are forced to learn from experience, a potentially bruising initiation into the profession.[41] His work is, therefore, another attempt

[37] Roach, *Players* Passion, pp. 98-99.
[38] Sainte Albine, *Le Comédien*, pp. 25-26.
[39] Ibid., pp. 45-46 & 48-49.
[40] François Riccoboni, *L'Art du Théâtre* (Simon & Giffart, 1750), hereafter *L'Art*.
[41] Ibid., pp. 2-4.

to articulate principles of acting. Rather than contending with his father, he pays him filial respect, acknowledging the authority of his insights. However, he complains that Luigi's work is misinterpreted by readers for whom it is too advanced.[42] In short, he positions his essay, not as a contradiction of his father's work, but as a description of an earlier stage of the actor's learning journey.

The language and concepts employed by Riccoboni echo those of his 'emotionalist' predecessors. He defines '*sentimens* [*sic*]' as 'movements of the soul', which arise from either love or anger.[43] He acknowledges the need for 'fire' in performance, but also points out that if an actor loses their composure, they are seized by a 'mortal coldness' which renders them unfit to represent the sentiment required.[44] This passage also illustrates where Riccoboni does depart from the emotionalist position. He argues that if you are unfortunate enough to actually feel what you are supposed to be expressing, then you are not in any fit state to act.[45] The key to expression is not for the actor to be penetrated by a particular 'movement of the soul', but to create its appearance, so that the spectator feels it.[46] Here, his perspective is that of an orthodox 'anti-emotionalist'.

[42] Ibid., p. 3 : 'mais combien de lecteurs se sont trompés en croyant l'avoir parfaitement entendu!' ('but how many readers deceive themselves by believing they have understood it perfectly').
[43] Riccoboni, *L'Art*., p. 45.
[44] Ibid., p. 38.
[45] Ibid., p. 37. In the original, 'hors d'état de joüer' ('unable to play').
[46] Ibid., p. 36 : 'L'on appelle expression, l'adresse par laquelle on fait sentir au Spectateur tous les mouvemens dont on veut paroître pénétré. Je dis que l'on veut le paroître, & non pas que l'on est pénétré véritablement' ('we call it expression, the means by which we make the spectator feel the movements by which we want to appear to have been penetrated. I say that we want to appear to have been, not that we have been truly penetrated').

Exploring eighteenth-century discourse reveals a rich vocabulary for discussing the affective life of the performer. But the discussion is not purely of historical interest. It shapes the emotionalist – anti-emotionalist debate and examines concepts of continuing importance to actors. Emotion is vital but must be balanced with control; passion and charisma must be coupled with reliable technique. Acting with 'fire' can electrify the stage, but strong feelings can have a disabling effect on the actor. Fake or forced emotion is repulsive for actors and audiences alike. Ultimately, what is important is what the audience feels, not what the actor feels.

Francesco Riccoboni makes two particular contributions to the anti-emotionalist argument that prefigure future scholarship. The first of these propositions was not, to my knowledge, explored in depth until the late twentieth century. He does not suggest that the actor feels nothing in performance, but that their agitation is caused by the huge effort of depicting passions they do not feel. In other words, the only real emotion they feel in performance is aroused by the execution of their professional duties. Furthermore, he explains how the actor can deceive themselves about what they are feeling, if they do not examine its true origin. Konijn's research points to similar conclusions (3.6).[47] Riccoboni's belief in the perils of experiencing the character's emotion was to receive heavyweight support from Denis Diderot, in one of the most famous contributions to the history of acting theory, *Le Paradoxe sur le Comédien.*

[47] Riccoboni, *L'Art*, p. 41. 'Mais cette agitation vient des efforts qu'on est obligé de faire pour peindre une passion que l'on ne ressent pas, ce qui donne au sang un mouvement extraordinaire auquel le Comédien peut être lui-même trompe, s'il n'a pas examiné la véritable cause d'où cela provient' ('but this agitation comes from the efforts one is obliged to make to paint a passion that one does not feel, it gives the blood an extraordinary movement that can deceive the actor themselves, if they have not examined its true origin').

3.3 Diderot's Paradox

Diderot's account of acted emotion can be productively seen in the context of his decades-long investigation into the trade secrets of a wide variety of arts, crafts and sciences. In 1745, he became the editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonne des sciences, des arts, et des métiers* (*Rational Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts and Professions*).[48] He was also a contributor to this monumental work, which was not completed until 1772. It was one of the quintessential documents of the Enlightenment, designed to strike a blow for reason and knowledge, in the face of a reactionary church and state, and to 'bring out the essential principles and applications of every art and science'.[49] His attempt to illuminate previously obscure corners of human activity introduces a theme of particular importance, the idea that apparently inexplicable achievements in the arts can be understood in terms of general principles or laws. As Roach puts it, 'mastery did not arise mysteriously from a source in the magical occult, but from professional skills knowingly applied'.[50] It seems that Diderot was determined to apply this principle to the art of acting and would not accept that inspiration conjured up from nowhere was preferable to careful preparation and the calm execution of skills.

Roach explains how Diderot aligns the actor's creative process with his conception of scientific method, divided into three stages: the observation of nature, reflection and

[48] Robert Niklaus, 'Denis Diderot: French Philosopher', *Brittanica*, 27 February 2024 <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Denis-Diderot> [accessed 20 December 2024].
[49] Ibid.
[50] Roach, *Player's Passion*, p. 116.

experimentation.[51] The first stage consists of the dispassionate observation of natural phenomena and is essentially the same for all areas of human endeavour, whether they be astronomy, acting, sculpture or physiognomy. At the heart of the second phase of the process is Diderot's conception of the '*modèle idéal*'. In order to clarify how Diderot uses this term, Roach translates it as 'inner model'. I suggest that 'inner image' or 'vision' might communicate Diderot's concept more effectively than a literal translation in the contemporary rehearsal room. The *modèle idéal* is the artist's vison of the product they wish to create, such as a potter's idea for an elegant vase. It is developed by a process of reflection that synthesises observations of the world with memory, imagination and sense impressions. The third stage overlaps with the second in rehearsals. The actor experiments with gestures and vocal effects to find the perfect expression of the *modèle idéal*, then practices it diligently until this version can be reliably reproduced in performance. To extend Diderot's analogy, in the same way that the skilled potter can produce dozens of identical vases, the actor should be able to produce performances of equal quality night after night.

Diderot's thesis in *The Paradox* is that, to use Archer's terms, the anti-emotionalist actor is superior to the emotionalist. One of the strategies he uses to make his case is to analyse the rivalry between leading actors of the day, Mme Dumesnil and La Clairon, who, he suggests, embody the two approaches. Dumesnil was famous for her inspired performances, but Diderot was unimpressed by her inconsistency. On the other hand, Diderot's mouthpiece, The First, declares that La Clairon's talent lay 'in imagining a mighty shape, and in copying it

[51] Ibid., pp. 139-42.

with genius'.[52] His contention is that methodical preparation and the ability to reliably reproduce a high-quality performance are far more admirable than occasional bursts of brilliance.

The First's praise for La Clairon's performance as Agrippina illustrates the application of the *modèle idéal*, including what Diderot calls 'double personality'. While lying carelessly on a sofa, according to The First, she is engaged with 'her memory's dream', a phrase suggestive of a blend of emotional and sensory memory with an imaginative reverie. At the same time, she continuously monitors herself and her performance, including in-the-moment assessment of the impact of her work. The *modèle idéal* enables Clairon to function simultaneously as character and actor, and exceed her own limitations, creating a convincing image of a heroic figures from neoclassical drama.[53] Dumesnil, on the other hand, is the recipient of scornful disparagement: 'she comes on the stage without knowing what she is going to say; half the time she does not know what she is saying; but she has one sublime moment'.[54] In Diderot's narrative, the two actors are pushed to the extreme ends of the debate. La Clairon can do no wrong, while Dumesnil can do no right.

Another aspect of Diderot's argument is that real feeling is incompatible with accomplished acting. He cites several examples of actors who demonstrate a complete awareness of their surroundings during a stage emergency, demonstrating they are certainly not lost in some kind of self-delusion that the fictional circumstances are real. Lekain, for example, seemed

[52] Diderot, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 43.
[53] Ibid., p. 16.
[54] Ibid., p. 17.

to be in the throes of passion when playing a blood-thirsty scene in *Semiramis*, but was still able to spot an earring on stage, dropped by accident. He calmly kicks it into the wings.[55] The First concludes that great actors cannot be in the grip of the character's emotion when they demonstrate such cool self-possession in response to events on stage. In Pollock's translation, Diderot uses the term 'self-possession' in opposition to 'sensibility'. In the guise of The First, he describes himself as a 'man of sensibility', meaning prone to sympathy for others and highly responsive emotionally, but often disabled or reduced to silence by his volatile feelings. The 'self-possessed' man, on the other hand, is able to think clearly and quickly under pressure.[56]

Diderot/The First extends his argument to suggest that the archetypal actor is a cold-blooded observer of human nature, largely incapable of empathy. At its most extreme, his arguments are overtly contradictory. On the one hand, The First declares that 'I have no thought of calumniating a profession I like and esteem', praising actors as people of 'a rare talent and a true usefulness'.[57] But elsewhere, he speaks of the stage as the last resort of the feckless rake who has 'wasted the best years of his life' and the low courtesan who has 'wallowed in gutter debauchery'.[58] Diderot's caricature of the profession as the last refuge

[55] Diderot, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 38.
[56] Ibid., p. 34. Diderot illustrates the point with an anecdote about his friend Marmontel. He tells Marmontel about an encounter with the writer Sedaine, during which he burst into tears. Sedaine had simply remarked, 'you are splendid'. The incident convinces Diderot that he is a man of 'middling' talents, while Sedaine is a 'man of genius'. Marmontel's ironic response is that if Voltaire were moved by a story, while Sedaine was indifferent to a friend in tears, then it must follow that Voltaire is very ordinary and Sedaine a genius by comparison. Marmontel's ability to calmy point out the absurdity of Diderot's argument reduces him to silence.
[57] Ibid., p. 46.
[58] Ibid., pp. 51-52.

of sociopaths and prostitutes is not one that many practitioners, past or present, would appreciate or recognise.

Writing many years after the publication of both *The Paradox* and Archer's *Masks or Faces?*, Strasberg dismisses Diderot's solution to the problem of embodying emotion. He speculates that *The Paradox* peters out because Diderot had lost faith in the 'obvious inadequacy' of his conclusion. In Strasberg's analysis, Diderot's solution was that the actor could only rely on external means. Francesco Riccoboni had come to a similar conclusion: feeling the character's emotions is disastrous for the actor (6.2). Strasberg suggests that Diderot was forced into this position because, in the eighteenth century, a reliable method of controlling emotion did not exist. He implies that the Stanislavsky System and his own Method filled this gap (5.3, 6.2).[59]

The structure of *The Paradox*, even if it was intended to explore competing perspectives on a complex subject, illustrates the weakness of binary arguments. Notwithstanding the depth and longevity of its influence, its duality seems to push Diderot into overt contradictions and untenable extremes. Archer speculates that Diderot was provoked into taking this stance in response to the perceived extremity of the arguments of his opponents, particularly Sainte Albine (3.2).[60] Diderot's position can therefore only be fully understood in the context of the debate from which it emerged.

[59] Strasberg, *Dream*, pp. 33-36.
[60] Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 87.

Roach's study operates as an erudite defence of Diderot, highlighting the range of his thought and longevity of his influence on many of the major acting innovators of the twentieth century, including Stanislavsky, Peter Brook, Artaud and Grotowski.[61] From the perspective of this thesis, one of Diderot's most potent ideas, is the proposition that the acting process can be seen as an analogy to an Enlightenment version of scientific method. His task is to uncover the knowable principles within the mystery. To a degree, the vigorous assertion of his anti-emotionalist position obscures the nuances of his account of acting. His ideas about double consciousness, careful preparation of a role and the blending of memory, imagination and physical expression, resonate in actor training well into the twenty-first century.

3.4 Archer's Riposte

William Archer's *Masks or Faces?* is an explicit response to Diderot's *Paradox*. The title of his work reproduces Diderot's polarization of the debate and symbolises the dualism of two approaches to acting: one that relies on surface appearance and the other that pursues a theatrical realism based on the use of actual feelings.[62] Archer coins the terms 'emotionalist' and 'anti-emotionalist' to describe these conflicting positions. His criticism of Diderot suggests he is firmly in the emotionalist camp.

Archer may have been one critic that Roach had in mind when he commented on the tendency of Diderot's foes to adopt his concepts (3.1). Archer certainly uses one of Diderot's

[61] Roach, *Player's Passion*, pp. 204-04, 218-26.
[62] Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, pp. 115 & 141.

ideas, that of double consciousness, to refute the main contention of *The Paradox*, that at the very moment when the actor most moves the audience, they are feeling nothing. Archer argues that rather than Diderot's formulation, the real paradox of acting is double consciousness. He suggests it is this concept that undermines Diderot's own argument: 'if it were true that the actor could not experience an emotion without absolutely yielding up his whole soul to it, then Diderot's doctrine, though still a little overstated, would be right in the main'.[63] In this section, I argue that Archer's case is not a simple contradiction of Diderot's position, rather he offers a variegated response. Although he is sympathetic to the emotionalist perspective, he presents a balanced discussion, incorporating evidence that supports both points of view. He complains the 'issue has been obscured…by rash overstatements on both sides', evidently aspiring to a more nuanced response.[64] I posit that his conclusions, particularly the concept of 'mimetic emotion', avoid some of the polarization of the emotionalist-anti-emotionalist debate and lay theoretical foundations for a 'third way' between the extremes.

Archer's discussion is underpinned by some key scientific preoccupations of the nineteenth century, particularly evolutionary theory and the unconscious.[65] He makes a number of references to Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*.[66] He also considers unconscious processes in some detail, including a chapter devoted to 'Nature's

[63] Ibid., p. 184.
[64] Ibid., p. 216.
[65] Roach identifies three dominant themes of the century, evolutionary theory, the unconscious and monism. See *Player's* Passion, pp. 161-62.
[66] Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, pp. 151, 172-73.

Cosmetics', the involuntary physiological response to emotional arousal.[67] These elements of his study indicate an intention to ground his contribution to acting theory in the science of his day. Like Darwin, his aim is to identify principles underlying the discipline: 'we want to arrive at the laws which govern the average or typical mimetic temperament'.[68] He expresses a faith in the notion of acting as a *Science* analogous to biology.

Like Diderot before him and Stanislavsky after, Archer expresses a desire to understand acting and to discover reliable methods of practising the art. He reveals his interest in actor pedagogy when he remarks that 'it is quite conceivable that a young actor may help or hinder the due development of his powers by starting with a right or with a wrong theory as to the artistic value of real emotion'.[69] The pursuit of a *Science* of acting is closely related to the development of its pedagogy. What we aspire to teach, we must first understand ourselves.

Masks or Faces? begins with a critique of Diderot's methodology. Archer attacks the device of a one-sided Socratic dialogue, suspecting that Diderot created this unequal struggle because he was not satisfied with his own argument, a claim later echoed by Strasberg (3.3).[70] Archer also complains that, although Diderot drew on both contemporary examples and conversations with Garrick, nevertheless, *The Paradox* is based on a single point of view. In order to improve on Diderot's methodology, Archer gathers data from a variety of

[67] Ibid., pp. 124-25, 159-71.
[68] Ibid., p. 76.
[69] Ibid., p. 79.
[70] Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 90, Strasberg, *Dream*, p. 36.

sources, primarily a survey of British and French actors, supplemented by historical accounts of the acting of previous eras. Archer's carefully crafted questions address topics which remain of vital interest to contemporary actors. They include, for example, the representation of grief, the relationship between real and stage feelings and the use of personal experience in creative work. Archer asserts that while Diderot's arguments are founded on theoretical deduction, his own conclusions are based on empirical research into performance practice.[71] The actor's testimony is complex and, in some cases, contradictory. Therefore, any satisfactory theory of acted emotion must explain the anomalies in the emotionalist-anti-emotionalist debate.

Archer's first set of questions relate to the representation of grief and its most obvious manifestation, crying. He was interested in how tears are stimulated and how they affect the audience.[72] Among the leading actors who responded to Archer was the great Italian actor, Tommaso Salvini, who influenced both Stanislavsky and Strasberg. He was a committed emotionalist, demanding the physiological changes in performance that accompany real emotion. He insists that if you do not weep, blush, glow or tremble according to the demands of the character, then you will 'never thoroughly transfuse into the hearts of your audience the sentiment of the situation'.[73] The comic actor, Toole, appears to take an emotionalist position, although he hints at the use of recollected emotion and imagination: 'no audience, in my opinion…was ever made to weep unless the actor had wept, or could weep, at what touched the audience'. He adds, 'at the same time, an actor

[71] Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, pp. 75-82.
[72] Ibid., pp. 101-30.
[73] Tommaso Salvini in Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 112.

must be able to control himself'.[74] Toole emphasises the need for a balance of emotional arousal with technical expertise. The theory of double consciousness explains why such a balance might be possible to achieve.

One aspect of Diderot's anti-emotionalist argument is that real emotion is incompatible with self-possession (3.3).[75] Conversely, a number of Archer's correspondents insist that passion in performance can be combined with professional discipline. However, they do express anxiety about losing control. Forbes Robertson is an example: 'I feel all emotional scenes, under favourable conditions, very strongly, but I never dare let myself go'.[76] Geneviève Ward makes a distinction between rehearsal and performance that is compatible with Diderot's view of the creation of the *modèle idéal*. She describes a process of complete openness to her emotions in the preparatory phase. She is wracked with sobs during private study of a part. However, she is determined to control herself in performance, because her focus is on affecting the audience. On the subject of weeping, she takes a pragmatic view. Tears are invisible to the majority, so 'I have not found that it made any difference with my audience whether I actually shed tears or not'.[77] In contrast, Beerbohm Tree, the future founder of the Academy of Dramatic Art (later RADA), regards both inner and outer experience as essential. He remarks that 'I do not believe that any emotion can be satisfactorily portrayed outside unless the inside emotion exists also'.[78] The testimony on grief encompasses a variety of perspectives.

[74] John Lawrence Toole in Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 126.
[75] Diderot, *Paradox/Masks*, pp. 34-35.
[76] Johnston Forbes Robertson in Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 123.
[77] Geneviève Ward in Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 118.
[78] Herbert Beerbohm Tree in Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 121.

After the discussion of tears, Archer turns his attention to situations in which an actor's personal experience resembles that of their character and, by accident or design, reality has an impact on fiction. He quotes Macready, who did not hesitate to plunder personal tragedy for inspiration. His daughter, Nina, died in February 1850. The following November, he played Virginius (the eponymous hero of the play by James Sheridan Knowles).[79] Virginius sacrifices his daughter in order to prevent her from being violated by a corrupt judge. Throughout the second act, Macready consciously focussed his thoughts on Nina. He claims this willingness to, in his phrase, 'gore his own thoughts' for the sake of art, enabled him to deliver 'one of the most brilliant and powerful performances of the character I have ever given'.[80] Conversely, a comparable situation was disastrous for Isabel Bateman, who lost her father during a run of *Hamlet*. Having to return promptly to play Ophelia, she struggled with self-control: 'I believe I never acted so badly; it remains in my memory as a terrible nightmare, and I have had a horror of the part ever since'.[81] The difference, perhaps, is that Macready made a conscious decision to use his family tragedy, while Bateman had no intention of exploiting her bereavement. Tales of 'goring one's thoughts' reveal that nineteenth century actors were well aware that excavation of personal experience could intensify acted emotion, but they also knew it was a dangerous tool that needed to be handled with care.[82]

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[79] James Sheridan Knowles, 'Virginius', in *Cumberland's British Theatre*, 6th edn, 6 vols (James Ridgway, 1823), VI.

[80] Charles Macready in Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 133.

[81] Isabel Bateman in Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 137.

[82] This is a theme as old as Western Theatre. Aulus Gellus, or Gellius, the Roman author and grammarian, tells the story of the Greek actor Polus, who made use of the intense suffering occasioned by the loss of his son. After a period of mourning, he played Electra in *The Oresteia*, including the moment she brings the ashes of her

A further example raises the issue of unhealthy use of personal feelings. Archer never saw the American actress Clara Morris, but read critical accounts of her work. She earned a reputation for her commitment to producing real emotion in performance and its extraordinary impact. She reports that from four o'clock in the afternoon, on the day of a performance, she begins to suffer: 'My hands get cold as ice, my face gets hot, and I am in a nervous tremor, because I am afraid I won't cry in the play'.[83] She expresses an anxiety identical to one afflicting many contemporary students. Will I be able to produce the visible manifestations of emotion?

Having done everything she can to arouse her feelings, Morris then struggles to recover her equilibrium after the event and her 'poor nerves suffer'.[84] Archer acknowledges she was capable of producing 'thrilling effects', but brusquely remarks that she pays too high a price: 'it appears that Miss Morris has permanently endangered her health by acting at too high pressure, and this, no doubt, shows either a morbid temperament or deficient technical training'.[85] Archer's remarks foreshadow some of the reservations British practitioners expressed much later about what would become known as 'Method' techniques (6.5). His research demonstrates that concerns about the mental health of the actor, particularly when they use personal experience to embody acted emotion, are not new.

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brother Orestes onto the stage. Polus entered carrying an urn containing the ashes of his son. According to Gellus, the auditorium was flooded, not with the imitation of sorrow, but with genuine grief. See Benedetti, *The Art of the Actor*, p. 20; A. Cornelius Gellius, 'Attic Nights', Loeb Classical Library edn, 3 vols, *Bill Thayer*, II, VI, pp. 36-37, 10 February 2018 <https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Gellius/6*.html> [accessed 5 July 2024].

[83] Clara Morris in Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 120.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 120.

In his final chapter, Archer progresses from debating the emotionalist and anti-emotionalist positions to articulating a distinction between life and acted emotion. On occasion he refers to acted emotion as 'mimic' or 'scenic', but seems to settle on the term 'mimetic'. He notes that where there is a coincidence of life experience and dramatic fiction, it can create a conduit for an expression of life emotion that can electrify a particular moment. But he suggests that these accidental events are not as desirable as 'mimetic' emotion, aroused through sympathy and the imagination. In this respect, his position is not dissimilar to that of Diderot. To illustrate, he invents the example of a boy whose sister is distraught because her doll is broken. He howls in sympathy, but doesn't feel anything like the same agony as his sibling.

Archer then offers a further metaphor for acted emotion, using the example of Salvini, who, he explains, was inspired by Shakespeare to create the 'phantom' of Othello. The phantom is then imposed on the man. It is the phantom Othello who suffers, but it is the 'nerve centres' of the real man that 'thrill in response'.[86] Both metaphors suggest a degree of distance between the actor and the emotional experience required by the play, but not to the extent of complete coldness. According to Archer, 'mimetic' emotion must be regarded as 'real', because it affects blood, veins, eyes, lips, and muscles. He concludes that the actors' capacity to blush, grow pale and perspire constitute 'proof positive that mimetic emotion is not, as some people argue, a state of mere vague unspecialised excitement, but is

[86] Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 220.

closely analogous to the emotion of real life'. In short, 'mimetic' emotion is linked to life emotion, but not identical.

Arther's theory of 'mimetic' emotion helps explain another paradox of acting: why is acted emotion enjoyable, even when the actor is playing suffering? He suggests that psychologically, we can function on different levels. Like a traveller on a voyage of a lifetime, who suffers the temporary discomfort of seasickness, suffering on one level does not preclude profound satisfaction on another. So, the actor playing Lear, with the dead Cordelia in his arms, can suffer with his character, but thoroughly enjoy the sensation of a job well done. The notion that acted emotion has special properties unique to the stage is one that Evgeny Vakhtangov developed further in the early twentieth century. I argue his concept of 'affective emotion' supersedes the emotionalist-anti-emotionalist binary and extends acting theory beyond the paradox.

3.5 Beyond the Paradox I: Affective Emotion

Evgeny Vakhtangov was seen by his contemporaries as one of Stanislavsky's most gifted pupils and clearest exponents of the system.[87] Stanislavsky himself asked Vakhtangov to teach the system as early as 1911.[88] In a lecture at his own studio, delivered in October 1914, Vakhtangov discussed the nature of acted emotion and its intimate relationship with the Stanislavskian notion of 'experiencing', the mode of acting that seizes the attention of

[87] See, for example, Popov, Birman and Chekhov's comments in Lyubov Vendrovskaya and Galina Kapterava, *Evgeny Vakhtangov*, trans. by Doris Bradbury (Progress Publishers, 1982), pp. 165, 186-96, 208 respectively.
[88] Andrei Malaev-Babel, *Yevgeny Vakhtangov: A Critical Portrait* (Routledge, 2013), pp. 64-65.

the audience and creates the '*Life of the human spirit in a role*' (5.3.2).[89] He poses the question, 'where do feelings come from and what is the essence of experiencing on stage?'.[90] His answer expounds the idea that 'experiencing' is rooted in sense and emotion memory and introduces the idea of 'affective emotions':

> In life our feelings are always aroused by real causes. No such causes exist on stage. They always demand and we can do no more than accept them. The question then arises: can these conventions arouse real feeling in us? Under no circumstances. They not only cannot evoke real feelings, they should not, otherwise the stage would cease to be art. The origin of our stage feelings, which are not similar to our normal, real feelings, is not the conventions, but our capacity to repeat experiences I spoke of earlier. And this repeated experience is not the same as real-life experiencing. And so, in opposition to real-life emotions, we will define our stage emotion as *affective emotion*. They are governed by quite different laws from those that guide our emotions in life itself.[91]

There are three implications of Vakhtangov's statement that are particularly relevant. His position is neither emotionalist, nor anti-emotionalist, because he assumes the actor will experience feelings on stage, but insists that they are those of the actor not the character. The stage 'conventions', i.e. the fictional circumstances and theatrical environment, *cannot* evoke 'real feelings'. Instead, he proposes a type of emotion unique to the stage that is rooted in re-experienced feelings. This idea of affective emotions decisively separates acted emotion from life emotion. Lastly, he asserts that affective emotions are 'lawful', in the same sense that Frijda uses the term, governed by identifiable principles (2.6). If consistent 'laws' can be articulated, they can then be communicated from teacher to student, and therefore learned.

[89] Stanislavsky, *AAW*, p. 19, italics in the original.
[90] Vakhtangov in Benedetti, *Art of the Actor*, p. 133.
[91] Ibid., italics in the original.

Vakhtangov's lecture specifies the distinctions between 'affective' and 'real' experiences.[92] Affective emotions, based on emotional memories, are evoked by the fulfilment of a stage task. Unlike life emotions, they evaporate the instant an actor leaves the stage, so the performer can move easily between, for example, grief and carefree gaiety, as the play requires. Affective emotions do not engulf and exhaust actors in the same way that actual fear or other 'basic' emotions might do, so performers can play a demanding role without undermining their physical or mental health. The intrusion of real feelings damages the play. A scene would be ruined if, for example, the text required one character to strike another, and the actor actually hit their partner. In this case, rather than drawing on an emotional memory of humiliation and indignation, the actor would feel hurt and offended in reality. The audience, therefore, would sympathises with the actor, not the character, and thus be removed from the fictional world. It would be life, not art.

The actor's repertoire of revived emotions should be comprehensive, since any adult will have experienced every emotion. Fear is fear, whether we have been confronted with a revolver or a threatening dog, and it can be amplified for stage purposes. Finally, crucial to the concept of 'affective emotion', is the importance Vakhtangov attaches to 'festive feeling' and 'creative joy'.[93] Festive feelings enable the actor to believe in the fictional circumstances. Creative joy is generated by the pleasure of experiencing 'repeat feelings well' and communicating emotion to the audience.[94] For Vakhtangov, real pain, misery or

[92] Ibid., pp. 133-14. See also *The Vakhtangov Sourcebook*, ed. by Andrei Malaev-Babel (Routledge, 2011), pp. 183-86, hereafter *Sourcebook*.
[93] Vakhtangov, *Sourcebook*, p. 185.
[94] Ibid., pp. 184-86.

grief have no place on the stage. But Lear's pain, Hedda Gabler's bitterness or Jaques melancholy are a source of joy to the actor, when they succeed in acting these emotions well.

There are precedents in the literature for many of the features of 'affective emotion'. Emotion memory as the root of the actor's feelings on stage is foreshadowed by Diderot's concept of the *modèle idéal*, which draws on both memory and imagination. The ability to switch rapidly from one emotion to another, which I have called 'emotional dexterity', is discussed by Sainte Albine and demonstrated by Garrick. Vakhtangov also shares with Sainte Albine the conviction that every actor should be able to play every emotion (3.2). Vakhtangov refers to the need to preserve the physical and mental health of the actor. Archer's evidence suggests that the French actor, François-Joseph Talma, despite his robustly emotionalist stance, would have held similar views, at least in terms of energy conservation. Although Talma had praised Dumesnil for abandoning herself to the 'agitations of her soul', according to contemporary reports, he 'se déclarait mécontent d'un succès qui lui avait coûté trop de fatigue' ('declared himself dissatisfied with a success that left him excessively exhausted').[95] Furthermore, Archer discusses both the ambiguous impact of the intrusion of life emotion on stage and the paradox of the actor's ability to enjoy playing negative emotions (3.4).

[95] Archer attributes the quotation to a 'Samson', writing in *L'Art Théâtral*. See *Paradox/Masks*, p. 120, note 29. See also Joseph Talma, *Réflexions de Talma sur Lekain et L'Art Théatral* (Fontaine, 1856).

Although some of the ingredients of 'affective emotion' can be detected in previous discourse, I argue that the concept is an important and undervalued advance in acting theory. It is a bold separation of life and acted emotion. Vakhtangov's elucidation of the idea is more detailed and comprehensive than Archer's account of 'mimetic emotion'. It avoids the binary extremes of the emotionalist-anti-emotionalist debate: 'the competent actor feels nothing' and 'the actor's and character's emotions are identical'. It represents one resolution of Diderot's paradox.

Perhaps the most surprising innovation introduced by Vakhtangov is his assertion that theatrical 'conventions' cannot arouse feelings because they are not 'real causes' of emotion.[96] It is not a belief in the fictional circumstances that stimulate experiencing, but the use of affective memory. Here he seems to hold a significantly different view to Stanislavsky. In *An Actor's Work*, the fictional teacher Tortsov provides a comprehensive list of the theatrical elements that comprise the Given Circumstances. They include the plot, the period, the time and place of the action, how the actors and directors understand the play, the mise-en-scène, the sets, costumes and props. Tortsov lectures the students on the connection between 'if' as a 'spur to a dormant imagination' and the Given Circumstances as the 'substance for it'.[97] They operate together to bring the state of experiencing into being. Malaev-Babel explains the difference of perspective in terms of the attitude to artifice and the role of creative joy: 'where Stanislavsky taught the actor how to erase the contradiction between life and theatrical reality, Vakhtangov told the actor that their creative joy arises

[96] Vakhtangov in Benedetti, *Art of the Actor*, p. 133.
[97] Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work*, pp. 52-53.

from "creating a new truth out of this contradiction"'.[98] For Vakhtangov, the acknowledgement of the actor as an artist is a source of inspiration.

Vakhtangov's model of 'affective emotion' is an attractive prospect for the contemporary conservatoire, at least in the sense that it has the potential to contribute to the mental and physical health of the students. It makes a clear distinction between life and acted emotion and it acknowledges the artifice of dramatic fiction and insists on an element of joy in playing. It certainly influenced the actor training of the twentieth century. Method practitioners frequently cite Vakhtangov as a major influence on their approach to 'affective memory' (6.4). His insight that an emotion that is provoked by one set of circumstances in life can be recalled, and deployed in an entirely different set of fictional circumstances on stage, opens the door for later work on what actor trainers refer to as 'substitution' or 'transference', particularly in American interpretations of Stanislavskian training (4.5).[99]

Vakhtangov's model of acted emotion may have some shortcomings. He does not explain the rationale for his claim that affective emotions 'are governed by quite different laws from those that guide our emotions in life itself'. My working definition of life emotion suggests that our physiological responses to emotionally competent stimuli make little distinction between causes, whether they are externally present, imagined or remembered. In other words, the science could not distinguish between 'affective' and life emotion on the basis of its origin alone. Vakhtangov also insists that the only real-life emotions that can exist on

[98] Leonid Volkov in Malaev-Babel, *Sourcebook*, p. 25.
[99] For a discussion of substitution, see Uta Hagen with Haskel Frankel, *Respect for Acting* (Wiley, 2008), pp. 34-45.

stage are the pleasure of experiencing affective emotions well and the displeasure of experiencing them badly.[100] However, since the brain generates a constant stream of thoughts, feelings and sensations every second of every day, it is not clear how this can be 'switched off' in performance.[101] It is commonplace for the events in an actor's day to colour their experience on stage or screen. The role of the actor's personal feelings and the emotions evoked by the job of acting were acknowledged and explored much more fully towards the end of the twentieth century by Ellie Konijn.

3.6 Beyond the Paradox II: 'The Actor's Dilemma'

Ellie Konijn's *Acting Emotions* incorporates an explicit attempt to resolve Diderot's paradox. Konijn proposes that rather than facing the choice between emotionalism and anti-emotionalism, the contemporary actor must decide to what extent they will identify with their character. She calls this the 'Actor's Dilemma'.[102] It avoids the polarisation of *The Paradox*, which at its most extreme, posits a stark choice between unreliable inspiration and cold-hearted competence. Its dualism is replaced with the selection of a point on a spectrum of options between complete identification and complete detachment. In this section, I consider Konijn's contribution to acting theory and argue that her proposed resolution of this key binary in acting theory is not entirely satisfactory.

[100] Vakhtangov in Benedetti, *Art of the Actor*, p. 133, Vakhtangov in Malaev-Babel, *Sourcebook*, p. 184.
[101] Lisa Feldman Barret explains how the brain makes use of sensory and interoceptive data to make sense of the world: 'intrinsic brain activity is millions and millions of nonstop predictions'. See *How Emotions are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain* (Pan, 2018), p. 59.
[102] Elly A. Konijn, *Acting Emotions: Shaping Emotions on Stage* (Amsterdam University Press, 2000), pp. 30-33, hereafter *Acting Emotions.*

Konijn places her study in the context of three broad categories of Western theatrical style, which she labels 'involvement', 'detachment', and 'self-expression'.[103] Her analysis can be aligned with previous theory. Her term 'involvement' is associated with Stanislavsky and Strasberg, and denotes those styles in which there is a close identification between actor and role.[104] It is therefore comparable to Archer's term 'emotionalism'. In the style of 'detachment', associated with Brecht, 'the emotions of characters are 'shown' or 'demonstrated' in a reproducible form, referring to emotions as they occur in reality, but not identical to them'.[105] The definition is very similar to that of 'anti-emotionalism' (1.2). Finally, the style of 'self-expression' is defined as the use of 'the actor's own authentic emotions' in a highly disciplined environment, 'without the least trace of egotism or self-enjoyment'.[106] I detect no obvious precedent for this term, but Konijn associates it with practitioners such as Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook, Richard Schechner, and Eugenio Barba. Konijn's exploration of what the actor feels on stage is located in her theoretical framework of involvement, detachment and self-expression.

Konijn's methodology has some features in common with that of Archer. Both researchers based their findings on questionnaires sent to actors in two countries. While Archer gathered data from Britain and France, Konijn contacted actors from the US and the Dutch-speaking areas of Europe. Both surveys concentrate on performance rather than rehearsal

[103] Konijn, *Acting Emotions*, pp. 36-44.
[104] Ibid., p. 112.
[105] Ibid., p. 39.
[106] Ibid., p. 41.

and only deal with theatre actors. However, just as Archer found shortcomings in Diderot's methodology, Konijn seeks to improve on the approach of her predecessor.

Konijn draws on a number of research tools developed by twentieth-century psychology and cognitive science. While Archer's findings were based on reports from approximately seventy respondents, Konijn drew on a much larger sample of three hundred and forty-one actors.[107] Archer's questions focussed on observable manifestations of emotion, in an attempt to maintain a degree of objectivity.[108] While he certainly crafted his questions with care, Konijn used multiple-choice questionnaires designed to generate both quantitative and qualitative data, relating to the actors' experience of emotion on stage. While Archer's respondents were aware their comments would be published, Konijn applied the principle of anonymity. She speculates that this was one reason why her conclusions differed so widely from those of Archer: 'his results are more likely to indicate how actors of the day thought they should feel when they performed, rather than providing a representative reflection of what actually went on'.[109] I suggest this conjecture is a relatively weak aspect of Konijn's argument. The accounts that appear in Archer appear to be sincere and are by no means always flattering to the actor. There is no obvious reason to suggest the lack of anonymity had an effect on the respondents' candour. Furthermore, the problematic nature of self-report is a factor that would have affected both surveys. As

[107] Konijn estimates the Archer's number to have been 'about seventy in all', *Acting* Emotions, p. 105. For details of her own respondents, see *Acting Emotions*, p. 124.
[108] Archer, *Paradox/Masks*, p. 78.
[109] Konijn, *Acting Emotions*, p. 105.

Scherer points out, it is difficult for people to be accurate and honest about their emotional experience, even when that is the intention (2.3).

Archer and Konijn both seek to use emotion science to illuminate their studies. Archer imagines an instructive dialogue between two giants of the worlds of acting and psychology, David Garrick and G.H. Lewes.[110] Konijn goes a step further by making explicit reference to Nico Frijda's theory, focussing on functionality and appraisal. She explains that emotions 'serve the personal motives, needs or concerns relating to pleasure and pain, attraction and aversion'.[111] In terms of appraisal, Konijn is presumably referring to Frijda's laws of 'Concern' and 'Situational Meaning', the spontaneous assessment of a situation, in terms of its meaning for the individual's interests (2.6). These laws operate in tandem to generate an 'action tendency', the goal-oriented urge to have an impact on the immediate environment. The language of motives and goals echoes that of the rehearsal room and the relevance to acting is clear.

Although there are some parallels between the research methods of Archer and Konijn, they come to radically different conclusions about the nature of acted emotion. Archer uses the images of a boy sympathizing with his sister's sorrow over a broken toy and of Salvini's 'phantom' to explain his concept of 'mimetic' emotion. The metaphors suggest a close analogy between life and acted emotion, but with different levels of intensity. To Archer, 'mimetic' emotion must be regarded as 'real', because it includes the involuntary

[110] Archer, *Paradox/Masks,* p. 76.
[111] Konijn, *Acting Emotions*, p. 57.

physiological indicators of life emotion (3.4). Konijn also posits a distinction between life and acted emotion: 'I presume that they are of a fundamentally different nature than the emotions we encounter in daily life'.[112] However, she repeatedly insists that the actor's representations, which she calls 'character emotion', 'are not real emotions, but they are intended to create the illusion of real emotions'.[113] Archer, then, takes a modified emotionalist position, that regards acted emotion as 'real' physiologically, and distinct from, but related to life emotion. Konijn, however, takes a different view of what constitutes 'reality' on stage.

Konijn develops two points to support her argument for the concept of 'character emotion'. Firstly, citing several examples from Greek classical drama, she argues that embodying the 'diversity and intensity' of the emotional range required in a short space of time 'would not be possible in daily life'.[114] Within the action of *Medea*, for instance, the eponymous heroine leaves her home of Colchis to marry Jason, is deserted by him and then kills his new wife and her own sons in revenge.[115] Konijn also draws on Schoenmakers's studies of audience perception to suggest that actors 'conjure up worlds which do not exist' in such a convincing way that audiences 'easily exchange' these imaginary worlds 'as though a pretend emotion were a real emotion'.[116] Konijn's view aligns with the anti-emotionalist position, insofar as she asserts that acted and life emotion cannot coincide.

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[112] Konijn, *Acting Emotions*, p. 59.
[113] Ibid., p. 34. See also pp. 47-48, 103.
[114] Ibid., p. 59.
[115] *The Complete Euripides*, ed. by William Arrowsmith and others, 5 vols (Oxford University Press, 2010-11) V, 2011, ed. by Peter Burian and Alan Shapiro, trans. by Michael Collier, pp. 117-223.
[116] Konijn, *Acting Emotions*, p. 59. See also Henri Schoenmakers, 'Aesthetic Emotions and Aestheticized emotions in Theatrical Situations', *Tijdschrift Voor Theaterwetenschap* (1992), pp. 39-58.

Konijn offers a detailed taxonomy of the actor's affective existence on stage, consisting of four 'levels of enactment'.[117] The first two levels relate to the actor as a human being. She argues that, contrary to Vakhtangov's view, the actor cannot entirely escape their private emotions. Secondly, the actor exists as a working professional, who experiences emotions related to the execution of their craft. Konijn names this level of enactment 'task emotion'. She lists the professional concerns that give rise to such emotions: the need to appear competent, the need to preserve self-image, the need for sensation and the drive to create.[118] The second two levels relate to the affective life of the character. To describe the third level of enactment, Konijn makes direct use of Diderot's term, *modèle idéal*.[119] It is the image of the character's affective existence which the actor develops in rehearsal. It constitutes the 'intended emotion' that the actor plans to repeat throughout the run of performances. Finally, on the fourth level of enactment, the actor portrays the 'character emotions' in performance. They are intended to be recognised by the audience as representations of real emotional states, but they are not. Although Konijn's third and fourth levels of enactment draw heavily on Diderot's *modèle idéal* and the anti-emotionalist view of acting, her analysis is a rich contribution to the literature with a distinctive new concept, the 'task emotion'.

Perhaps the most striking suggestion in Konijn's study is the connection she makes between task emotions and the actor's capacity to invest their character emotions with

[117] Konijn, *Acting Emotions*, pp. 33-34.
[118] Ibid., pp. 61-63.
[119] Ibid., p. 33.

verisimilitude.[120] She suggests that it is the genuine task emotions that persuade the audience that what they are watching is in some way 'real'. The actor 'uses the emotions as an actor-craftsman to lend the illusion of spontaneity and believability to the reproducible form which has become second nature, based on the inner model'.[121] She partially explains how this process might work by drawing a parallel between actor and character. The competent actor responds positively to challenge, because they believe they have the skills and ability to overcome the stress of performing in public. They therefore have an intention to successfully complete their performance. Similarly, actors working in the Stanislavsky tradition will routinely create goal-oriented 'tasks' or 'objectives' for their characters. This means actor and character are on parallel trajectories, and the actor's state of arousal, focussed on their professional task, can be adapted to the fictional situation of the character.[122]

To resolve the *Paradox*, Konijn proposes that actors adapt their task emotions to the fictional circumstances. So, their performance is not cold and lacking in feelings, but what they experience is related to doing their job, not to the imagined emotion of the character. She acknowledges that how, exactly, actors adapt their task emotions to fit the character's needs is not yet clear.[123] Elucidating such a mechanism could be a promising area for future research.

[120] Konijn, *Acting Emotions*, pp. 153-54.
[121] Ibid., p. 52.
[122] Ibid., pp. 153-54.
[123] Ibid., p. 155.

Both Archer and Konijn offer a critique of their predecessors' methodology and strive to achieve more reliable results. Similarly, Konijn's survey is open to question. She herself reflects on her research method, including concerns about the size and composition of her sample and about the variability of language used to describe emotional experience.[124] I would add that the problematic nature of self-report is compounded by the vagaries of memory. The actors were asked to recall performance experiences on a specific occasion that may have occurred weeks or months before.

A number of aspects of Konijn's argument seem unsatisfactory. She states that 'according to the involvement theory, the actor himself has the emotions which he impersonates in his character'.[125] I contend this claim over-simplifies Stanislavsky's complex and nuanced view of the role of emotion in the theatre, particularly his account of processing emotional experience for artistic purposes (5.3.5, 5.4). Konijn's interdisciplinary references are almost exclusively confined to Frijda, who, she claims, provides the 'most comprehensive current emotion theory' for the purposes of her study.[126] She therefore relies on a single point of view from the sphere of emotion science. It is therefore all the more strange that she ignores Frijda's third Law, the 'Law of Apparent Reality' (2.6). This law states that an emotional response can be initiated by events that are appraised as real. Konijn's discussion assumes that it is impossible for an emotional response to be provoked by the fictional situation of the play or *mise-en-scène*. I argue that actors take advantage of Frijda's third law by an imaginative acceptance of given circumstances as real, the process that

[124] Konijn, *Acting Emotions*, pp. 147-50.
[125] Ibid., pp. 36-39.
[126] Ibid., p. 16.

Stanislavsky referred to as 'belief and the sense of truth'.[127] Vakhtangov and Konijn both offer a model of acted emotion that supersedes the emotionalist-anti-emotionalist binary, but neither provide a definitive answer. The search goes on for a satisfactory model of acted emotion.

3.7 Scenic Emotion

In the concluding section of this chapter, I develop the new model of acted emotion, which I have called 'Scenic Emotion'. It is informed by the dialogue between the humanities and sciences set up by my thesis and is used throughout the discussions to follow. The model is conceived as a reinvention of the expression used by Archer, in the light of subsequent developments in the arts, psychology and neuroscience.

The term 'Scenic Emotion' is appealing in a number of ways. It suggests a type of emotion specific to dramatic contexts, distinct from life emotion. It has other useful, more pragmatic connotations in actor training, albeit from the Russian tradition rather than the UK conservatoire. In my experience of the Moscow Art Theatre School, what British practitioners would refer to as a 'voice class' or 'movement class' appear on Russian timetables as 'scenic speech' and 'scenic movement'. The labels are not used esoterically, they simply mean 'movement and speech suitable for the stage'. It is tempting to extend this formulation to emotion, to reflect the thesis aspiration towards what might be called an 'emotion class', where actors can learn to embody emotion, in a safe environment, for artistic purposes.

[127] Stanislavsky, *AAW*, pp. 152-94.

The history of the emotionalist-anti-emotionalist debate includes a wide diversity of opinion. Nevertheless, there is a degree of consensus on one point. Life emotion can and should be distinguished from acted emotion. Commentators as varied as Diderot, Archer, Vakhtangov, Konijn and Frijda all share this view, albeit expressed in different terms. For Diderot, the actor uses the *modèle idéal* to shape their stage portrayal of emotion. The others, respectively, use the terms 'mimetic', 'affective', 'character' and 'virtual' emotion. The model of Scenic Emotion developed here follows these antecedents and asserts, as a working hypothesis, that acted emotion is distinct from life emotion.

The concept of Scenic Emotion draws on a number of sources, but is particularly influenced by Vakhtangov's definition of 'affective emotion' (3.5) and Damasio's concept of the 'as-if' body loop (2.7). When I first noticed a possible synergy between these two ideas, I decided to check that I had understood Damasio's proposal. I contacted him to ask if he thought a link was plausible. His response was unequivocal: 'you are correct, the most effective way of accounting for "affective emotions" (a bad term, by the way), is by invoking my as-if-body-loop'.[128] I take it Damasio objects to Vakhtangov's 'bad term' because of the element of tautology. Since emotions are within the broad category of affective experience, they are all, necessarily, 'affective'. There is no such thing as 'non-affective' emotion. Vakhtangov is presumably using a kind of shorthand for 'present emotion rooted in affective memory'. To mark the particular meaning of Vakhtangov's concept and its importance in the thesis, it will be capitalised hereafter. Damasio's term, the 'as-if' body loop, has an obvious similarity to

[128] Antonio Damasio, email to the author, 11 May 2015.

Stanislavsky's idea, popularly known as the 'magic if'.[129] In Stanislavskian actor training, a practitioner might ask, 'how would I behave if I was in these given circumstances?' The 'as-if' mechanism is a biological equivalent of Stanislavsky's challenge to the imagination, which supports a comparable process in the body. The brain generates the neural pattern associated with an emotional stimulus, but without the full range of visceral responses that the stimulus would normally provoke. The purpose of this mechanism is to guide decision-making, without the expensive use of energy that accompanies a full-blown physiological reaction. We react 'as if' the physiological component of the emotion had taken place.

Energy management is vital to the actor during repeated performances in a long theatrical run or an arduous shoot, particularly in high-stakes roles. Invoking the 'as-if' body loop explains how the actor can budget for the demands on their body through the trajectory of their character's journey. It also explains a feature of Affective Emotion mentioned by Vakhtangov: the actor's capacity to 'shake off' an emotional state immediately on leaving the stage, even if it is an intense one such as the agony of Lear. The 'as-if' mechanism seems essential to the physical and mental wellbeing of the actor. Additionally, the brain's simulation of a partial emotional response supports the actor's belief that they are responding as the character not themselves. I argue this is not a delusion or a lie, as Konijn suggests, but a manifestation of a recognised neurological mechanism.[130] This belief enables the actor to play a challenging scene with conviction, and to avoid the hollow feeling that

[129] Stanislavsky, *AAW*, pp. 43-54.
[130] Konijn cites Shachter and Singer to support her argument that the conditions of performance can deceive the actor into believing that they are experiencing a 'spontaneous, real emotion' (2.3). See *Acting Emotions*, pp. 99-100.

'nothing is going on inside' and that they are in some way 'cheating the audience'. In short, the work of the imagination is scaffolded onto the biological functioning of the body.

Whether actual emotion is necessary to convince an audience of the 'reality' of what they are seeing remains an open question. The advice of Luigi Riccoboni still sounds useful: 'a Speaker ought to take care not to work himself up to Tears: Yet if they shall naturally flow, he should not use the least Efforts to stop them'.[131] Scenic Emotion does not demand a physiological response, but neither does it suppress it. On the question of the artistic value of actual emotion, Archer's survey includes a range of richly contradictory evidence. In some cases, a conduit to life emotion led to artistic triumph, in some cases it was disastrous. Some actors insists that the small, unconscious manifestations of emotion support the illusion of real life in the theatre, even if they are barely visible to the people at the back of the auditorium. Certainly, it is difficult to hide a 'fake' reaction from the camera. Others find actual tears irrelevant to the objective of convincing the crowd their character is suffering. It probably depends on the lens and size of the theatre. The expression of Scenic Emotion is adjusted to the medium.

Finally, the model outlined here also draws on Frijda's functional account of emotion. In his terms, an emotional reaction creates a state of action readiness or action tendency (2.6).

[131] Lewis Riccoboni, 'Reflections upon Declamation, or, The Art of Speaking in Public', in *An Historical and Critical Account of the Theatres in Europe,* trans. by R. Dodsley (Printed for Waller and Dodsley, 1741), pp. 1-36 (p. 15). In the original French, Riccoboni writes '*L'Orateur doit bien se garder de s'exciter aux larmes, mais aussi il ne doit pas faire le moindre effort pour les arrêter, si elles viennent naturellement*', in Louis Riccoboni, 'Pensées sur la Déclamation', in *Reflexions Historiques et Critiques sur les Differens Theatres de L'Europe* (Guerin, 1738), pp. 1-45 (p. 20).

The mechanism prompts an active response to a challenge in the environment, either from another person or other feature of human ecology. This view invites actor trainers to reframe their view of emotion and action. These elements of drama need not be seen as polar opposites, since they are aspects of the same process. I argue, therefore, that to view emotion and action as distinct is a false binary. An obvious advantage, if this argument is accepted, is that concentrating on action is not 'cheating'. It is a legitimate focus on a controllable aspect of the emotional process. Action in this context *is* emotion. A visceral response may or may not help the actor, but the most visible manifestation of emotion is the action taken prompted by bodily changes. To the actor training specialist, the mechanisms explored by Frijda, within the discipline of academic psychology, seem very familiar. It is a commonplace observation that Stanislavsky explored the links between emotional and physical response in the early decades of the twentieth century. What is less obvious is that the development of the Method of Physical Actions and Active Analysis prefigure some much later emotion science, because they assume that action and emotion are aspects of a single psychophysical whole (5.4, 5.6).

CHAPTER FOUR: CAN ACTING BE TAUGHT? *MYSTERY* AND *SCIENCE* IN THE UK CONSERVATOIRE

4.1 The Pedagogy of Acted Emotion

Having established working definitions of life and acted emotion, the thesis now turns to the third and final element of my critical framework, actor training in the UK conservatoire. This chapter considers how emotion has been dealt with in drama schools, in the context of the pedagogical binary I have dubbed *Mystery* and *Science*. The discussion highlights prevalent conceptions of acted emotion and how they might overlap with the Scenic Emotion model. Overall, the argument aims to identify dominant pedagogical approaches, so that they might be challenged and updated.

Mysterians accept that there a number of 'intangibles' in acting that cannot be measured and are difficult to explain, such as charisma, instinct, presence and inspiration (1.2). According to *Mysterians*, it is futile to attempt to analyse these elusive qualities, perhaps even counter-productive. In this sense, it can be seen as an anti-scientific stance. *Mysterians*, typically insist that 'acting cannot be taught', a refrain that has been relentlessly repeated, often, paradoxically, by important figures in the history of actor training. These include Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, founder of RADA and the celebrated actor and Stanislavsky enthusiast, Michael Redgrave (4.2). *Scientists*, on the other hand, propose that acting is 'lawful' in the sense that Frijda uses the term (2.6). It is a human process governed by consistent principles which may be difficult to discover, but which can be both taught and learned. Notable

Scientists include Stanislavsky himself, Harold Lang, one of the first Stanislavskian teachers in the UK conservatoire, and the eminent actor-pedagogue, Uta Hagen (4.2).

In chapters two and three, I argued that more stable and satisfactory definitions of life and acted emotion can be achieved through a synthesis of opposing positions. The methodology here is comparable, but with an important variation. I examine binary arguments, but make a case for the *Scientific* position (4.2). From the perspective of a teacher and scholar, there must be a degree of faith in the possibility of pushing back the boundaries of what is knowable about acting. The subsequent discussion of practice is dominated by pedagogical *Scientists*.

In order to achieve a deep understanding of the current training landscape, I propose it is illuminating to examine how key ideas and language took root in drama schools. There is, therefore, an element of historical analysis in the chapter. I draw, in particular, on Michael Sanderson's account of the evolution of theatre practice and training from the late nineteenth century to the early 1980s, *From Irving to Olivier: A Social History of the Acting Profession*.[1] I also build on David Shirley's argument that variants of the Stanislavsky System (KSS), have, over time, become the 'the mainstay of British conservatoire training'.[2] The analysis of training practice is located in its historical and institutional context.

[1] Michael Sanderson, *From Irving to Olivier: A Social History of the Acting Profession* (Athlone, 1984), hereafter *Irving to Olivier.*
[2] David Shirley, 'Stanislavsky's Passage into the British Conservatoire', in *Russians in Britain: British Theatre and the Russian Tradition of Actor Training*, ed. by Jonathan Pitches (Routledge, 2012), pp. 38-61 (p. 39), hereafter 'Passage into the Conservatoire'.

It is difficult to make reliable generalisations about conservatoire pedagogy, not least because most schools explicitly avoid commitment to any one approach. Rose Bruford, for example, informs candidates for its BA Acting course, 'over three years, you will train in a variety of methodologies'.[3] The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD) asserts that 'drawing upon multiple performance theories, rather than subscribing to a particular doctrine or method, Central actors have always adopted a pragmatic approach to their training'.[4] Similarly, the LAMDA website states that 'we won't teach you just one methodology of acting, instead you'll learn a wide range of techniques and skills'.[5] There is no homogenous approach in drama schools.

The preference for an eclectic curriculum is not new. Vladimir Mirodan, a former Principal of the Drama Centre London (DCL), reports that Gwynneth Thurburn, the Principal of the Central School from 1942-67, was fond of quoting Orson Welles: 'The only thing wrong with The Method is the word "The"'.[6] Eclecticism in the curriculum is not the only complication facing an investigation of actor training. There are also limitations in the literature, because of both the nature of knowledge transfer in drama schools and, arguably, a culture of secrecy surrounding the rehearsal room.

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[3] 'Acting BA Hons: What you'll study', Rose Bruford College, n.d. <https://www.bruford.ac.uk/learn/undergraduate-courses/acting/> [accessed 6 July 2024].
[4] 'Acting, BA: About Central's Acting, BA courses', Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, n.d. <https://www.cssd.ac.uk/courses/acting-ba> [accessed 6 July 2024].
[5] 'BA (Hons) Professional Acting: Key Information: Is this course for me?', LAMDA, n.d. <https://www.lamda.ac.uk/all-courses/acting-directing-courses/ba-hons-professional-acting> [accessed 6 July 2024].
[6] Orson Welles in Vladimir Mirodan, 'The First Class: Harold Lang and the Beginnings of Stanislavskian Teaching in the British Conservatoire', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 11, 1 (2020), pp. 60-75 (p. 62), doi:10.1080/19443927.2019.1636856, hereafter 'Harold Lang'.

In his 2007 study of tacit knowledge, Ross Prior laments the lack of relevant publications. He suggests that pedagogical exchanges in drama schools are 'synnoetic', i.e., direct, personal and experiential, and that the process is therefore difficult to articulate.[7]

Prior's discussion of synnoetic pedagogy has a number of implications for vocational training, whether it be acting, professional football or haute cuisine. It matters little if a chef understands the history and theory of cooking, but they are incapable of producing an edible plate of food. A footballer learning how to score directly from a free kick does not need to know the physics governing the trajectory of the ball. But they do need to develop the embodied sensation of how to execute the run-up and optimal leg-action. Therefore, the training is focussed on short demonstrations, practising the relevant actions and receiving feedback. Too much information is not helpful. For this reason, acting teachers are often reluctant to engage in lengthy preamble. They want the students to 'just try it' and see what happens. The positive intention is to focus on experiential learning. The unintended outcome is sometimes that the students feel confused, that they are working in the dark. It also creates a climate in which knowledge resides within the traditions of the school and, perhaps, within particular teachers. There is then the risk of individuals developing 'guru' status and the job of the student becomes to try to fathom out what the guru is thinking and to strive to please them, with minimal guidance.

[7] Ross W. Prior, 'Understanding Actor Trainers' Articulation of their Practice', *Studies in Theatre and Performance,* 27, 3 (2007), pp. 295-305 (p. 295).

Prior concludes that because of the failure to articulate tacit knowledge, 'there is a distinct lack of literature on the pedagogy of actor training'.[8] Kathy Dacre also comments on a lack of information, but suggests a different explanation. In her report on Stanislavskian teaching in the UK, published in 2009, she remarks that actor training is a 'discipline that is notorious for shrouding rehearsal room practice in secrecy' and argues that it is therefore 'difficult to find sound evidence of the curricula of training in theatre over the past fifty years'.[9] Any attempt to illuminate actor pedagogy must therefore overcome the diversity of the curricula, the limitations on the literature and an apparent reluctance to reveal trade secrets.

Notwithstanding the barriers mentioned by Prior and Dacre, this thesis aims to identify some of the most frequently occurring practices. To some extent, gaps in the available knowledge have been filled in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Prior himself has made some inroads into the neglected area of conservatoire pedagogy, with his *Teaching Actors: Knowledge Transfer in Actor Training*.[10] Some conservatoire teachers have been happy to articulate and share their practice. John Gillett, Dee Cannon and Nick Moseley, for example, have all published accounts of their teaching at, respectively, East 15, RADA and RCSSD.[11] To

[8] Ibid.
[9] Kathy Dacre, *Teaching Stanislavski: An Investigation into how Stanislavski is Taught to Students in the UK*, (Palatine, 2009), p. 3, hereafter *Teaching Stanislavski.*
[10] Ross W. Prior, *Teaching Actors: Knowledge Transfer in Actor Training* (Intellect, 2012).
[11] John Gillett, *Acting on Impulse* (Methuen, 2007); Dee Cannon, *In Depth Acting* (Oberon, 2012); Nick Moseley, *Meisner in Practice: A Guide for Actors, Directors and Teachers* (Nick Hern, 2012).

support the argument, therefore, I have consulted a range of sources, including accounts of studio practice, autobiographical works by prominent actors and directors, unpublished documentation, personal experience of teaching in the conservatoire and historical accounts of the evolution of actor training in the UK.[12]

Shirley traces the gradual, 'piecemeal' passage of Stanislavskian ideas into the UK conservatoire.[13] I explore his suggestion that the founding of the Drama Centre London (DCL) represents a watershed in UK actor training, particularly in terms of the systematic use of Stanislavskian practice. I argue that, prior to 1963, the chief training innovators, such as Theodore Komissarzhevsky, Michel Saint-Denis, Joan Littlewood and Howard Lang, had little or no contact with the mainstream conservatoire. Nevertheless, they had a long-term impact on drama schools and had a part to play in the introduction of Stanislavskian ideas to British theatre culture. The DCL functioned as a gateway into the conservatoire for innovative ideas, including both Russian and American strands of the Stanislavsky System (KSS). DCL was the first UK school to wholeheartedly embrace what it called a 'methodological' training, i.e., one that aimed to provide a systematic and integrated approach. Moreover, following Shirley, I suggest that a 'diaspora' of DCL teachers went on to influence training throughout the conservatoire (4.4).

[12] I have worked as a freelance tutor and director in a range of drama schools, including the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, The Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts and ALRA South. Between 2013 and 2016, I worked as a full-time acting tutor at the Birmingham School of Acting, now the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. I was Course Leader for BA Acting at the Drama Centre London between 2016 and 2020. At the time of writing, I am Course Leader for BA Acting at Anglia Ruskin University.
[13] Shirley, 'Passage into the Conservatoire', p. 40.

Russian training culture has reached the UK in a number of forms. Both Theodore Komissarzhevsky and Michael Chekhov taught and directed in England.[14] Although Stanislavsky never visited Britain, his published works were eagerly devoured by significant figures such as Redgrave, Littlewood and Lang. However, my analysis suggests that it is US interpretations of Stanislavsky that have outweighed alternative approaches to acted emotion. I trace some widely used exercises and terminology to a short lineage of trainers, who had a significant impact on DCL, RADA and future teachers. Although Uta Hagen did not work in UK drama schools, she is a notable influence, because she trained the first Head of Acting at DCL, Doreen Cannon. Cannon later transferred to RADA and her daughter, Dee, became a prominent pedagogue at the same school (4.5).

Hagen is by no means the only practitioner to have informed UK approaches. Dacre's report mentions a variety of figures, including Michael Chekhov and Strasberg. However, among teachers in higher education, it is Sanford Meisner and Stella Adler who are most frequently cited.[15] In their case, there is no obvious direct route into the conservatoire. But British trainers, such as John Beschizza and Nick Moseley, used Meisner repetition exercises in drama schools for many years, while Adler's ideas and language have become common currency. I argue the practitioners discussed are

[14] Jonathan Pitches, 'A Tradition in Transition: Komisarjevsky's Seduction of the British Theatre', in *Russians in Britain*, ed. by Jonathan Pitches (Routledge, 2012), pp. 13-37, hereafter 'Tradition in Transition'; Jerri Daboo, 'Michael Chekhov and the Studio in Dartington: The Remembering of a Tradition', in *Russians in Britain*, ed. by Jonathan Pitches (Routledge, 2012), pp. 62-85.
[15] Dacre, *Teaching Stanislavski*, p. 6.

among the primary sources of pervasive beliefs about acted emotion and the language that is used to discuss it in the studio.

The focus of this thesis is current training practice in relation to its emotional component. However, it is impossible to discuss the contemporary landscape without at least acknowledging some of the huge challenges and changes that the sector has faced in the period between 2020 and 2024, including radical overhauls in staffing, organisation and curricula. The catalyst for many of these changes has been a drive for greater equity, inclusion and diversity among students and staff. The full implications of these developments have, to date, received little or no attention from scholars. However, I propose that, despite some important shifts in prevailing practice, including the ethical dimension, the teaching of acted emotion in the conservatoire remains in a Stanislavskian paradigm (4.7).

4.2 *Mystery* and *Science* in UK Actor Training

As the founder of Britain's first specialist drama school, now known as RADA, Herbert Beerbohm Tree might be expected to have had faith in the possibility of teaching acting. However, he had a limited view of what pedagogy could achieve. Tree remarked that 'Art cannot be taught, nor genius implanted; but given the genius, we can teach the fit expression of the Art. Our school aims at no more'.[16] At the heart of Tree's pedagogy, is the notion of 'genius', or perhaps the more modest 'talent',

[16] Herbert Beerbohm Tree in Austin Fryers, *A Guide to the Stage* (Everett, 1904), p. xiii.

understood as an innate quality that is, as it were, a gift of God. All the teacher can do is uncover that talent and equip the lucky possessors with skills to express themselves. Sanderson outlines the early RADA curriculum, which consisted of voice production, the art of expression, elocution, pantomime, dancing, callisthenics, fencing, a rehearsal class and the history of English theatre and drama.[17] There is no mention of acting.

Michael Redgrave had little involvement with the conservatoire, but did show an interest in training. He delivered a series of lectures at Bristol University in the early fifties, which included discussion of the KSS.[18] Redgrave suggests it is specifically the emotional dimension of acting that renders it difficult, if not impossible, to teach. He greatly admired the Stanislavskian project to create a reliable system: '[…] the work of Stanislavski is the only successful attempt which has ever been made to come to terms with the fundamentals of the actor's art'.[19] His claim for the unique status of the KSS is debatable. It is also notable that, despite Redgrave's endorsement of a 'lawful' system of acting, he also adopts a characteristically *Mysterian* position. He regards the claim that 'acting cannot be taught' as a 'truism'.[20] He links the axiom to 'sensibility', a term familiar from the eighteenth-century debates: both Sainte Albine and Diderot used the word to indicate emotional responsiveness and empathy, as a foundation for ethical behaviour (3.2, 3.3).[21] Redgrave defines the term

[17] Sanderson, *Irving to Olivier*, pp. 42-43.
[18] Michael Redgrave, *The Actor's Ways and Means* (Heinemann, 1953), p. 49.
[19] Ibid., p. 50.
[20] Ibid., p. 30.
[21] See 3.3 for a discussion of Diderot's distinction between 'sensibility' and 'self-possession'.

slightly differently, identifying two qualities that are indispensable to the actor, sensibility and intelligence:

> Sensibility [is] the power to apprehend emotionally the entire content of character and action; and intelligence, the power to reduce that emotional experience to a technical formula which can be repeated at will. Sensibility cannot be consciously acquired, which is why acting cannot be taught.[22]

Redgrave, then, occupies a nuanced position between the extremes of *Mystery* and *Science.* He welcomes Stanislavsky's attempt to describe the fundamental principles of acting, but argues that acting cannot be taught, because the emotional faculties required are innate.

Stanislavsky's pursuit of a universal grammar of acting places his work unequivocally in the realms of *Science.* Sonia Moore, a student of Vakhtangov's, remarks that

> The widespread opinion that the actor's work is something mysterious which cannot be learned consciously was considered by Stanislavski to be a prejudice and, like all prejudices, harmful to culture and progress. Stanislavski regarded it as an alibi for an actor's laziness.[23]

Redgrave's and Moore's remarks highlight a key feature of this thesis. Despite his *Mysterian* tendencies, Redgrave believes in the coherence of the KSS. I argue that it is precisely this quality that renders acting both teachable and learnable, a point emphasised by Moore. In contrast to the school of thought that claims 'you've either got it or you haven't', Stanislavskian pedagogy asserts the efficacy of training and the possibility of real transformation and growth. This characteristic of the training helps explain the increasing

[22] Michael Redgrave, 'The Stanislavsky Myth', in *Actors on Acting: The Theories, Techniques, and Practices of the World's Great Actors, Told in their Own Words*, ed. by Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy (Crown, 1970), pp. 403-08 (p. 406).
[23] Sonia Moore, *The Stanislavski System: The Professional Training of an Actor*, 2nd rev. edn (Penguin, 1984), p. 15.

grip of Stanislavskian ideas on the conservatoire, especially post-1963 (4.4). Michael Chekhov succinctly explains the powerful allure of the KSS: 'why does the so-called Stanislavsky's system have such an irresistible power? Because it gives a young actor hope that he can actually master the principal powers of his own creative soul'.[24] In contemporary terms, it is the potential of Stanislavsky-based work to empower students that gives it enduring value in the twenty-first century.

Mirodan's examination of the pioneering teaching of Harold Lang incorporates an explicit link between the idea that 'acting cannot be taught' and the *Mysterian* approach. According to Mirodan, Lang's strategy was to connect internal action with physical expression, an innovation that provoked critics to accuse him of 'psychologising',

> … of linking the perceptible aspects of acting (sound, words, gestures) to particular mental processes. At the root of this accusation is the endlessly repeated dictum: 'acting cannot be taught'. Once this is accepted, the point of actor training is, paradoxically, not to teach acting but to instil certain physical skills and a sense of acting 'taste', of 'what works and what doesn't'. Once absorbed, these enable the mysterious, natural talent of the student to find its voice, its unique timbre.[25]

Mirodan's analysis works as a concise summary of the *Mysterian* approach: skills training, instillation of 'taste' and leaving 'natural talent' well alone. At its heart is a characteristically English reluctance to intellectualize about acting. Director Richard Eyre remarks that 'most actors are as reluctant to theorise about acting as cows are to theorise about veterinary science'.[26] It is an observation that resonates with my own experience. As a member of the

[24] Michael Chekhov, *The Path of the Actor*, ed. by Andrei Kirillov and Bella Merlin, (Routledge, 2005), p. 40.
[25] Mirodan, 'Harold Lang', p. 73.
[26] Carole Zucker, *In the Company of Actors: Reflections on the Craft of Acting*, foreword by Richard Eyre (A & C Black, 1999), p. vii.

Peter Hall Company, rehearsing Feydeau's farce *Where There's a Will*, I was working alongside some well-known actors, including Elaine Paige, David Warner, Nicholas Le Prevost and David Bamber. During a break, curious about a colleague's approach, I asked how they worked on their part. They avoided answering the question, as if they feared any attempt to articulate their process would destroy it. As a pioneer of a psychophysical approach, Lang is at the opposite end of the spectrum. It is precisely the hitherto obscure areas of the actor's inner life that he seeks to address. As Mirodan puts it, 'for him, if actors are to be independent masters of their creative tools acting can and should be taught'.[27] This stance places Lang firmly in the camp of *Science.*

Of the legion of practitioners in the Stanislavsky tradition, one outstanding actor and teacher is particularly worth mentioning in the context of the *Science-Mystery* debate. Uta Hagen objects to the core claim of the *Mysterians*, that acting cannot be taught, on the grounds that 'they are the opinions of those who believe that the "tricks of the trade" can be picked up while performing in public' (1.2).[28] To Hagen, such a belief is indicative of a lack of respect for acting.[29] Her dislike of *Mystery* may well have originated in Britain. She attended RADA in the mid-1930s and was thoroughly dissatisfied, describing her training there as 'poor'.[30] But as a teacher, Hagen was destined to have a long-term impact on the UK conservatoire, albeit indirectly, through her student and assistant Doreen Cannon (4.4, 4.5).

[27] Mirodan, 'Harold Lang', p. 73.
[28] Uta Hagen, *A Challenge for the Actor* (Simon & Shuster, 1991), p. 35, hereafter *Challenge*.
[29] Uta Hagen with Haskel Frankel, *Respect for Acting* (Wiley, 2008), p. 3, hereafter *Respect*.
[30] Hagen, *Challenge*, pp. xviii-ix.

The acting 'intangibles' constitute some grounds for the *Mysterian* position, because there are so many unquantifiable, perhaps unknowable factors in acting (4.1). Reluctance to articulate the process appears to arise from an almost superstitious fear of undermining the actor's instincts, a fear which seems to be based on the dualist belief that thought and emotion are opposites. Although cognitive and emotional processes are separate to a degree, the neurology demonstrates that they are also intimately linked and the best decisions are made when they function in partnership. Antonio Damasio discusses an extraordinary and tragic case that illustrates the point.[31] Phineas Gage suffered from catastrophic damage to his brain, sustained in an accident while he was involved in building a railway. Gage was tasked with preparing an explosive charge to clear an area of rock so that track could be laid. He used a long iron bar to tamp down the powder, but was distracted in the process. The charge exploded prematurely, forcing the bar through his left cheek and out of the top of his skull. Miraculously, Gage survived with many cognitive functions intact, including language, memory and intelligence. However, he lost the ability to manage his impulses, behave in a polite manner and relate successfully to others. Unable to hold down a permanent job, he became a drifter. The intellectual mind alone was not enough for him to function successfully as an adult.

There is an analogy between exploration of the acting 'intangibles' and a key issue in neurology. One of the most intractable problems facing scientists is what Barrett calls 'the age-old mystery of how a human brain creates a human mind'.[32] Damasio detects some

[31] Damasio, *Descartes Error* (Vintage, 2006), pp. 3-33.
[32] Lisa Feldman Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain* (Pan, 2018), p. xv.

resistance to efforts to penetrate the mysteries of the mind, in the form of worry among non-specialists, who fear the 'human consequences of elucidating the biology of consciousness'.[33] He argues that knowledge does not diminish the stature of previously mysterious phenomena. On the contrary, it enhances appreciation of complex human mechanisms. He aspires to 'solving the mystery of consciousness and making a dent on a few related mysteries of mind', confident that even if that were achieved, there would be enough enigmas left to occupy the time of scientists.[34] Damasio's remarks, adapted to acting, could almost be a paraphrase of the aims of this thesis. It aspires to illuminate the mystery of Scenic Emotion and to make a few dents in some related intangibles of acting.

I conclude that the *Mysterian* position is untenable for an actor trainer-researcher. There is an obvious contradiction in a conservatoire teacher claiming that acting cannot be taught. This thesis takes a *Scientific* position, because consigning large elements of the acting process to the realms of the unknowable inhibits research and experimentation. It may be difficult to investigate Scenic Emotion, charisma, stage presence and the rest, but those are precisely the areas that offer the greatest challenge to scholars. If the riddle of just one of these intangibles were solved, there would be no shortage of mysteries remaining. There is a clear duty for researchers to push back against the unknown in the pursuit of *Science*.

[33] Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness* (Vintage, 2000), p. 26.
[34] Ibid., p. 28.

4.3 Innovation before the Watershed

In this section, I argue that in the first half of the twentieth century, the innovations in actor training that had the most far-reaching implications came not from within the conservatoire, but from outside the established drama schools. I also examine Shirley's suggestion that practitioners such as Theodore Komissarzhevsky and Michel Saint-Denis, in addition to their own distinctive contributions, were, to some extent, a 'conduit' by which Stanislavskian thinking entered mainstream UK training.[35]

As Jonathan Pitches explains, Komissarzhevsky was 'deeply immersed in the Russian theatre establishment from birth'.[36] He was the son of Fyodor Komissarzhevsky, Stanislavsky's opera teacher and the co-founder of the Moscow Society of Art and Literature. He was also the half-brother of the world-famous actress Vera Komissarzhevskaya, who created the Dramatic Theatre of St Petersburg. Theodore learned his trade at the Dramatic Theatre and developed into a multi-skilled practitioner, an accomplished director, designer, critic and teacher.[37] When he moved to Britain in 1919, he began to use an anglicized version of his name, quickly abbreviated to 'Komis' by theatrical friends and colleagues.

Pitches argues that Komis had a significant impact on the aesthetics of British theatre, through his season of Chekhov plays at the Barnes Theatre in the 1920s and his 'epoch-defining productions' at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in the 1930s.[38] By comparison,

[35] Shirley, 'Passage into the Conservatoire', p. 38.
[36] Pitches, 'Tradition in Transition', p. 18.
[37] Theodore Komisarjevsky, *Myself and the Theatre* (Heinemann, 1929), pp. 54-99, hereafter *Myself*.
[38] Pitches, 'Tradition in Transition', p. 13.

his contribution to the conservatoire was modest. There is some evidence that he introduced pantomime and commedia at RADA between 1925 and 1928, but no suggestion of a longer-term involvement.[39] It is in the professional sphere that his approach to training had the most impact.

One celebrated actor who had cause to be grateful to Komis's teaching was John Gielgud, whose publications are a rich source of insights into the early UK conservatoire and the art of acting. Despite his reputation for what is now known as 'emotional availability', Gielgud struggled with acted emotion in training. He describes a rudimentary emotion class at Lady Benson's school. Students were required to rush on stage to 'express different emotions with the same line of dialogue', for example uttering 'baby's burning' with 'hate, fear, disgust or joy'.[40] When he transferred to RADA, Gielgud attempted to imitate his teacher, Claude Rains, straining 'every fibre in my efforts to appear violent or emotional, and only succeeded in forcing my voice and striking strange attitudes with my body'.[41] He did not find the antidote to his involuntary tendency to tighten up until he was cast as Tusenbach in Komis's production of *The Three Sisters* at Barnes.[42] He credits Komis with

> […] teaching me not to act from outside, seizing on obvious effects and histrionics; to avoid the temptations of showing off; to work from within to present a character, and to absorb the atmosphere and general background of a play […] He also gave me my first important lesson in trying to act with relaxation – the secret of all good acting.[43]

[39] Pitches notes that the RADA archive documenting this period of the Academy's history was destroyed in a fire. See 'Tradition in Transition', p. 35.
[40] John Gielgud, *Early Stages* (Sceptre, 1990), p. 30.
[41] Ibid., p. 37.
[42] Gielgud, *Stages*, pp. 62-68, 192.
[43] John Gielgud in Giles Brandreth, *John Gielgud: A Celebration,* (Pavilion, 1985), pp. 23-24.

It is possible to detect some parallels between Komis's Barnes season rehearsals and Moscow Art Theatre practice. Gielgud was introduced to several approaches that were new to him, including detailed table work, a commitment to the ensemble and exploring the inner life of the character. However, although there are parallels, Komis cannot be reduced to a mere harbinger of Stanislavskian practice.

Although he admired aspects of Stanislavsky's work, Komis was at pains to distance himself aesthetically and in terms of training ideas. He appreciated the 'sincerity' of Stanislavsky's work. He also acknowledged his passion for innovation and intuitive gifts as a 'régisseur': 'a real artist, Stanislavsky was always interested in anything new concerning the theatre, and his interest was not confined to theorising. He always experimented with new methods and principles concerning the art of acting and of production'.[44] Open in his praise of Stanislavsky, Komis was equally direct about what he perceived to be his shortcomings. He placed Stanislavsky in the realist tradition of Antoine and the Meininger Theatre, and himself and his sister's theatre in a movement that reacted against realism. His models included Meyerhold, the poets Blok and Bryusov and the artists Bakst and Doboujinsky.[45] He bluntly described the Moscow Arts Theatre's attempts to produce 'anti-naturalistic' plays as a failure. He also dismissed Stanislavsky's theory of acting as 'fallacious' and refers to the System's 'fundamental mistakes'.[46] Although certainly not a defender of the KSS, Komis introduced some compatible ideas to British training culture, including table work, the idea of working from within and the vital importance of relaxation.

[44] Komisarjevsky, *Myself*, p. 73.
[45] Ibid., pp. 54-59.
[46] Ibid., pp. 117-23, 123, 121.

Another European influence, in the form of Michel Saint-Denis's Compagnie des Quinze, also attracted the attention of Britain's theatrical elite. When they first performed in London, the company was seen by Gielgud, Peggy Ashcroft, Redgrave, George Bernard Shaw, Sybil Thorndike, Laurence Olivier, Edith Evans, Alec Guinness and Charles Laughton. Saint-Denis believed their work was popular with audiences because, 'they were refreshed by our plays and by our way of acting. They found us direct, real, devoid of artificial brilliance'.[47] The positive response he enjoyed convinced Saint-Denis that London would provide a conducive environment for his work and he moved to England in 1935.[48]

While Komis had some limited involvement with RADA, Saint-Denis's training projects took place entirely outside the established conservatoire. He promptly started a school of his own, alongside George Devine and Glen Byam Shaw. The London Theatre Studio (LTS) opened in 1936. In a mission statement, he stressed the need to balance individual creativity with ensemble discipline, invention with technique:

> The main objectives of the L.T.S. were to develop in the student initiative, freedom, and a sense of individual responsibility as well as the ability to merge his individual qualities into an ensemble. Although the acquisition of a strongly developed technique of body and voice was one of our basic aims, technique was never to be allowed to dominate or supersede invention.[49]

The second World War curtailed the activities of the LTS, but Saint-Denis resumed his commitment to training in 1947, when Laurence Olivier invited him to open another new

[47] Michel Saint-Denis, *Training for the Theatre: Premises and Promises*, ed. by Suria Saint-Denis (Heinemann, 1982), p. 42, hereafter *Training.*
[48] Ibid., p. 43
[49] Saint-Denis, *Training*, p, 46.

school attached to the Old Vic. Byam Shaw and Devine were involved once more, along with John Blatchley, who later co-founded the Drama Centre.[50] The school was relatively short-lived and closed in 1952 for financial reasons. Saint-Denis's subsequent contribution to the training of British actors took place in a professional context. He was invited by Peter Hall to join the RSC and to re-focus on experimental studio practice. Hall vouched for his pedagogical expertise, describing him as a 'superb' teacher.[51]

Although his work in drama schools was curtailed after a few years, Saint-Denis has had a long-term impact on actor pedagogy. His teaching programmes emphasised mask work, animal studies and improvisation, all of which have become staples of the conservatoire curriculum. In *Training for the Theatre*, he describes improvisation as the most fundamental and important branch of the training:

> We believe that through it the student discovers for himself the true essence, the real substance, of acting. It is here that he will find the relationship between the reality of his own inner life, both intellectual and emotional, and its physical expression, the means through which he can convey this reality to others.[52]

His account of improvisation is reminiscent of Stanislavsky's Acting Analysis, which integrates the physical, intellectual and emotional faculties of the actor (5.4).

From the perspective of emotion training, Saint-Denis's use of mask work is particularly illuminating. Shirley frames the practice as a means of developing emotional sensitivity in a depersonalised manner, and channelling impulses using a stylised frame which amplifies,

[50] Ibid., p. 51.
[51] See Hall in Saint-Denis, *Training*, pp. 14, 73.
[52] Saint-Denis, *Training*, p. 146.

conditions and moderates the communication of emotion.[53] Saint-Denis himself describes mask work as having a number of virtues from the perspective of arousing and developing control of emotions. He cites the example of a male actor, shielded by the mask: 'the actor was often able to forget his inhibitions and to go beyond his usual limits', to 'strengthen his inner feelings' while maintaining physical control, to 'warm his feelings and cool his head'.[54] Saint-Denis echoes Talma's remark, that what is required of the actor is 'a warm heart and a cool mind' (6.1).[55] The mask facilitates both the kindling of emotion and the actor's ability to control it, so its use is compatible with the concept of Scenic Emotion (3.7).

Saint-Denis gave a cautious welcome to Stanislavskian ideas. Speaking at a discussion held at the Royal Court, he pointed out that, in the wake of the publication of *An Actor Prepares* in 1937, they used 'quite an amount' of Stanislavsky at the LTS.[56] He believed that 'if Stanislavski's system is applied literally, it leads merely to realism, but applied selectively, with discrimination, it can be made the "grammar of all styles" that it aspires to be'.[57] Somewhat fluid in his use of the term 'realism' or 'realistic', in this context Saint-Denis seems to use the term to denote an uninspiring reproduction of everyday life. But like Stanislavsky himself, Saint-Denis was acutely aware of potential abuse of the System and was determined to avoid rigid application of any one approach. As Peter Hall puts it, 'Michel hated dogma. [….] He had a deep-rooted suspicion of any "method" – old or new – of anything which

[53] Shirley, 'Passage into the Conservatoire', pp. 45-46.
[54] Saint-Denis, *Training*, p. 170.
[55] Strasberg was intrigued by Talma's aphorism. See Lee Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion: The Development of the Method* (Plume, 1988), p. 36.
[56] Peter Brook and others, 'Who Alienated Konstantin Stanislavsky: Text of a Discussion', *Encore*, 10.3 (1963), pp. 18-34 (p. 28).
[57] Saint-Denis, *Training*, p. 38.

stopped questions or inhibited change. *His* method was challenge and change'.[58] The attitude Hall describes suggests a confirmed *Scientist*. Saint-Denis's blend of a judicious use of Stanislavsky with what Shirley calls the 'physically stylised and highly experimental work' of the Compagnie des Quinze would later have a strong influence over the curriculum of the Drama Centre.

The legendary director and founder of the Theatre Workshop, Joan Littlewood, only had the most peripheral contact with the conservatoire. According to Robert Leach, she was, like Uta Hagen, 'disaffected' by her training at RADA in the early 1930s. She abandoned the course, determined to literally walk her own path. She made her way to Manchester on foot, in search of a job at the BBC.[59] In common with Komissarzhevsky, her most innovative training practices would be developed in the professional sphere rather than in a school. In Manchester, she met Ewan MacColl and they were drawn together by a shared passion for agit-prop theatre, left-wing politics and all things Russian. The training they wanted for their theatre activities did not exist, so they set about developing it for themselves.

Littlewood and MacColl sought inspiration from abroad. In the Manchester Central Library, they found a copy of *The New Movement in the Theatre*, a compendium of photographs of avant-garde theatre in Europe, especially Russia and Germany.[60] When *An Actor Prepares* was published in the UK, they seized on it and, according to Leach, it became 'the bulk and

[58] Peter Hall in Saint-Denis, *Training*, p. 14.
[59] Robert Leach, 'Who is Skivvy?', in *Russians in Britain*, ed. by Jonathan Pitches (Routledge, 2012), pp. 110-38, (p. 115).
[60] Léon Moussinac, *The New Movement in the Theatre: A Survey of Recent Developments in Europe and America* (Batsford, 1931).

mainstay of all their practical work with actors'.[61] The point is illustrated by a comparison of Littlewood's notes with the Hapgood translation of *An Actor Prepares*. Stanislavsky writes,

> Our art teaches us first of all to create consciously and rightly, because that will best prepare the way for the blossoming of the sub-conscious, which is inspiration [….] To play truly means to be right, logical, coherent, to think, strive, feel and act in unison with your role.[62]

Littlewood paraphrases Stanislavsky, for what Leach guesses was a talk to the actors of the Theatre Union:

> First our art will teach us how to create *consciously* and *rightly* – that is the mastery of our technique – *conscious* and *right* creative moments in our role will in turn open the gates of inspiration. To play *rightly*, that is *truly*, our acting must be logical, it must be coherent, we must think, strive, feel and act in unison with our role.[63]

As Leach puts it, 'no other British actors were anywhere nearly as conscientious in their application of Stanislavsky as these two and their Theatre Union colleagues'.[64] The war put an end to the Theatre Union, but Littlewood and MacColl resumed their endeavours in 1945, forming the famous Theatre Workshop.[65]

Throughout her career, Littlewood remained committed to training, developing versatile actors who could act, sing, dance, speak verse and perform acrobatics. Although Stanislavsky remained part of the company's process, Leach argues that it was later supplemented by the Laban-trained dancer Jean Newlove, whose practice resembled the physical explorations of the Method of Physical Actions and the formal training of Meyerhold's biomechanics. Although Littlewood had negligible contact with the

[61] Leach, 'Who is Skivvy?', p. 122.
[62] Constantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (Methuen, 1980), p. 14.
[63] Joan Littlewood in Leach, 'Who is Skivvy?', p. 123, italics in the original.
[64] Leach, 'Who is Skivvy?', p. 125.
[65] Ibid., p. 128.

conservatoire, the influence of her training is evident in contemporary drama schools, most obviously at East 15, founded by Theatre Workshop member Margaret Bury. The school retains the commitment to training multi-skilled performers with social commitment.[66]

The training practice discussed so far originated in mainland Europe, particularly Russia, but took place largely in the professional sphere with little immediate impact on the established conservatoire. Mirodan identifies an exception in the form of Harold Lang, who taught Stanislavskian classes at CSSD in the early 1960s.[67] He explains that Lang was brought to Central by a former colleague of Saint-Denis at the Old Vic school, John Blatchley, who was gathering a new team in his capacity as Director of the Stage Course. Mirodan observes, 'Blatchley will now teach the full panoply of Copeau-inspired exercises: verbal and non-verbal improvisation, animal work, clown and character mask', but also wanted to add a Stanislavskian element.[68]

Mirodan describes a class based on Lang's reading of Stanislavsky, rather than practice derived from the American strand of the KSS. The session would seem short and constrained by contemporary standards: the students sit at desks and the duration is only one hour. Nevertheless, it is recognisable as a Stanislavskian acting class, despite some variations in the language of actions and obstacles. Lang leads exercises in observation, imagination, transformation, 'wants' and 'resistances'.[69] A key point, from the perspective

[66] 'Our School…', East 15 Acting School, n.d. <https://www.east15.ac.uk/about> [accessed 6 July 24].
[67] Mirodan, 'The First Class'.
[68] Ibid., p. 66.
[69] Ibid., pp. 67-70.

of the *Mystery-Science* debate, is that it is described explicitly as an 'acting' class. According to Sanderson, in the early RADA curriculum, this subject did not exist (4.2). Evidently, Lang believed acting could be taught. When Blatchley and Lang left Central in 1963, after irreconcilable differences emerged between Blatchley's team and Gwynneth Thurburn, it was the prelude to the founding of a new school based on fresh thinking about training for the theatre.

4.4 After the Watershed: The Drama Centre as Gateway

There is a degree of critical consensus that in the period leading up to 1963, drama schools were failing to respond to new aesthetics in British theatre and that pressure for change was coming from outside the sector. Sanderson, for example, argues that by the 1950s, RADA and its long-serving Principal, Kenneth Barnes, were in decline. He identifies an appetite for new forms of realism sharpened by innovations in the theatre and the new medium of television: 'this was often socially committed, dealing with working-class life and its problems, critical of existing institutions' attitudes, emphasizing a certain 'kitchen sink' realism in style'.[70] A public discussion, held at the Royal Court in 1963, reflects what appears to have been widespread dissatisfaction with UK training. The illustrious speakers included Saint-Denis, director Peter Brook, critic Charles Marowitz and the actor Kenneth Haigh. Haigh alludes to a New Wave in acting, but asserts that it didn't have its origins in the conservatoire, but with the writers whose work demanded a fresh approach: 'it came about – was called into being – not by the drama schools but by the writers themselves. [….] The true drama teachers of this period were people like Osborne, Pinter, Wesker, Behan, Owen,

[70] Sanderson, *Irving to Olivier*, p. 280.

Delaney'.[71] The panel's criticism paints a picture of a moribund conservatoire incapable of responding to the needs of the time. It was not producing actors equipped for socially committed plays by working class writers. The sector was, it seems, ripe for change.

The tension between a need for reform and a slow-moving sector was dramatically crystallised by the historic fissure at CSSD and the establishment of the Drama Centre London (DCL). In the summer term of 1963, the Swedish dancer and movement teacher, Yat Malmgren, was sacked from his post at CSSD. This event precipitated an exodus of staff and students, who ultimately formed the core of the new school.[72] Notably, many of the figures involved in its foundation had been involved in the most dynamic initiatives in British actor training. When John Blatchley had joined the staff of CSSD in 1960, he had been keen to recruit pioneers in the field. He approached Harold Lang, who accepted, on condition that Blatchley also engage Malmgren. Their radical teaching methods excited the students, but displeased Thurburn and staff of the voice department. Thurburn sacked Malmgren on the grounds that his work undermined the vocal training of the school. Mirodan suggests this was a pretext designed to conceal the true reasons, a 'conflict of personalities' and a fundamental disagreement about the future of actor training.[73] The rebels eventually established a new school based at a disused Methodist church in Chalk Farm. The Council of

[71] Haigh in Brook, 'Text of a Discussion', pp. 20-21.
[72] These events are described by Shirley, 'Passage into the Conservatoire', pp. 49-51 and eyewitness Christopher Fettes, 'Yat Malmgren', *Guardian*, 13 June 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2002/jun/13/guardianobituaries.obituaries> [accessed 8 July 2024]. However, the most detailed account was published in a limited edition by Central Saint Martins, to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the school: Vladimir Mirodan, *After the Revolution, A Critical History of Drama Centre London: Part I - A Hampstead Revolution* (Central Saint Martins, 2013), pp. 7-29, hereafter *Revolution.*
[73] Mirodan, *Revolution*, p. 14.

Management, formed to support the fledgling enterprise, included senior managers from Saint-Denis's two schools and other key figures in British theatre with a passion for actor training. It included George Devine, Glen Byam Shaw, Peter Brook and Peter Hall.[74] As a focus of original thinking, which had failed to take root in the conservatoire until that point, DCL can be seen as a gateway to innovation and a curriculum firmly based on what became known as a 'methodological' approach, a *Science* of acting in which Stanislavskian ideas were a dominant but not exclusive feature.

Although DCL training, from its inception, incorporated mask work, animal studies, ballet and a classical repertoire, nevertheless, Mirodan describes it as 'a school which embraces Stanislavskian approaches wholeheartedly and places them at the heart of its curriculum'.[75] The curriculum was shaped by Stanislavskian ideas from a number of different perspectives. They included Malmgren's Character Analysis, inspiration drawn directly from the texts and elements of American Method introduced by Doreen Cannon. Character Analysis, also known as Movement Psychology, is Malmgren's unique fusion of Jung's archetypes, Laban's analysis of movement and Stanislavsky. In an adaptation of Jung, Malmgren proposes six character types, organised into opposing pairs, Stable/Mobile, Near/Remote and Adream/Awake.[76] Mobile, for example, is the most emotional type, defined as a person who is in an unbalanced or abnormal state. Malmgren also uses an array of Stanislavskian terms,

[74] Ibid., pp. 39-40.
[75] Mirodan, 'Harold Lang', p. 71.
[76] Vladimir Mirodan, 'The Way of Transformation: the Laban-Malmgren System of Dramatic Character Analysis', 2 vols (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 1997) <https://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/id/eprint/7854/> [accessed 8 July 2024], I, p. 64.

including Objective, Action and Adaptation.[77] Overall, his work consists of the pursuit of an entirely physical manifestation of psychological objectives.

A second strand of Stanislavskian influence is more difficult to identify with a specific teacher. Simon Callow, who began his training in 1970, remarks that a typical day might include 'a rigorous account of the Stanislavsky work', without mentioning who taught the class.[78] Like the training developed by Littlewood and Lang, the classes appear to have been inspired by readings of Hapgood's translations, rather than American Method. Callow remarks that DCL teaches Stanislavsky with 'absolute fidelity to his texts'.[79] Mirodan suggests that the ruling triumvirate of the school, Blatchley, Malmgren and Chrisopher Fettes, had Lang in mind as their first Head of Acting. In the event, Lang went in a very different direction, devoting his energies to his own venture, 'Voyage Theatre'.[80] This left a vacancy at the new school, which was filled by Method-trained Doreen Cannon, who, arguably, changed the landscape of UK actor training.[81]

Cannon trained under Uta Hagen at the HB Studio in New York. She brought a third strand of Stanislavskian practice to the DCL. This strand included Hagen's series of 'Object Exercises', which are a development of Stanislavsky's 'six questions', a tool for stimulating

[77] Ibid., I, pp. 223-26.
[78] Simon Callow, *Being an Actor* (Penguin, 1985), p. 31.
[79] Ibid., p. 32. Stanislavski's *An Actor Prepares* (Bles, 1937)*, Building a Character* (Reinhardt, 1950) and *Creating a Role* (Bles, 1961) had all been published in the UK by the time Drama Centre was established.
[80] Mirodan, 'Harold Lang', p. 72.
[81] Shirley suggests this was a surprising choice, in view of a degree of scepticism of American approaches to Stanislavsky. See 'Passage into the Conservatoire', pp. 50-51.

the imagination.[82] The Object Exercises entered UK training through Cannon at the DCL and remained part of its curriculum throughout its history.[83] Although Hagen is her primary influence, Cannon also learned from other Method teachers. Callow vividly describes classes that are clearly informed by Strasberg's sense and emotional memory work (6.2). The teacher establishes an atmosphere of intense concentration, then guides the student towards an emotional experience, by prompting them to recall precise sensory details. Callow comments, 'the results are often extraordinary: girls with tiny Minnie Mouse voices suddenly bellow like oxen; stoics weep hysterically; po-faced people laugh till the tears run down their faces'.[84] Cannon's practice, then, developed from a range of American interpretations of the KSS.

This thesis concurs with Shirley's argument that not only was DCL the first British drama school to commit fully to Stanislavskian ideas, but that it was also instrumental in disseminating practice and terminology throughout the conservatoire. Shirley states 'since 1963, the Drama Centre's appropriation of Stanislavskian methodology – especially as reflected in the work of Doreen Cannon – has, through the influence of former staff and graduating students, migrated to many, many British drama schools'.[85] His list is a long one, including Arts Educational, CSSD, East 15, Italia Conti, Guildford, LAMDA, Manchester Metropolitan, Mountview, Rose Bruford and what is

[82] Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work: A Student's Diary*, trans. and ed. by Jean Benedetti (Routledge, 2008), pp. 69-85, 116-17, 669-71. Hagen describes the sequence in *Respect*, pp. 81-142 and *Challenge*, pp. 131-230.
[83] During my tenure as Course Leader for BA Acting (2016-20), I observed colleagues leading versions of the Object Exercises on numerous occasions. Every year group experienced these exercises, including the final cohort, known as 'Group 58'. DCL closed in July 2022.
[84] Callow, *Being an Actor*, p. 34.
[85] Shirley, 'Passage into the Conservatoire', p. 56.

now the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. I would also add the Birmingham School of Acting, now the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Danièle Sanderson, a graduate of DCL, has led the BA Acting course there since 2004. Cannon herself is an example of the Drama Centre diaspora. She retained her post for twenty years, then transferred to RADA, where she was Head of Acting from 1985-95.[86] DCL, then, provided a gateway for Stanislavskian practice, particularly as inflected by Hagen and Cannon, to enter the sector as a whole and become firmly embedded in British actor training.

4.5 An Actor Training Lineage

The pedagogical practice of a short lineage of influential conservatoire trainers is accessible through a combination of literature and first-hand accounts. The work of Doreen Cannon's teacher, Uta Hagen, is well documented in her two main publications, *Respect for Acting* and a later revised volume, *A Challenge for the Actor.*[87] Some of Cannon's students at DCL have discussed her practice publicly, including Simon Callow and acting teachers John Beschizza and Annie Tyson.[88] Finally, Cannon's daughter, Dee followed her mother as an actor trainer at RADA. Dee Cannon's publication, *In Depth Acting*, describes her studio work and acknowledges her debt to her mother. She dedicates the monograph to her 'mentor' and 'inspiration'.[89]

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[86] Dee Cannon, 'Doreen Cannon', Dee Cannon Actors, n.d. <http://deecannonactors.com/doreen.cannon/index.html> [accessed 17 September 2016].
[87] Hagen, *Respect*; Hagen, *Challenge*.
[88] Callow, *Being an Actor*; Robert Price, 'John Beschizza and Annie Tyson discuss Doreen Cannon: the History of Actor Training in the British Drama School', Apple Podcasts, 18 August 2021 <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/john-beschizza-and-annie-tyson-discuss-doreen-cannon/id1535319541?i=1000532390121> [accessed 5 December 2024], hereafter 'Beschizza and Tyson discuss Cannon'.
[89] Dee Cannon, *In Depth Acting*.

An aspect of Hagen's teaching with an affective dimension is the use of personal experience which she calls 'transference'. In her earlier volume, *Respect for Acting*, Hagen uses the term 'substitution'. It refers to the practice of evoking an emotional reaction required for the play, by imagining a moment in one's own life that did or would stimulate the required response. She cites the example of an actress struggling with a scene that required her to feel ashamed in front of someone she admired. In rehearsals, Hagen asked her 'what if Lynn Fontanne had a pair of your soiled panties in her hand and showed them to you?'. The actress blushed instantaneously.[90] By the time she wrote *A Challenge for the Actor*, Hagen had begun to use the term 'transference' instead.[91] The change in terminology, presumably, underlines her conviction that substitution alone is not enough to move an audience. She insists that 'a transference is incomplete until the original source has become synonymous with the material in the play'.[92] In short, any evocation of an emotional response must be related to the given circumstances. I would add, that without this meshing of actor and play, there is no Scenic Emotion, only life emotion, which, as Vakhtangov observed, removes the audience from the fictional world (3.5).

Another device that Hagen developed to make artistic use of personal experience is the 'trigger', a concept she derived from the work of psychologist Jack Palaci. She uses Palaci's idea that certain objects constitute a kind of 'catchall' for unprocessed fears, so that a focus

[90] Hagen, *Respect*, p. 35.
[91] Compare Hagen, *Challenge*, pp. 60-73.
[92] Ibid., p. 71.

on that object can 'release' the emotion under certain conditions.[93] Hagen calls an emotional experience that is similar to that of the character an 'approximation' and argues that it is useful to the actor because the structure or essence of the experience is transferrable from life to fiction. She cites a number of examples which illustrate that the trigger object might have no obvious connection with the intended emotion, the emotion the actor wishes to experience and convey. For example, frosted spectacles fill her with terror, because she was once attacked by a group of children throwing frozen snowballs, one of whom wore frosted glasses. The smell of sewage, unexpectedly, fills her with joy, because she once spent a happy week on holiday in the Tyrol, at a resort where the drains were blocked.[94] In fact, Hagen suggests, it is precisely those peripheral perceptions that are most useful, since they bypass the 'reasoning censor'.[95] A psychological phenomenon that Hagen regarded as a useful resource for the actor has acquired an entirely different connotation in the present. While some strands of actor training embrace 'triggers' as a useful tool, in the current climate, many teachers, theatre managers and programme-makers issue 'trigger warnings', to avoid offending or upsetting students and audiences with controversial content.

Although Hagen believed stimulation of the emotions was an important factor in preparing a role, she did not equate extravagant emotional displays with good acting. She reports with approval that someone 'wisely observed that if crying were acting his aunt would be

[93] Hagen, *Challenge*, pp. 88, 96.
[94] Ibid., pp. 86-91.
[95] Ibid., p. 88.

Duse!'.[96] It is an attitude shared by Doreen Cannon. Although Simon Callow was not able to respond to the emotion memory exercises that so transformed his classmates, he achieved what was known as a 'breakthrough' in another task, called the 'Life and Death' exercise. Callow was required to prepare a scene during which he came home to find his girlfriend in bed with another man. His cold reaction to the infidelity was greeted by Cannon with the laconic remark, 'don't believe it'. Spurred into action, Callow repeated the scene and terrified his scene partners by bellowing, hurling them across the room and smashing the furniture. Although the group were stunned by the improvisation, Callow drily remarks that 'nobody, certainly not Doreen, and not even I, thought it was good acting'.[97] Although Cannon viewed the ability of the actor to fully experience and reveal their anger as an important moment of learning, it was most certainly not equated with the controlled behaviour required for professional performance.

Other former students reveal terminology that entered the conservatoire lexicon through Cannon's acting classes. Annie Tyson, who played the 'unfaithful girlfriend' in Callow's 'Life and Death' exercise, later became an actor and senior teacher, at both DCL and RADA. She acknowledges the primary influence of Uta Hagen, and explains that what Cannon demanded above all was a 'truthful' not 'indicated' response.[98] The meaning of these terms is illuminated by Sanford Meisner's criticism of English actors 'who know intellectually what the character should be feeling and indicate this through the way they verbally handle the

[96] Hagen, *Challenge*, p. 98. Hagen paraphrases Robert Lewis who makes the point that crying is not the sole object of acing with a witticism: 'if it were, my old Aunt Minnie would be Duse!'. See Robert Lewis, *Method – Or Madness?*, intro. by Harold Clurman (Heinemann, 1960), p. 58.
[97] Callow, *Being an Actor*, p. 36.
[98] Tyson in Price, 'Beschizza and Tyson discuss Cannon'.

text, [but] we work from living truthfully under imaginary circumstances'.[99] According to Tyson, such 'truth' is built by patiently asking fundamental questions, such as, what do I want, why do I want it and what happens if I don't get it? The role of the teacher is then a vigilant observation of the student, to gauge how successfully they behave according to the agreed circumstances. Cannon's feedback typically included 'what are you doing?', which suggested the student was confused in their actions or uncommitted. Other common interventions were exhortations to 'leave yourself alone' or 'get out of your own way'. These latter instructions, Tyson explains, refer to acting marred by 'too much white noise going on in the head', or thinking, rather than acting on impulse.

John Beschizza, who also taught at both DCL and RADA, believes Cannon's pedagogy was not a slavish imitation of her teacher, rather she was 'riffing off Uta Hagen's work'.[100] He also suggests the slightly mysterious injunction to 'leave yourself alone' was derived from Meisner. Beschizza was one of many students who struggled under Cannon's relentless cries of 'I don't believe it'. After much trial and error, he eventually concluded that she was pursuing simplicity, in opposition to the actor's tendency to overthink and overcomplicate their task. He concludes that Cannon demanded an emotional intensity appropriate to the stakes of the scene, but was unimpressed by histrionics. She 'hated self-indulgence' because 'anyone can roll around on the floor'. She demanded both lifelike behaviour and a level of self-control suggestive of Scenic Emotion.

[99] Sanford Meisner and Dennis Longwell, *Meisner on Acting* (Vintage, 1987), p. 136.
[100] Beschizza in Price, 'Beschizza and Tyson discuss Cannon'.

Dee Cannon follows Hagen and her mother in the belief that good acting must be emotionally 'truthful' rather than 'indicated'. She asserts, in colloquial style, that 'supplying real love or feelings has to be a million times better than manufacturing them, right?'.[101] She also argues, in terms reminiscent of both Wilhelm Reich and Strasberg, that it is incumbent on the actor to be in touch with their emotions and eliminate 'blocks', so that they can access a full palate of feeling (2.4, 6.2).[102] Despite her apparent insistence on the evocation of life emotion, Cannon proposes limits to the conscious exploitation of memory. She echoes Hagen when she suggests its proper place is in the actor's preparation:

> […] whereas there is a place for **sense memory, affective** and **emotional memory**, I do feel this is **homework** you do when you need to connect to a feeling or emotion you can't access. *I do not* agree with making this the heart of the training.[103]

Cannon addresses the issue of emotion most directly in a section on sense, affective and emotional memory.[104] She makes a distinction between the mild impact of 'affective' memory and the intense impact of 'emotional memory', which she defines as something more extreme, rooted in a 'shattering and traumatic' event.[105] Her process is reminiscent of a standard emotion memory exercise, which starts with a period of relaxation (6.2). She suggests imagining a film screen onto which the actor 'projects' the events of the day, leading up to the incident in question. Using the same term as Hagen, the aim of the exercise is to isolate the sensory details that most effectively 'trigger' the memory, which

[101] Cannon, *In Depth Acting*, p. 87.
[102] Ibid., pp. 13, 19.
[103] Ibid., p. 16, bold and italics in the original. Hagen discusses the example an actor who managed to cry, but didn't move the audience. She remarks 'he was doing his homework on stage', meaning he had evoked the emotion but failed to connect it to the circumstances of the play. See *Respect*, p. 42.
[104] Cannon, *In Depth Acting*, pp. 101-07.
[105] Ibid., p. 105.

can then be used to arouse the appropriate emotion in performance. Where Cannon extends Hagen's practice, and that of Lee Strasberg's Method (LSM), is by considering ways of 'planting' the trigger, i.e. discovering through experimentation how long the trigger needs to take effect. The actor then visualizes the image at a specific moment, so that the desired reaction emerges on cue.[106] The precise timing of the emotional release certainly does not suggest a lack of control, rather a manifestation of double consciousness or Scenic Emotion.

4.6 Adler and Meisner

The Hagen-Cannon lineage had a demonstrable and direct impact on actor pedagogy at both DCL and RADA. The diaspora of ex-DCL teachers elsewhere in the conservatoire suggests its influence extended to other drama schools. British teachers cite Stella Adler and Sanford Meisner as additional important influences (4.1). I therefore examine their approach to acted emotion and consider how it has transferred to the UK.

Adler's pedagogy espouses three principles in particular, an emphasis on action, use of the imagination and attention to given circumstances, especially the 'where' of Stanislavsky's 'six questions'.[107] From the perspective of this thesis, one idea that Stanislavsky passed on to Adler is particularly important. She reports, 'Stanislavski said that one can demand of an actor that he do something. You can never demand of him that he feel something'.[108] Adler is scornful of teachers who encourage students to dwell on their neuroses, presumably

[106] Ibid., pp. 110-11.
[107] Stanislavski, *AAW*, pp. 69-85, 116-17, 669-71.
[108] Adler, *Art of Acting*, pp. 140-41.

thinking of Strasberg.[109] In her own teaching, she explains, 'you don't hear me talk much about emotions. That's because emotions aren't doable. Actions are doable, and if you do them correctly, they prompt the feelings'.[110] Here, Adler echoes Stanislavsky, who, in the guise of Tortsov, advises students 'when choosing an action, leave your feelings alone' (5.3.4).[111] In my experience, the belief that 'if you focus on the action, the emotion will take care of itself' is widely accepted in the conservatoire. The source of this axiom appears to be Adler's inflection of a Stanislavskian principle.

Although Adler equates acting with performing physical actions, it is equally clear that she uses action to induce an affective response. She challenges her students to select 'strong' actions, which have a direct object. So 'I'd like to drink' is weak, but 'I'd like to drink coffee' is specific and strong.[112] A verb like 'to love' must be translated into 'doable' actions, such as 'I dance with you. I put your coat on for you. I give you a flower'.[113] Moreover, actors must create a 'justification', a reason for the action. Adler advises her students that 'your justification should agitate you, should help you experience the action and the emotion', 'talent consists in how well you "shop" for your justifications'. The words actors choose should 'enliven' and 'warm' them, not leave them 'cold and remote'.[114] In Adler's pedagogy, the right choices give the actor both an achievable action to play and a strong emotional stimulus.

[109] Adler had a notoriously acrimonious relationship with Strasberg (6.6).
[110] Adler, *Art of Acting*, p. 139.
[111] Stanislavski, *AAW*, p. 43.
[112] Adler, *Art of Acting*, p. 106.
[113] Ibid., p. 126.
[114] Ibid., pp. 125, 130.

Despite no obvious route into UK practice, Meisner's work has taken root in the conservatoire. Beschizza's use of Meisner's repetition work was very popular among students at DCL. Nick Moseley developed his own variation of Meisner technique at RCSSD between 2006 and 2021. Meisner identifies two aspects of affective life required by the training, the ability to 'generate emotion from within', as part of the actor's preparation, and emotional availability, i.e., allowing oneself to be affected by a scene partner.[115]

Unlike Stanislavsky or Adler, Meisner felt he could demand an instant emotional reaction from his students. Before an exercise or rehearsal, he might instruct an actor to 'prepare', meaning, to intensify their emotional state virtually instantaneously. While he acknowledges that 'preparation' is an 'agonizing problem', he still expected his more experienced students to produce a physiological response on demand.[116] When rehearsing a scene from *Spring Awakening*, he exhorted one actor to imagine her daughter were going to prison:

> "Cry! And don't stop crying until I tell you to. That's right. Begin to cry! Now, Sarah, you're an actress. If a doctor told you that you had lung cancer, would it upset you?" Sarah nods and Lila begins to cry. "That's right. Sarah, if somebody told you that your mother was about to die, would it upset you?"
>
> "Yes"
>
> "Okay, so start to cry".[117]

Evidently, as far as Meisner is concerned, it is reasonable to expect a trained actor to have instant access to their emotional responses using the 'magic if'.[118]

[115] Moseley, *Meisner in Practice*, p. 132.
[116] Meisner, *Meisner on Acting*, p. 74.
[117] Ibid. p. 197.
[118] See Stanislavsky, *AAW*, pp. 43-54.

Emotional availability is cultivated by a series of repetition exercises, during which pairs of actors remain seated opposite each other and make no physical contact. [119] The stages can be broken down as follows:

1. 'Mechanical' repetition: the actor observes an undeniable physical fact about their partner and names the first thing they notice, such as 'blue jumper'. The partner listens to what is said and repeats it exactly.
2. 'Point of view' repetition: the simple statement is extended into a sentence, such as 'you crossed your legs'. This develops into the partner repeating from their own perspective, so 'you crossed your legs' becomes 'I crossed my legs'.
3. 'Working off': when the actors detect a psychological or emotional reaction in their partner, they can and must comment on what actually happens, so the repetition will shift in response to their observations and instinctive reactions.

The purpose of this sequence is to train the actors to focus on the other person and to play 'the pinch and the ouch', the habit of affecting the partner and allowing oneself to be affected by them. When this is achieved, the emotions emerge spontaneously.

Ultimately, Meisner training aims to enable the actor to deliver text while maintaining an emotive and provocative exchange with their partner. The process is described by one of Meisner's most memorable metaphors:

[119] The same sequence is described, with some variations, by Meisner himself, in *Meisner on Acting*, pp. 20-32; Moseley, *Meisner in Practice*, pp. 23-76; and Larry Silverberg, *The Sanford Meisner Approach: Workbook One* (Smith and Kraus, 1994), pp. 27-47.

> The text is like a canoe […] and the river on which it sits is the emotion. The text floats on the river. If the water of the river is turbulent, the words will come out like a canoe on a rough river. It all depends on the flow of the river which is your emotion. The text takes on the character of your emotion. That's what this exercise is for: how to let the river of your emotion flow untrammelled, with the words floating on top of it.[120]

Personal experience suggests, the skill of maintaining a constant flow of words, while paying attention to partners on stage, has applications beyond standard Meisner training. As students on an MA course in Actor Training and Coaching, my peers and I became interested in another 'agonizing problem', that of making the transition from silent *étude* to improvised speech, in the process of Active Analysis (5.4, 5.6). I had worked on the repetition exercises with another actor in the cohort and we had enjoyed some success, generating an emotional response during the 'working off' stage. So, we were comfortable maintaining a flow of words that did not necessarily require our full attention. Having prepared a silent *étude* based on a scene from David Mamet's *Edmond*, we repeated the exercise, while launching into the repetition.[121] It worked as an excellent bridge, between playing the scene free of the pressure of needing to speak, and playing it in our own words.

The evidence presented here suggests that American inflexions of the KSS, often re-interpreted by British practitioners, have infused the exercises and pedagogical language used in the UK to address acted emotion. Among the seminal ideas embedded in the practice is that the physiological indicators of emotional arousal play a part in audience perception of what is 'real' or 'truthful', so activating a bodily response is a crucial element of training, rehearsal and performance. It therefore follows that emotional availability – the

[120] Meisner, *Meisner on* Acting, p. 115.
[121] David Mamet, *Edmond* (Methuen, 1986).

capacity to respond to an on-stage partner or imaginary stimuli – is a prerequisite for an actor. However, in order to move an audience, any physiological responses must be linked to the world of the play.

4.7 Current and Future Landscape: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Until the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, few would have questioned Shirley's assertion that Stanislavsky's theories became the 'mainstay of British conservatoire training' (4.1). A sample of course documentation from the mid-2010s illustrates the point. The Birmingham School of Acting BA Course Guide describes a programme consisting of fourteen modules, addressing skills, performance and theory.[122] All three modules devoted to acting as a discrete discipline refer to Stanislavsky, either explicitly or implicitly.[123] DCL's course handbook for the same year names four major influences under the heading of 'Rationale'. Top of the list is Stanislavsky: 'the most famous and detailed of all systems and the point of departure for most subsequent developments'.[124] The Course Specification for the BA Acting programme at RCSSD describes a wide-ranging set of learning activities, including the Meisner training delivered, at that time, by Moseley.[125] Senior acting tutor, Peter McAllister, incorporates another strand of the American branch of the KSS. He is a rare example of a teacher in the UK who was using a scheme of work modelled on LSM.[126]

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[122] Birmingham School of Acting, 'BA (Hons) Acting Course Guide 2015-16' (unpublished course documentation, Birmingham City University, 2015), pp. 43-48.
[123] Ibid., p. 44.
[124] Drama Centre London, 'BA (Hons) Acting: Course Handbook 2015/16' (unpublished course documentation, University of the Arts, 2015), p. 10.
[125] Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, 'BA Acting: Course Specification and Units 2015-16', (unpublished course documentation, University of London, 2015), p. 10.
[126] McAllister discussed his work with me on several separate occasions during PhD supervisions between 2013-15. He also led a Method workshop which I observed at the Birmingham School of Acting on Monday 6th July 2014.

This documentation supports the contention that in the middle of the last decade, training, including its emotional component, sat securely in a Stanislavskian paradigm.

By 2023, references to Stanislavsky had virtually disappeared from online information about conservatoire acting courses. What has happened in the interim is a major upheaval in the sector that is yet to be fully digested and documented. A number of factors in quick succession have precipitated dramatic changes to curricula, teaching practice and staffing: the #MeToo and Time's Up movements; attempts to reconcile changing priorities in Higher Education with established drama school practice; the difficulty of delivering a practical training during Covid lockdowns; and the seismic impact of the murder of George Floyd, which reignited the Black Lives Matter protests. Responses to these events included a drive to develop a more inclusive curriculum and a questioning of some of the traditional elements of British training, such as Restoration Comedy and a challenging style of pedagogy. The name of 'Stanislavsky' may have been a casualty of these initiatives, of a suspicion that as the ultimate canonical figure in actor training, he is too hopelessly implicated in white, middle-class, Western, male hierarchies to be compatible with a renewed vision for the conservatoire. A full exploration of the impact of these changes is outside the scope of this thesis. However, in this section I do briefly mention some early indications of the direction of curriculum development in the sector.

Recent literature reflects the drive towards equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in higher education, from feminist, anti-ableist and anti-racist perspectives. Sherrill Gow, Joint Head of Postgraduate Training at the Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, interrogates some of

the core concepts in Stanislavsky-based training, including objectives, actions and 'if'. She argues it is necessary for teachers to be conscious of and to challenge practice that inadvertently supports oppression. She attests that 'students regularly delineate objectives […] that serve patriarchal and/or heteronormative interests, and position women as passive'.[127] Gow's position is comparable to that of Rosemary Malague, who aims to disentangle Method from patriarchal contexts. She supports the practice, but rejects its manipulation by male artists.[128]

Deborah Leveroy proposes that the linear nature of Stanislavskian concepts, such as the 'through line of action', can be problematic for dyslexic learners and explores alternative visual and somatic approaches. In particular, she suggests that Michael Chekhov's non-intellectual approach could be more suitable for dyslexic students, who typically have difficulty with verbal processing.[129] Similarly, Daron Oram's 'Twelve Steps' method offers practical ways that 'traditional' actor training can be modified to help neurodivergent actors remain in an 'experiential' rather than a 'narrative' mode. Oram draws on Zybutz and Farquharson's neuroscientific model that distinguishes between narrative thinking and sensory experience.[130] In experiential mode, the student engages with an exercise and is alive to the sensory

[127] Sherrill Gow, 'Take Care: Engaging a mindful approach to acting to intervene in oppressive practices', unpublished paper delivered at the symposium 'Stanislavsky and Mindfulness' (London South Bank University, 20 April 2023).
[128] Rosemary Malague, *An Actress Prepares: Women and "the Method*" (Routledge, 2012), p. 3.
[129] Deborah Leveroy, 'Disabling Actions and Enabling Actors: Exploring the Method of Actioning the Text for Actors with Dyslexia', in *Inclusivity and Equality in Performance Training: Teaching and Learning for Neuro and Physical Diversity*, ed. by Petronilla Whitfield (Routledge, 2022), pp. 78-100.
[130] Daron Oram, 'Twelve Steps Toward an Anti-Discriminatory Approach to Neurodivergence in Actor Training', in *Inclusivity and Equality in Performance Training: Teaching and Learning for Neuro and Physical Diversity*, ed. by Petronilla Whitfield (Routledge, 2022), pp. 60-77.

and emotional feedback that arises during the process, unhindered by self-criticism. They are 'in the moment'. In 'narrative' mode, the student is unable to interrupt a running commentary in their mind, frequently of a self-critical nature. They are 'in the head' and therefore unable to enjoy the full benefit of the exercise.

Complementing the innovative work oriented towards dyslexia and dyspraxia, Zoë Glen examines another form of neurodivergence. In her study of autistic students in training, she argues that the Stanislavskian paradigm underpins a normative pedagogy, characterized by a narrow conception of what constitutes a 'realistic' expression of emotion. Such approaches effectively invalidate the experience of autistic people. Glen proposes a synthesis of techniques drawn from Rudolf Laban, Michael Chekhov and Stanislavsky, to develop a more inclusive strategy for addressing acted emotion.[131]

The essays in *Stanislavsky and Race: Questioning the "System" in the 21st Century* discuss actor training from a range of US and British perspectives. Monica White Ndounou, for example, discusses American Black actors' experience of Stanislavskian practice. She cites Barbara Ann Teer's objection to certain core concepts, such as emotion memory and the 'magic if'. Teer argues they can be profoundly troubling, and in some cases dangerous for Black actors, because of an implicit acceptance of

[131] Zoë Glen, 'Neuronormativity, Naturalism and the Neurotypical Gaze: The Equating of Neurotypicality and Quality in Actor Training', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 16.1 (2025), pp. 119-35, doi:10.1080/19443927.2024.2428615.

oppressive narratives.[132] Ndounou's experience of working in the United States, and that of fellow Black practitioners, have persuaded her to turn away from her early training. She is now 'much more interested in actively pursuing alternatives developed by Black artists and educators'.[133] Ndounou is one example of a critical perspective common to all the contributors to *Stanislavsky and Race*, summed up by the editors:

> Each chapter regards Stanislavsky's "system" as foundational and part of the framework of our current construction/conception of acting methodology. However, the contributors' examinations seek not to revere Stanislavsky's approach to performance but to critically engage with the "system" from the perspective of 21st-century artists and scholars from a variety of countries, ethnicities and lived experiences.[134]

This very brief survey of current scholarship suggests a critical engagement with the dominant paradigm of actor training, rather than a wholesale rejection of it. While some practitioner-scholars are investigating alternative approaches, many are adjusting their pedagogy, rather than abandoning the basics of objective, action and given circumstances. To use a colloquial phrase, they do not want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. The absence of any mention of the KSS in drama school publicity may represent a desire to avoid the appearance of too conservative an approach, unresponsive to the demand for reform. The actual scale of curriculum change remains to be determined. The need for a reassessment of paradigmatic

[132] Monica White Ndounou, ''I AIN'T STUDYIN' STANISLAVSKY: We Are the Key to Reimagining 21st-Century Actor Training', in *Stanislavsky and Race: Questioning the "System" in the 21st Century*, ed. by Siiri Scott and Jay Paul Skelton (Routledge, 2023), pp. 162-75 (p. 168).
[133] Ibid., p. 163.
[134] Siiri Scott and Jay Paul Skelton (eds), 'Introduction' in *Stanislavsky and Race: Questioning the "System" in the 21st Century* (Routledge, 2023), pp. 1-13 (p. 10).

emotion training seems stronger and more urgent than ever, including a consideration of how it relates to the EDI agenda and a duty of care for students. This thesis contributes to this process from its own critical perspective, the tripartite framework of life emotion, Scenic Emotion and the idea of a *Science* of acting.

PART TWO: THE EMOTION SPECIALISTS

THREE CASE STUDIES IN ACTOR TRAINING

CHAPTER FIVE: THE ROLE OF EMOTION IN THE STANISLAVSKY SYSTEM (KSS)

5.1 A Process for Re-Evaluation

Part Two of the thesis examines three examples of training practice in the light of the theoretical framework developed in Part One, consisting of my working definitions of life emotion, Scenic Emotion and of actor pedagogy conceptualized as an ethical *Science* (2.10, 3.7, 4.2). It is a double-edged process intended to 'stress-test' both the methods discussed and the efficacy of the critical tools I have developed. All three case studies pose the same research questions: does the science still support the assumptions underlying the approach? What view of acted emotion underpins the practice and how does it relate to the thesis model of Scenic Emotion? Does the pedagogy remain current in the twenty-first century conservatoire? The first case study considers the most influential acting teacher of the twentieth century, Konstantin Stanislavsky.

I locate the discussion of science and the Stanislavsky System (KSS) in the context of critic Vissarion Belinsky's contention, that the arts and sciences share a common obligation to improve the lot of mankind.[1] I review the well-documented discussion of influences on the KSS, especially the competing claims of reflex theory and Ribot's introspective psychology (2.2, 2.5). This thesis aligns with the view that reflex theory had a negligible impact. It also argues that an examination of Ribot's work continues to yield useful insights, because key aspects of his analysis are consistent with contemporary science, particularly his study of emotion memory and the link between emotion and action (5.2).

[1] Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: His Life and Art* (Methuen, 1999), p. 36, hereafter *Life and Art*.

The third section consists of a detailed exploration of Stanislavsky's conception of emotion and its multiple functions in the KSS. It includes discussion of a selection of artists who had a particularly decisive influence on Stanislavsky, the writers Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol and Lev Tolstoy, and the actor Mikhail Shchepkin. I consider feeling as an epistemological tool in the acting process (5.3.1); the communication of emotion as the purpose of art (5.3.2); the role of emotion in creativity (5.3.3); the notion of 'lures', i.e. using indirect means to stimulate an emotional response (5.3.4); and the emergence of a distinctive, nuanced understanding of acted emotion, in contrast to that of Stanislavsky's antecedents (5.3.5). At this point of the argument, I introduce a paradox that lies at the heart of the KSS: the System demands the actor experience genuine feelings in order to create the life of the human spirit, but also insists on a distinction between life and art. I frame Vakhtangov's Affective Emotion as a strategy for resolving this paradox. His theoretical innovation also lays the foundations for the concept of Scenic Emotion (5.3.6).

Stanislavsky developed the apotheosis of the KSS during his final phase of work at the Opera-Dramatic Studio, which operated from 1935 until his death in 1938. The principal fruit of this period was his 'new device' of Active Analysis (5.4). His last words on the role of emotion in acting are available through the eye-witness accounts of studio members, Vasily Toporkov and Maria Knebel.[2] I identify both continuity and innovation in Stanislavsky's teaching, in order to demonstrate that in this phase of Stanislavsky's work, the emotional

[2] Vasili Toporkov, *Stanislavski in Rehearsal,* trans. by Jean Benedetti (Methuen, 2001); Maria Knebel, *Active Analysis*, ed. by Anatoly Vassiliev, trans. by Irina Brown (Routledge, 2021).

component is thoroughly integrated into conscious, physical action. It is embedded in the practice, not pursued as an explicit goal.

I then offer a summary evaluation of the KSS in the context of the theoretical framework (5.5). I argue that the longevity of the KSS, and its continuing usefulness in drama schools, is partly attributable to the durability of some of the concepts on which it is founded. I propose that Ribot's view of emotional memory, his monism and his association of emotion and action underpin the KSS. Moreover, these concepts remain relevant to the contemporary scientific discourse of Frijda, Damasio and Barrett, among others. I discuss the ethical challenges that arise from actor training methods that evoke actual emotional experiences and consider whether the concept of Scenic Emotion might contribute to the effective management of 'raw' emotion memories. Finally, I assert that Active Analysis is particularly well suited to the contemporary conservatoire, because of the ethical advantages of an approach based on the actor's creative self-determination and the acknowledgement of individual identity (5.6).

To conclude the chapter, I discuss some current and future directions for both the KSS and Active Analysis. Drawing on Vassiliev's 'Dialogues with Theatre Pedagogues', I offer an account of his innovations in concepts, terminology and pedagogy. It is a specific instance of the KSS as a dynamic system that has its roots in the past, but continues to evolve and provide creative challenges in the present (5.6).

The argument draws on a range of sources, in order to develop as deep and precise an understanding of Stanislavsky's view of acted emotion as possible. I use the available translations of the published work, particularly those of Jean Benedetti (1.6). Benedetti renders Stanislavsky's written account of the System as *An Actor's Work* and *An Actor's Work on a Role*.[3] Both volumes are written in the form of the fictional diary of a student called Kostya Nazvanov, whose training is led by a teacher named Arkady Tortsov. Benedetti explains that Nazvanov is a blend of the young Stanislavsky and Stanislavsky's favourite pupil, Vakhtangov. Tortsov, who functions as Stanislavsky's mouthpiece in the diaries, is a combination of the mature Stanislavsky and his mentor, Fyodor Komissarzhevsky. Nazvanov's fellow students include Darya Dymkova, Pasha Shustov, Marya Maloletkova, Nikolai Umnovikh and Vanya Viuntsov.[4] The fictional diaries provide a comprehensive account of the theory underpinning the KSS and a dramatized version of Stanislavsky's pedagogy. It may be an idealized view of the classroom, but it is informed by his decades of practical experience.

I draw on existing critical literature, especially where it explores the emotional component of acting or the influence of science on the development of training practice. In particular, I refer to the work of Jean Benedetti, Sharon Carnicke, Jonathan Pitches and Rose Whyman.[5] I also cite Toporkov and Knebel's first-hand accounts of the final phase of Stanislavsky's career

[3] Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work: A Student's Diary*, trans. by Jean Benedetti (Routledge, 2008), hereafter *AAW*; Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work on a Role,* (Routledge, 2010), hereafter *AAWR*.
[4] Stanislavski, *AAW*, pp. xxi-xxii.
[5] Jean Benedetti, *Life and Art*; Sharon Marie Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus: An Acting Master for the Twenty-First Century*, 2nd edn (Routledge, 2009), hereafter *Stanislavsky in Focus*; Jonathan Pitches, *Science and the Stanislavsky Tradition of Acting* (Routledge, 2006), hereafter *Science and Stanislavsky*; Rose Whyman, *The Stanislavsky System of Acting* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), hereafter *Stanislavsky System*.

(5.4). In contrast to the fictional pedagogy of Nazvanov's 'diary', Toporkov and Knebel provide insights into Stanislavsky's actual teaching. The argument is further informed by my own documented practice of Active Analysis in the UK conservatoire.[6] Finally, I draw on unpublished material, including a lecture delivered by Sergei Cherkassky, Head of the Acting Studio at the St. Petersburg State Theatre Arts Academy and a series of dialogues between the eminent director Anatoly Vassiliev and a group of teachers currently working in UK drama schools and universities.[7]

5.2 On Good Terms with Science

Laurence Senelick sums up a mission that 'was explicit in the mandate of the Moscow Art Theatre'. He states that 'historically, the Russian theatre was always expected to implement the progress of civilization'.[8] Benedetti traces this sense of mission to Belinsky, who 'set the agenda for all discussion on the relationship between art and society for a century or more'.[9] In Belinsky's view, the arts and sciences are united by a common goal, the advancement of society. They do, however, have complementary methods that are not to be confused. While the scientist deals with facts, the artist must convince the public of the 'truth'

[6] David Jackson, 'Twenty-First-Century Russian Actor Training: Active Analysis in the UK', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 2.2 (2011), pp. 166-80, doi:10.1080/19443927.2011.602704, hereafter 'Active Analysis in the UK'; David Jackson, 'The Samovar and the Steam Train: An Interview with Albert Filozov', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 9.1 (2018), pp. 99-113, doi:10.1080/19443927.2017.1417155.
[7] Sergei Cherkassky, 'The Stanislavsky System of Actor's Training and its International Development in the Last 100 Years', unpublished lecture delivered to staff and post-graduate students (University of London, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, 9 February 2013), hereafter 'Stanislavsky System of Actor's Training'; David Jackson, 'From the Opera-Dramatic Studio to the UK conservatoire: The Evolution of Active Analysis', unpublished paper delivered at the conference 'The S Word: Stanislavsky - Director, Trainer, Pedagogue' (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 10 November 2023), hereafter 'Evolution of Active Analysis'.
[8] Lawrence Senelick in Anatoly Smeliansky, *The Russian Theatre after Stalin,* trans. by Patrick Miles (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. xii.
[9] Benedetti, *Life and Art*, p. 35.

uncovered by science, by appealing to their feelings.[10] Stanislavsky's oft-quoted remark, that 'art should be on good terms with science', suggests he regarded scientists as allies.[11] He shared with them an idealistic determination to improve the lot of mankind. He also turned to science for help with his search for reliable principles of acting.

Roach identifies three themes that preoccupied the scientists of the nineteenth century: evolutionary theory, the unconscious and monism, which he concisely defines as the belief that 'mind and body are organically inseparable'.[12] Arguably, the KSS aligns with all three themes. Whyman proposes that Stanislavsky absorbed a principle underpinning evolutionary theory, that 'scientific law was discoverable', as well as Darwin's belief in the 'existence of universal passions' (2.2).[13] The importance of the unconscious to the KSS is evident in the prominent position it occupies in Stanislavsky's diagram of the system: the third of its foundational principles is labelled 'to the subconscious through the conscious' (5.3). Exactly how Stanislavsky conceives of the subconscious is a subject of debate. Carnicke subdivides his view of the unconscious into 'the "subconscious" (that lives within each person) and the "superconscious" (that transcends the individual)'. She argues the superconscious is equivalent to the yogic idea of 'higher consciousness'.[14] Crohn Schmitt and Whyman, however, trace Stanislavsky's thinking to philosopher Edouard von

[10] Ibid., p. 36.
[11] Stanislavski, *AAW*. p. xxiv.
[12] Joseph Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp. 161-62, hereafter *Player's Passion*.
[13] Whyman, *Stanislavsky System*, pp. 5 & 264.
[14] Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus,* p. 227. The influence of yoga on the KSS has been widely discussed. See, for example, Carnicke, pp. 167-84; Whyman, *Stanislavsky System*, pp. 81-85; Dorinda Hulton and Maria Kapsali, 'Stanislavsky and Yoga', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 10.1 (2019), pp.145-48, doi:10.1080/19443927.2018.1557736.

Hartmann.[15] Crohn Schmitt remarks that 'Stanislavski […] was primarily interested in the unconscious as the "realm where nine-tenths of any genuine creative process takes place". Freud saw the unconscious as irrational and contradictory. Stanislavski thought of it as logical'.[16] In psychoanalysis, the subconscious is frequently seen as a repository of threatening memories and a source of inhibition, but to Stanislavsky, it is a potent source of creativity (2.4).[17]

The role of monism in the KSS has been widely recognised. Pitches, for example, observes that 'Stanislavsky's whole system is predicated on the integration of mind and body'.[18] A discussion of Bits and Tasks in *An Actor's Work* illustrates the point.[19] The students struggle to understand the relationship between psychological and physical tasks. Umnovikh comments hesitantly, 'there's no way to separate the…mind from the body.' Tortsov agrees: 'in every physical, in every psychological Task and its fulfilment there's a great deal of the other. There's no way you can separate them'.[20] I argue Ribot is an important source of Stanislavsky's monism and that the 'indissoluble link' between mind and body paves the way

[15] Natalie Crohn Schmitt, 'Stanislavski, Creativity, and the Unconscious', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 2.8 (1986), pp. 345-51 (p. 346), doi:10.1017/S0266464X00002359, hereafter 'Creativity and the Unconscious'. See also Whyman, *Stanislavsky System*, pp. 88-90.
[16] Crohn Schmitt, 'Creativity and the Unconscious', p. 346.
[17] See *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (Random House, 1995). Freud explains that not everything that is unconscious is repressed, but that everything that is repressed is unconscious (p. 631). Repression is the ego's defence against impulses of the id that it regards as unacceptable, including memories that it finds in some way distressing. So, the unconscious becomes a store-house for what is 'alarming or painful or shameful' (p. 17). Freud describes any psychic representation of repressed instincts in terms suggestive of a malignant entity, that grows the more it remains hidden from consciousness. It 'proliferates in the dark'. When indirect expressions of the 'representation' are manifested to the 'neurotic', they seem alien and 'frighten him by giving him the picture of an extraordinary and dangerous strength of instinct' (p. 570).
[18] Jonathan Pitches, *Science and Stanislavsky* (Routledge, 2006), p. 21. See also Roach, *Player's Passion*, p. 205.
[19] Stanislavski, *AAW*, pp. 135-51.
[20] Ibid., p. 147.

for his 'new device', known as the Method of Physical Actions or Active Analysis (5.4).[21] It uses physical action as a primary means of accessing the emotions.

Two contrasting psychological traditions have been proposed as the dominant scientific influence on the KSS: the objective psychology of Sechenov and Pavlov and the introspective psychology of Ribot. However, the claims of objective psychology have been dismissed by some influential scholars. Carnicke, for example, rejects the alignment of the KSS with reflex theory relatively briefly. She states that 'while Stanislavsky read virtually everything that Ribot wrote, there is scant evidence to suggest such curiosity about Sechenov and Pavlov'.[22] Whyman discusses the claims in more detail, but comes to comparable conclusions. She argues that although Stanislavsky was undoubtedly aware of the work of Sechenov and Pavlov, he was unable to 'integrate reflex theory coherently into his own [theory of acting]'.[23] Reflex theory failed to displace Stanislavsky's primary influence on the psychology of emotion, Ribot.

Ribot's direct influence on Stanislavsky has been widely discussed by, for example, Benedetti, Carnicke, Jackson, Pitches, Roach and Whyman.[24] Benedetti notes that Ribot was first recommended to Stanislavsky in 1908 and he subsequently acquired copies of *Les*

[21] The phrase 'indissoluble link' has become a commonplace of Stanislavskian discourse. He seems to have used it frequently in workshops, according to his student Maria Knebel, who reports that he used it on numerous occasions, while discussing both mind and body, and interior and exterior activity. See Knebel, *Active Analysis*, pp. 30, 73, 105.
[22] Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in* Focus, p. 162.
[23] Whyman, *Stanislavsky System*, p. 75. See also Benedetti in Stanislavski, *AAW*, p. xvii.
[24] Benedetti, *Life and Art*, pp. 184-85; Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, pp. 77, 155-56 & passim; David Jackson, 'Ribot, Emotion and the Actor's Creative State', *Stanislavski Studies*, 2.1 (2013), pp. 246-67, doi:10.1080/20567790.2013.11428600; Pitches, *Stanislavsky and Science*, pp. 100-01, 104-05 & passim; Roach, *Player's Passion*, pp. 201 & 209-11; Whyman, *Stanislavsky System*, pp. 52-58 & passim.

Maladies de la Mémoire (1881) and *Les Maladies de la Volonté* (1884).[25] Whyman identifies a wider range of reading, which includes *La Logique des Sentiments* (1905)*,* the article *La Mémoire Affective* (published in Russian in 1899)*, Psychologie de l'Attention* (1889) and *L'Evolution des Idées Générales* (1909).[26] An English version of Ribot's studies of affective life was published as *The Psychology of the Emotions* in 1897.[27] It includes a chapter called 'The Memory of Feelings', which is a translation of Ribot's earlier article on affective memory.[28] Whyman notes that Stanislavsky's Russian translation of *La Mémoire Affective* is heavily annotated and there seems little doubt that Stanislavsky borrowed a variety of terms and ideas from Ribot.[29]

In 'The Memory of Feelings', Ribot discusses sense memory, the recall of bodily states, such as hunger or nausea, and identifies two main varieties of emotional memory (2.2). One is the intellectual recall of the circumstances surrounding an emotional event with 'a vague affective trace' of the original experience. He calls this 'abstract' or 'false' emotional memory. The second includes a fully 'revived condition of feeling', which reproduces the physiological effects of the original episode, which he refers to as 'concrete' or 'true' emotional memory (2.2).[30] In Ribot's view, the second form of emotional memory is

[25] Benedetti, *Life and Art*, pp. 184-85.
[26] Whyman, *Stanislavsky System*, pp. 52-53.
[27] Théodule Ribot, *The Psychology of the Emotions*, [trans and?] ed. by Havelock Ellis (Walter Scott, 1897), pp. hereafter *Psychology of the Emotions.*
[28] Ibid., pp. 1-22, 140-71. Whyman explains that the content of the Russian translation of *La Memoire Affective* is the same as chapter XI of the English translation of Ribot's *La Psychologie des Sentiments* (1896) entitled 'The Memory of Feeling'. It seems likely that the article, which originally appeared in *La Revue Philosophique* (October 1894), was subsequently included as a chapter in *La Psychologie des Sentiments.* Rose Whyman, discussion with the author, 19 October 2023.
[29] Whyman, *Stanislavsky System*, p. 53.
[30] Ribot, *Psychology of the Emotions*, p. 152.

extremely rare, but for Stanislavsky the ability to cultivate emotional memory, including a bodily response, is an essential element of the KSS.

Elements of Ribot's study read almost like a manual for sense and emotional memory exercises. He analyses data from approximately sixty dossiers, compiled from interviews with volunteers, who were questioned about their ability to recall sense impressions. He concludes that visual and auditory images are the easiest impressions to revive, and also that individuals with strong sensory recall are relatively likely to be capable of concrete emotional memory.[31] This idea may have suggested to Stanislavsky, and later to Strasberg, that work on sense memory might open the door to an enhanced ability to experience 'true' emotional memory (6.3). Ribot highlights the relatively rare case studies that exemplify concrete memory. One is of particular interest to actor trainers.[32] A young woman sits in a chair and reconstructs the sensory details of a hospital waiting room:

> First, I feel the carpet under my feet, then I *see* its pattern of red and brown roses; then the table with the books lying on it, their colour and style of binding; then the windows, and through them the branches of the trees, of which I hear the sound as they beat against the glass; lastly, the peculiar atmosphere of the room, its unmistakable smell. After this, I feel over again all the weariness of waiting, complicated by an intense dread of the doctor's arrival, a state of apprehension ending in a violent palpitation of the heart, which I find it impossible to escape.[33]

Notably, the woman experiences multiple sense memories, touch, sight, sound and smell. This paves the way for a physiological response and increasingly powerful emotions. The sequence of embodied states becomes unstoppable and distinctly unpleasant. When used

[31] Ibid., pp. 153 & 159.
[32] Pitches also discusses this example, in *Stanislavsky and Science*, pp. 100-02.
[33] Ribot, *Psychology of the Emotions*, pp. 155-56, italics in the original.

many decades later by Method practitioners, in an attempt to master their emotions, the value of such disturbing procedures came into question: did the end justify the means (6.6)?

A further aspect of Ribot's thinking has received little critical attention, despite its strong resonance with aspects of the KSS, the profound link between emotion and action. I am not aware of any evidence that Stanislavsky read *The Psychology of the Emotions* in its entirety, but nevertheless, there are some striking parallels between its introductory chapter and Stanislavsky's insistence on an indissoluble link between the psychological and the physical. In 'The Evolution of Affective Life', Ribot offers an account inspired by the evolutionary model. The primitive foundation of feelings is described as 'protoplasmic sensibility', which develops into the pursuit of basic survival needs, then to simple emotions, finally evolving into the 'higher', complex emotions which include religious feeling, aesthetic response and moral discrimination. 'Protoplasmic sensibility' consists of the 'tendency' of micro-organisms to be attracted to or repelled by an object, or alternatively the inhibition of such movement. Ribot writes in terms reminiscent of the goal-based vocabulary of the rehearsal room:

> The life of feeling consists of a 'tendency' towards movement or arrest of movement. Tendency embraces both psychological and physiological aspects and is synonymous with needs, appetites, instincts, desires, inclinations.[34]

Whyman points out that the Russian translation of 'tendency' was *stremlenie*. Stanislavsky uses this word to denote striving towards a significant goal and to develop his conception of the Supertask.[35] The shared terminology links the action-oriented vocabulary of the KSS

[34] Ribot, *Psychology of the Emotions*, p. 2.
[35] Whyman, *Stanislavsky System*, pp. 94-95. See also Stanislavski, *AAW*, pp. 306-32.

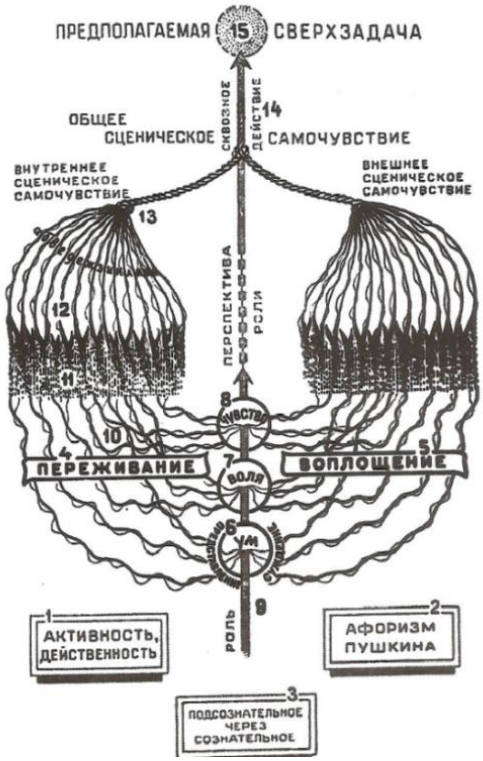
with Ribot's account of the foundations of affective life at the cellular level. It implies that, in Stanislavsky's thought, action in the theatre is not simply a means of stimulating emotion, but a fundamental component of what emotion is.

5.3 Emotion in the KSS

Although Stanislavsky certainly drew on the ideas of Ribot, Darwin and von Hartmann, among others, the science of his day could only take him so far. As Whyman explains, he complained that 'stage creativity had been neglected by science'. He was also frustrated by how little information was available to illuminate the topic of what he called the 'logic and consistency of feelings'.[36] In order to extend his understanding of theatrical creativity and the role of emotion within it, he looked to the great writers and actors he admired, especially Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy and Shchepkin, as well as engaging in his own practical investigations. This section explores the outcomes of his research, especially the multiple functions he discovered for emotion and how he advanced the ideas of his predecessors.

The significance of Pushkin's aesthetics to the KSS is represented graphically in Stanislavsky's sketch of the System. Its foundational principles appear at the base of the diagram in three boxes. The labels can be translated as 1: activeness, dynamism, 2: Pushkin's aphorism, and 3: to the subconscious through the conscious.[37] The diagram is reproduced below as a reference point for the thesis:

[36] Whyman, *Stanislavsky System*, p. 9.
[37] Carnicke translates the box 1 contents as 'Dynamism' and the motto in box 3 as 'The Subconscious by means of the Conscious'. See *Stanislavsky in Focus*, p. 123.



3. Stanislavsky's 'Plan of Experiencing'

Pushkin's aphorism (*АФОРИЗМ ПУШКИНА,* box 2) is quoted in *An Actor's Work*: 'truth of the passions, feelings that seem true in the supposed circumstances, that is what our intellect requires of a dramatist'.[38] The left-hand side of the diagram is labelled *ПЕРЕЖИВАНИЕ* (*perezhivanie*, or 'experiencing') and the right-hand side, *ВОПЛОЩЕНИЕ* (voploshchenie, or 'incarnation'). The strands of the two lung-like aspects of the system comprise its various elements, such as bits and tasks, adaptation and communion. The argument here will focus on the three foundations.[39]

[38] Pushkin in Stanislavski, *AAW*, p. 52.
[39] For a full explanation of the details of the diagram, see Whyman, *Stanislavsky System*, pp. 39-42.

5.3.1 'Knowing means feeling'

Stanislavsky's famous claim that 'in the theatre, knowing means feeling' points to an introspective methodology appropriate for the arts.[40] He may have found some validation for his approach in the introspective psychology of Ribot and James (2.2). Closer to home, he might also have found support from both Belinsky and Tolstoy. Like Belinsky, Tolstoy believed that art and science shared the common purpose of improving the lot of mankind, but by different means. Moreover, they must work symbiotically: 'science and art are as closely bound together as the lungs and the heart, so that if one organ is perverted the other cannot act rightly'.[41] The task of science is to discover what is important and that of art to transform this knowledge from 'perception' to 'feeling'.[42] This distinction suggests two modes of knowing, intellectual grasp of a subject on the one hand and a deeper, intuitive understanding on the other. Thus, Tolstoy reinforces two of Belinsky's ideas that had an impact on the KSS, the notion that science and art are on a joint mission and that art has its own legitimate methods.

In translation, Stanislavsky's remark that 'knowing means feeling' is deceptively simple. Carnicke explains the full richness of this short phrase. The Russian noun, translated as 'feeling', '*чувство*' (*chuvstva*), applies equally to sensory and emotional experience. The related verb 'chustvovat' has a remarkably wide range of applications, including to have sensations, to feel and to understand. It can be used somatically, cognitively and to describe

[40] Stanislavski, *AAW*, p. xxiv.
[41] Lev Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, trans. by Aylmer Maude (Roads, 2014), p. 210, hereafter *What is Art?*
[42] Ibid., pp. 209-21.

subjective experience.[43] The complex resonances of the original Russian include the implications that performance knowledge is only valuable if it is embodied and that interoceptive awareness of emotional or sensory response is an important dimension of an actor's learning. It is also worth recalling Damasio's distinction between emotion and feeling. In his taxonomy, emotion is the cascade of physical responses to an 'emotionally competent stimulus'. Feeling, the perception of the bodily changes, can take place both non-consciously and consciously. Damasio emphasises that, because of the 'somatic marker hypothesis', feelings are a valuable guide as we navigate through the world, particularly in relation to other people (2.7). Therefore, awareness of the messages sent by the body are useful in life and essential in acting. The linguistic and neurological perspectives both illuminate Stanislavsky's remark.

Notwithstanding his respect for psychology, Stanislavsky reserved the right to employ his own approach based on phenomenological experience, including the workings of his imagination. In the chapter headed 'Communication', he explains how useful he found it, when delivering a long speech in verse, to imagine a conversation between his Intellectual Centre located in the head and Emotional Centre located in the solar plexus. In somewhat belligerent terms, he defends his right to make use of non-scientific practice:

> I have no wish to go into whether what I felt is acceptable to science or not. My criterion is the way I felt. It may indeed be purely personal, it may indeed prove to be the product of my own imagination but it helps me, so I make all possible use of it.[44]

[43] Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, pp. 168-69.
[44] Stanislavski, *AAW*, p. 234.

Stanislavsky employs a pragmatic approach, consisting of introspection, invention, trial and error and reflection. Feeling is Stanislavsky's touchstone for knowledge in the theatre and the means of identifying what is useful. It is both epistemology and research methodology.

5.3.2 'The activity of art'

If one function of emotion in the KSS is to guide artistic decision-making, then a second is also prefigured in the aesthetics of Belinsky and Tolstoy: the belief that emotion is the content of art and its communication to the audience essential to the civilizing mission of theatre. Tolstoy explains the purpose of art in terms of sharing an emotional memory:

> *Art is a human activity, consisting in this: that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings, and also experience them*.[45]

He cites the example of a boy telling the story of an encounter with a wolf. It makes no difference if the incident actually happened or if the storyteller is simply scared of wolves, as long as the boy activates his own fear and succeeds in 'infecting' his audience with the same feeling. But the artist does not arouse emotion for its own sake. Art is 'indispensable for the life and progress towards the wellbeing of individuals and of humanity'.[46] The anecdote captures several aesthetic principles crucial to the development of the KSS. Tolstoy posits a form of artistic communication in which there are two essential phases, arousal of real feelings in the actor-storyteller and transmission of those feelings to the audience. In the

[45] Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, p. 63, italics in the original.
[46] Ibid., pp. 61-62, 63.

theatre, once the actor has succeeded in transmitting emotion to the spectators, they can experience a sense of kinship.[47]

How emotion might be evoked in the actor and then transmitted to an audience in the theatre is addressed as early as the second chapter of *An Actor's Work*, when Tortsov feeds back to the students after their first diagnostic performance. Only two of the beginning students are deemed worthy of praise, Maloletkova and Nazvanov. Tortsov picks out Maloletkova's cry of 'save me!' and Nazvanov's rendition of Othello's line, 'Blood, Iago, blood!' Tortsov sees these isolated moments of brilliance as the result of gut instinct and therefore not sustainable, but nevertheless recognises these moments as examples of 'the art of experiencing'. He highlights two features of this type of acting. Firstly, it seizes the attention of the audience and produces a sense of shared experience. He remarks that all those present 'were stunned and fired by the same common emotion'.[48] Secondly, he points out that Nazvanov was in the grip of unconscious creation.

Tortsov goes on to relate 'experiencing' to the fundamental aim of the art of acting to which his school aspires: 'experiencing helps the actor to fulfil his basic goal, which is *the creation of the life of the human spirit in a role and the communication of that life onstage in an artistic form*'.[49] In a separate passage, Tortsov makes an explicit connection between emotion and the process of working towards this 'basic goal': 'material drawn from the

[47] See also Whyman, *Stanislavsky System*, pp. 13-16.
[48] Stanislavsky, *AAW*, p. 16.
[49] Ibid., p. 19, italics in the original.

emotions is particularly precious. From it is formed "the life of the human spirit in a role"'.[50] Nazvanov and his new friend Shustov question Tortsov further, eager to know if it is possible to teach an actor to master the unconscious. In reply, he outlines a process of conscious work to build 'truth' and 'belief' as an indirect means of engaging natural responses and coaxing inspiration into life. In short, he introduces the raison d'être of the KSS.

Emotion is implicit in the concepts of both 'experiencing' and the 'life of the human spirit of the role'. Once this content has been created, the final stage in Stanislavsky's vision is communication with an audience. Benedetti suggests that Gogol provided Stanislavsky with the germ of an idea of how this communication should take place. Gogol wrote that the actor 'must not *present* but *transmit*'.[51] It seems this need to communicate the character's inner life without, in contemporary terms, 'demonstrating' explains to some extent Stanislavsky's interest in the yogic notion of 'prana' or vital energy. According to Stanislavsky, in a successful performance, 'prana rays' pass between actors and their on-stage partners and between actors and audience, 'thus becoming the vehicle for infecting others with the emotional content of the performance'.[52] Tortsov will only accept theatre that is enriched by the actor's human experience and transmitted, not demonstrated to the public:

> Only acting of this kind can fully capture an audience and bring them to a point where they not only comprehend but, more importantly, experience everything done onstage, and so enrich their own inner lives, leaving a mark that time will not erase.[53]

[50] Ibid., pp. 117-18.
[51] Gogol in Benedetti, *Life and Art*, p. 15.
[52] Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, pp. 245-57.
[53] Stanislavski, *AAW*, pp. 20-21.

Creating the life of the human spirit, with emotion at its heart, is the core strategy for bringing about the ennobling vision of theatre inspired by Belinsky and Tolstoy.

5.3.3 Emotion and creativity

Crohn Schmitt and Whyman identify von Hartmann as the primary source for Stanislavsky's idea of the creative unconscious (5.2). Crohn Schmitt remarks that 'for von Hartmann, the unconscious was the fundamental active principle in the universe, the creative force upon which depended the meaning of all creation'.[54] Whyman connects Stanislavsky's tri-partite model of unconscious, superconscious and subconscious with von Hartmann's 'three layers' of the unconscious, the absolute, physiological and psychological.[55] Stanislavsky repeatedly refers to the 'subconscious' as the dominant source of creativity.[56]

To understand the role of emotion in this mysterious realm, Stanislavsky may well have turned to Ribot once more. A number of ideas in his *Creative Imagination* resonate with the KSS. For Ribot, 'the emotional factor yields in importance to no other; it is the ferment without which no creation is possible'.[57] Just like thoughts, feelings and emotions, according to Ribot, the creative imagination is rooted in motor activity. Invention is born of 'a want, a craving, a tendency, an unsatisfied impulse'.[58] In an additional striking parallel, Ribot identifies another feature of creativity. He claims the poet, novelist, dramatist, musician, even the sculptor and painter, 'experience the thoughts and feelings of their characters,

[54] Crohn Schmitt, 'Creativity and the Unconscious', p. 346.
[55] Whyman, *Stanislavsky System*, pp. 86-89,
[56] Stanislavsky, *AAW*, passim.
[57] Théodule Ribot, *Creative Imagination*, trans. by A.H.N. Baron (Kegan Paul, 1906), p. 31.
[58] Ibid., pp. 32, 42-44.

become identified with them'.[59] Stanislavsky strives to explain this creative 'ferment' in terms of a metaphorical model of the interaction between conscious psychotechnique and unconscious creativity.

In a chapter entitled 'inner psychological drives', Tortsov introduces the class to the notion of the elements of the system as soldiers in an army, with the drives as its generals.[60] The drives are Will, Mind and Feeling. Feeling is 'the most important general, the prime mover, the drive in the creative process'. Unfortunately, 'feeling is intractable, it won't take orders'.[61] Feelings are not subject to conscious control, so the actor's work must be mobilised by Will and Mind. In a subsequent chapter, Stanislavsky extends his military analogy. Tortsov speaks of the inner drives heading for 'a military camp, deep in slumber'. This camp consists of the actor's 'artistic forces', such as objects of attention, tasks and emotion memories, i.e., the elements of the KSS. Mind, Will and Feeling activate the components of psychotechnique and, conversely, the elements cause the drives to become more dynamic. There is also an emotional dimension to the interaction. The drives absorb the affective quality of the elements and, in return, impart their initial creative response to the play.[62] Stanislavsky's attempt to theorise the activation of the creative unconscious is not always entirely lucid. However, he offers a vivid example of the process, in his account of an *étude* (exercise), used several times during the imaginary training.

[59] Ibid., p. 33.
[60] Stanislavski, *AAW*, pp. 273-82.
[61] Ibid., p. 273.
[62] Stanislavski, *AAW*, pp. 292-93.

Tortsov calls on Nazvanov and Viuntsov to play the 'burning money' *étude*, in which a young accountant takes money and documents home in order to complete his work. Later, he discovers that his brother-in-law, who has an unspecified learning disorder, has burnt the money.[63] The passage illustrates Stanislavsky's vision of how an actor might make the transition from conscious preparation to a subconscious creative state, one of the key goals of the KSS. Initially, Nazvanov struggles to relax, but is assisted by some gentle side-coaching from Tortsov. The familiar exercise is revitalized by two new given circumstances, financial responsibility for the young man's parents-in-law and the discovery of a large deficit in the company accounts. These triggers enable Nazvanov to fully experience his part, living through the implications of the events of the scene, healthily indifferent to the presence of an audience. He is only able to reflect on what happened after the exercise has concluded. Nazvanov reports, 'I lost myself in the role', revealing the subconscious nature of his acting. He notes a switch from 'feelings that seem true' to a deeper 'truth of the passions' (5.3.5). Tortsov concludes, 'you have found yourself in the role and the role in you'.[64] In Stanislavsky's thought, the mechanisms of unconscious creativity are necessarily infused with emotion and feeling. In contemporary terms, Nazvnov's *étude* describes what might be called a 'flow' state or being 'in the moment'.[65]

[63] Ibid., pp. 322-25.
[64] Stanislavski, *AAW*, p. 325.
[65] The term 'flow' was coined by the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in the 1970s. See *Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology: The Collected Works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi* (Springer, 2014).

5.3.4 The wildfowl and the lure

Nazvanov notes in his diary that 'all our work at school, in all its phases leads principally to arousing Emotion Memory and recurrent feelings'.[66] His statement suggests that *all* the elements of the KSS, 'if', Actions, Given Circumstances, Belief, Communication and so on, are intended to stimulate emotion and feeling. But the ultimate aim, as Stanislavsky himself might have put it, is not to produce 'feelings for feelings sake'. The aim is to harness the power of the 'feeling drive' to 'prepare the soil' for 'genuine, subconscious creation'.[67] Nevertheless, the intractable feeling drive must be engaged in order to establish the conditions for optimum creativity. But how should this be achieved? Tortsov insists:

> You can't squeeze feelings out of yourself, you can't be jealous, love, suffer for the sake of being jealous, loving, or suffering. You can't force feelings. That only leads to the most repulsive kind of ham acting. So, when choosing an action, leave your feelings alone.[68]

A key image, indicative of the strategy used to activate the 'feeling drive', appears in chapter nine of *An Actor's Work*. Tortsov uses hunting imagery:

> You must handle Emotion Memory and the feelings it contains in the same way a hunter handles wildfowl […]. If the bird won't fly to him, there's no way of tracking it down in a dense green thicket. There's nothing for it but to entice it out of the woods with the help of special whistles, which we call "decoys".[69]

Stanislavsky evokes this image of a timid bird in a range of contexts. He uses the words 'lure' or 'decoy' in discussions of how to stimulate 'emitting and receiving rays'; of how the inner drives can act as decoys for each other; and of how the elements of the KSS can help the

[66] Stanislavsky, *AAW*, p. 226.
[67] Ibid., p. 18.
[68] Ibid., p. 43. Variations on this principle, that if you focus on action, then emotion will take care of itself, have become axiomatic in the conservatoire. See, for example, Stella Adler's assertion that 'emotions aren't doable. Actions are doable' (4.6).
[69] Stanislavski, *AAW*, p. 225.

actor overcome the unnatural conditions of the stage.[70] He establishes a principle that is still widely accepted in contemporary actor training, that acted emotion cannot be approached directly, it must be induced by indirect means.

5.3.5 Stanislavsky's modifications

Stanislavsky's debt to his artistic forebears is clear. He also introduced some significant modifications to his predecessors' ideas, in the process of developing an evolved model of acted emotion. When Tortsov introduces Pushkin's aphorism to the class, the students are confused and demand an explanation (5.3). Tortsov explains the change from Pushkin's 'supposed' to his own 'given' circumstances. The dramatist has the freedom to invent imaginary, or 'supposed' details, but for the actor, these details are 'imposed', or 'given' by the play and production. These details include the plot, facts, incidents, period, time and place of the play scène.[71]

Pushkin uses 'truth of the passions' and 'feelings that seem true' synonymously. But Stanislavsky, through Tortsov, seeks to articulate a distinction between the two. 'Truth of the passions' is grounded in the emotional repertoire of the actor: it refers to 'genuine, living, human passions, feelings, the actor's own personal experiences'.[72] Tortsov's attempt to illuminate the second term is repetitious and not entirely clear, but is consistent with the two tiers of acted emotion encountered by Nazvanov in the 'burning money' *étude* (5.3.3).

[70] Ibid., pp. 254, 279, 611.
[71] Stanislavski, *AAW*, pp. 52-53.
[72] Ibid., p. 53.

'Feelings that seem true' are better than nothing, but are a second-class achievement. They are:

> Not genuine passions, feelings or experiences, but a hint of them, a mood closely related to them, seeming like truth and therefore true-see[m]ing. This is a way of conveying the passions, not directly, spontaneously, subconsciously but, so to speak prompted by our feelings.[73]

In an echo of Ribot's 'concrete' and 'abstract' analysis, Stanislavsky posits a hierarchy of acted emotion, in which the 'truth of the passions' is the ideal, but 'feelings that seem true' are the minimum requirement.

Benedetti argues that both Pushkin and Gogol found their ideal actor in Mikhail Shchepkin, because of his ability to identify closely with his roles and to experience actual emotion in performance. He suggests that Stanislavsky shared these great writers' admiration for the star of the Maly Theatre, even though he never saw Shchepkin perform.[74] Nevertheless, Stanislavsky's view of acted emotion diverged significantly from that of Shchepkin in the course of his career. Shchepkin compares two types of actors in terms reminiscent of the Emotionalist-Anti-Emotionalist debate (3). Firstly, there is the egoist, who only uses reason. They may play well but can only perform mechanically. Secondly, there is the actor driven by feeling, who 'wipes out' their own identity and becomes the character the author imagines, thinking, feeling and moving accordingly:

[73] Ibid. The phrase 'true-seeing' in Benedetti's translation is presumably a typographical error.
[74] Benedetti explains that, although Shchepkin died the same year that Stanislavsky was born, the great actor nevertheless influenced the young Konstantin Sergeyevich, through his autobiography and Stanislavsky's enthusiasm for the Maly Theatre, known as 'The House of Shchepkin'. See *Life and Art*, pp. 16-17.

> You see how the work of this actor is more meaningful. In the first case you only need to pretend to live – in the second you have to live…You might say that this is impossible. No, it is only difficult.[75]

Shchepkin's assertions are consistent with an unequivocally 'emotionalist' approach. But Stanislavsky develops a more nuanced account of acted emotion, which clearly differentiates it from the emotion a person might feel in life. He repeatedly refers to feelings that are 'parallel' or 'analogous' to the character, reinforcing this separation.[76] Acted emotion must be rooted in real experience, but be chosen for its relevance to the play and processed artistically.

Nowhere is the transformation of actual experience for dramatic use better exemplified than in Nazvanov's account of an accident he witnessed in the street.[77] On his way home from class, he is shocked by the traumatic spectacle of a partially dismembered beggar, who has been killed by a trolley-car. A couple of days later, he passes the same spot and his feelings of revulsion have vanished, replaced by compassion for the victim and a feeling of indignation aroused by the cruel event. A week after that, he passes the spot once more and his memory of the accident acquires symbolic qualities: the passengers in the trolley-car seem to represent the transitory generations, the white snow to symbolise life and the black corpse death. Still later, he recalls a similar accident and another image of death, the sight of a grieving Serb attempting to revive his dying pet monkey with a sugarplum.

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[75] Michael Shchepkin, 'Feeling and Pretense', in *Actors on Acting*, ed. by Toby Cole and Helen Crich Chinoy, rev. edn (Crown, 1970), pp. 482-84 (p. 483).
[76] See, for example, Stanislavski, *AAW*, pp. 19, 55; Knebel, *Active Analysis*, pp. 100, 107, 108.
[77] Stanislavski, *AAW*, pp. 203-07.

Using this fictional anecdote, Stanislavsky illustrates how memory and imagination develop and synthesise life experiences, endowing them with aesthetic and moral qualities, so that they acquire a kind of universality: the emotional content becomes applicable to a variety of situations and develops the power to resonate with an entire audience. Tortsov remarks that 'time is a wonderful filter, a powerful purifier of memories, of feelings one has had. Moreover time is a great artist. It not only purifies, it lends poetry to memory'.[78] By contrasting the brutal effect of Nazvanov's first impressions with the symbolic quality of the transformed images, Stanislavsky illustrates the difference between the raw material of life and what is suitable for the stage. He distinguishes between life and acted emotion.

5.3.6 Towards Affective Emotion

The trolley car anecdote contrasts 'crudely naturalistic' and 'poetic' emotion. Stanislavsky makes two further distinctions between life and art. Discussing the difficulties of behaving naturally on stage, Tortsov explains that actors have one advantage and one disadvantage. Working in public tempts the actor to exhibitionism, but on the other hand, when the actor achieves the state of 'public solitude' there is a kind of delight that is only available in performance.[79] In this state, the actor can enjoy experiencing even negative emotions, a phenomenon discussed previously by Archer (3.4). Stanislavsky also refers to the state of dual consciousness, an idea derived from Diderot and Salvini.[80] He quotes Salvini: 'the actor lives, weeps, laughs onstage but weeping or laughing he observes his laughter and tears.

[78] Ibid., p. 206.
[79] Stanislavski, *AAW*, p. 294.
[80] See Benedetti, *Life and Art*, p. 221; Roach, *Player's Passion*, p. 214.

And it is in that double life, that balance between life and the role that art lies'.[81] Double consciousness, in the KSS, is one of the factors that separates art from life.

Stanislavsky develops a complex, multifaceted role for emotion in the acting process. Feelings are a touchstone for worthwhile discoveries in practical research. When created on stage in the form of the 'life of the human spirit', emotion resonates throughout the auditorium, building an empathetic rapport with the audience. Emotion is an elusive, but powerful ally in the process of stimulating the creative unconscious. Arousing of emotion is the goal of every element of the KSS. Finally, the idea of an aesthetically conditioned emotion that is parallel to, but distinct from, life emotion paves the way for Vakhtangov's articulation of Affective Emotion (3.5). That in turn paves the way for the introduction in this thesis of my new formulation of Scenic Emotion (3.7).

5.4 Active Analysis

In order to fully understand the role of emotion in the KSS and appreciate its long-term influence, it is essential to take into account the activities of Stanislavsky's final studio, the Opera-Dramatic. The significance of this period is explained by Benedetti. Only two of Stanislavsky's books were published in his lifetime and although he had made voluminous notes, he realised that time was running out for him. He concluded the best chance of securing his legacy was to select a group of students and assistant directors, with a view to working practically on the most highly evolved version of the KSS.[82] His assistants included

[81] Salvini in Stanislavski, *AAW*, p. 302.
[82] Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski and the Actor: The Final Acting Lessons* (Methuen, 1998), pp. xi-xiv, hereafter *Final Lessons.*

Michael Kedrov, a future Artistic Director of the Moscow Art Theatre, Maria Knebel and Vasily Toporkov. This section considers both continuity and changes in emphasis in the KSS towards the end of Stanislavsky's career.

Firstly, it is worth discussing the nomenclature for the most important discovery of the Opera-Dramatic, because it is not a simple issue. Stanislavsky mentions his novel approach in a letter to his family, dated 1936:

> I am setting a new device in motion now, a new approach to the role. It involves reading the play today, and tomorrow rehearsing it on stage. What can we rehearse? A great deal. A character comes in, greets everybody, sits down, tells of events that have just taken place, expresses a series of thoughts. Everyone can act this, guided by their own life experience.[83]

Benedetti refers to this 'new device' as the Method of Physical Actions, but acknowledges that some Russian teachers prefer the Method of Analysis through Physical Actions.[84] The complexity of terminology is confirmed by acting teacher, Sergei Cherkassky. He identifies three variations on comparable terms and elucidates their meanings: the 'Method of Physical Action's suggests an exclusive focus on external behaviour, but the name is a misnomer, because the approach is also psychological; the 'Method of Action Analysis' focusses on the events of the play; the word '*étude*' is reserved for improvisations that address specific acting problems.[85] In Irina Brown's translation, Knebel uses various expressions, mainly 'Active Analysis' and 'rehearsal by *étude*', or '*étude* rehearsals'. Merlin argues that the 'Method of Physical Actions' is reductive, at least in Kedrov's interpretation. Arguably, it is a coldly logical approach that excludes any spiritual content in favour of

[83] Stanislavsky in Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, p. 194.
[84] Benedetti, *Final Lessons*, p. xiv.
[85] Cherkassky, 'Stanislavsky System of Actor's Training'.

physical mechanics. She therefore prefers Knebel's 'Active Analysis', on the ground that it better represents the holistic approach of the final studio.[86] Here, I analyse the perspectives of the studio members whose accounts are available in English, Knebel and Toporkov, using the term 'Active Analysis'.

Toporkov was a veteran of the Moscow Art Theatre and played Orgon in the production of *Tartuffe* that Stanislavsky was working on when he died. Kedrov played the title role.[87] In an oft-quoted remark, he stresses the continuity of the final phase of work with the KSS as a whole:

> It can't be said that Stanislavski brought anything completely new to his final work with us, or anything contrary to his previous teachings about the system […]. But now Stanislavski's method was richer, more practical, and that was expressed in the definition, the 'Method of Physical Action'.[88]

The apparent emphasis on action did not prevent Toporkov from acknowledging the central role of emotion. Discussing a shift of emphasis towards the fulfilment of tasks, he anticipates a possible objection to this development: 'does that mean he rejected the emotional side of our work? Not at all, he spoke of it every step of the way, and acting only becomes high art when an actor brings genuine emotion and energy to it'.[89] In Toporkov's account, Kedrov explains the apparent shift to an exclusive focus on action: 'Stanislavski said that when we talk about "physical actions" we mislead the actor. They are psychophysical actions, but we call them physical to avoid unnecessary discussion, because physical actions

[86] Bella Merlin, *The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit* (Nick Hern, 2007), pp. 196-98.
[87] Toporkov, *Stanislavski in Rehearsal*, pp. 104-58.
[88] Ibid., p. 111.
[89] Ibid., p. 28.

are real, they can be set'.[90] Kedrov touches on a pedagogical strategy to guide the actor in a productive direction and articulates the idea that while emotions cannot be fixed and reproduced at will, actions can.

Avoiding speaking about emotion is a pedagogical tactic entirely consistent with Stanislavsky's belief in an indirect approach to the subconscious. It is not a radical departure, rather a new mode of dealing with the same challenge. However, Toporkov does discuss some fresh ideas that do not appear in earlier documentation of the KSS. Echoing Kedrov, he notes that if the actor attempts to repeat the feelings of a previous performance, they will tend to 'dry up'. Repeated actions, however, do not have the same effect: 'you cannot recall and set feelings, you can only recall a sequence of physical actions'.[91] In a connected idea, he proposes that actions can be enlivened by whatever affective state the actor happens to be in on a particular day, 'here, today, now'. This phrase, in a number of variations, is repeated with almost monotonous regularity. Evidently, it has entered the vocabulary of the KSS. As Stanislavsky himself puts it, 'my method is to get involved with the feelings I have today. Here, today, now'.[92] Toporkov builds a picture of a thoroughly pragmatic approach that is demanding, but sympathetic to the actors. It presents them with achievable challenges.

Knebel also stresses the continuity of the final phase with the KSS as a whole. One of the aims of *On Active Analysis of the Play and the Role* is to demonstrate the strong link between

[90] Michael Kedrov in Toporkov, *Stanislavski in Rehearsal*, p. 158.
[91] Toporkov, *Stanislavski in Rehearsal*, p. 125. See also p. 115.
[92] Stanislavsky in Toporkov, *Stanislavski in Rehearsal*, p. 110. See also pp. 92, 113, 128 & 158.

the new method of rehearsing and the 'principal tenets of the system'.[93] Similarly, she remarks that 'it is not possible to discuss the use of active analysis' without reference to the key elements of the KSS.[94] In outline, it is possible to trace these connections through the chapter headings in *Active Analysis* and its companion volume, *The Word in the Actor's Creative Work*. Many of the titles are familiar from Benedetti's translation of *An Actor's Work*, including Given Circumstances, Supertask, Throughaction, Adaptations and Tempo-Rhythm. Less familiar is the focus on Events, which replace 'Bits' as the essential unit for analysing dramatic structure, 'operative facts', which are the moments or details of the play that spur the characters into action, or the *étude*, a structured improvisation, which is used as the core method of exploration (5.6). The continuity and innovation in Knebel's account point to an evolution of the KSS, not a radical change of direction.

From the perspective of the thesis, there are three techniques described by Knebel of particular interest, because of their relationship to emotion in acting. They are Nemirovich-Danchenko's idea of the 'second plane', the inner monologue and images. To exemplify the 'second plane', Knebel cites an episode from Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. Anna is on her way to the station in her carriage, apparently the perfect, privileged society lady. But internally, she is taking stock of her entire life, contemplating suicide and secretly saying farewell to all that she sees.[95] The actor must build up similar 'psychological cargo', to foster the 'art of experiencing'. The 'inner monologue' is connected to the second plane, because it is 'one of

[93] Knebel, *Active Analysis*, p. 83.
[94] Ibid., p. 59.
[95] Knebel, *Active Analysis*, p.61. The passage Knebel refers to is the penultimate chapter of part seven of the novel, in Lev Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, trans. by Margaret Wettlin, 2 vols (Raduga, 1978), II, pp. 375-78.

the main tools for acquiring 'inner cargo'.[96] Moreover, it is a reliable method for infusing text with the 'warmth of real human feeling', because 'inner monologue is always emotional'.[97] The technique is illustrated with a detailed description of Stanislavsky's work with some students on the scene from *The Cherry Orchard*, during which Lopakhin fails to propose to Varya.[98] The actor playing Varya had particular difficulty because, as the teacher points out, Varya's lines do not just fail to express her true feelings, they contradict them. Stanislavsky sets up an *étude*, in which the actor articulates her inner thoughts. The exercise enables her to build imaginative, appropriate links between the disjointed and apparently prosaic bits of text. The scene is radically improved.[99]

For Stanislavsky and Knebel, the accumulation of mental images, from daily life, is important homework for the actor. Knebel offers the example of an encounter she had with a sick woman on a train. She did not stop to assist the woman, because she was late for rehearsals. Afterwards, Knebel is not troubled by the incident itself, but regrets her unkind failure to help. The guilt stays with her and her memory of the event acquires a distinctive affective colouring: 'the more often I go back to it, the more actively and deeply I process my first direct impressions. My feelings are now more acute, more complex and sharper than they were in the that first instance'.[100] Like Nazvanov's vision of the trolley-car, Knebel's image of the woman on the train intensifies with time. Life echoes art.

[96] Knebel, *Active Analysis*, pp. 61-65.
[97] Ibid., p. 148.
[98] Anton Chekhov, *Plays*, trans. by Michael Frayn (Methuen Drama, 1993), pp. 349-50.
[99] Knebel, *Active Analysis*, pp. 146-48.
[100] Ibid., p. 118.

Toporkov's account is slanted towards physical action and Knebel's towards the character's inner life. But both understood that a physical score is nothing without a parallel psychological score. Knebel defines subtext as the continuous flow of thoughts, feelings and images under the text which causes the characters to speak: 'what is called *throughaction* in the sphere of action, is called *subtext* in the sphere of speech'.[101] Conversely, interior creativity is nothing unless it is visible to the audience as action. While Toporkov and Knebel are not exactly two sides of the same coin, their work presupposes the psychophysical unity embedded in the KSS.

5.5 The KSS in the Frame

Before summarising the chapter arguments, I briefly recap its key research questions. How has the science changed since Stanislavsky drew on Ribot's research? How does his evolving idea of acted emotion relate to the concepts of Affective and Scenic Emotion? Can training approaches grounded on this one-hundred-year-old system meet the needs of the twenty-first century conservatoire?

Aspects of Ribot's thought and language are archaic. For example, contemporary biologists rarely use the word 'protoplasm'. As early as the mid-twentieth century, microbiologist Garrett Hardin discusses the 'Meaninglessness of the Word Protoplasm', arguing that the word was falling into disuse because of its imprecise definition.[102] More recently, in their analysis of developments in cellular biology, Rickey Welch and James Clegg refer to the term

[101] Knebel, *Active Analysis*, p. 149.
[102] Garrett Hardin, 'Meaninglessness of the Word Protoplasm', *The Scientific Monthly*, 82.3 (1956), pp. 112-20, https://www.jstor.org/stable/22160.

as 'an archaic expression long buried in the annals of biology'.[103] However, I argue that a number of Ribot's ideas remain current and continue to provide a secure foundation for a Stanislavskian approach to emotion. Ribot's views on the functioning of emotional memory, monism and the links between action and emotion all resonate with contemporary science.

Ribot's description of the interaction of sense and emotional memory seems entirely consistent with the neurology considered in this thesis. LeDoux, Damasio and Barrett all discuss the highly complicated neural traffic between the sensory cortices and various brain regions implicated in emotional response (2.3, 2.7, 2.8). Ribot, Stanislavsky and LeDoux all posit a binary structure for emotional memory. Ribot's categories are abstract cognitive recall and concrete physiological reconstruction (2.2, 5.2). His case studies also demonstrate how the recall of sensory details can shift memory from the abstract to the concrete (5.2). Stanislavsky's analysis has a comparable two-level structure. He proposes a 'truth of the passions', derived from personal experience, and a weaker version of acted emotion, 'feelings that seem true' (5.3.5). The fictional anecdote of the burning money illustrates how the actor's psychotechnique can 'upgrade' the latter to the former (5.3.3). In LeDoux's account, primary emotion memory occurs when a stimulus instantly activates the relevant brain region, which, in the case of the fear response, is the amygdala. Secondary emotion memory occurs when the conscious recall of an emotionally competent event, taking a slightly longer route via the hippocampus, indirectly activates the amygdala (2.3). Once activated, the primary and secondary routes can reinforce each other. The idea of a first and

[103] G. Rickey Welch and James S. Clegg, 'From Protoplasmic Theory to Cellular Systems Biology: A 150-Year Reflection', *American Journal of Physiology-Cell Physiology*, 298.6 (2010), C1280-90, doi:10.1152/ajpcell.00016.2010.

second order of emotional memory, the one unconscious, automatic, and intense, the other, initially at least, conscious, less intense and comparatively slow, is one that is validated by LeDoux's neurology.

The late nineteenth-century preoccupation with monism continues to resonate with researchers in both the performing arts and science, albeit in a variety of forms. Ribot insisted that the physiological dimension of emotional response and the correlative states of consciousness, including the subjective experience of emotion, were not separate phenomena, but '*a single occurrence expressed in two languages*' (2.2).[104] Similarly, the accounts of Stanislavsky's final studio insistently reiterate the principle that mind and body are indissolubly linked (5.4). The mind-body relationship continues to be a fruitful area for science to explore. To cite a few examples from this thesis, Damasio strives to explain how consciousness arises from human brain anatomy.[105] Barrett describes a process that links mind, body and action, beginning with interoception alerting us to a bodily response to an emotive event. Our neural networks rapidly select an appropriate interpretation of the event, which then prompts us to 'launch an action' (2.8).[106] The monism that assumes the indivisibility of mind and body has implications for the actor trainer that continue to be explored: physical activity can stimulate inner life, and inner life prompts a visible manifestation of feelings.[107]

[104] Ribot, *Psychology of the Emotions*, p. 112, italics in the original.
[105] See, for example Antonio Damasio, *Descartes Error* (Vintage, 2006), pp. xxi-xxiv, and *Self Comes to Mind* (Vintage, 2012), pp. 241-49.
[106] Lisa Feldman Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain* (Pan, 2018), p. 123.
[107] See, for example, Frank Camilleri, *Performer Training Reconfigured: Post-Psychophysical Perspectives for the Twenty-First Century* (Bloomsbury, 2019); Lisa Wolford, 'Grotowski's Vision of the Actor: The Search for Contact', in *Twentieth Century Actor Training*, ed. by Alison Hodge (Routledge, 2000), pp. 191-208; Phillip B. Zarrilli, *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach after Stanislavski* (Routledge, 2009).

Perhaps the most compelling evidence for the currency of the KSS, in terms of its consistency with contemporary psychology, is the connection between action and emotion that is implicit in Stanislavsky's work. It is an idea almost certainly derived from Ribot, who spoke of 'the fundamental and irreducible fact at the root of all emotion: attraction or repulsion, desire or aversion, in short, motion, or arrest of motion'.[108] Frijda's account emphasises the functional nature of emotion, defined as a largely automated response that prepares the body to take appropriate action in relation to an external challenge. He calls it 'potentiation', because the individual can choose to either respond, or not respond to the impulse to act (2.6). Either choice is useful to the professional actor. I argue the link between action and emotion remains fundamental to actor training and any separation of the two is a form of dualism, that is scientifically questionable and unhelpful to the actor.

Paradoxically, the KSS seems to demand that the actor both experience genuine feelings in in a role and that they make a distinction between life and art. But are re-experienced emotions on stage the same as emotions experienced in life? If they are different, how are they different? I suggest Vakhtangov developed the theory of Affective Emotion to resolve this apparent contradiction, but that Stanislavsky laid the foundations. It is clear from the trolley-car episode that Stanislavsky had a distaste for 'crudely naturalistic' details on stage, that have not been through a process of refinement (5.3.5). He repeatedly advocates a search for feelings that are 'parallel' or 'analogous' to the character's, terms which suggest both similarity and distance. Stage emotion is linked to actual experience but must have

[108] Ribot, *Psychology of the Emotions*, p. 91.

been processed psychologically and artistically. In a letter to Gurevich, Stanislavsky explains how an aspect of this artistic transformation is the intensification of emotion:

> What I say is that on stage the actor lives genuine feelings, but that they have their origins in affective memory, in which feeling is stripped of anything superfluous. This feeling is the quintessence of all similar feelings. Thanks to its purity and concentration it is often stronger than in real life.[109]

This statement illuminates Vakhtangov's use of the phrase 'affective emotion'. It seems to be a contraction of 'present emotion rooted in affective memory' (3.7). That idea, combined with the concepts of public solitude and double consciousness, provide Vakhtangov with the foundations for his proposals for a new definition of acted emotion (3.5). This thesis takes a step further and connects Affective Emotion to neurology in an alternative model, Scenic Emotion. The incorporation of the 'as-if' body loop explains how acted emotion can have the colouring or sensation of relevant life emotion, but enables the actor to both conserve energy and enjoy the portrayal of negative emotions. Furthermore, LeDoux's account of the neurology of fear helps explain how, on occasion, secondary or 'true seeming' feeling can flip into primary emotional memory, the 'full-blown' truth of the passions. The contemporary conservatoire is obliged to safeguard its students, whilst preparing them to enter a profession that continues to demand convincing displays of apparently 'real' emotion. A model of acted emotion that is related to, but distanced from, life emotion provides a foundation for an ethical approach to this challenge.

In one fictional episode from *An Actor's Work*, the distinction between life and art becomes dangerously blurred. Tortsov asks Dymkova to play the *étude* of the 'abandoned child',

[109] Stanislavski, *AAW*, p. 337.

suggested by a scene in Ibsen's *Brandt.*[110] The passage encapsulates an ethical dilemma that, despite the passage of time, seems only too familiar to contemporary drama school teachers. Dymkova delivers a heart-rending performance, treating a log of wood wrapped in a tablecloth as tenderly as if it were a living, breathing child. Staff and students alike are in floods of tears. Nazvanov is one of the few people present to realise that her acting is informed by the loss of a baby son. Dymkova immediately attempts to reproduce her performance, but is baffled when neither her own nor the group's feelings are aroused for a second time. Tortsov coaches her to reconstruct the precise physical actions she used the first time she played the scene. When she has prepared her physical 'score', Tortsov then proposes a magic 'if' to re-activate her emotions. It is uncomfortably close to the truth. He invites Dymkova to imagine she has lost a little girl, but that her grief is assuaged by adopting an orphan. This iteration of the scene is every bit as powerful as the first. Fearful of the consequences, Nazvanov rushes to warn Tortsov that he has inadvertently hit a raw nerve. Appalled by his apparent faux pas, Tortsov leaps up to interrupt the performance. However, he is so entranced, he decides to let Dymkova proceed.

Later, Nazvanov questions Tortsov about his management of the exercise: was the quality of the acting the result of technique or the accidental coincidence of art and life? The passage conveys a sense of Stanislavsky's limits when faced with the potential emotional abuse of a student, but on the other hand, Tortsov decides not to intervene and stop its final version. He justifies this pedagogical choice on two grounds. Firstly, he insists that Dymkova wept because she believed in the 'genuineness of her actions', not because she had suffered from

[110] Stanislavski, *AAW*, pp. 339-43.

an hallucination. At no stage did she believe the block of wood was actually a child. Secondly, Tortsov insists her tears were for the imaginary living orphan of the drama, not her real dead son. By a narrow margin, then, her acting remained within the realms of fiction.

The Dymkova episode is emblematic of a core dilemma in the Stanislavskian tradition. Experiencing is grounded in emotional memory and personal history. Therefore, practitioners actively seek to draw on the actor's store of life emotion. Even if the actor focusses on artistically processed memories, there will be times when, consciously or otherwise, they activate something raw and uncomfortable. To adapt Macready's phrase, they run the risk of 'goring their own thoughts' (3.4). At the same time, higher education demands a concern for the wellbeing of student actors.[111] I propose that the theoretical framework developed by Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov sought to resolve this dilemma, by means of the concept of Affective Emotion. To reiterate the key principles, this idea asserts that there are some forms of emotion that are only available on the stage. It eschews raw experience, in pursuit of processed emotion, that is selected, distilled and adapted for artistic purposes. Affective Emotion belongs exclusively to the sphere of art.

This thesis further connects Affective Emotion to my concept of Scenic Emotion (3.7). It provides a rationale for an ethical application of the KSS or its derivatives. I also argue that

[111] For example, among the information for prospective students, Rose Bruford College states that 'your wellbeing is of primary importance to us' https://www.bruford.ac.uk/life-at-the-college/student-support/ [accessed 23.08.24.] Similarly, Kate Williams, Student Support Manager at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, comments on the issue of student mental health: 'we pride ourselves on offering an exceptionally high level of individual attention and support, both academic and pastoral' https://www.rwcmd.ac.uk/student-services [accessed 23.08.24.]

the late products of Stanislavsky's life-long investigations are particularly well suited to the demands of the twenty-first century conservatoire. This is a conviction based on my own experience of using Active Analysis, as both a training tool and rehearsal method, at the Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts and the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.[112] Active Analysis begins by asking, 'what would you do in the imaginary circumstances?' The lack of text puts creative pressure on the actor to use their own experience and identity to explore the dramatic situation proposed by the writer. As repeated iterations of the scene enable the actor to explore its potential, they begin to ask a different question, 'what would the character do in the imaginary circumstances?' This rehearsal method builds a bridge between self and character. It is therefore founded on the actor's creative self-determination and an acknowledgement of their individual identity.

5.6 Developments in Active Analysis

This concluding section considers some ways that the KSS and Active Analysis has been reconditioned by the celebrated director, Anatoly Vassiliev, and some routes by which these developments might migrate to the contemporary conservatoire. The argument is derived from a series of discussions between Vassiliev and a group of UK-based drama school teachers. The sessions were entitled 'Dialogues with Theatre Pedagogues' and took place in central London, in November and December of 2019. Vassiliev spoke in detail about how his innovative ideas evolved from an orthodox Stanislavskian foundation, and of his vision for Metaphysical, Ludic and Situational Theatre. Irina Brown of Rose Bruford College convened and translated the discussions. These observations were first disseminated at the 'S-Word'

[112] The work at Mountview is documented in Jackson, 'Active Analysis in the UK', pp. 173-79.

conference in Athens in November 2023.[113] They have been adapted for the purposes of this thesis.

Vassiliev is something of an ambivalent figure, in the sense that he represents both continuity and change in the Russian school of acting. He trained at the Russian Institute of Theatre Arts, commonly known as GITIS, under Knebel and Andrei Popov. At GITIS, every director also trains as a pedagogue and Vassiliev was no exception. After graduation, he was accepted by the Moscow Art Theatre as a junior director. While still relatively inexperienced, he worked with a number of veteran actors who knew Stanislavsky personally. So, by training and early professional experience, he was steeped in the Russian tradition. However, unlike Toporkov and Knebel, who emphasised continuity in Stanislavsky's thinking, Vassiliev argues that each successive phase of his work 'annihilated' and 'cancelled out' the previous one (5.4). For his own part, Vassiliev claims the right to reject what went before, not through ignorance, but as a result of twenty years of thought, practice and experimentation. His career is a demonstration that the KSS is not a fossilized form, but, in Brown's translation, a 'growing tissue in movement'. Innovation in the practice of Active Analysis was evident in the dialogues, in the form of conceptual originality, deployment of updated and precise terminology and exploration of the nuances of acting pedagogy.

Stanislavsky's sketch of the System incorporates action as one of its three foundational principles, expressed in the form of the Russian words '*активность*' ('activeness') and

[113] Jackson, 'Evolution of Active Analysis'.

‘*действенность*’ (‘dynamism’) (5.3). Vassiliev also regards action as a fundamental principle of theatre. His work is devoted to the discovery of the source of action in each play. He argues that the dominant source determines the genre. In the case of Metaphysical Theatre it is the word and in Physical Theatre, the body. Here, I focus on Situational Theatre, in which the source of action is the psyche.

The term ‘Situational Theatre’ reframes the more familiar ‘Psychological Theatre’. Vassiliev regards it as more grammatically correct, because ‘psychology’ implies an internal process, while theatre is concerned with psychology ‘situated’ in a particular environment. Inner life must be visible to the audience. His point of view is entirely consistent with the ‘4Es’ of cognitive science and the concept of embedded cognition’ (1.5).

Vassiliev uses a term derived from Knebel, speaking of ‘operative facts’ rather than ‘given circumstances’ (5.4). He connects the two concepts. The ‘situation’ consists of an aggregate of facts specified by the writer. The facts operate on the psyche of the character and provide the impulse to take action. Vassiliev describes the process as a ‘push in the back’. In contrast to notions of objective or super-objective, the character is not motivated by a target or goal that lies ahead of them. In Situational Drama, they have no idea what lies ahead, so their impetus is not derived from the future, but from an event which takes place before the play begins. Vassiliev refers to this as the ‘Source’ or ‘Exodus’ event.

The language of actor training in the UK employs multiple action-related words, including objective, target, activity, intention and ‘want’, to name but a few. Vassiliev insists on a

precise definition of action vocabulary, using an archery metaphor to elucidate the subtle, but essential distinctions between action, task and goal. In his analogy, the goal is the target itself. The task might be something like 'to hit the bull's eye of the target'. The actions are the postures, behaviours and embodied activity that the archer/actor adopts in order to carry out their task. Actions may be the result of learned behaviour or conscious training, but in performance, they should be executed instinctively, unconsciously and spontaneously. To foster spontaneity, Vassiliev enforces a rule in the rehearsal room: 'the action cannot be named'.

Vassiliev identifies a paradox of acting that creates the need for Active Analysis. The play doesn't exist without a literary text, but it is the text itself that prevents the actor from acting. His point brings to mind Meisner's remark that 'the text is your greatest enemy'.[114] The logic of Active Analysis is that if the text gets in the actor's way, then remove it. Let actors make up their own text. But the process is not a free-for-all that allows the actor to stray far from the facts. In one earthy phrase, Vassiliev defines Active Analysis as 'reading the play on your feet, not on your arse'. To allow the actor freedom to explore but to retain the connection with the play, Vassiliev uses *étude*s, defined very precisely. He uses the word to mean, exclusively, the practice of action that is derived from deconstruction of a playtext.

Preparation for the *étude* begins with a discussion of the operative facts. Vassiliev avoids any language that invites an intellectual analysis, so he uses the Russian *разбирать*, which Brown translated as 'to take apart'. The term implies a child-like curiosity, disassembling an

[114] Sanford Meisner and Dennis Longwell, *Meisner on Acting* (Vintage, 1987), p. 136.

object to see how it works. The discussion considers what is the situation at the beginning of the scene and what is it at the end, where does it change? Crucially, in order to create conflict, the characters must take opposing views of the facts. For example, in act four of *Uncle Vanya*, one fact is that Vanya steals a morphine bottle from Astrov.[115] Sonya believes he intends to kill himself, but Vanya is only interested in *threatening* suicide. The difference generates a dramatic conflict with a hint of farce.

During the dialogues, the UK acting teachers were keen to ask questions. Many were thinking practically: how might they might apply Vassiliev's vision of what he described as the 'correct' way to conduct rehearsals by *étude*. In response, he discussed a range of pedagogical issues. In particular, he spoke about the value of 'getting it wrong' and cultivating the 'organic' nature of the actor, rather than their intellect, presumably referring to the actor's instinctive, impulsive responses. The *étude* work is, therefore, guided by the principle, 'love your mistakes'. It calls for a certain methodological cunning from the director-pedagogue. A spontaneous reaction is much more important than remembering the content of the scene, so Vassiliev tolerates a great deal of 'dross' in the studio. Reprimanding the actor for trivial errors would only prevent them from working with freedom, which takes priority over 'getting it right'. The aim is to create a process of living interaction between characters and this is impossible if the actor simply follows the director's instructions. Rather than pouncing on mistakes, the teacher points out where the actor's choices differ from those of the character and explores the reasons for the difference. In this way, they are gently redirected to the content of the play, without losing

[115] Anton Chekhov, *Anton Chekhov: Plays*, trans. by Michael Frayn (Methuen Drama, 1988), pp. 176-79.

their autonomy. If the actor produces something entirely unexpected, but achieves the goal of creating a living process, then that is an indicator of pedagogical success.

Threaded through the dialogues is the binary assumption that instinct and intellect are incompatible opposites. So, even if tasks are discussed in detail, actors are not encouraged to consciously recall them once they embark on the *étude*. Physicalising the task helps the actors to 'forget' it and to foster trust in their own nature. The embodiment of tasks, discouragement of cognitive analysis and tolerating 'dross' are just some of the pedagogical tactics Vassiliev uses to block the intellect and encourage spontaneous behaviour. His stance recalls some commonplace injunctions in conservatoire training, such as 'leave yourself alone' and 'get out of your head' (4.5, 4.6).

Some students struggle to play scenes in their own words, but others have a facility for improvising text. This can also create a pitfall that the teacher must avoid. One participant asked, 'how do you avoid the actor trying to be a clever playwright?' Vassiliev replied that it is a common problem, caused by a lack of contact between the facts and feeling. It means the actor's emotions are dead and only their head is working. Then you must say, 'don't do that, that's not the way forward. There is no action or life in what you are doing. The fish doesn't live in an empty bath, it needs water.' Like the members of the Opera-Dramatic studio, Vassiliev rarely addresses emotion directly, but it is clear that it is an essential ingredient in the process.

Vassiliev's sophisticated version of Active Analysis is the product of many decades of thought and practice, not to mention his skills as a director. It is not easy to emulate. But nevertheless, the dozen or so pedagogues engaged in the dialogues were keen to absorb as many lessons as they could, and perhaps apply them in their own classes. The discussions demonstrate that the KSS continues to evolve into the twenty-first century and provide inspiration for the UK conservatoire.

CHAPTER SIX: STRASBERG'S INVESTIGATION OF EMOTION

6.1 Myth and Reality in the Method

Lee Strasberg identifies the problem of acted emotion as a central challenge. In *A Dream of Passion*, he ponders François-Joseph Talma's concise definition of what the actor requires, 'a warm heart and a cool mind'. But Talma's aphorism begs the question, 'how do you stimulate the heart to be warm?'.[1] Strasberg acknowledges that generating stage emotion is not difficult for every actor. He describes Stella Adler, for example, as 'emotionally facile', an expression that seems to be equivalent to one often used in the UK conservatoire, 'emotionally available'. However, for the actors who are not blessed with this facility, he insists that 'the creation of *the right kind* of emotion remains a continuing problem'.[2] This chapter examines what Strasberg might mean by the 'right kind' of emotion and the strategies he developed to arouse it. I also consider the notion of 'true' emotion in Lee Strasberg's Method (LSM): is there a difference between these two formulations? The overall aim is to re-evaluate Strasberg's practice in the context of my theoretical framework, in order to determine if LSM, and specifically its emotional memory exercise, remain fit for purpose in the twenty-first century: does it work and is it a threat to the wellbeing of students?

Strasberg claims that 'Stanislavsky himself had never fully expounded the procedures of […] emotional memory' and does not hesitate to assert his own contribution: 'the work done in this area under my direction at the Group Theatre opened possibilities and dimensions that

[1] Lee Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion: The Development of the Method* (Plume, 1988), p. 36, hereafter *Dream.*
[2] Strasberg, *Dream*, p. 90.

were later to prove an important addition to the fundamentals put forth by Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov'.[3] Strasberg's peers comment on his single-minded focus on arousing emotion, particularly during the early years of the famous Group Theatre. Co-founder of the company, Harold Clurman, comments on his approach:

> Strasberg was a fanatic on the subject of true emotion. Everything was secondary to it. He sought it with the patience of an inquisitor, he was outraged by trick substitutes, and when he had succeeded in stimulating it, he husbanded it, fed it and protected it.[4]

Clurman also notes that at the beginning of the Group's existence, the primary vehicle for this pursuit was the emotional memory exercise. It was so firmly established in the Group's consciousness, that it was referred to simply as 'the exercise'.[5] In this chapter, I employ a similar abbreviation, capitalised for clarity, The Exercise. In order to tease out what might constitute the Group's notion of 'true' emotion, I employ Ribot's terms, 'abstract' and 'concrete', which he used to distinguish between the dispassionate memory that an emotion occurred and the full re-experiencing of an emotional episode, including its associated physiological responses (2.2, 5.2, 6.2).

There are some particular difficulties involved in a project to re-evaluate LSM. So-called 'Method' acting is perhaps the only actor-training system that has entered the public consciousness. It has also, from the beginning, been shrouded in misunderstandings and distortions. Key figures in the LSM tradition comment on this phenomenon with various degrees of exasperation. Strasberg himself remarks, 'I am always surprised by how little is

[3] Strasberg, *Dream*, p. 90.
[4] Harold Clurman, *The Fervent Years: The Group Theatre & the 30's* (Da Capo, 1983), p. 44, hereafter *Fervent Years.*
[5] Ibid.

known of our actual training and rehearsal procedures in the Group Theatre'.[6] Clurman points out that misunderstandings and wild speculation arose from the very beginning. He is amused by 'hilarious' reports that Group Theatre actors prayed before going on stage, as if they were some kind of religious cult.[7] Elia Kazan dismisses stereotypical accounts of the Actor's Studio in robust terms: 'there's so much garbage written in the columns about backscratching and mumbling that you can't take it seriously'.[8] LSM has been dogged by misinterpretation and partial understanding since its inception.

More recent online journalism is no more accurate, equating the determination to stay in character with 'method' acting. Famously, Daniel Day Lewis refused to leave his wheelchair and insisted on being fed with a spoon during the shooting of *My Left Foot*, in which he played cerebral palsy sufferer, Christy Brown.[9] Similarly, according to journalist Matthew Neale, the crew of *The Power of the Dog* were delighted to wrap the final scene, because they would finally meet the 'real' Benedict Cumberbatch, rather than Phil Burbank, the repellent character he portrayed.[10] The practice of close and continuous identification with a character may have derived from American Method, but has little to do with any techniques described by Strasberg, Adler or Meisner.

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[6] Strasberg, *Dream*, p. 87.
[7] Clurman, *Fervent Years*, p. 44.
[8] Elia Kazan in *Strasberg at the Actors Studio: Tape-Recorded Sessions*, ed. by Robert H. Hethmon (Theatre Communications Group, 1991), p. 36, hereafter *Actor's Studio.*
[9] Calum Russell, 'Daniel Day-Lewis' extraordinary method acting in 'My Left Foot', *Far Out*, 21 November 2021 <https://faroutmagazine.co.uk/daniel-day-lewis-method-acting-in-my-left-foot/> [accessed 1 October 2024].
[10] Matthew Neale, 'Benedict Cumberbatch says he was method acting his latest role "for every minute" of shooting', *NME*, 26 January 2022 <https://www.nme.com/news/film/benedict-cumberbatch-method-acting-latest-role-every-minute-shooting-3147222> [accessed 1 October 2024].

In the context of a storm of information and misinformation about LSM, it is essential to separate the myths from the reality. This thesis seeks to achieve this separation by acknowledging a selection of the criticisms levelled against LSM, but also carrying out a careful examination of its pedagogy, in order to avoid discarding techniques that may be of enduring value. The chapter begins with a precise specification of what The Exercise is and how it fits into an overall scheme of actor training. I argue that the primary purpose of LSM training is to stimulate the actor's ability to respond physiologically to imaginary sensory and emotive stimuli. I also include an outline of some refinements of emotion memory work developed by Method practitioners, Uta Hagen and Pamela Chabora (6.2).

LSM is then discussed in the context of the three components of my critical framework. Firstly, I interrogate the scientific influences on LSM, especially Ribot, theories of conditioned learning and Freudian psychoanalysis, including discussion of some neglected parallels with the highly unorthodox work of WilheIm Reich. I argue that the most commonly cited influences, psychoanalysis and conditioning theory, no longer provide a satisfactory foundation for the future use of LSM, because neither can fully account for the actor's experience. Ribot's research, however, still has some currency in the light of contemporary psychology and neurology (6.3).

Section 4 locates Strasberg's view of acted emotion in the Emotionalist-Anti-Emotionalist debate. The demands he placed on actors imply that he was only satisfied by 'true' renditions of life emotion, defined as an embodied response to imaginary stimuli. However, there are some hints that Strasberg's idea of the 'right kind' of emotion can be understood

in terms of both Vakhtangov's Affective Emotion and my concept of Scenic Emotion (3.5, 3.7). I highlight Method practitioners' insistence that acted emotion is rooted in affective memory, reports of the pleasure of experiencing strong emotions and the notion of emotional dexterity.

Discussion of the influence of LSM on the contemporary conservatoire is framed by the notion of Strasberg as a *Scientist* of actor training, determined to master the apparently uncontrollable arousal of 'concrete' emotional response (6.5). I present evidence that despite some significant reservations, the language and, in some cases, practice of LSM has entered the curricula of UK drama schools. In conclusion, I propose a protocol for the retention of The Exercise as a training tool. I argue that, under the right conditions, teachers and students might continue to benefit from a modified and selective use of the technique (6.6).

6.2 LSM and The Exercise

In Strasberg's account, the procedure for The Exercise begins with the selection of an emotive event that has taken place at least seven years previously.[11] The memory of the event can be either positive or negative. Some practitioners assume that the 'seven-year rule' is a safeguarding measure, introduced to ensure that actors only attempt to work with painful memories that have been fully processed. Dee Cannon, for example, discusses the recreation of a 'shattering and traumatic' experience. She insists the chosen memory must be at least five years old 'in order for you to have sufficient detachment and recovery from

[11] Strasberg, *Dream*, pp. 148-51.

the event to be able to control it for creative purposes'.[12] Uta Hagen takes a more complex view. She emphasises the need for distance, but argues that it is a matter of understanding, not time. She mentions 'an experience twenty years before which is still shrouded in unexplained fears and pain. That one I will leave alone'. On the other hand, she might have a 'terrific row' with her husband in the morning, discuss it with a friend during the day, find a 'trigger' and happily use the memory the same evening.[13] However, mental health is not Strasberg's stated concern. Rather, he believes older memories are more likely to be useful. He holds that if an experience has been stored in long-term memory, and the actor can successfully revive it, then they will be able to use it repeatedly, without eroding its potency over time.[14] I interrogate these features of LSM lore in the next section (6.3).

As he guides the student through The Exercise, Strasberg prompts them to capture the sensory details associated with the original event. He cites one example reminiscent of Ribot's case study of the unnamed woman in the hospital (5.2). The Exercise begins with the actor simply stating 'I'm cold'. Strasberg urges her to remember the type of cold she experienced and to reproduce it, without worrying if she is unable to succeed. Gradually, he coaches her to retrieve tactile sensations, a dusty smell and sounds. As her perception of the sound of a voice intensifies, she begins to sob and wail. In terms of protection of the student, it is important to note that Strasberg avoids intrusive questions about what actually happened. He does, however, observe that 'some acting teachers misuse this exercise.

[12] Dee Cannon, *In Depth Acting* (Oberon, 2012), p. 105.
[13] Uta Hagen, *A Challenge for the Actor* (Simon & Shuster, 1991), p. 89.
[14] Strasberg, *Dream*, p. 149.

They want to know the stories. I don't want to know'.[15] Once the emotion has 'broken through', Strasberg stops the exercise. Its purpose has been fulfilled. He concludes that, as a result of this procedure, the actress has 'tapped into an emotion she can recreate at will'.[16] He does not, however, explain the mechanism by which the actor makes use of their 'breakthrough' in performance.

Richard Hornby asserts that the missing link between The Exercise and the stage is a major flaw in LSM: 'that such experiences do *not* transfer to the stage, and may even damage the person's ability to act, somehow never deter the practitioners of this approach'.[17] However, second generation Method teachers have explored the application of emotional memory further and do make this connection. Uta Hagen, for example, found that a remembered object, indirectly connected to an event, could reliably evoke an associated emotion. In conversation with Jacques Palaci, a specialist in psychology and psychiatry, she discovered that this phenomenon, the association of an apparently insignificant item with an emotional episode, was a familiar concept (4.5). Hagen suggests some examples of what Palaci called a 'release object': a polka-dot tie, an ivy leaf on a stucco wall and the smell of sizzling bacon . Palaci's explanation for this phenomenon appears to be based on the Freudian idea of cathexis, the suppression of unacceptable thoughts by the Ego (2.4). He suggests it is the unconscious nature of the association between object and emotion which allows unprocessed fears to, as it were, 'sneak past' the mind's defences.[18] For an actor, this is an

[15] Ibid., p. 149.
[16] Ibid., p. 150.
[17] Richard Hornby, *The End of Acting: A Radical View* (Applause, 1992), p. 32, hereafter *End of Acting.*
[18] Hagen, *Respect*, pp. 47-48.

advantage, because, according to Hagen, the object can reliably trigger the intended emotion, provided it remains a secret. If shared, it loses its power.

LSM trained Pamela Chabora suggests that Hagen adapted Palaci's term 'release object' and coined the expression 'release trigger'. In her account of The Exercise, she states that an important element of the procedure is for the actor to identify the specific sense memory most likely to trigger the emotion they wish to elicit. Once the trigger has been identified, it can be used to release the emotion on stage when required.[19] The theory of 'triggers' certainly entered the UK conservatoire, and it is interesting to note the shift in meaning of the word (4.5). Today, 'trigger' warnings are often issued, to warn audiences that a drama contains challenging content. To the Method actor, the 'trigger' is a precious discovery, to be hoarded and deployed at will.

Although The Exercise was a dominant ingredient of the Group Theatre's training, Strasberg's approach shifted significantly between the early nineteen-thirties and the end of his career fifty years later. Mel Gordon argues that LSM was not fully systematised until the early sixties, by which time Strasberg was Artistic Director at the Actor's Studio.[20] Commenting in the mid-seventies, Meisner endorses the point. He remarks that Strasberg's pedagogy developed significantly over time.[21] Modifications and developments in LSM are

[19] Pamela D. Chabora, 'Emotion Training and the Mind/Body Connection', in *Method Acting Reconsidered: Theory Practice, Future*, ed. by David Krasner (Palgrave, 2000), pp. 229-43 (pp. 231-32).
[20] Mel Gordon, *Stanislavsky in America: An Actor's Workbook* (Routledge, 2010), p. 142-43.
[21] Sanford Meisner in 'Reunion: A Self-Portrait of the Group Theatre', ed. by Helen Crich Chinoy, *Educational Theatre Journal*, 28.4 (1976), pp. 445-552 (p. 504), hereafter 'Self-Portrait'.

apparent in the transcriptions of Strasberg's classes, recorded at the Actor's Studio between 1956 and 1965, and in *A Dream of Passion*, published posthumously in 1987.[22]

In marked contrast to the focus of Group Theatre training, The Exercise was rarely used at the Actor's Studio. Actor Ned Manderino, for example, states that he trained with Strasberg over a six-year period in the 1960s, but witnessed it being employed only twice.[23] In an interview published in 1964, Strasberg implies that he had come to use The Exercise selectively. He describes it as a 'device very useful for high moments on the stage, shock moments'.[24] I would add that many plays contain relatively few such emotional peaks and perhaps none at all for some members of the cast. Strasberg's most surprising revelation, perhaps, is that The Exercise had a low success-rate: 'out of a hundred affective memory experiments six may work, although all may work to some extent'.[25] By 'work', Strasberg presumably means the successful evocation of a 'concrete' memory. These accounts suggest a sparing use of a procedure that no longer occupies the dominant position it once did in the Group Theatre.

Strasberg and his wife Anna founded the Lee Strasberg Institute (LSI) in 1969, thus establishing a school dedicated to the systematic delivery of LSM.[26] His account of the

[22] These volumes were first published as *Strasberg at The Actors Studio*, ed. by R. H. Hethmon (Viking, 1965) and Lee Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion: The Development of the Method* (Little, Brown, 1987).
[23] Ned Manderino in David Shirley, 'His Dream of Passion: Reflections on the Work of Lee Strasberg and his Influence on British Actor Training – Part Two', *Stanislavski Studies*, 6.2 (2018), pp.165-182 (p. 166), doi:10.1080/20567790.2018.1496555.
[24] Lee Strasberg, 'Working with Live Material', *Tulane Drama Review*, 9.1 (1964), pp. 117-35 (p. 132), hereafter 'Live Material'.
[25] Strasberg, *Actor's Studio*, pp. 110-11.
[26] The **LEE STRASBERG** THEATRE & FILM INSTITUTE, n.d., <https://strasberg.edu/> [accessed 1 October 2024].

evolved version of LSM appears posthumously in *A Dream of Passion*. It is his last word on actor training and the place of The Exercise within it.[27] The first phase of work addresses what he calls the 'internal skills', equivalent to the 'experiencing' element of the KSS (5.3). The emphasis at this stage is on relaxation, concentration, sense and emotion memory. Strasberg regards relaxation as vital for the trainee actor, because tension in the body, which he defines as excess energy, 'inhibits the flow of thought or sensation to the required area'.[28] Areas of muscular tension are known as 'blocks' which must be relaxed to allow the free expression of emotion.[29] Relaxation is the essential prelude to a series of concentration exercises, which focus on the sensory experience of imaginary objects. He describes a sequence of increasing complexity, during which the actor learns to concentrate on an object that is present and then strives to reproduce its sensory impact through memory and imagination.[30] He explains, 'the purpose of these acting exercises is to train the actor's sensitivity to respond as fully and as vividly to imaginary objects on stage as he is already capable of doing to real objects in life'.[31] Strasberg's pursuit of sensory details during The Exercise demonstrates its relationship to this sequence. The focus is on sense memory, not exposing the personal life of the actor.

The assumption that Method actors are only concerned with internal life is challenged by other dimensions of LSM, which address what Stanislavsky refers to as 'incarnation' or 'embodiment' (5.3). For example, he devised the 'private moment' exercise in order to

[27] Strasberg, *Dream*, pp. 123 – 74.
[28] Ibid., p. 125.
[29] Ibid., pp. 138-39.
[30] Ibid., p. 132-40.
[31] Ibid., p. 123.

overcome actors' inhibitions and promote vivid self-expression on stage. It is an adaptation of Stanislavsky's idea of 'public solitude'.[32] However, there is an important distinction to make between Stanislavsky's pedagogical tactic to overcome normal self-consciousness and Strasberg's concern with overcoming social 'conditioning' (6.3). The student is encouraged to engage in an activity they normally only do in private. It is based on the assumption that behaviour is much more unrestrained when people are alone. The theory is, that if this can be reproduced in the studio, then 'unblocking' the student will help them produce more full-blooded work in performance.

LSM also incorporates animal studies, a practice that has become a staple of the UK conservatoire (4.3, 4.4). The actor explores a range of movement that is radically different from their day-to-day physical habits, by striving to reproduce the behaviour of, for example, a leopard, spider or honey-badger. It is a technical exercise that can be seen as an antidote to introspection and an effective tool for physical characterisation and transformative acting.[33] Other techniques, developed in the days of the Group Theatre, reappear in the evolved curriculum of LSM, including improvisations using gibberish and rehearsal of scenes using a form of Active Analysis (5.4, 5.6). Phoebe Brand mentions the gibberish exercise as a strength of the Group Theatre training. Clurman refers to 'acting of the play's scenes in the actor's own ad lib. speech'.[34] Overall, the curriculum includes not just work on internal life

[32] Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work: A Student's Diary*, trans. and ed. by Jean Benedetti (Routledge, 2008), pp. 294-95, hereafter *AAW.*
[33] Strasberg, *Dream*, pp. 147-48.
[34] Phoebe Brand in *Self-Portrait*, p. 517; Clurman, *Fervent Years*, p. 44.

but on theatrical skills of expressivity, vocal invention and communication with both partner and audience.

Anna Strasberg succeeded her husband as Principal of the LSI, so can be seen as a twenty-first century representative of the LSM tradition. In an article published in 2008, she explains some of the constraints the faculty apply to the contemporary version of LSM. Firstly, she reserves The Exercise for more mature students: 'we don't do any of the emotional work in the first year'.[35] Secondly, she confirms a stipulation that emerged early in Method history, that 'people with emotional range didn't do the emotional exercises'. [36] Finally, she comments on the need to identify who is sufficiently robust to attempt The Exercise: 'Lee always felt that teachers of his technique should be careful that individuals are ready to be subjected to these emotionally powerful exercises'.[37] This suggestion raises the question, how can an acting teacher judge if a student has sufficient resilience to benefit from the procedure? It blurs the distinction between pedagogue and mental health specialist and potentially puts teacher and student into a hazardous position.

I conclude that The Exercise plays an important role in the process of cultivating an embodied response to fictional circumstances. It can also help the actor overcome any technical or psychological barriers they may have that inhibit their creative work. However, it is one of several LSM strategies designed to develop an active inner life and the means of

[35] Anna Strasberg, 'Lee Strasberg Technique', in *Handbook of Acting Techniques*, ed. by Arthur Bartow (Nick Hern, 2008), pp. 17-27 (p. 20).
[36] Ibid., p. 23.
[37] Ibid., p. 21.

communicating it to an audience. Overall, the training balances inward-looking individual work with attention to the partner and communication with the audience. In the course of LSM history, some useful parameters emerge for the application of The Exercise. Strasberg avoided using it with the emotionally 'facile', tried to distinguish between the robust actor and the mentally fragile, and, towards the end of his career, used it selectively, for moments of heightened emotion in the play. These developments provide the basis for a protocol for the potential use of The Exercise in contemporary drama schools (6.6).

6.3 The 'Twin Pillars' of American Psychology

Although Strasberg discusses both William James and Ribot, academic analysis of the scientific influences on LSM primarily revolves around what Pitches calls 'the key psychological conflict of the time: psychoanalysis versus behaviourism'.[38] In this section I refer to these traditions as the 'twin pillars'. It is worth noting that, like Carnicke, Pitches's analysis blurs the distinction between reflex theory and behaviourism. To my knowledge, there is no evidence that Strasberg studied Russian conditioning theory in depth, but it is Pavlov he cites rather than the American derivations (2.5). This thesis distinguishes between Pavlov's reflex theory (PRT) and behaviourism and argues that the 'twin pillars' no longer provide a satisfactory explanation of, or support for, the continued use of LSM in the conservatoire.

[38] Jonathan Pitches, *Science and the Stanislavsky Tradition of Acting* (Routledge, 2006), p. 3, hereafter *Science and Stanislavsky*. For Strasberg's discussion of Ribot and James, see *Dream*, pp. 111-13 and 183-88 respectively.

At first sight, the suggestion that the learning involved in The Exercise can be explained by PRT is plausible. To recap Pavlov's famous experiment, dogs are taught to associate the ticking of a metronome with eating. In this case, the sound is labelled the 'stimulus' and the response which it triggers, salivation, the 'conditioned reflex'. According to LSM theory, something similar happens during a sense or emotion memory exercise. Practitioner Doug Moston, for example, refers to Pavlov's experiment and claims 'this conditioned response helps actors achieve real sensory experiences that are, in fact, nonexistent'.[39] Presumably what Moston means is that the sensory experience is real but that its cause is imaginary. However, the simple equation of animal and human learning brings to mind John Watson's critique of comparative psychology. The founder of behaviourism rejected such methodology on the grounds that it is anthropomorphic and unreliable (2.5).

Although there are similarities between mammals, the comparison between person and dog is debatable. While the dog presumably remembers what meat is, and has some ability to imagine, or at least anticipate eating, its drives are simple. It is hungry and wants to eat. The actor, on the other hand, is trying to consciously recreate the physical sensation of, for example, sunshine on the skin, and use this imaginary stimulus to prompt a physiological response. It is a conscious activity undertaken for artistic purposes, a significantly more subtle and complex cognitive feat than anything attempted by the dog. Moston seeks to explain how the actor's conditioning works by reference to a theory of the imagination, specifically, Stanislavsky's 'magic if'.[40] So, he cannot account for the actor's learning without

[39] Doug Moston, 'Standards and Practices' in *Method Acting Reconsidered: Theory Practice, Future*, ed. by David Krasner (Palgrave, 2000), pp. 135-46 (p. 137), hereafter 'Standards and Practices'.
[40] Moston, 'Standards and Practices', p. 137-38.

a conception of inner life, which forms no part of PRT or behaviourism. As an example of 'mentalism', it would be rejected outright by radical behaviourism as an 'explanatory fiction' (2.5).

Strasberg asserts that older memories continue to generate a physiological response, even if the actor uses them repeatedly (6.2). This claim has a degree of support in contemporary neurology. LeDoux, for example, notes that the conditioned fear response is very resilient and that emotional memory is probably indelible.[41] However, this aspect of LSM lore ignores the phenomenon of 'extinction', observed by physiologists over a long period. Pavlov's team discovered that a conditioned response fades with time, if not reinforced.[42] Much more recently, LeDoux confirms these findings, with some qualification.[43] His studies of fear pathologies, such as anxiety, panic attacks and PTSD, suggest that although therapy and the passage of time can bring phobic responses under cortical control, they cannot be completely erased. He notes that conditioned responses, particularly that of fear, can be revived by stressful situations.[44] The picture is therefore a complex one.

Paradoxically, what might benefit a psychiatric patient is not necessarily good news for an actor. It is difficult to generate an emotional response to fictional circumstances repeatedly. Group Theatre actor, Margaret Barker, remarks that, after the initial experience of The

[41] Joseph LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain* (Simon & Schuster, 1996), pp. 200-04, 250-52, hereafter *Emotional Brain.*
[42] See, for example, George Windholz, 'The Discovery of the Principles of Reinforcement, Extinction, Generalization, and Differentiation of Conditional Reflexes in Pavlov's Laboratories', *The Pavlovian Journal of Biological Science*, 24 (1989), pp. 35-42, doi:10.1007/BF02964534.
[43] LeDoux, *Emotional Brain*, pp. 141-48.
[44] Ibid, pp. 250-66.

Exercise, 'that fresh, original emotion began to wear away'.[45] For the same reason, a second principal of LSM lore, that older memories are safer to use, is also difficult to reconcile with PRT and the concept of extinction. Older memories may be less disturbing, as they shift from the concrete to the abstract. However, for the actor attempting to generate a physiological response, it is precisely the 'concrete' element of the memory which is precious. Sense and emotional memory exercises are a complicated transaction that cannot be satisfactorily explained by classical conditioning, because it does not incorporate a theory of the imagination and does little to illuminate the question of how the actor might repeat the evocation of bodily response, night after night.

Although the Method literature references Pavlov, it may be that Skinner's model of radical behaviourism provides a more fruitful model for understanding conditioning in LSM. While classical conditioning creates an association between a stimulus and reflex response, operant conditioning creates an association between an activity and a particular result. This more complex and dynamic model is potentially more relevant to acting theory because of its emphasis on action. Skinner analyses learned behaviour in terms of linked actions and consequences. 'Positive contingencies' make a particular outcome more likely and 'negative contingencies' make that outcome less likely. Outcomes are divided into desirable and undesirable consequences, known as 'reinforcers' and 'punishers'. So, reinforcers encourage positively contingent behaviour and punishers discourage positively contingent behaviour (2.5).

[45] Barker in 'Self-Portrait', p. 523.

If the operant conditioning model is transferred to The Exercise, the desired outcome of the training can be defined as the successful induction of a 'concrete' experience of remembered emotion. LSM posits that the behaviour most likely to achieve this consequence is to focus on the sensory details surrounding a remembered event. Reconstruction of the sensory details is therefore positively contingent. But if the exercise is successful, is the outcome a punisher or a reinforcer? It is, at the very least, ambiguous. In my experience, actors regard it as a professional accomplishment to stimulate their feelings in training or rehearsal. But 'concrete' emotional response necessarily disturbs the individual on a visceral level, because of the multiple associated changes triggered in the body, including hormone release, muscular tension, body temperature and respiration. Such changes disrupt regular autonomic functions and often give rise to uncomfortable or unpleasant sensations, so to actively court the arousal of difficult feelings requires courage and commitment.[46] From the perspective of Skinner's model, it is a paradox that the actor might both want and not want a particular consequence. Emotional experience can be both a reinforcer and a punisher.

Although the LSM literature frequently employs the language of conditioned learning, Strasberg uses the terminology loosely, in a variety of contexts. In a passage discussing Vakhtangov and the artistic use of affective emotion, Strasberg evokes PRT in somewhat vague terms. He proposes that 'emotional response is conditioned response', which can be stimulated by 'the factors associated with the particular conditioning process'.[47] But

[46] See 1.6 for a short explanation of the autonomic nervous system and related process of homeostasis.
[47] Strasberg, *Actors Studio*, p. 113.

elsewhere, he uses the term negatively to indicate unhelpful 'social conditioning'. He remarks that the 'customs of society create a hindrance that in later years interferes with the actor's freedom of expression'.[48] Realising that these inhibitions need to be overcome, he asserts, 'is, in fact, one of the greatest discoveries in the work I have done'.[49] Strasberg's view of 'social conditioning' as a restrictive mode of learning that must be unpicked in training, is very different from more recent models. Contemporary psychology explains behavioural constraints as 'display rules', which govern the expression of emotion in a particular culture or context.[50] Frijda's 'Law of Care for Consequence' is a comparable idea. It posits that the impulse to take action is restrained by awareness of potential consequences and the immediate environment (2.6). Display rules promote cooperative behaviour in a social group and can be seen as an advantage to an actor rather than the reverse. Restraints on the urge to take action can be a useful means of building a feeling of inner conflict. This analysis of the relevant learning models and Strasberg's use of language, suggest that neither classical conditioning nor radical behaviourism provide satisfactory foundations for the process of sense or emotional memory exercises.

Pitches proposes that a psychoanalytic model of actor training provides a better explanation of LSM than conditioning theory. He argues that Strasberg derived this approach from his

[48] Ibid., p. 80. Strasberg often discusses conditioning as a negative force for the actor: the loss of child-like spontaneity (pp. 79-80); interference with self-expression, like a piano sounding a false note (pp. 164-65); separation between what we feel and what we say (pp. 248-49).
[49] Ibid., p. 165.
[50] John Hamilton remarks that Paul Ekman has often been credited with the first use of the term in 1972. See 'Emotional Display Rules | Definition, Development & Examples', Study.com, 21 November 2023 <Emotional Display Rules | Definition, Development & Examples - Lesson | Study.com> [accessed 1 October 2024]. In fact, Paul Ekman, Richard E. Sorenson and Wallace V. Friesen refer to 'display rules' earlier, in 'Pan-Cultural Elements in Facial Displays of Emotion', *Science (American Association for the Advancement of Science)*, 164.3875 (1969), pp. 86-88 (p. 87).

teacher at the American Laboratory Theatre, Richard Boleslavsky, who incorporated Freud's ideas, in order to 'root his interpretation of the system in America'.[51] He asserts that Strasberg did not just borrow psychoanalytic concepts, but also appropriated its methodology. The quasi-analytic quality of The Exercise is evident in actor Richard Durham's description of a class at the Actor's Studio:

> [Strasberg] brought in Freud in his session with actors in what he called 'Affective Memory'. That is, instead of lying on a couch, the actor sat in a chair (straight-backed), relaxed as fully as possible, eyes closed, while a teacher […] led him in a kind of dream-like sensory journey into an incident in the actor's past experience.[52]

While acknowledging the similarities between LSM and psychoanalysis, Durham also mentions a procedural difference, the posture of the subject. There are other significant distinctions between treatment and training, in purpose and approach. The analysand's revelations take place in private, guided by a suitably trained individual. The aim of the session is exclusively therapeutic. Even a highly unorthodox figure such as Wilhelm Reich emphasizes that psychoanalytical procedures should only be carried out by a trained physician.[53] In actor training, emotion memory exercises typically take place in front of a class. Their purpose is to promote emotional availability, range and expressivity. While conservatoire teachers are almost invariably experienced professionals, actor training is less strictly regulated than medicine and there is no professional body that prevents 'unlicensed' practice. In the event that a student chooses a traumatic rather than a joyful event as the basis for an Exercise, then it is conceivable that they may successfully come to terms with a

[51] Pitches, *Science and Stanislavsky*, p. 105. See also Strasberg, *Dream*, pp. 63-82.
[52] Richard Durham in Pitches, *Science and Stanislavsky*, p. 116.
[53] Myron Sharaf, *Fury on Earth: A Biography of Wilhelm Reich* (Da Capo, 1994), p. 239, hereafter *Fury on Earth*.

painful past experience. Conversely, they may be psychologically damaged by exposure to a procedure, managed by staff ill-equipped to deal with mental instability. Either way, what might be called the 'analytical' model of actor training leaves LSM vulnerable to accusations of 'amateur psychiatry'.

One dimension of the 'analytical' model has received little critical attention: the striking parallels in terminology and practice between Wilhelm Reich's therapeutic work and LSM. It is not clear if, or how, Reich had any direct impact on Strasberg. As LSM was evolving during the 1930s, Reich was still in Europe and his publications were only available in German. However, Strasberg may have become aware of Reich after he escaped to the United States in 1939.[54] Certainly, by the late 1960s, Reich's work was sufficiently well known to be mocked in a number of films. The notorious 'Orgone Accumulator', alleged to enhance uninhibited sexual expression, seems to have influenced Roger Vadim's science fiction comedy, *Barbarella*. The film features an erotic pleasure machine. Reich's invention was also memorably lampooned as the 'Orgasmatron' in Woody Allen's *The Sleeper*.[55] In view of some of Reich's more controversial ideas, not to mention his ignominious demise in Lewisburg prison, any connection with LSM is unlikely to enhance Strasberg's reputation (2.4). Nevertheless, it is worth separating his more lurid proposals from the work on how emotion is stored or manifested in the body.

[54] Sharaf, *Fury on Earth*, pp. 259, 262-63.
[55] *Barbarella*, dir. by Roger Vadim (France-Italy, 1968); *The Sleeper*, dir. by Woody Allen (USA, 1973). See also Christopher Turner, 'Wilhelm Reich: The Man Who Invented Free Love', *The Guardian*, 8 July 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jul/08/wilhelm-reich-free-love-orgasmatron> [accessed 1 October 2024].

Reich explored the connections between psychology and physiology, in the pursuit of an anatomical foundation for psychoanalysis. In the process, he developed the concepts of character and body armour (2.4). To recap, character armour is behaviour adopted by a patient in order to protect themselves from an intense or uncomfortable emotion. Body armour consists of emotions 'bound' in areas of muscular tension. The tension 'blocks' the free expression of emotion. The resonances with LSM are clear. Both practices aim to 'unbind' emotion, albeit for very different purposes. They also share the term 'blocks', understood as muscular tension associated with an unconscious memory, frequently dating from a childhood trauma. The idea that emotional biography can be stored in areas of muscular tension, especially the face and back, underpins Strasberg's account of relaxation procedures. He refers specifically to massage of the bridge of the nose, eyelids, the side of the nose, chin and back.[56] The teacher tries to facilitate the process by touching the students' neck, back, arms or legs, to check for areas of tension.[57]

Perhaps the most notable parallel between Reich and Strasberg is the emphasis placed on the re-experiencing of emotion. Reich's clinical practice taught him that it was perfectly possible for a patient to recount a traumatic event dispassionately, to have an abstract emotional memory. Reich concluded this was a resistance tactic. Freud himself had discovered that without 'concrete' memories there was no alleviation of symptoms, but did not pursue this discovery in clinical practice. Reich, however, persevered with 'the

[56] Strasberg, *Dream*, pp. 126-150.
[57] A brief video of Strasberg conducting such a class is available online: 'Acting Tip | Lee Strasberg Checks an Actor's Relaxation', YouTube, n.d. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QK2qo9JoRY0> [accessed 1 October 2024].

resurrection and making conscious of unconscious memories'.[58] He decided that without 'concrete' memories, it was a kind of fake analysis, a 'way of dealing and at the same time not dealing with this situation'.[59] Presumably, Strasberg would take a comparable position, and argue that the maximum benefit for the actor arises from a 'concrete' emotional memory experienced under controlled conditions. If the trainee actor avoids emotional challenges, they are unlikely to develop significantly. It would then be a kind of fake training with little added value.

At times, LSM literature reads like a confused attempt to reconcile the 'twin pillars'. David Krasner argues that the 'main feature' of Strasberg's teaching is the mission to liberate the actor's expressive ability.[60] Strasberg observes,

> Often we see things going on inside that can't come out – the face contracts, the eyes contract – the emotion isn't let through. The actor feels at times like crying but he can't cry, he can't uncurl the muscles to permit the tears to flow. Such strong conditioning has been created against the expression of emotion.[61]

Strasberg uses the language of PRT, but the inhibition he describes could equally well be explained by Freud's model of Id, Ego and cathexis (2.4). Moreover, the methods he uses to release 'blocks', such as the manipulation of muscles, the Private Moment or The Exercise, echo psychotherapeutic practice. The mix of terminology and ideas is a strange hybrid of conditioning theory and notions of repression. It is theoretically incoherent because it fuses two fundamentally incompatible branches of psychology, the introspective Freudian

[58] Sharaf, *Fury on Earth*, pp. 78, 241.
[59] Ibid., p. 77.
[60] David Krasner, 'Strasberg, Adler and Meisner: Method Acting', in *Twentieth Century Actor Training*, ed. by Alison Hodge (Routledge, 2000), pp. 129-150 (p. 134).
[61] Strasberg, 'Live Material', p. 123.

approach and objective psychology, which in its most radical form, denies mental life altogether.

I conclude that neither Freudian psychoanalysis nor conditioning theory provide a secure basis for LSM, because they do not provide a satisfactory explanation of the actor's experience. Neither PRT nor behaviourism adequately explain acts of the imagination, or how an actor might generate emotion repeatedly. The theory of 'extinction' seems to preclude such a possibility. Quasi-psychoanalytical practice blurs the distinction between actor training and therapy and is ethically problematic. Moreover, the 'twin pillars' sit outside contemporary mainstream science. From its inception, psychoanalysis was marginalised because of its introspective nature and unverifiable results (2.4). The concept of conditioned learning still has some currency. Damasio, for example, uses the term in the context of discussions of learned social behaviour and the fear response.[62] However, the influence of behaviourism has waned. LeDoux notes that it gave way to cognitive science in the mid-twentieth century.[63] Barrett elaborates, 'most scientists rejected behaviorism because it ignores a basic fact: that each of us has a mind, and in every waking moment of life, we have thoughts and feelings and perceptions'.[64] The former 'twin pillars' of American psychology no longer provide a firm foundation for LSM. They do not adequately account for the practice and they have been superseded by neurophysiological models with greater explanatory power.

[62] Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness* (Vintage, 2000), pp. 56-57, 59-62.
[63] LeDoux, *Emotional Brain*, p. 25.
[64] Lisa Feldman Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain* (Pan, 2018), p. 171.

Surprisingly, perhaps, Ribot's exploration of the connections between sense and emotion memory provide more resilient support for LSM. Contemporary neurology is able to extend Ribot's insights much further and help explain why training practices work. Barrett, for example, discusses the ability to 'see' colours that are not present, in terms of the predictive capacity of the brain.[65] LeDoux's description of the primary and secondary routes to stimulating the amygdala, the brain region crucial to the fear response, explains how an actor can, on some occasions, experience an instantaneous concrete emotional reaction and on others, gradually build such responses through sense memory (2.3, 5.5). Frijda's investigation of the link between action and emotion updates Ribot's discussion of the same topic and suggests some shortcomings in LSM. The Exercise is invariably conducted in a static position and therefore cuts the actor off from any action that might arise from the emotion. It is an 'unnatural' procedure, in the sense that it artificially separates emotion and action. This suggests an area for future performance research: could emotional memory exercises be combined with dynamic action?

6.4 LSM and Scenic Emotion

Strasberg's efforts to understand acted emotion, to some extent, recapitulated Stanislavsky's artistic journey. A starting point for both was a study of outstanding actors and singers. Where Stanislavsky praises, for example, Jivokini, Shumsky and Salvini, Strasberg appreciates the great performances of Eleanora Duse, Giovanni Grasso, Laurette

[65] Ibid., p. 130.

Taylor and Jacob Ben-Ami.[66] Despite his admiration for these actors, like Diderot nearly two centuries before him, Strasberg is perplexed by their inconsistency (3.3). He reports his disappointment that such exceptional talents could deliver performances that were 'strangely lifeless'.[67] On one occasion, he returned to see Grasso in *La Morte Civile*, having previously been impressed by his work. He was bewildered when, on a second viewing, Grasso's genius failed to materialise. But Grasso's performance abruptly came to life, in a moment when his character was seized by jealousy: 'suddenly the blood rushed into Grasso's face; his eyes distended. This wasn't acting: this was real – real blood, real bursting of blood vessels'.[68] Notably, it was Grasso's physiological reality that most impressed Strasberg. He admired acting that did not look like acting.

Strasberg's investigations drew him not just to the theatre, but to the literature of acting theory. His reading list was almost identical to that of Stanislavsky during the latter's period of reflection in the summer of 1914.[69] Strasberg studied Riccoboni, father and son, Diderot, Saint-Albine and Talma, among others (3.2, 3.3). During his discussion of Talma's 'warm heart and cool mind' aphorism, he identifies a shortcoming in actor training. While there are technical means of developing the use of voice and body, there is no pedagogy for the emotions.[70] His study of the literature and great American actors helped him identify key

[66] Konstantin Stanislavsky, *My Life in Art*, trans. G. Ivanov-Mumjiev (Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1928), pp. 48 and 193-95; Strasberg, *Dream*, pp. 13-26.
[67] Strasberg, *Dream*, p. 22.
[68] Ibid., p. 26.
[69] See Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: His Life and Art* (Methuen, 1999), p. 221.
[70] Strasberg, *Dream*, pp. 32-36.

issues and to formulate questions, but it wasn't until he saw the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) that he began to find some answers.[71]

Sharon Carnicke explains the seismic impact of the MAT tours to America in 1923 and 1924, on both eminent actors and the future stars of the US theatre.[72] John Barrymore, for example, 'reported having been shaken and intoxicated with the greatest theatrical experience of his life'.[73] The visit was equally important to Strasberg. In his view, it was the ensemble that set the Moscow Art Theatre apart. In performers such as Duse, Chaliapin and Ben-Ami, Broadway had individual talents as great as their Russian counterparts. But the strength in depth of the MAT company impressed Strasberg deeply: 'Maria Ouspenskaya in *The Cherry Orchard* and Leo Bulgakov in *The Lower Depths* were true, real and emotionally full, even in small roles'.[74] The lasting impact of this experience manifested itself in the ideals of the Group Theatre, whose attention to detail and commitment to the ensemble rendered it unique in the challenging environment of American commercial theatre.[75]

Strasberg acknowledges his debt to the MAT, 'the Method is really a continuation of and an addition to Stanislavsky's system in Russia'.[76] However, there are important distinctions between the KSS and Strasberg's understanding of what might constitute 'true' emotion in the theatre. Stanislavsky describes the need for a delicate approach to emotion using the

[71] Ibid., p. 36.
[72] Sharon Marie Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus: An Acting Master for the Twenty-First Century*, 2nd edn (Routledge, 2009), pp. 19-26, hereafter *Stanislavsky in Focus*.
[73] Ibid., p. 26.
[74] Strasberg, *Dream* p. 37.
[75] Clurman explains that the Group Theatre's rehearsal method was consciously modelled on their understanding of the Moscow Art Theatre's approach. See *Fervent Years*, pp. 43-45.
[76] Strasberg, *Dream*, p. 6.

image of the wildfowl, which cannot be caught by direct means, but must be coaxed from its lair by 'decoys' (5.3.4).[77] Strasberg uses a comparable metaphor of temptation, which suggests that emotions cannot be forced, offering a lollipop to a child.[78] Nevertheless, Strasberg's practice suggests a determination to master emotion (6.2). As Carnicke puts it, there is a contrast between the system's 'compendium of lures' and the Method's search for a 'sure-fire technique' for arousing emotion'.[79] This thesis concurs with Carnicke. While emotional memory remained central to the KSS, it was embedded in the practice and continued to be approached indirectly (5.4). LSM, on the other hand, seeks to gain conscious control over emotion and The Exercise is its chief tool for arousing a physiological response, a 'true' emotion.

Both Strasberg and Clurman explicitly acknowledge the influence of the KSS. Clurman remarks of his formative years in the 1920s, 'the technique we were learning was, of course, that of the Moscow Art Theatre, the so-called Stanislavsky "system"'.[80] However, Boleslavsky and Vakhtangov are also often cited in Method literature. Strasberg devotes a complete chapter of *A Dream of Passion* to the American Laboratory Theatre, where he was taught by Boleslavsky and Ouspenskaya. He quotes the mission statement for the school, 'that it is not enough to live through a part only once, and then represent it many times. The actor must live it through every time.' Boleslavsky had clearly imbibed Stanislavsky's concept of '*perezhivanie*' ('experiencing') (5.3). Strasberg also emphasizes Boleslavsky's

[77] Stanislavsky, *AAW*, pp. 225-26.
[78] Strasberg, *Actors Studio*, p. 112.
[79] Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus*, p. 151
[80] Clurman *Fervent Years*, p. 17.

belief that 'every feeling can be built up and trained'.[81] It is possible to work on emotions and feelings.

Strasberg and his editor, Robert Hethmon, refer to Vakhtangov on numerous occasions in *Strasberg at the Actor's Studio*, including a discussion of heightened forms of theatricality, which require more than a raw and lifelike expression of emotion.[82] This may reflect both a genuine artistic influence and a response to the suggestion that LSM is only suitable for artistic verisimilitude. Strasberg seems to stress his alignment with Vakhtangov as a means of defence. He bluntly states that Stanislavsky failed in the area of heightened expressiveness, while praising Vakhtangov's celebrated productions of *The Dybbuk* and *Turandot*.[83] Peter McAllister underlines the point. He detects Vakhtangov's influence in several of Strasberg's productions that, stylistically, demonstrate the potential of LSM beyond psychological realism, including *The House of Connelly*, *Men in White*, *The Case of Clyde Griffiths* and *Johnny Johnson*.[84] Stanislavsky's students also conditioned Strasberg's view of acted emotion.

Strasberg proposes that the capacity for heightened theatricality is dependent on the reformulation of Stanislavsky's 'creative if' proposed by Vakhtangov. Stanislavsky's challenge to the actor is, if you were in the given circumstances of the play, what would you do? Vakhtangov asks a different question: what would motivate you to do what the

[81] Richard Boleslavsky and Strasberg in *Dream*, pp. 63-82 (p. 66).
[82] See Robert Hethmon and Strasberg in *Actor's Studio*, pp. 112, 298, 308, 357-58.
[83] Strasberg, *Dream*, p. 62.
[84] Peter McAllister, 'Lee Strasberg's Method', *Stanislavski Studies*, 6.1 (2018), pp. 105-10 (p. 107), doi:10.1080/20567790.2018.1446410.

character does in the given circumstances? This shift in theoretical position is reiterated in the transcripts from the Actor's Studio.[85] Strasberg's allegiance to Vakhtangov hints at a distinction between 'true' emotion, acted emotion that is accompanied by a physiological response, and the 'right kind' of emotion, which might have the same starting point, but is modified for heightened or stylized forms of theatre.

Clurman's comment on Strasberg fanatical pursuit of 'true' emotion seems to place LSM squarely in the camp of the emotionalists, at least in its Group Theatre phase (3, 6.1). It suggests a conception of acted emotion that is indistinguishable from life emotion. According to Robert Lewis, Helen Westley of the Theatre Guild said that watching the Group Theatre was 'like witnessing a real accident'.[86] However, Strasberg insists, 'we never use real, that is, literal emotion in art, only affective memory emotion, only remembered emotion'.[87] Presumably, this is what Strasberg meant by the 'right kind'. His language suggests a compatibility with Vakhtangov's Affective and my Scenic Emotion. Both concepts posit that recalled experience has undergone an artistic process and is distinct from life emotion. The literature includes other hints that LSM may be compatible with the theory of Scenic Emotion. Robert Lewis mentions the pleasure of using emotion memory to 'rev up' the actor before going on stage.[88] Strasberg remarks that when conducting an Exercise as a public demonstration, 'observers were startled by the quickness and ease with which it was performed, and at the ease with which the actor could change from one emotion to

[85] See *Actors Studio*, pp. 298 and 308.
[86] Lewis in 'Self-Portrait', p. 485.
[87] Strasberg, *Actors Studio*, p. 112.
[88] Lewis in 'Self-Portrait', p. 486.

another'.[89] Lewis' creative joy and the emotional dexterity described by Strasberg are characteristic of both Affective and Scenic Emotion (3.5, 3.7).

Although some tentative links might be made between LSM and Scenic Emotion, Method literature has little to compare with the vivid account of the artistic transformation of emotion provided by Stanislavsky's story of the trolley-car accident (5.3.5). Similarly, the limited evidence for the role of creative joy is outweighed by references to trauma and negative experiences. Margaret Barker's case is representative: 'I think some actors were hurt. Strasberg was so intent on getting what he called "real emotion" that he reduced us to a pulp'.[90] Both Clurman and Strasberg note that people with mental health difficulties may have been drawn to the company subconsciously because of the quasi-therapeutic quality of its training. Clurman concedes they were accused of 'attracting the unbalanced'.[91] In response, Strasberg attempted to identify and exclude the mentally fragile from certain exercises. Introducing an account of the 'private moment', Hethmon remarks that Strasberg adamantly refused to allow actors to attempt it, if they were judged to be among 'those few in need of psychiatry'.[92] A review of the literature presents a complex and often contradictory picture of the effects of The Exercise, but, in some respects, the procedure is alien to the concept of Scenic Emotion. There is relatively little emphasis on the joy of playing and of a type of experiencing that enables to actor to shrug off their acted emotion easily when departing from the stage.

[89] Strasberg, *Dream*, p. 151.
[90] Barker in Self-Portrait, p. 523.
[91] Clurman, *Fervent Years*, p. 62.
[92] Hethmon in Strasberg, *Actors Studio*, p. 115.

6.5 LSM in the UK Conservatoire

Strasberg's determination to master acted emotion establishes him as a confirmed and committed *Scientist* (1.2, 4.2). In a revealing use of metaphor, Strasberg lays claim to a degree of medical objectivity, by comparing his activities in the studio to that of a doctor. He uses the parallel to justify processes which may not be pleasant, but are, he insists, necessary, to 'cure' the acting problem under discussion. During one session at the Studio, a playwright in the audience objects to the personal nature of the pedagogical exchanges he has witnessed. Strasberg responds: 'if someone watches an operation and faints away, is that the fault of the doctor?'.[93] This might be called the 'medical' model of actor training. It is the job of the acting teacher to 'diagnose' the problem and to administer whatever 'treatment' is required. The treatment may be unpleasant or even painful, but it is for the long-term benefit of the 'patient'. Such a model invests the acting teacher with considerable authority, but they are highly unlikely to possess the same level of technical training or knowledge of human anatomy as a qualified doctor.

Whatever the advantages of LSM might be, it does not dominate contemporary drama school pedagogy in the UK. One factor that may have inhibited the use of LSM in the British Isles is a degree of scepticism among practitioners. Carole Zucker's collection of interviews with British and Irish actors, published in 1999, explores the contributors' training, experiences and attitudes to the Method. It therefore provides a snapshot of LSM at the

[93] Strasberg, *Actors Studio*, p. 47.

end of the twentieth century, from the perspective of a group of successful theatre professionals based in the UK.[94]

Judi Dench visited the Actor's Studio and was unimpressed with the introversion of the actors, frustrated that she simply could not hear them.[95] It is, of course, possible that the actors' goals had nothing to do with performance. Strasberg makes it clear that the purpose of the studio was for actors to have a space to investigate acting problems free of the demands of commercial theatre and the need to please an audience.[96] However, for Dench, theatre is about communication and she saw no value in the exercise. Her point of view is echoed by a number of peers, including Eileen Atkins and Janet McTeer, who are shocked by the lack of voice training and dislike what they regard as a Method 'style' of mumbling and inserting pauses, which they view as a kind of fake realism. Fiona Shaw offers some defence, noting that 'broken thought is often what is mistaken for Method acting'.[97] Like the veterans of the Group Theatre, she is aware that LSM practice is often misread.

Several of the actors express strong commitment to an ensemble culture, incorporating a willingness to respond to colleagues, respect the director and focus outwardly towards the company and ultimately, the audience. These actors express a concomitant suspicion for approaches that appear self-indulgent or solipsistic. Nigel Hawthorne finds a place for character exploration, but enjoys throwing preparation aside and revelling in the communal

[94] *In the Company of Actors: Reflections on the Craft of Acting,* ed. by Carole Zucker (A & C Black, 1999), hereafter *Company of Actors*.
[95] Judi Dench in *Company of Actors*, p. 49.
[96] Strasberg, *Actor's Studio*, pp. 43-45.
[97] *Company of Actors*, pp. 10-12 (Eileen Atkins), 97 (Janet McTeer), 158 (Fiona Shaw).

experience: 'start working with your fellow actors, and evolve something'. Similarly, Penelope Wilton declares 'I don't think you can do anything by yourself in the theatre, it all comes off the other actors'.[98] Preparation is one thing and imposing planned decisions on a colleague is another.

Ian Richardson makes a sharp distinction between the Stanislavsky system and the Method, which he regards as incoherent and overindulgent.[99] However, the majority offer LSM a cautious welcome. Certainly, there is no lack of generosity when it comes to praise of the best American actors. Alan Bates, for example, admires Marlon Brando, Montgomery Clift, James Dean and Julie Harris.[100] Miranda Richardson reports a familiarity with American Method from both reading and professional experience. She studied Hagen's *Respect for Acting* and appeared alongside LSM trained Jennifer Jason Leigh, in Robert Altman's feature *Kansas City*.[101] Richardson did not detect any significant differences in their working methods, and reveals that she uses emotional memory as part of her private preparation.[102]

This cross-section of British and Irish actors frequently associate LSM with acting faults that are anathema to the theatre culture of the British Isles, particularly poor technical training leading to unsatisfactory communication with an audience, self-indulgence and selfishness in relation to the ensemble. However, there is also a feeling that differences between training methods and actors from either side of the Atlantic are exaggerated. Virtually all the actors

[98] *Company of Actors*, pp. 75 (Nigel Hawthorne), 222 (Penelope Wilton).
[99] Ian Richardson in *Company of Actors*, p. 127.
[100] Alan Bates in *Company of Actors*, p. 20.
[101] *Kansas City*, dir. by Robert Altman (USA, 1996).
[102] Miranda Richardson in *Company of Actors*, pp. 147-48.

have incorporated aspects of the Stanislavsky tradition in their practice, whether acquired from their training, reading or encounters with Method-trained peers. Ultimately, they share a conviction that good acting transcends particular training traditions or national styles. However, their perceptions of Method acting and reservations about its application may help to explain a degree of resistance to its widespread use in the UK.

Notwithstanding any scepticism in UK theatre culture, David Shirley's 2016 survey identifies some isolated examples of conservatoire pedagogy informed by LSM.[103] He points to the work of Thomasina Unsworth and Julian Jones at Rose Bruford and mentions my experiments with sense memory at the Birmingham School of Acting (now Royal Birmingham Conservatoire). He identifies Peter McAllister as the only practitioner in the sector who uses the full range of LSM techniques, at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.[104] However, he makes the point that the Drama Centre London (DCL) has the strongest Method tradition, including use of The Exercise (4.4). During the four years that I was Course Leader for BA Acting (2016-20), The Exercise did not feature in the curriculum, but it certainly has been employed by senior staff in the past.

In a BBC documentary series, broadcast in 1993, the voiceover states that the DCL is the only 'Method' school in the country.[105] Two American teachers, in particular, have had a significant impact on its curriculum, Doreen Cannon and Reuven Adiv. Cannon, who trained

[103] David Shirley, 'His Dream of Passion: Reflections on the Work of Lee Strasberg and his Influence on British Actor Training', *Stanislavski Studies*, 4.1 (2016), pp. 47-62, doi:10.1080/20567790.2016.1155365, hereafter 'Reflections on Lee Strasberg'.
[104] Ibid., pp. 57-60.
[105] *Theatre School*, prod. by Paul Watson (BBC 2, 1993), episode 2.

at the HB Studio with Uta Hagen, was the first Head of Acting at DCL (4.5).[106] Adiv, who was Cannon's successor, trained as a director under Strasberg and subsequently taught at the Actor's Studio.[107] The documentary includes footage of Adiv coaching a student through an Exercise. There is no doubt it makes distressing viewing. The young woman concerned recalls an incident at her secondary school. She reports being compelled to stand up in class. She was singled out as an example of someone who was evidently eating an unhealthy diet, because of her weight. Some classmates had openly mocked her, so, in contemporary parlance, she was 'fat-shamed'. Such is her distress that her speech is semi-coherent. But far from calling a halt to the exercise, Adiv patiently and quietly encourages her to strive to be articulate under intense emotional pressure. The actor, Stephanie, appears later in the documentary, apparently unscathed. The documentary makers do not comment on the episode, nor, apparently, did they follow it up with any checks on the student's wellbeing. Evidently, they did not think there was any great cause for concern. But the footage begs a number of questions: what devices were in place to take care of the student before, during or after the exercise? Did it do any lasting damage? Is this evidence of abuse and would this be seen as acceptable in the twenty-first century? Such questions are still relevant and remain to be answered.

Shirley discusses the use of The Exercise by a DCL teacher who was one of my predecessors as head of the BA Acting course, Annie Tyson. His account outlines some safeguards Tyson

[106] David Shirley, 'Stanislavsky's Passage into the British Conservatoire', in *Russians in Britain: British Theatre and the Russian Tradition of Actor Training*, ed. by Jonathan Pitches (Routledge, 2012), pp. 38-61 (p. 51).
[107] Christopher Fettes, 'Reuven Adiv: Inspirational Drama Teacher', *The Guardian*, 31 January 2005 <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2005/jan/31/guardianobituaries> [accessed 2 October 2024]; Shirley, 'Reflections on Lee Strasberg', pp. 57-58.

developed in order to address concerns about the wellbeing of students. Sound social health within the group is a prerequisite for attempting The Exercise, including a level of trust and sensitivity that is unlikely to have evolved before the third year of training. Psychological risks are mitigated by conducting The Exercise in a calm and non-sensational atmosphere. The Exercise is rigorously de-briefed, so it becomes a learning experience for the entire group.[108] Tyson's pedagogy suggests some further conditions under which The Exercise might remain a valuable tool for exploring the actor's inner landscape and cultivating emotional availability.

While LSM practice may have made limited inroads into the conservatoire, I argue that some of its language and concepts have become commonplace in UK training discourse, often through influential DCL teachers. Robert Lewis provides one example of language transfer. He comments on Strasberg's ability to teach actors how to have 'truthful' rather than 'indicated' emotions.[109] Presumably, Lewis considers 'concrete' emotional experience to be 'truthful'. On the other hand, 'indicated' emotion is a signal sent to the audience, which tells them what the character is supposed to be feeling, rather than allowing them to 'read' the emotion in the actor's body. Doreen Cannon used the same terminology at DCL. When Tyson was an acting student at the school, she witnessed a somewhat brutal, one-word summary of a fellow student's performance in Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, 'indicated'.[110] The authoritative teacher is the arbiter of what is truthful and what is not.

[108] Shirley, 'Reflections on Lee Strasberg', p. 58.
[109] Lewis in 'Self-Portrait, p. 485.
[110] Annie Tyson in Robert Price, 'John Beschizza and Annie Tyson discuss Doreen Cannon', Apple Podcasts, 18 August 2021 <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/john-beschizza-and-annie-tyson-discuss-doreen-cannon/id1535319541?i=1000532390121> [accessed 2 October 2024].

The Actor's Studio transcripts provide further examples of language and ideas that have migrated to the UK. One section describes Strasberg's work with an actor who, despite thorough preparation, is delivering a lifeless performance. He advises her to simplify what she is doing, to focus on contacting her partner and on logical behaviour. He proposes that 'leaving yourself alone' will free her unconscious mechanisms, allowing her to use the research material she has gathered. Similarly, he refers to an actor who 'gets in his own way'.[111] Here, he is noting the tendency of actors to approach every scene as if it were difficult, when sometimes the work is simple. Similarly, I have often noticed teachers and students wrestling with the issue of 'over-thinking', seen as a barrier to instinctive and impulsive work. I argue this set of related terms are deployed to encourage simplicity and spontaneity, rather than disabling levels of intellectual analysis. Although Strasberg acknowledged that over-complicating the work could interfere with acting, he also remarks that 'acting is too often surrounded by a kind of mysticism or by a kind of fear that says, "Now wait a minute. If I start asking myself questions, I'm going to be unable to act"'.[112] Although he sought to remove the barriers to actors' instinctive responses, he remained a confirmed *Scientist*.

6.6 The Exercise in the Twenty-First Century: Conditions for Retrieval

There must be very few theatrical debates that are more bad-tempered than those surrounding LSM. In an article in the New York Times, Stella Adler declares 'I think what he

[111] Strasberg, *Actors Studio*, pp. 139, 146.
[112] Ibid., p. 171.

[Strasberg] does is sick. Too many of his students have come to me ready for an institution'.[113] No less robust, when asked about Adler's training, Strasberg replies 'there's no comparison between the people who have come out of my school and the people who have come out of her school'.[114] Strasberg's death did little to defuse the animosity. The day after it was announced, Adler insisted it 'will take a hundred years before the harm that man has done to the art of acting can be corrected'.[115] It was a sad conclusion to an artistic relationship of more than fifty years.

Clurman balances a generous appreciation of Strasberg's virtues with a shrewd assessment of his vices. He describes him as a man of 'intense feelings and an even more intense effort to control his feelings'. Similarly, he praises Strasberg's directing, which, he said featured 'strong emotion curbed by ascetic control'.[116] Clurman is equally precise in his assessment of Strasberg's less appealing qualities. He describes a difficult period in Strasberg's personal life: 'there came into his humble demeanor something tight and autocratic, driving and fierce. He would alternate between a childish self-indulgence in people's good opinion of him and an almost sadistic fury when he was balked'.[117] The perspective of Strasberg's peers suggests LSM techniques are historically intertwined with his personality, which was, by his own admission, a challenging one.[118] The drive and determination that enabled Strasberg to make discoveries and establish a new kind of theatre had a darker side. Therefore, a

[113] Stella Adler quoted in 'Can the Method Survive the Madness?', *The New York Times*, 7 October 1979 <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/10/07/archives/can-the-method-survive-the-madness-method.html>.
[114] Lee Strasberg ibid.
[115] Stella Adler in Elia Kazan, *A Life* (Knopf, 1988), p. 143.
[116] Clurman, *Fervent Years*, pp. 40, 61.
[117] Ibid., p. 52.
[118] Commenting on his own dismissive critique of Laurence Olivier, Strasberg describes himself as 'very tough and very harsh'. See *Actor's Studio*, p. 380.

reassessment of LSM requires a separation of Strasberg's personality from his practical discoveries.

The comments on LSM by Strasberg's contemporaries are sometimes coloured by animosity and the sheer friction of strong, creative personalities coming into contact. Academic discourse, although comparatively polite, is also ill-tempered at times. Krasner comments irritably on opponents of the Method: 'disdain for Strasberg in particular has become so intense that understanding it requires less reliance on objective reason and more on psychopathology'.[119] However, there is a wealth of material that focusses dispassionately on the ethics and efficacy of LSM.

Krasner and Rhonda Blair both provide useful overviews of Method literature. Krasner identifies four categories of criticism: Method has a tendency to 'fixed characterisation', which inhibits flexibility in acting and effaces the cultural values of the actor; it prioritises the self over the role as defined by the text; it is only useful for 'kitchen-sink realism'; LSM constitutes a 'betrayal' of Stanislavsky, because its representatives had a limited knowledge of the KSS and were therefore ill-equipped to be its champions.[120] Blair considers a wide range of Method discourse, which she summarises in two broad categories defined by professional point of view. Firstly, 'actors misread it to support an anti-intellectual, ahistorical attachment to a private, psychotherapeutically centered perspective that claims actors need only access their "authentic feelings"'. Secondly, theorists reject the Method as

[119] David Krasner, 'I Hate Strasberg: Method Bashing in the Academy', in *Method Acting Reconsidered*, ed. by David Krasner (Palgrave, 2000), pp. 3-39 (p. 7), hereafter 'I Hate Strasberg'.
[120] Ibid., pp. 8-34.

'too subjective and noncritical; they assert actors must be more skeptical about identity and emotional appeal'.[121] Thus LSM and its creator have been subjected to a broad range of criticism, from peers, professional actors and academics. Nevertheless, as Krasner puts it, 'Method acting refuses to go away'.[122] Its resilience suggests there is something of enduring value in LSM, despite its controversial reputation.

A full engagement with the voluminous critical discourse on the Method could easily constitute a thesis in itself and is outside the scope of the argument. Here, I simply note that even its sternest critics acknowledge its continuing appeal to actors and teachers.

As one of Strasberg's closest associates at the Group Theatre, Clurman was under no illusions about his colleague's difficult character. But he praised Strasberg's potency as a teacher without hesitation. Clurman comments on the impact of The Exercise:

> The first effect on the actors was that of a miracle. The system […] represented for most of them the open-sesame of the actor's art. Here at last was a key to that elusive ingredient of the stage, true emotion.[123]

Rosemary Malague exposes elements of patriarchy and misogyny in LSM. She argues that teachers who believe feminism has been integrated into academy and studio 'may not be cognizant of the sexist assumptions that are deeply embedded in the methods they have inherited; they may, therefore, unintentionally perpetuate them'.[124] But her aim is not to destroy LSM, but to disentangle it from patriarchal behaviour. She supports the practice, but rejects its manipulation by male artists.[125] Even Hornby, who, according to Krasner,

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[121] Rhonda Blair, 'The Method and the Computational Theory of Mind', in *Method Acting Reconsidered: Theory Practice, Future*, ed. by David Krasner (Palgrave, 2000), pp. 201-18 (p. 202).
[122] Krasner, 'I Hate Strasberg', p. 8.
[123] Clurman, *Fervent Years*, p. 44.
[124] Rosemary Malague, *An Actress Prepares: Women and "The Method*" (Routledge, 2012), p. 3.
[125] Ibid.

'exemplifies the extreme' of Method criticism, acknowledges the value of The Exercise.[126] Hornby remarks that 'every actor should learn Strasberg's emotion memory and be prepared to use it in the proper circumstances'.[127] To conclude the chapter, I make a case for retaining elements of LSM in actor training and propose some guidelines for what the 'proper circumstances' might be for using The Exercise in UK Higher Education.

Developing a protocol for the effective and ethical application of The Exercise requires some consideration of the particular challenges of the procedure, from the perspective of both teacher and student. Although Strasberg claims to have had 'no difficulty' when conducting The Exercise, he also reports a low incidence of success in terms of stimulating a full emotional memory (6.2). This suggests it is not easy to teach. Pedagogues are unlikely to be able to manage the process safely and effectively without direct personal experience of the process or, at the very least, a history of observation of an expert leading the work. A medical doctor has a qualification that guarantees a minimum level of competence, but there is no such thing as an LSM licence. There is no 'Dr Theatre'. However, responsible use of the technique requires both competent staff and an environment that supports controlled, artistic risk-taking.

Aspiring actors are frequently adventurous in spirit and highly motivated to challenge themselves. In my experience, students want to explore their limits as people and

[126] Krasner, 'I Hate Strasberg', p. 7.
[127] Hornby, *End of Acting*, p. 186.

developing artists. However, life emotion is by definition a disturbance of the psychophysical system which is not necessarily comfortable (2.10). It is a common human trait to avoid unpleasant experiences, even if they have a constructive purpose, and it is tempting to see an analogy with a phenomenon in psychoanalysis: patients both court and fear cathartic experiences of full emotional recall (2.4, 6.3). Similarly, actors may seek intense emotional experiences as a kind of professional rite of passage, but this may also carry a degree of psychological or even physical risk. After an emotional episode, the homeostatic process returns the body to a state of equilibrium, but there are instances of effects lingering to the point of pathology (1.7). If emotion is artificially aroused, it needs to be consciously defused as part of the training session, and this must be an aspect of the teacher's responsibility. With these pedagogical considerations in mind, I propose a set of working guidelines for the safe and ethical application of The Exercise:

1. The Exercise is only attempted with experienced students in the latter stages of training, on condition that the group has maturity and sound social health.
2. Students who are already emotionally available are unlikely to need The Exercise.
3. The Exercise is not attempted in isolation. It is the logical conclusion of a series of sense memory exercises. Mastery of relaxation and concentration are a pre-requite for sense and emotional memory work.
4. Students select a memory they would like to investigate and would be prepared to talk about to family, friends or staff. Extremely traumatic events, such as a car crash or bereavement, must be avoided.
5. The Exercise is equally valuable if the memory is of a difficult or joyous occasion. It is a misconception to assume it must be painful or embarrassing.

6. The focus of both teacher and student is the sensory associations with the memory. The student is not required to reveal the personal details of the original event and the teacher should not attempt to uncover them.
7. All observers are responsible for maintaining a supportive and respectful atmosphere.
8. A debrief, in the form of a discussion and/or physical 'cooling down' procedure, follows The Exercise.
9. The Exercise is not obligatory. It may be useful for emotional high points in a play or film, but many roles do not include emotional extremes.
10. Before the class, students are reminded of institutional arrangements for mental health first aid and counselling.

The rationale for the guidelines is to make a powerful tool available to actors and their trainers. But this can only happen if The Exercise is managed very carefully to meet the expectations of contemporary higher education, especially in terms of protection of students. Deployment of the tool is dependent on a clear ethical position and significant expertise in terms of emotion management. In a refreshed pedagogy for acted emotion, I envisage a range of approaches, which not only presuppose a high level of pedagogical skill, but also inculcate self-care practices. In the next chapter, I consider a training method that has no recourse at all to emotional memory and builds in safeguarding techniques from the start.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ALBA, AN ANTIDOTE TO 'THE EXERCISE'

7.1 Bloch's Watershed

To my knowledge, Susana Bloch is the only trained scientist who has also made a significant contribution to actor training practice. Her dual passions were evident at the very beginning of her career. In the mid-twentieth century, Bloch left secondary school and faced a choice between degrees in theatre or psychology at the University of Chile, in Santiago. She auditioned for the university's drama school and was offered a place, but hesitated to take it up:

> I remember my terror at initiating a career in which so often actors identified so much emotionally with their roles, that they frequently became very unbalanced in their lives. Fear won over passion and I ran away from the Drama Department and rapidly registered in the Psychology Department.[1]

Although Bloch does not explicitly mention Strasberg's Method (LSM), she clearly shared the popular conception of the dangers of certain approaches to acting (6.1). Her perception is that strong identification between actor and character is widespread and that it constitutes a threat to mental health. This thesis outlines how the training method, which Bloch developed later in her career, seeks to address acted emotion without recourse to unhealthy introspection or emotion memory. It therefore offers the possibility of an effective approach to the pedagogy of the emotions that places student wellbeing at the centre of the practice. In this sense, her method can be seen as an antidote to LSM.

[1] Susana Bloch, *Alba Emoting: A Scientific Method for Emotional Induction*, ed. by Patricia Angelin and Elizabeth Ann Townsend, trans. by Susana Bloch, 2nd edn ([CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform], 2017), p. 31, hereafter *Alba Emoting.*

In the five decades of its existence, Bloch's technique has been known by a variety of names, so the nomenclature needs some clarification. After training as a neurophysiologist, an unexpected opportunity to revive her love of theatre presented itself. She was invited to join an interdisciplinary team interested in an investigation of emotion. Her co-researchers were the successful Chilean theatre director, Pedro Orthous, and a colleague at the university, clinical psychologist, Guy Santibañez-H.[2] One of the fruits of their investigation was a somatic method of actor training capable of generating emotional responses at will (7.2). The original research team named it the 'BOS Method', an acronym derived from the surnames of the lead investigators.[3]

After the Pinochet coup of 1973, Bloch left Chile, eventually settling in France, where she resumed her work as a neurologist. In her spare time, she pursued her interest in acted emotion with the Danish theatre company, *Teaterklanen*.[4] According to Roxane Rix, it was during this period that Bloch renamed her training approach 'Alba Emoting', after Lorca's *The House of Bernardo Alba.*[5] Bloch herself explains she chose the name because it is the Spanish word for 'dawn' and also means 'white', with connotations of purity.[6] In 2013, the two governing bodies for Alba Emoting in North America amalgamated under a new name,

[2] Bloch, *Alba Emoting*, pp. 32-33; Susana Bloch, Pedro Orthous and Guy Santibañez-H, 'Effector Patterns of Basic Emotions: A Psychophysiological Method for Training Actors', *The Journal of Social and Biological Structures*, 10 (1987), pp. 1-19 (p.3), hereafter 'Effector Patterns'.
[3] Jessica M. Beck, 'Alba Emoting and Emotional Melody: Surfing the Emotional Wave in Cachagua, Chile', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 1.2 (2010), pp. 141-56 (p. 143), doi:10.1080/19443927.2010.504998, hereafter 'Surfing the Emotional Wave'.
[4] Bloch, *Alba Emoting*, pp. 79-82.
[5] Roxane Rix, 'Alba Emoting: A Revolution in Emotion for the Actor', in *Performer Training: Developments Across Cultures*, ed. by Ian Watson (Harwood Academic Publishers, 2001), pp. 205–19 (p. 209), hereafter 'Revolution in Emotion'.
[6] Bloch, *Alba Emoting*, p. 93.

the Alba Method Association (7.4).[7] The founders of the AMA were, perhaps, anxious to avoid a negative connotation of the word 'emoting', which suggests an excessively theatrical projection of fake emotion. Finally, Laura Bond, who has worked closely with Bloch, developed a variation on her mentor's approach, which she calls 'Emotional Body' work.[8] For the purposes of the argument, this training tradition is referred to simply as 'Alba'.

All the manifestations of Alba are underpinned by two key scientific ideas, established by the original BOS team. Firstly, they identified six basic emotions, anger, tender love, fear, erotic love, sadness and joy.[9] Secondly, they developed the notion of the 'effector pattern', a concept closely linked to a definition of emotion provided by Bloch and fellow neuroscientist, Madeleine Lemeignan:

> We would like to define an emotion as a complex and dynamic functional state of the entire organism, triggered by an external or internal stimulus, integrated in the central nervous and neuroendocrine systems, involving simultaneously a particular group of effector organs (visceral, humoral, neuromuscular) and a subjective experience (feeling).[10]

Alba distinguishes between the 'effector organs' as a whole, and the effector patterns, which are a sub-set of responses that can be controlled consciously. They are, therefore, learnable. At the same time, the 'triad' of breathing, facial expression and body posture can be activated unconsciously. Breathing, for example, does not stop because we are asleep. Furthermore, the triad is capable of stimulating the systems that are definitely not under conscious control, such as the hormone release governed by the endocrine system. Bloch

[7] 'History of the Alba Method/Alba Emoting', Alba Method Association, 2017 <https://www.albamethod.com/history> [accessed 26 October 2024].
[8] Laura Bond, *The Emotional Body: A Method for Physical Self-Regulation*, 2nd edn (Pure Expressions, 2018).
[9] Bloch, Orthous and Santibañez-H, 'Effector Patterns', pp. 4-6.
[10] Bloch and Lemeignan, 'Respiratory-Posturo-Facial Patterns', pp. 31-32.

and Lemeignan summarise the BOS approach: ‘what we did essentially, was to extract the prototypical somatic 'triad' […] whose reproduction is sufficient to activate, partially or totally the corresponding emotional network’.[11] So, the triad is a locus where the somatic and autonomic nervous systems meet (1.7). It is of particular interest to the actor, because it provides a method for activating the unconscious by conscious means. The training is founded on learning to execute the effector patterns for the six basic emotion.

Unlike the giants of Russian and American actor training, Bloch is not a well-known figure. However, her approach is vital to this thesis because if offers a radical alternative to methods that depend on personal experience, sense and emotion memory. Rather, the path to a convincing embodiment of acted emotion is through a technical, physical training. It aims for an accurate reproduction of the visible signs of life emotion, not the full visceral experience that Strasberg craved (6.1, 6.4). At the same time, Bloch retained her youthful concern for the wellbeing of actors and incorporated safety measures into her training from the beginning. This chapter aims to use my critical framework to determine if Alba is a technique that deserves a more prominent place in the conservatoire, because of its efficacy and its built-in capacity to safeguard the mental health of students.

The argument is developed in four further sections. Alba is comparatively easy to locate in a scientific context, because of Bloch’s training as a neurophysiologist and the interdisciplinary nature of the research project that established the foundations of the method. However, within the framework of my working definition of life emotion, I challenge some of Alba’s

[11] Ibid., p. 37.

assumptions. As an example of Basic Emotion Theory (BET), it is subject to the same critique as any account that ignores the role of appraisal and cultural variation in emotional expression (7.2).

Knowledge of Alba is limited in comparison to the dominant forms of actor training in the UK, so it is essential to describe Bloch's pedagogy in some detail. Section three argues that her approach is grounded almost entirely on her own scientific research and practical experimentation with actors, and that artistic influences have had a limited effect. However, I suggest it can be seen as Anti-Emotionalist, because, although it places emotion at the centre of acting, Bloch recommends an entirely technical approach to the embodiment of emotion in performance. Furthermore, I propose that the phenomenon of 'induction', when the subjective experience of an emotion occurs during an exercise, is a manifestation of Scenic Emotion.

Bloch is a scientist in the conventional sense. She can also be seen as a *Scientist* of actor training, because of the precise control that her method seems to offer over acted emotion (1.2, 4.2). But despite the promise of mastery over one of acting's great 'intangibles', Alba's impact on the conservatoire has been negligible. To date, the literature on application of the technique in UK drama schools is virtually nonexistent. Therefore, in order to assess the potential of the technique, I consider some examples of how second-generation Alba practitioners in the United States have employed it in higher education, particularly Rix and Bond. I also consider some isolated examples of Alba use in the UK, including the work of Jessica Beck and Eric Hetzler (7.4).

Finally, I summarise the findings of the chapter, that the principal advantages of Alba are the technical control of emotions it offers and its built-in mental health safeguards. However, I conclude its further dissemination is inhibited, by a method that seems artificial and regimented in its early stages and by a lack of suitably qualified teacher-trainers (7.5).

7.2 Alba and Basic Emotion Theory (BET)

Rick Kemp suggests that Alba is 'informed by a scientific perspective' rather than based on 'empirically derived data' (1.5).[12] This section challenges Kemp's view with an account of the scientific foundations of Alba, drawing on peer-reviewed journals and Bloch's retrospective account of the development of the training.[13]

By 1970, Bloch was a Professor of Neurophysiology in the Psychology Department at the University of Chile in Santiago. She was asked to deliver lectures in psychology to the students at the university's Theatre School, but responded with an alternative suggestion: a practical investigation of emotion with the actors. This proposal led to the interdisciplinary collaboration between Bloch, Santibañez-H and Orthous.[14] Their discoveries were documented in a number of English-language publications, dating from the mid-eighties.

[12] Rich Kemp, *Embodied Acting: What Neuroscience Tells Us About Performance* (Routledge, 2012), p. 185.
[13] Key sources include Guy Santibañez-H and Susana Bloch, 'A Qualitative Analysis of Emotional Effector Patterns and their Feedback', *The Pavlovian Journal of Biological Science*, 21 (1986), pp. 108–116, doi:10.1007/BF02699344, hereafter 'Qualitative Analysis'; Bloch, Orthous and Santibañez-H, 'Effector Patterns'; Susana Bloch and Madeleine Lemeignan, 'Precise Respiratory-Posturo-Facial Patterns Are Related to Specific Basic Emotions', *Bewegen & Hulpverlening,* 1 (1992), pp. 31-39, hereafter 'Respiratory-Posturo-Facial Patterns'; Bloch, *Effector Patterns.*
[14] Bloch, *Alba Emoting*, pp. 32-33.

These accounts provide insight into the scientific foundations of Alba and indicate how it developed as an actor training practice.[15]

In a paper published in 1986, Santibañez-H and Bloch describe their original experimental design. The BOS team recruited participants belonging to three distinct groups. The first group were patients, under the care of Santibañez-H, undergoing treatment for anxiety disorders. The other two groups consisted of students at the University of Chile, one from the theatre school and the other from the psychology department. As a first step in the study, the team conducted an anamnesis with each participant, i.e., they recorded significant moments in their life history. The anamnesis had a twin purpose, to ensure the students taking part were 'well balanced' and to identify events that had provoked a specific emotional response. The term they used for such events was 'emotogenic'.[16] The BOS team were dealing with issues familiar to emotion scientists and actors alike. Both need to engineer an emotional response at specific moments, one for an audience and the other for the purposes of study. Both need to consider the risks of the conscious arousal of a powerful emotion.

The three participant groups had different roles within the experiment. The neurosis patients were asked to speak about an episode that made them anxious. Their accounts were recorded and then played back to them. The actors received contrasting instructions: to relax in a supine position, then recall an emotogenic episode, while researchers observed

[15] See note 13.
[16] Santibañez-H and Bloch, 'Qualitative Analysis', p. 109; see also Bloch, *Alba Emoting*, pp. 97-100.

changes in their breathing patterns and physical behaviour. The research team gathered data, not just through observation and self-report, but by monitoring physiological changes associated with emotional response. The parameters included blood pressure, heart rate, skin temperature and muscle tone.[17] The effector patterns identified were then taught to all the actors. The psychology students were put into a hypnotic sleep, coached to execute the patterns discovered by the actors, then asked to report on the feelings and associations that arose. Writing many years later, Bloch pin-points the common purpose underlying the three modes of inquiry. She quotes William James's suggestion that '…***any voluntary arousal of the so-called manifestation of a special emotion ought to give us the emotion itself***'.[18] In effect, the BOS project was an experimental investigation of James's proposal.

In addition to exploring James's idea, the BOS study investigated how subjective states were modified by consciously altering the triads. In his clinical practice, Santibañez-H had noticed changes in his patients' breathing patterns when they were verbalising accounts of painful past events. One of his early discoveries was, that if he asked patients to maintain a calm, regular breathing pattern while recounting emotionally charged episodes, they reported reduced levels of anxiety.[19] Similarly, the psychology students participating in the study were asked to adopt an effector triad that was inconsistent with the emotogenic stimulus. The verbal accounts, derived from their responses to the taught patterns, were fed back to them under two sets of contrasting conditions. Either they listened to the report while consciously breathing evenly and remaining relaxed, or they deliberately adopted a pattern

[17] Bloch, *Alba Emoting*, p. 98.
[18] Ibid., p. 51. Ellipsis, italics and bold in the original.
[19] Bloch, *Alba Emoting*, p. 95.

different from the one associated with the emotion targeted in the report. In both cases, the intensity of the emotional experience was reduced.[20]

The experimental results suggested several conclusions that formed the basis for what became Alba training. Firstly, the team identified typical breathing patterns, physical postures and facial expressions for six basic emotions (anger, tender love, sadness, joy, fear and erotic love). Secondly, the data confirmed James's intuition that there is a reciprocal relationship between the qualitative experience of emotion and its manifestations. Finally, the discovery that participants could reduce the intensity of an emotional state by adopting an alternative pattern, particularly regular breathing, became the basis of what the team later called 'neutral breath' and the 'step-out' technique, an important method of managing strong emotions during training sessions (7.3).

After her move to Paris in the early 1970s, Bloch became the Director of Research at the French National Scientific Research Centre (CNRS). She attempted to switch from her neurological speciality, pigeon vision, to the study of the emotional dimension of actor training. But as Damasio and LeDoux have observed, for much of the twentieth century, the scientific climate was not conducive to emotion research (2.1).[21] Although she was in a senior position, Bloch's attempts to change direction were not supported by her colleagues:

> In those days, and particularly in France, not only an experimental study of emotions but also the simple word 'emotion' itself, was inconceivable for scientific study. Even

[20] Ibid., pp. 95-100.
[21] Antonio Damasio, *Descartes Error* (Vintage, 2006), pp. xv-xvi; Joseph LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain* (Simon & Schuster, 1996), pp. 24-25.

> in the world of theatre where emotions are the core of acting, emotion was not supposed to be studied or analyzed, but just "felt".[22]

Her remarks suggest that her innovative interdisciplinary collaboration in Santiago was the exception rather than the rule in her career. Bloch was compelled to confine her interest in the theatre to spare-time activities. She made contact with her compatriot, Horacio Muñoz, who was based in Denmark, and they set up the Centre for Theatre Investigation. Muñoz was the director of two theatre companies, the *Rimfaxe* and *Teaterklanen*. In Copenhagen, Bloch continued to refine her training method through workshops with the young actors from the two companies.[23] Eventually, Bloch abandoned her animal research to concentrate on her theatre work.[24]

An article published in *The Journal of Social and Biological Structures*, in 1987, reflects both the evolution of Alba and Bloch's acknowledgment of her original collaborators. 'Effector Patterns of Basic Emotions: a Psychophysiological Method for Training Actors' credits both her research partners from the previous decade, Orthous and Santibañez-H. Bloch was moving beyond the foundational discoveries of the early 1970s and developing her actor training pedagogy (7.3). It appears the editors of the journal recognized the interdisciplinary implications of the paper, since they invited a range of specialists to comment, from the fields of psychology, psychiatry, neurobiology and the theatre. Some of the early critique of Alba appears among the responses.[25]

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[22] Bloch, *Alba Emoting*, p. 43.
[23] Ibid, pp. 79-81.
[24] Ibid., pp. 82-84.
[25] Ross Buck and others, 'Commentaries on 'Effector Patterns of Basic Emotions' by S. Bloch, P. Orthous and G. Santibañez-H', *Journal of Social and Biological Structures*, 11 (1988), pp. 201-11, hereafter 'Commentaries'.

Neurobiologist Wolf Singer has no difficulty accepting that repeated execution of behavioural patterns can influence the brain region where emotional coding takes place. He argues the brain is a distributed system made up of specialized modules characterised by reciprocal influences. It is, as it were, 'democratic'. Furthermore, multiple feedback loops, between periphery and centre, are a feature of the whole organism. Therefore, the fundamental principle of Alba has a secure foundation in neurology.[26] Theatre specialist, Robert Lanchester, is less sympathetic. He concedes that exercising an isolated part of the actor's armoury could be beneficial, but is wary of over-simplification. He regards the training as a hierarchical imposition on the creativity of the actor. Alba 'presumes that there is a "correct" way to shape and score any text in terms of its emotional continuity and interpretation'.[27] He also contests the naive notion that the precise expression of an emotion on stage will automatically affect the audience in the desired manner.[28]

The eminent psychologist, Paul Ekman, was an obvious person for the editors to invite to comment on Bloch's discoveries, because of his well-known work on the facial expression of

[26] Wolf Singer, 'Commentaries', pp. 207-09.
[27] Robert Lanchester, 'Commentaries', p. 203.
[28] A full discussion of audience reception is outside the scope of this thesis. However, the literature on kinesthetic empathy and spectator perception illuminates the topic. See Shantel Ehrenberg and Karen Wood, 'Kinesthetic Empathy: Concepts and Contexts, University of Manchester, England, April 22–23, 2010', *Dance Research Journal*, 43.2 (2011), pp. 113-18, doi:10.1017/S0149767711000167; Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (eds), *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices* (Intellect, 2012); Celia Vara, 'Kinesthetic Empathy as Embodied Research', *Performance Research*, 26.4 (2021) pp. 130-36, doi:10.1080/13528165.2021.2005973; Bruce McConachie, *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Henri Schoenmakers, 'Aesthetic Emotions and Aestheticised Emotions in Theatrical Situations', *Tijdschrift Voor Theaterwetenschap* (1992), pp. 39-58; Ed Tan, *Emotion and the Structure of Narrative Film* (Abingdon, 2011).

basic emotions.[29] He agrees that facial expressions, posture and breathing are all patterned for emotion and that it should be possible to stimulate feeling using any of the three, noting that the effect is likely to be more pronounced if more than one effector is manipulated. However, he questions Bloch's list of basic emotions, observing that 'few emotion theorists or researchers characterize eroticism and tenderness as emotions, although emotions may become involved in either'.[30] He offers Alba his qualified support.

I take the view that the version of BET used in Alba does not provide a completely secure foundation, but not because it is an outlier in the field, as Ekman suggests. In a meta-study of BET, psychologist Andrew Ortony and anthropologist Terence Turner demonstrate there is little agreement among researchers (1.2, 1.5). In their survey of eighteen studies, no two share exactly the same list, although fear, anger, sadness and joy make frequent appearances. Estimates of the total number of 'basic' emotions vary wildly, from two to eighteen. The rationale for including an emotion in this category also varies significantly. Criteria for inclusion include, for example, whether the emotion is an innate response, density of neural firing, type of action tendency and universality of facial expressions.[31] This lack of consensus is one reason why constructionist theorists, such as Barrett, assert basic emotions do not exist at all (2.8). Nevertheless, Alba does have a basis in interdisciplinary research.

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[29] See, for example, Paul Ekman, Robert W. Levenson and Wallace V. Friesen, 'Autonomic Nervous System Activity Distinguishes among Emotions', *Science*, 221 (1983), pp. 1208-10; Paul Ekman, 'All Emotions are Basic', in *The Nature of Emotion: Fundamental Questions*, ed. by Paul Ekman and Richard J. Davidson (Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 15-19.
[30] Paul Ekman, 'Commentaries', p. 202.
[31] Andrew Ortony and Terence J. Turner, 'What's Basic About Basic Emotions?', *Psychological Review*, 97.3 (1990), pp. 315-31 (pp. 315-16).

The working definition of emotion, developed in this thesis, seeks to balance data that points to an innate neurological architecture for basic emotions with the evidence that emotions are socially constructed (2.10). Alba is rooted in experimental psychology and is consistent with contemporary neurology, in terms of what Singer calls the 'democratic' functioning of the brain. However, it does not take account of cultural variations in emotion concepts and expression. I conclude, therefore, that it is not fully supported by a comprehensive theory of emotion.

7.3 The Effector Patterns and Scenic Emotion

Bloch's publications demonstrate limited engagement with acting theory. However, her references to Artaud are consistent with her belief in the centrality of emotion. On several occasions, she quotes Artaud's definition of the actor as an 'athlete of emotions', arguing that they must become expert in the nuances and somatic representation of emotion. Bloch also makes explicit reference to Diderot: 'in my opinion subjective involvement and emotional identification, if anything, diminishes the theatrical performance, rather than enhancing it. In this respect I concur with Denis Diderot'.[32] Paradoxically, perhaps, Bloch is an anti-emotionalist.

A rare reference to Stanislavsky acknowledges his 'brilliance' as a theatre director and theorist, but her discussion is not indicative of a deep understanding of his work. She claims,

[32] Susana Bloch, *The Alba of Emotions: Managing Emotions Through Breathing* (Ediciones Ultramarinos PSE, 2006), pp. 27, 103, 173 & 178, hereafter *Managing Emotions*. See also Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, trans. by Victor Corti (Calder, 1993), pp. 88-95.

without offering any evidence, that he encouraged actors 'to completely identify with their characters' and that, at the end of his life, 'he recognized that the exclusive use of such emotion memories ultimately produced neurotic actors'.[33] I argue this is neither an adequate summary of Stanislavsky's complex, nuanced view of emotion, nor does it represent accurately the practice of the Opera Dramatic Studio, which was infused with emotional content without necessarily making conscious use of memory (5.4). This thesis proposes the influences on Bloch's actor training were overwhelmingly neurophysiological. Alba evolved through experimentation in both laboratory and studio, with little reference to other traditions of actor training practice. This section, therefore, outlines the pedagogy of Alba in its own terms. It evaluates its potential use in the conservatoire in terms of my conception of Scenic Emotion (3.7).

Bloch's early publications are written according to the conventions of scientific papers, including literature review, presentation of data and formal discussion.[34] Her later work, in both Spanish and English translations, has a much looser structure, including interpolations of poetry and detailed accounts of students' experience of the technique.[35] Despite these variations, the core information varies little and, in some cases, passages are identical.[36]

[33] Ibid., p. 178.
[34] See Santibañez-H and Bloch, 'A Qualitative Analysis', 108–116; Bloch, Orthous and Santibañez-H, 'Effector Patterns'; Susana Bloch, Madeleine Lemeignan and Nancy Aguilera-T, 'Specific Respiratory Patterns Distinguish among Human Basic Emotions', *International Journal of Psychophysiology*, 11 (1991), pp. 141-54.
[35] Susana Bloch, *Al Alba de las Emociones* (Random House Mondadori, 2002); Bloch, *Managing Emotions*; Bloch, *Alba Emoting*.
[36] Compare, for example, 'firstly, the actors were instructed to adopt a particular breathing pattern without being told the name of the corresponding emotion' (*Effector Patterns*, p. 9) and 'actors were first instructed to adopt a particular breathing pattern without being told the name of the corresponding emotion' (*Alba Emoting*, p. 139).

Therefore insights into the method are available in a range of publications across a time-span of more than forty years.

Bloch, Orthous and Santibañez-H propose three minimum requirements for an actor training:

> (1) It should provide the actor with a technique for the voluntary control of the body or part of the body involved in the emotional and verbal behaviour to be represented.
> (2) It should provide the actor with the techniques needed to control the […] stress which appears during acting behaviour, and to obtain an adequate balance of excitatory and inhibitory neural processes.
> (3) It should teach the actor to 'simulate' an emotion. This means to learn to reproduce at will the respiratory, postural and facial configurations which correspond to 'real-life' emotional behaviours.[37]

These mission statements highlight voluntary control of emotional expression and the need to balance psychophysiological activation with management of arousal. The third implies an aesthetic that assumes a primary purpose of acting is the accurate imitation of life emotion.

The need for techniques to manage the stress of deliberate self-excitation was detected in the early stages of the BOS investigation. Bloch noticed that students sometimes found it difficult to recover their equilibrium after executing the effector patterns, just as it can be difficult to recover from the after-effects of an intense emotion that occurs spontaneously in life. She called the inability to shake off the lingering effects of the training 'emotional hangover'.[38] The team developed a technique to enable students to 'step out' of an emotional state and restore a condition of calm to mind and body:

[37] Bloch, 'Effector Patterns', pp. 2-3.
[38] Susana Bloch, 'ALBA EMOTING: A Psychophysiological Technique to Help Actors Create and Control Real Emotions', *Theatre Topics*, 3.2 (1993), pp. 121-38 (p. 128), hereafter 'Real Emotions'.

> The procedure was to give one or two deep and complete abdomino-thoracic normal breathing cycles and to perform a simple action such as wiping the face with the hands, stretching the body or changing posture immediately after the signal 'stop; out' had been given.[39]

In my experience of Alba, the 'step-out' evolved from this early description. The actor stands upright, but relaxed, levelling the gaze onto the horizon, softening the eyes and regulating breathing, so the inhale and exhale are of equal length. The hands are laced together and during an inhale, raised above and behind the head. The palms are squeezed together at the top of the action and lowered during exhalation. This is repeated several times. In neurological terms, the procedure has a homeostatic effect (1.7).

Bloch's English-language publication, *Alba Emoting* (2017), outlines the trajectory of Alba training and provides an account of the evolved version of her pedagogy.[40] Here, this source is supplemented with further clarification and developments contributed by Bloch's students, Rix, Bond and Beck. Bond usefully divides the training into three phases, which she calls the Robotic/Mechanical stage, induction and integration.[41] The first, foundational stage is almost entirely technical, with an emphasis on the precise execution of the six effector patterns (7.1, 7.2). Bloch recommends students learn the patterns at the highest level of intensity, presumably because they are easier to learn in their purest form. The three aspects of each pattern are always addressed in the same order, breathing, body posture and facial expression. The breath is regarded as the key to the pattern. Once it is in place,

[39] Bloch, 'Effector Patterns', p. 10.
[40] Bloch, *Alba Emoting*, pp. 139-47.
[41] Bond, *Emotional Body*, pp. 40-41.

training experience suggests that the facial expression often falls into place with little conscious effort from the student.[42]

The physical effort involved in the patterns, particularly anger, is considerable, therefore students are directed to maintain the patterns for only fifteen to eighty seconds at a time. Bloch acknowledges that the execution of the patterns in their pure and prototypical form can feel 'over acted'.[43] In my experience of the exercises, this stage can feel uncomfortable, even faintly ridiculous. In the sadness pattern, for example, facial features are arranged like a clown's mask of sadness or the tragic mask of classical Greece. The acting teacher needs to be prepared to guide students beyond the stage of what can feel like bathetic exaggeration.

During the initial phase of training, a pedagogical issue that often arises is what Alba practitioners refer to as 'entanglement'. This means the inadvertent mixing of two separate basic emotion patterns. Beck, for example, describes working with an actor who habitually mixed the anger and sadness pattern.[44] Similarly, Bond discusses her personal experience of mixing anger with fear and sadness.[45] If an individual has difficulty expressing a particular emotion, there are obvious advantages, from the perspectives of both acting and psychological health, of learning to embody emotion in a pure and 'full-blooded form'. For

[42] Ekman notes that, in his experiments, the reverse is also true, the breath pattern follows the facial expression. See 'Commentaries', p. 202.
[43] Bloch, *Alba Emoting*, pp. 139, 142.
[44] Beck, 'Surfing the Emotional Wave, p. 154.
[45] Bond, *Emotional Body*, pp. 42-43.

example, in the controlled environment of the studio, a non-violent expression of anger might facilitate both artistic development and the capacity for legitimate protest.

Beyond the mechanical/robotic stage, once a degree of proficiency has been achieved, practitioners identify a phenomenal feature of the training known as 'induction'. The patterns can trigger the subjective feeling of the intended emotion, without recourse to emotional memory or generating any associated images from the real world. Bloch argues it is important for students to experience 'induction', especially if they 'have difficulties expressing and feeling a particular emotion'.[46] Later, however, she seeks to inhibit 'induction', by starting and stopping exercises frequently and switching from one to another.

Once the patterns have been mastered, free of 'entanglement', Alba students progress to a more subtle application of skills, incorporating varying levels of intensity and consciously mixing basic emotions. For example, the patterns can initially be practiced at 'minimal', 'moderate' and 'maximal' levels of intensity, and later applied with ever finer gradations. Other variations might involve a partial execution of the pattern, such as breathing in the anger pattern, but tensing just one part of the body. More advanced students may also execute the patterns in conjunction with physical actions, such as carrying a chair, and reciting short pieces of text. Further mastery is sought through a variety of exercises and playful applications, including rapid switches from one pattern to another and theatre games. One involves two or more actors switching more or less randomly from one pattern to another, concentrating on correct and precise execution. According to Bloch, observers

[46] Bloch, *Alba Emoting*, p. 140.

of this game endow it with a coherent narrative, even though it is unplanned and the actors make no attempt to develop a story.[47]

In the later stages of training, which Bond refers to as 'integration', the patterns have been physically mastered, the student experiences induction relatively easily and has acquired a flexible physical vocabulary. The emotion not only looks genuine, but feels genuine to the actor.[48] Bloch concludes:

> In order to be "natural" or "authentic" on the stage, it is not a "sine qua non" (obligatory) condition that the actor must "feel" the emotion interpreted, but that what is essential is to produce the correct expressive "output" of the emotion.[49]

Like Diderot, she takes the anti-emotionalist position that what is required of the actor is not that they feel the emotion portrayed, but that they render the visible signs of feeling as accurately as possible.

Even when the actor has achieved a high level of mastery of the effector patterns, they will rarely be useful professionally in their prototypical form, outside specific types of performance, such as clowning or the classical canon. Bloch observes that 'pure' emotions are rarely seen in fiction outside Greek drama. The emotions we encounter in life and art are usually more complex. Therefore, for the rehearsal of text, she proposes a scheme of 'pure' and 'mixed' emotions, analogous to the notion of primary and secondary colours.[50] So, pride can be seen as a mix of joy and anger. Jealousy mixes anger and fear with a dash of

[47] Bloch, *Alba Emoting*, p. 141-44.
[48] Bond, *Emotional Body*, p. 41.
[49] Bloch, *Alba Emoting*, p. 143.
[50] Psychologist Robert Plutchik proposed a comparable idea, expressed in the form of his 'Wheel of Emotions'. See Robert Plutchik, 'The Nature of Emotions', *American Scientist*, 89.4 (2001), pp. 344-50 (pp. 347-50).

sexuality.[51] Rehearsal, then, becomes a process of experimentation with the 'recipe' for the emotion the actor wishes to embody in a particular moment. Bloch also develops the concept of the 'emotional melody', which, she suggests, 'may be established for the entire play, for each character or for any particular scene'.[52] The playtext or screenplay is analysed and annotated to indicate which emotional mix at what intensity is appropriate at each stage of the drama. Bloch aspires to a precise language of the emotions, equivalent to Laban notation, which would enable the actor to 'score' their role.[53]

Dancers and musicians benefit from standard notations that enable them to record choreography and the dynamics of a score. The aspiration for an equivalent method of preparing an actor's performance is understandable. However, as a practitioner, I suspect that the laborious creation of a complete 'emotional melody' for a play would smack of 'acting by numbers' and alienate actors who prefer a more instinctive approach. But, like many techniques worked on consciously in rehearsal, the melody might work if 'forgotten' in performance, so it becomes a kind of second nature.

To conclude this section, I posit a link between the experience of 'induction' and the concept of Scenic Emotion developed in the thesis. In her account of teaching Alba, Rix observes that although 'induction' may be accompanied by images or memories, the subjective state is certainly not generated by them, but by the physiology. She describes it as an unfamiliar,

[51] Bloch, *Alba Emoting*, pp. 145-46.
[52] Ibid., p. 146.
[53] Ibid., pp. 146-47.

eerie experience, sometimes accompanied by 'pervasive feelings of emptiness'.[54] She calls it 'contentless emotion' because it often has no referent. Her description corresponds to my own experience. I recall lying on the floor during an Alba workshop, working with Feldenkrais practitioner, Lavinia Plonka. Participants were urged to relax like a baby, with knees and elbows raised, waggling our limbs very loosely, while executing the pattern for sadness. When the induction occurred, and I became aware of the unmistakable subjective experience of sadness, it did indeed feel strange, because the sadness was not unpleasant and it did not prompt any associations with any real-life events. This 'contentless emotion' was remarkably easy to control. It could be summoned or dismissed by adjustments to the execution of the pattern.

'Contentless emotion' is induced by conscious psychophysical activity. The theory of Scenic Emotion offers an explanation for this phenomenon. Like Scenic Emotion, 'contentless emotion' has the distinctive 'flavour' of life emotion, but is relatively easy to control. It is not exhausting and is easy to dismiss at the end of the exercise. One of the strengths of Alba is that it provides a somatic route to the arousal of Scenic Emotion.

7.4 Alba in Higher Education

The BOS team define acting as 'a particular form of behaviour produced at will by an actor in order to transmit gnostic and emotional information to an audience by word, gesture and posture within an artistic framework'.[55] They conclude that because this 'acting behaviour'

[54] Rix, 'Revolution in Emotion', p. 212.
[55] Bloch, Orthous and Santibañez-H, 'Effector Patterns', p. 1.

is a learned process, it can be taught. Bloch can, therefore, be confidently described as a pedagogical *Scientist*, as well as a scientist in the conventional sense (1.2, 4.2). The team go on to assert that 'what in our opinion is lacking in the curricula of most drama schools are instrumental techniques for learning how to express an emotion'.[56] Although classes in voice and movement are commonplace, there is no such thing as a dedicated 'emotion class'.

Despite its promise to fill this perceived gap and the high premium it places on student wellbeing, Alba has little or no traction in UK drama schools. There is, therefore, a paucity of evidence for its effectiveness in a British context. However, some insights are available from practice-based studies in higher education, primarily in the United States and to a lesser extent in the UK. These give some indication of Alba's potential in the conservatoire sector. This section also discusses some of the factors inhibiting the wider use of the approach, with a view to proposing how any barriers might be overcome. In particular, I consider the rigidity of the method and the shortage of qualified teachers.

According to the AMA, Alba has spread 'slowly and deliberately, by Bloch's design'.[57] Her caution is rooted in her belief in the potency of its techniques and a laudable determination to ensure it is only taught by well-qualified teachers. In an article published in 1993, she remarks that 'if a critical level of emotional arousal has been attained, the full course of the emotion will take place, therefore the need [*sic*] to learn to control and practice this

[56] Ibid., p. 2.
[57] Alba Method Association, 'History of the Alba Method/Alba Emoting', *AMA* (2017) <https://www.albamethod.com/history> [accessed 29 October 2024], hereafter 'History of Alba'.

powerful tool'.[58] In the late 90s, two organisations were set up to facilitate what Bloch called the 'diffusion' of Alba practice, Alba Emoting Inc. and Alba Emoting North America.[59] These two bodies developed and administered a system of teaching certification, divided into five levels, from Level 1 (Beginner) to Level 5 (Master Teacher). However, by the end of the decade, there were still very few teachers who were authorized by Bloch to teach Alba independently, so dissemination was slow. To date, it is largely confined to relatively small concentrations of practitioners in Denmark, North America and Bloch's native Chile.[60]

Many of the key figures in the development of Alba in North America are, or were, teachers in higher education. Roxane Rix, one of the first pedagogues to be authorized to teach Alba independently by Bloch, documents her work with acting students at Villanova University in Pennsylvania and the University of Toledo, Ohio.[61] Rix's journey, from beginner to confident, highly-qualified pedagogue, is particularly instructive for any teacher interested in experimenting with Alba. As a novice, she developed a number of strategies for engaging with the technique, without purporting to be an expert. She was therefore able to accumulate high-level skills over time.

Rix was excited by Bloch's ideas from the start, although she shared some of theatre scholar Jean-Marie Pradier's reservations, which were published in the 1988 commentaries.[62] Rix

[58] Bloch, 'Real Emotions', p. 128.
[59] Alba Method Association, 'History of Alba'; Bloch, 'Real Emotions', p. 136 (note 15).
[60] Rix estimates that, by 2001, Alba training had reached approximately 100 actors and teachers in the US. See 'Revolution in Emotion', p. 205.
[61] Roxane Rix, 'Alba Emoting: A Preliminary Experiment with Emotional Effector Patterns', *Theatre Topics*, 3.2 (1993), pp. 139-45, hereafter 'Preliminary Experiment'. See also Rix, 'Revolution in Emotion', pp. 205–19.
[62] Jean-Marie Pradier, 'Commentaries', pp. 205-07.

picks out two of Pradier's criticisms in particular, that the training method will favour the upper body, tending to stereotypical use of the face and upper limbs; and that the work will suffer from 'Rosenthal's experimenter expectancy effect'.[63] In other words, the outcomes are compromised by the participants' desire to provide what they think a charismatic teacher wants to achieve. Rix refers to the acting student's tendency to use codified gestures, particularly in the face, as 'signalling', a bad habit also known in the conservatoire as 'demonstrating' or 'indicating' (6.5). Rix, therefore, embarked on a cautious experiment with the method. She was particularly interested in exploring its impact, when not introduced by its charismatic creator. She also decided to favour breath and posture, ignoring facial manipulation, in order to avoid 'signalling'.

At this stage, Rix had no Alba qualification. Mindful of Bloch's reluctance to allow inexperienced teachers to use her method, she built in a number of safeguards. She worked with a small group of seven students that she knew well, in an atmosphere of mutual trust. She made it clear that it was an experiment, rather than an attempt to teach the method in its entirety. She also gave permission in advance for students to drop out of any exercise if they felt uncomfortable.

Rix gathered feedback after each exercise and summarises the responses. While executing the 'fear' breathing pattern, for example, students spontaneously introduced various gestures, including raising their hands or arms in self-protection, closing or opening their eyes, backing away and hiding behind a chair. Participants also reported a range of

[63] Ibid., p. 207.

emotional reactions, including examples of 'entanglement', such as a mix of fear and wonder, as if encountering a UFO. The 'erotic love' pattern generated some unexpected associations. One student imagined himself ice-skating then visualised an image of death. Two students, unsurprisingly perhaps, felt inhibited and uncomfortable while executing the the pattern and took advantage of the permission to withdraw. It is difficult for teachers to adopt new pedagogies without the freedom to experiment. Rix's example suggests some ways this might be accomplished while protecting learners.

Rix concludes her account by stressing her intention to 'test' the breathing patterns rather than teach them. It is difficult to see how it is possible to test the effector components without first teaching them to the actors. However, her overall strategy seems sound. She limited the scope of the project and framed it as a preliminary experiment, avoiding an over-ambitious attempt to teach the full range of Alba techniques. In conclusion, she expresses her determination to investigate specific pedagogical issues further. One major concern is how to manage students in the event of an intense emotional reaction, 'how to teach the technique so that students feel empowered rather than manipulated'. Another is 'how (or whether) to integrate the technique into existing approaches to emotion, including memory-based ones'.[64] My own Performance Experiment explores the last area in particular, testing Alba techniques alongside emotional memory exercises (8).

By 2001, Rix had moved to the University of Toledo, Ohio. Now equipped with experience, expertise and Alba teaching certification, she had developed strategies for managing intense

[64] Rix, 'Preliminary Experiment', p. 144.

emotional responses.[65] She found this essential because of frequent sobbing in her classes, including anomalous reactions, such as weeping while executing the pattern for joy. The entire group would immediately engage with the 'step-out' procedure followed by a sustained execution of the tenderness pattern. It is notable that the students' attitude to outbursts of emotion shifted quite quickly. Initially fearful of intense emotional expression, they quickly 'came to embrace, and even celebrate, these incidents as breakthroughs in growth'.[66] Conscious emotional arousal ceased to be threatening and became an indicator of positive change. It may be that the students were reassured by Rix's clear strategy for managing such emotional eruptions and therefore gained the confidence to allow themselves to experience their physiological manifestation to the full. They felt empowered, not manipulated.

Laura Bond is another actor trainer who has applied Alba in the US system. At the time of writing, she is Professor of Drama at the University of North Carolina, Asheville.[67] Bond retains the six basic emotions identified by the BOS team, but has modified the nomenclature of the patterns and developed her own variation of Alba training, which she calls 'Emotional Body'.[68] The change in terminology was driven by two pedagogical nuances that Bond encountered through practice. Firstly, she detected in her students a reluctance to engage with what might be described as the 'negative' emotions, namely anger, sadness and fear. But from an evolutionary standpoint, all emotions have a survival value, and from

[65] Rix, 'Revolution', pp. 205–19.
[66] Ibid., p. 214.
[67] 'Laura Bond, M.F.A.', University of North Carolina Asheville, n.d. <https://www.unca.edu/storehouse/Person/laura-bond/> [accessed 29 October 2024].
[68] Bond, *Emotional Body*, pp. 31-36.

an artistic perspective, the actor needs a full 'palate' of emotions from which to create a role. It is, therefore, inaccurate and unhelpful to regard any emotion as 'negative'.[69] Secondly, Bond suspected her use of language could interfere with the students' ability to learn the effector patterns with precision. If she used standard English-language terminology, then there was a risk the actors' personal interpretations of emotion concepts might undermine her pedagogical goals.[70] Her solution was to employ a system of numbers and letters to identify the patterns, without using any emotion labels. She grouped the six emotions in pairs, according to their breathing pattern:

mode of breathing	identifier/ basic emotion
nose and mouth	**0** neutral, balanced
nose	**1a** tender love
	1b anger
mouth	**2a** sexual love
	2b fear
nose and mouth	**3a** joy
	3b sadness

4. Summary of Laura Bond's numerical labels for the Alba effector patterns[71]

[69] Acting teacher Rocco Dal Vera found a more satisfactory alternative, referring to all the basic emotions as 'resource states', in 'Alba Emoting', training workshop for actors and teachers (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, August 2014).
[70] Bond, *Emotional Body*, p. 32.
[71] A fuller description of Bond's analysis, adapted from unpublished teaching materials, is included in appendix 1.

The table includes the 'neutral' or 'zero' breath which is part of the 'step-out' routine.[72] Anger and tender love are both nose-breathing patterns, while sexual love and fear are mouth-breathing patterns. The breathing pattens for joy and sadness involve both nose and mouth. Coincidentally, categorization by breathing creates complementary pairs, consisting of one 'positive' and one 'negative' item. Bond's numerical labelling circumvents both the pedagogical barriers she identified and creates a clear, accessible resource for acting teachers.[73]

To date, Jessica Beck is the only Level 5 Alba teacher based in the UK. Her expertise has been developed by a long-standing interest in the approach and attending and leading numerous training workshops, including working directly with Bloch. Beck mentions just one brief and isolated example of using Alba in a UK drama school. When directing a scene, she noticed a student's portrayal of anger was 'entangled' with the sadness pattern and was able to improve his performance with a simple adjustment of his facial expression.[74] However, this episode was not part of any systematic Alba training. Eric Hetzler, a Senior Lecturer at Huddersfield University, holds Level 3 certification and is an Associate Teacher of Bond's 'Emotional Body' group. He regularly teaches Alba at undergraduate level.[75] Peter McAllister, a Senior Lecturer at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD) has

[72] Bloch remarks that 'this "**step out**" exercise acts as a kind of ''reset'' or back to "zero level" of the emotional excitement, and allows the person to return to a neutral state'. See *Managing Emotions*, p. 151 (bold in original).
[73] See appendix 1.
[74] Beck, 'Surfing the Emotional Wave', p. 154.
[75] Eric Hetzler, email to the author, 14 February 2024.

trained with both Bloch and Rix and uses elements of Alba in his teaching, in combination with other techniques: 'I have used elements of this and PEM [Perdekamp Emotional Method] together, and have freely adapted some of the ideas and exercises along with more traditional Stanislavsky / Michael Chekhov / Lee Strasberg approaches'.[76] As a pedagogical *Science* of acted emotion, offering a safe and reliable route to a convincing portrayal of a character's passions, Alba would seem a highly attractive prospect for the UK conservatoire. Yet these modest inroads into higher education only demonstrate the limited dissemination of the method.

Alba practice can be challenging from the perspectives of both student and teacher. From the actor's point of view, the principal difficulties include the frustrations of the 'robotic' phase of learning and the counter-intuitive process of emotional melody. Another of McAllister's remarks points to an obstacle from the viewpoint of the conservatoire teacher. Discussing his desire to mingle Alba with other techniques, he comments that 'purists would probably be upset but I truly don't believe in a "one-size fits-all" approach as each actor is unique and very individual in terms of their needs, based on self-identity, background, temperament, and above all, acting experience'.[77] In an effort to work creatively, blending training methods to find the right pedagogical adjustments for each student, McAllister is aware that some Alba specialists might object.

[76] Peter McAllister, email to the author, 13 February 2024.
[77] Ibid.

McAllister's impulse to mix Alba with other approaches is echoed by other practitioners. Beck cites Yvan Joly, who attended two Alba workshops in Montreal and noticed some parallels with Feldenkrais somatic training. He observes that Feldenkrais aims to promote flexibility, readiness to move in any direction and the ability to find neutral, while Alba does the same in the emotional sphere.[78] She lists several other examples of teachers finding it fruitful to combine Alba with a diverse range of training traditions, including Ann Bogart's 'Viewpoints', Strasberg's Method, and Michael Chekhov.[79] She also mentions Hyrum Conrad's 'ArcWork', which combines Alba with 'Rasabox' exercises, derived from the Indian aesthetic system of classification of emotional states.[80] Beck herself has blended the approach with physical exercises from a Grotowskian tradition as well as the work of South African theatre practitioner Brian Astbury.[81] Overall, Beck's experience suggests that Alba is an attractive tool, but may not be a complete training system in itself. Many practitioners have felt the need to synthesise it with other approaches to the emotional component of actor training.

[78] Beck, 'Surfing the Emotional Wave', pp. 145-46.
[79] Ibid., pp. 154-55. See also Anne Bogart and Tina Landau, *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* (Nick Hern, 2014). Pamela Chabora discusses her exploration of the relationship between Alba and LSM in 'Emotion Training and the Mind/Body Connection: Alba Emoting and the Method', in *Method Acting Reconsidered: Theory, Practice, Future*, ed. by David Krasner (Palgrave, 2000), pp. 229-43.
[80] See Dyutiman Mukhopadhyay, 'Dancing with Nine Colours: The Nine Emotional States of Indian *Rasa* Theory', *PhilPapers: Online Research in Philosophy* (2022), https://philpapers.org/rec/MUKDWN [accessed 13 December 2024]; *Inside The Performance Workshop: A Sourcebook for Rasaboxes and Other Exercises*, ed. by Rachel Bowditch, Paula Murray Cole and Michele Minnick (Routledge, 2023). How far Western actors can make use of non-Western aesthetic and training traditions is a matter for considerable debate. Although there are many fascinating areas to explore, 'dipping in' to non-Western practice runs the risk of dilettantism and/or cultural appropriation. Systems develop in different countries to serve the forms of theatre and performance in that country. This complex area is outside the scope of the current thesis. An excellent starting point for any such investigation would be Phillip B. Zarrilli's *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach after Stanislavski* (Routledge, 2009).
[81] Beck, 'Surging the Emotional Wave', pp. 154-55.

There are sound reasons for the slow dissemination of Alba, particularly the need for a thorough technical knowledge and the imperative that is central to the training, to use a powerful tool in an ethical manner that protects the mental health of students. However, the hierarchical system of certification, used by the Alba governing bodies, simply does not exist in most other forms of training for acting teachers. It becomes an obstacle to further dissemination when suitably qualified teacher-trainers are so scarce.

For Alba to spread further, more instructors are required and existing teaching staff would need to be convinced of its value and so willing to undertake professional development. The practitioners discussed provide some alternative models for the 'diffusion' of Alba. Although Rix trained with Bloch, her initial experimental activities, with no oversight from a high-level teacher, laid the foundations for her movement from novice to expert. McAllister's absorption of ideas from a range of sources, and ability to adapt them to the needs of his students, ensures that an element of Alba has entered the curriculum of RCSSD actor training. All possible routes must be pursued if Alba is to proliferate in the UK.

7.5 Reconfiguration

There are a number of features of Alba that might tempt pedagogues to overcome the barriers to its wider deployment in the conservatoire. It promises an unusually high degree of control over the elusive process of acted emotion, in terms of physical expression, intensity and the capacity to create emotional mixes (7.4). Induction cannot be guaranteed, but Alba offers a relatively reliable method of activating the subjective component of emotion. It is debatable whether such activation is necessary or desirable in performance,

but arguably, it is a rite of passage for actors in training, and may support their belief in imaginary circumstances and have a subtle influence on audience perception. Alba also contributes to rehearsal-room practice by offering a clearly defined terminology for discussing emotion and by proposing a system of notation that enables practitioners to plan the emotional melody of a script (7.3).

One of the drivers of the original interdisciplinary experiment was the pursuit of new therapeutic approaches to psychiatric patients in the care of Santibañez-H. Block herself was anxious about the impact of over-identification with a character. Alba's historical concern for the mental health of participants has ensured that care for students is built into the training. Although induction is seen as a necessary phase in the training, it also includes strategies for calming or disrupting a powerful emotional response, such as the step-out procedure and frequent changes of exercise, from one pattern to another. The central role of wellbeing in Alba renders its practice eminently suitable for the contemporary conservatoire, because it balances the professional imperative to embody acted emotion with the actor's right to protection.

Alba has some manifest advantages. But if it is to be reconfigured for wider use in the UK conservatoire, it is not necessarily the training itself that needs to be amended, but the way it is taught and how its dissemination is managed. If the precision of Alba is one of its key strengths, it is also among its weaknesses. Within the conceptual framework of this thesis, Alba is on the extreme end of the *Scientific* philosophy of actor training. Its offer of a degree of certainty is attractive, but also potentially alienating. The exercises can feel mechanical,

even cartoon-like in execution and, if poorly taught, could appear to leave little room for some of acting's highly-valued intangibles, including spontaneity, instinct and individuated response. Teachers need the confidence and expertise to guide students beyond the 'robotic' phase of training.

Alba can also be challenged for some of the aesthetic and scientific assumptions that underpin the method. As Lanchester points out, there is a degree of theatrical naivety in Bloch's belief that the accurate execution of the patterns will automatically communicate the relevant emotion directly to the audience (7.2). Alba also assumes that the manifestations of the basic emotions that it identifies are universally recognizable, without acknowledging that there is no definitive list of basic emotions in psychology or neuroscience. Emotion concepts and expressions vary from culture to culture and person to person. A final barrier that potential Alba teachers must overcome is a significant one, the paucity of qualified teacher-trainers in the UK. Although there are development opportunities in the US and online, their limited accessibility means there is often a stark choice between individual experimentation with the method, without supervision from an experienced practitioner, and ignoring Alba in favour of alternative approaches.

The next chapter explores how Alba might be deployed further in the UK conservatoire. It is an account of a practice-based enquiry, designed jointly by psychologist Kate Muir and myself.

PART THREE: CULMINATION AND CONCLUSION

CHAPTER EIGHT: A PERFORMANCE EXPERIMENT

8.1 Rationale and Objectives

The final part of the thesis consists of two chapters. The first is an account of a performance experiment and the second a summary of conclusions. The 'Performance Experiment' is partly inspired by a specific challenge, common to actors and emotion scientists alike. Both need to arouse an emotional response at specific, planned moments. Whether or not actors need to self-stimulate life emotion in performance is a question debated in this thesis. But in some styles of drama at least, the professional is expected to produce apparently authentic displays of emotion on demand, when the metaphorical curtain goes up or the director calls 'action'.[1] Similarly, in order to examine emotional processes, scientists need study volunteers to produce a reaction under laboratory conditions. A range of methods have been used to achieve this aim, including observation of images and film extracts, writing emotive scenarios and re-reading them, facial manipulation and planned improvisations.[2]

[1] This is not only a requirement of 'naturalistic' or 'realistic' drama. Postmodern work also demands, in Meisner's phrase, 'living truthfully under imaginary circumstances' (Sanford Meisner and Dennis Longwell, *Sanford Meisner on Acting* (Vintage, 1987), p. 15). For example, in Sarah Kane's *Blasted* and *Cleansed*, conventional narrative structures collapse, but the actors are still called on to embody a response to the brutal events depicted on stage, in a manner that is convincing to an audience. See *Sarah Kane: Complete Plays* (Bloomsbury, 2001).

[2] Richard D. Lane and others, 'Neural Activation During Selective Attention to Subjective Emotional Responses', *NeuroReport*, 8.18 (1997), pp. 3969-72 (images); Eric M. Reiman and others, 'Neuroanatomical Correlates of Externally and Internally Generated Human Emotion', *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 154.7 (1997), pp. 918-25 (film clips); Karim S. Kassam and others, 'Identifying Emotions on the Basis of Neural Activation', *Plos One*, 8.6 (2013), doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0066032 (emotive scenarios); Paul Ekman, Robert W. Levenson and Wallace V. Friesen, 'Nervous System Activity Distinguishes among Emotions', *Science*, 221.4616 (1983), pp. 1208-10 (facial manipulation); Ann D. Futterman and others, 'Immunological and Physiological Changes Associated with Induced Positive and Negative Mood', *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 56.6 (1994), pp. 499-510 (planned improvisations).

Although a number of studies have recruited actors as participants, there have been very few attempts at a joint investigation of emotion that satisfies the requirements of both science and the arts, generating new knowledge in both areas.[3] Writing in 2009, Thalia Goldstein notes that acting is a potentially rich territory for psychological research, but has barely been touched: 'despite its obvious popularity, we know shockingly little about the cognitive and affective underpinnings of acting'.[4] The Performance Experiment (PE) contributes to the cognitive turn scholarship that has sought to fill this gap (1.5).

The PE has three objectives. Firstly, it aims to compares the impact of Alba and Emotion Memory exercises on a group of actors in conservatoire training. There is a paucity of empirical data relating to how effectively such techniques stimulate a physiological and subjective response appropriate to the intended emotion. Secondly, it investigates an area not previously explored: the role of interoception in the acting process. There is a body of neurological research that theorises a link between interoceptive awareness (IA) and the capacity for intense response to emotional stimuli. Wiens, Mezzacappa and Katkin, for example, use heartbeat detection as a measure of interoceptive ability. They find that undergraduates who are good 'heartbeat detectors' also reported powerful reactions to emotive film clips.[5] Muir and I were curious about what relevance this link might have for

[3] Kassam, Ekman and Futterman's studies all used either student or professional actors (see note 2). In the case of Futterman and others, the team specifically selected actors trained in Method techniques.
[4] Thalia R. Goldstein, 'Psychological Perspectives on Acting', *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 3.1 (2009) pp. 6–9 (p. 8), hereafter 'Psychological Perspectives'. Goldstein herself has pursued an interest in the emotional and psychological benefits of acting. See *Why Theatre Education Matters: Understanding the Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Benefits* (Teachers College Press, 2024).
[5] Stefan Wiens, Elizabeth S. Mezzacappa and Edward S. Katkin, 'Heartbeat Detection and the Experience of Emotions', *Cognition and Emotion*, 14.3 (2000), pp. 417-27, hereafter 'Heartbeat Detection'. See also Hugo D. Critchley and others, 'Neural Systems Supporting Interoceptive Awareness', *Nature Neuroscience*, 7 (2004), pp. 189-95, hereafter 'Interoceptive Awareness'; Antoine Bechara and Nasir Naqvi, 'Listening to your Heart:

actor training. If the capacity for an intense emotional response to imaginary events is a measure of acting ability, could interoceptive awareness be used as an indicator of acting 'talent'? How does IA as an individual difference influence an actor's emotional response? Might IA constitute a rationale for matching the pedagogical technique to the needs of the individual performer? These questions could have important implications for the inclusion of diverse performers (8.6). Finally, the PE sought to address its research questions using the techniques of both the social sciences and actor training, thus creating a 'third space' for interdisciplinary collaboration.

Susana Bloch developed a writing style that intersperses the precise documentation of her investigations with segments of poetry and subjective accounts of actor training experience (7.3). Similarly, this chapter blends the structure and rigour of experimental design with the narrative accounts more familiar to humanities scholars.[6]

8.2 Ethics and Recruitment

In view of the risks of a calculated arousal of emotion, it was particularly important for the PE to incorporate robust safeguards, drawn from both contributing disciplines. Many of the precautions are standard practice in experimental psychology. The Research Ethics Committees of Birmingham City University and the University of the West of England

Interoceptive Awareness as a Gateway to Feeling', *Nature Neuroscience*, 7.2 (2004), pp. 102-03, hereafter 'Gateway to Feeling'.

[6] The Performance Experiment is also described in David Jackson and Kate Muir, 'Individual Differences in Acted Emotions: An Exploratory Study into the Role of Interoceptive Awareness in Feelings Prompted by Emotion Eliciting Acting Techniques', *PsyArXiv* (2019) pp. 1-16, doi:10.31234/osf.io/shf72, hereafter 'Individual Differences'. See appendix 2.

granted ethical approval for the study. Participants were treated in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society.[7] The experimental protocol excluded anyone in poor health or taking contraindicated medication.[8] Volunteers gave informed written consent, were free to leave at any time and were guaranteed confidentiality.

Additional safeguards were put in place, comparable to those used by Roxane Rix during her early experiments with Alba (7.4). We recruited students from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire with a minimum of two years full-time experience of actor training. I knew all the actors well and enjoyed excellent working relationships with them, built on successful previous classes and productions. The experimental, optional nature of the project was emphasised. Eight actors volunteered, five female and three male, all between twenty and twenty-three years old. In advance of the PE, all participants were taught the step-out procedure and the effector patterns for a limited range of basic emotions, anger, sadness and joy. As a final safeguard, Muir thoroughly debriefed the participants at the end of the project.

8.3 Experimental Design

In psychological terms, the study utilized a 2 x 3 within-subjects design. The two factors were acting exercise (Alba effector patterns vs. Emotion Memory) and intended, or 'target' emotion (anger vs. sadness vs. joy). The participants were divided into two groups of four

[7] Jackson and Muir, 'Individual Differences', p. 5 (appendix 2, p. 367).
[8] The full protocol is included in appendix 3, under its original title, 'The Impact of Actor Training Exercises Designed to Elicit an Emotional Response in Terms of Physiology and Subjective Experience: A Mixed Methods Pilot Study'.

and the order in which the groups undertook the exercises was counterbalanced. The target emotion was also counterbalanced within each acting exercise type. Thus, group 1 undertook Alba (anger, joy, sadness) followed by Emotion Memory (sadness, anger, joy), while group 2 undertook Emotion Memory (anger, joy, sadness) followed by Alba (sadness, anger, joy). Both groups completed their exercise sets with a 'positive' emotion.

8.4 Procedure and Methods

Before any practical engagement, the participants completed Wolf Mehling's Multidimensional Assessment of Interoceptive Awareness (MAIA), a tool with a high level of 'construct validity', i.e. it is an experimentally robust method of self-report.[9] The MAIA consists of thirty-two items in total, assessing eight dimensions of interoceptive awareness: awareness of body sensations (noticing); not distracting oneself from sensations of discomfort (not-distracting); not worrying about sensations of discomfort (not-worrying); ability to control attention to body sensations (attention regulation); awareness of the connection between body sensations and emotional states (emotional awareness); ability to regulate distress by attention to body sensations (self-regulation); listening to the body for insight (body listening); and trusting one's body as safe (trusting). When completing the form, participants indicate how frequently each statement applies to them generally in daily life from 0 (never) to 5 (always). High scores on the MAIA indicate high levels of interoceptive awareness.

[9] Wolf Mehling and others, 'The Multidimensional Assessment of Interoceptive Awareness (MAIA)', *Plos One*, 7.11 (2012), pp. 1-22, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0048230, pp. 17, 19 and passim.

Before engaging with the exercises, each group of participants took part in a short, playful, game to facilitate relaxation and minimise inhibitions. The participants then engaged with the acting exercises to elicit the target emotions in the prescribed order, for a maximum of 10 minutes per emotion (8.3). When briefing the actors, I avoided basic emotion language, in order to encourage a fresh investigation, rather than the presentation of a predetermined stereotype. So, in the case of the Alba effector patterns, the actors were coached to adopt the relevant breathing, facial expressions and postures, without any mention of emotion labels. Similarly, during the LSM-based exercises, participants were invited to recall the sensory information and physical experience of an emotogenic episode, without reference to the name of the associated emotion. I specified each emotion in terms of embedded cognition (1.5): a situation when you had a confrontation with someone and you felt like lashing out, as if you could annihilate the other person (anger); a situation when you realised you had lost something that you valued very much (sadness); a situation when you were enjoying yourself a lot. Perhaps a friend said something that made you laugh so much it was almost painful (joy).

After each exercise, participants executed the step-out procedure and fed back on their experience in two ways, verbal report (recorded on video) and completion of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to measure the intensity of their emotional arousal, using a single-item Likert scale, from 1 (not at all intense) to 7 (very intense). Execution of the exercises, therefore, was framed by data gathering through qualitative and quantitative self-report.

8.5 Results

The PE generated some intriguing results, both in terms of Muir's data analysis and the actors' qualitative feedback.[10] For the purposes of this thesis, the statistical results are adapted for a non-specialist audience. I include Muir's conclusions and one table, which summarises the mean intensity of self-rated subjective emotional feelings, as a function of target emotion and acting exercise (standard deviations are presented in brackets):

Target Emotion	Alba	Emotion Memory
Anger	5.25 (2.25)	5.75 (1.38)
Sadness	3.75 (2.49)	5.12 (2.03)
Joy	5.50 (1.07)	6.12 (1.12)

5. Actors' self-assessment of emotional intensity

The table shows that Emotion Memory prompted slightly higher intensities across all three target emotions (anger, sadness, joy), in comparison with the Alba exercises.

Muir's statistical analysis of the MAIA scores suggested some further tentative conclusions about the relationship between IA and specific acting exercises. Higher IA was associated with higher intensity of subjective emotional feelings experienced during Emotion Memory compared to Alba, but lower levels of IA were associated with higher intensity of subjective emotional feelings experienced during Alba compared to Emotion Memory. Furthermore, the same moderating effect of interoceptive awareness on subjective emotional response

[10] Jackson and Muir, 'Individual Differences', pp. 10-12 (appendix 2, pp. 369-71).

applied across all three target emotions.

The participants qualitative data, effectively an extension of the feedback typical of the actor training studio, provides a rich commentary on a wide range of issues. Two students reported a degree of reluctance to engage with 'negative' emotions and conversely, a readiness to engage with the positive emotion of joy. This was balanced by what, in my experience, is a commonplace desire among student actors, to explore challenging areas and to develop the ability to ignite an emotional response at will. Several participants expressed satisfaction that they had 'got a result', in the sense that they had successfully initiated an authentic-feeling experience of the target emotion.

The actors' reports included examples of, in Bloch's terms, both 'emotional hangover' and effective step-out, particularly in relation to the emotional memory of an experience of loss. One student was partially successful in recalling her chosen event, but reported a much more intense subjective response during a de-brief immediately afterwards. Paradoxically, perhaps, it appears the inability to fully re-experience the emotion in the first instance made it more likely that 'emotional hangover' would occur. Another student made a full connection with a past event and expressed her response physiologically, crying copious tears. However, she reported that she was entirely free of hangover after the step-out. A third student had mixed experiences with emotional memory exercises, in terms of his mental wellbeing. To explore anger, he felt he had made a mistake by working with an episode related to a highly problematic relationship. He struggled to recover from a very intense physiological response. Reflecting after the exercise, he did draw something positive

from the episode, remarking 'it worked, though'. By contrast, his investigation of sadness was a more judicious choice, the loss of a relative that he cared about, but to whom he was not especially close. This enabled him to manage his feelings much more effectively.

One student with a dance background expressed a strong preference for the Alba approach, because she does not welcome intimate investigations of emotion, but felt that her body recognised the physical patterns of the target emotions. Participants reported examples of both the robotic phase of learning and the phenomenon of induction, widely discussed in the Alba literature (7.3, 7.4). Those who experienced a 'mechanical' execution of patterns, noted it was often accompanied by feeling foolish and self-conscious. They reported an uncomfortable awareness of producing cartoon-like acting. In one case, the 'robotic' execution was contrasted with a positive experience of emotion memory (anger), which generated a powerful urge to speak and take action.

While some participants did not progress beyond the stage of purely physical execution, others experienced induction. However, once the subjective feeling of emotion had been elicited, they found it difficult to maintain the technical instructions for the relevant pattern. Some actors noticed that one component of their normal expression of an emotion was at odds with the physicality defined by Alba theory. For example, one reported his features did not conform to the facial configuration for sadness, once induction had taken place. From a pedagogical perspective, this is not necessarily a problem. As Rix observes, in the 'integration' phase of the training, expression is personalised within the broad framework of

the pattern.[11] The teacher needs the skill and experience to differentiate between an 'entanglement' and a desirable individualisation, which renders the pattern more natural in appearance. Another actor noted the respective advantages of the two methods, the speed of Alba and the depth of LSM. He concluded they would make a very effective combination used in tandem.

Three of the actors pondered how the techniques they had explored might be integrated with previous training and text-based work in the professional sphere. They wondered how the techniques might be used in the context of given circumstances and the parameters of a character predetermined by a script. One participant felt that Alba had a slight advantage over LSM, because emotion memories are not necessarily specific and appropriate to the character's given circumstances. He offered the example of an emotion memory of a maternal relationship, inappropriately evoked to activate a fictional relationship with a wife or partner. As Uta Hagen observed, any use of personal experience is not complete until it has been 'transferred' to the material of the play (4.5).

The same actor who struggled to recover from an emotional memory of anger considered the question of the impact on the audience. In his experience, spectators could detect if the actor was not 'fully in it', but emphasised that worrying about audience response was not always helpful. He suggested that part of the actor's responsibility was to find stimuli that 'warmed them up'. It is a sentiment that echoes Stella Adler's advice, to choose actions and

[11] Roxane Rix, 'Alba Emoting: A Revolution in Emotion for the Actor', in *Performer Training: Developments Across Cultures*, ed. by Ian Watson (Harwood Academic Publishers, 2001), pp. 205–19 (p. 212).

justifications that warm and enliven the actor, rather than leaving them 'cold and remote' (4.6). This qualitative evidence offers some support for the notion that while impact on the public is ultimately the most important factor in professional acting, it is not achieved by a 'robotic' physical expression of emotion. A degree of subjective feeling within the actor is necessary, because it is detectable to the audience and it animates speech and action.

8.6 Discussion

Both methods of actor training generated the subjective experience of the intended emotion, although the emotion memory exercises had a more potent effect. I would note that results may have been different if the participants had been more experienced in the use of Alba. Interestingly, our data is consistent with studies that find a connection between levels of IA and intensity of emotional reaction, but in the PE, the link was differentiated according to each training strategy.[12] Participants who scored highly on the MAIA scale were more responsive to the emotion memory exercises while lower levels of IA were associated with a stronger response to Alba. We deduce that levels of IA may be an accurate predictor of which mode of training might suit which student. It reinforces the idea that successful acting teachers need a variety of tools at their disposal, to meet the needs of every student.

The evidence for a link between IA and acted emotion suggests two potentially fruitful areas for a larger-scale study. Firstly, IA assessment might constitute a useful element of the audition process. In the current higher education climate, many institutions explicitly

[12] Wiens, 'Heartbeat Detection'; Critchley 'Interoceptive Awareness'; Bechara 'Gateway to Feeling'.

commit to the values of equality, diversity and inclusion.[13] This is an important issue for admissions officers, especially in the ultra-competitive process of drama school auditions. Arguably, these values could be supported by the use of the MAIA, if interoceptive ability can be viewed as a stable trait independent of geography, race or social class. However, if IA measures were used to screen drama school candidates, it might not benefit all applicants, particularly those who are neurodivergent.

In her paper of 2009, Goldstein argues that 'without the ability to understand deeply what a character is thinking and feeling, to feel the emotions of that character, and to create and regulate emotions in oneself, one will never be considered a great actor'.[14] Some of the literature suggests that, if Goldstein is correct, autistic people, for example, are disqualified from becoming great actors. Clearly, that is a conclusion that flatly contradicts the drive toward inclusive education. Apparent shortcomings in theory of mind, empathy and emotional regulation have all been discussed in relation to autism spectrum disorders (ASD). For example, a team of psychologists and neuroscientists, led by Punit Shah, consider the evidence for elevated levels of alexithymia in the autistic population. In other words, they argue many autistic people have an impaired ability to identify emotions from internal bodily sensations. Shah and others also refer to the 'socio-emotional impairments thought to be

[13] For a representative sample, see 'UEL Equality Diversity & Inclusion Policy', University of East London, 29 July 2022, pp. 3-4 <https://uel.ac.uk/sites/default/files/edi-final-policy-v1-0.pdf> [accessed 29 October 2024]; 'Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy Statement', University of Bristol, n.d. <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/inclusion/governance-policy-and-guidance/edi-policy-statement/> [accessed 29 October 2024]; 'Equality and Diversity Policy', RADA, n.d. https://www.rada.ac.uk/about-us/equality-and-diversity-policy/ [accessed 29 October 2024].

[14] Goldstein, 'Psychological Perspectives', p. 6.

symptomatic of ASD'.[15] Similarly, social psychologist Damian Milton discusses a widely held view of autism, that it can be defined as a 'deficit in "theory of mind"'.[16] However, it is a highly complex area and the lessons for the actor trainer are by no means clear.

In a meta-study that analyses research exploring the connections between interoception and autism, Zachary Williams and others review a broad range of conflicting data. They conclude that although autistic people are poor heartbeat detectors, compared to non-autistic people, by other measures of IA there is little or no difference.[17] Milton also challenges deficit models of autism, reframing the issue as the 'double empathy problem'. He argues that it is not just autistic people who struggle to read the emotions of non-autistic people, but that the converse is also true. There is an empathy deficit on both sides, so comprehending each other's experience is difficult.[18] In short, there are numerous ways to assess IA and the relationship between autism and IA is an evolving area of study. So, to use IA assessment as a tool for actor training selection is far from straightforward. However, with further research it may prove to be a useful factor in the selection of actors for high-level training. IA also seems likely to provide a useful guide to the efficacy of specific actor training strategies for the individual.

[15] Punit Shah and others, 'Alexithymia, not Autism, Is Associated with Impaired Interoception', *Cortex*, 81 (2016), pp. 215-20 (p. 215).
[16] Damian E.M. Milton, 'On the Ontological Status of Autism: The 'Double Empathy Problem', *Disability & Society*, 27.6 (2012), pp. 883-87 (p. 883), doi:10.1080/09687599.2012.710008, hereafter 'Ontological Status'.
[17] Zachary J. Williams and others, 'Characterizing Interoceptive Differences in Autism: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Case–control Studies', *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 53 (2023), pp. 947–62, doi:10.1007/s10803-022-05656-2.
[18] Milton, 'Ontological Status'.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

9.1 Summary Discussion

This thesis proposes a new theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between life and acted emotion in the context of the UK conservatoire. It does not present an entirely new pedagogy for acted emotion. Rather, it repositions selected training practice in the light of the interdisciplinary framework, to ensure its continuing validity in the twenty-first century.

Part One developed the three interlocking elements of the framework, a working definition of life emotion, a new conception of acted emotion which I have called Scenic Emotion and a commitment to the notion of pedagogical *Science*, the pursuit of underlying principles of acting which enable it to be both understood and taught.

My definition of life emotion integrates two historically opposed perspectives, Basic Emotion and Appraisal theories (2.10). Basic Emotion theorists, or to use Barrett's term, 'classicists', view emotions as innate resource-states, conditioned by evolution to facilitate rapid response to prototypical challenges, such as threat, loss or mating opportunities. When an individual perceives such a challenge, a cascade of reactions is automatically triggered, including changes to musculature, hormone release, heart rate and respiration. These changes prepare the body for an adaptive response and often involve extreme expenditure of energy. Running away or fighting are obvious examples.

Barrett points out that there is considerable doubt about the existence of such a thing as a characteristic physiological 'fingerprint' for specific emotions (2.8). Nevertheless, some basic emotions are strongly associated with specific neural architecture. The amygdala, for example, is heavily implicated in the fear response (2.3). But evidence for brain plasticity supports Appraisal Theory or 'constructionist' views of emotion. Different cultures develop their own emotion concepts and language. Individuals growing up in those cultures absorb the vocabulary of their own society, but develop an infinite variety of understanding of emotion concepts and their expression, because of both neurodiversity and their own life experiences. Emotions, it seems, are a fusion of nature and nurture (2.10).

The idea that life emotions are resource states of enormous survival value has implications for the acting teacher. Triggering an emotional response that is 'real', in the sense that it is accompanied by physiological response, is 'upsetting', because it disturbs the routine functioning of the body. Emotional responses are essentially emergency responses. It is also true that there is a pathology of the emotions, particularly when they are experienced over an extended period. For example, when sadness develops into depression, or fear is triggered inappropriately, as in the case of phobias, it is clearly damaging. However, under normal circumstances, emotions are not hazardous and they are, by definition, short-lived.[19] The body has a built-in system to restore emotional and physical equilibrium, the parasympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system (ANS). This branch of the ANS is responsible for homeostasis, a term coined by Walter Cannon to describe the process by

[19] Paul Ekman, 'Moods, Emotions and Traits', in *The Nature of Emotion: Fundamental Questions*, ed. by Paul Ekman and Richard J. Davidson (Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 56-58.

which the body recovers a state of internal calm after extreme exertion or an emotional episode (1.7). This suggests that, pathological responses apart, emotions are not dangerous. Actors and their teachers should not be afraid of evoking them, but need some means to support the homeostatic process. The challenge for the pedagogue, who does not have a specialist knowledge of emotional disorders, is to distinguish between emotional episodes that will pass and an unhealthy response that does not fade at the end of the class.

The idea of Scenic Emotion is a new concept of acted emotion that supersedes the 'Emotionalist' and 'Anti-Emotionalist' binaries identified by Archer (3.4). It synthesises previous thinking in the arts and sciences, particularly Vakhtangov's idea of Affective Emotion and Damasio's 'as-if' body loop. Vakhtangov theorises a form of emotion unique to the stage that is rooted in emotional memory. Although its origin is in real events, it is transformed into a product of the theatrical imagination. It belongs exclusively to the aesthetic realm and is characterised by a sense of joy in performance. 'Affective Emotion' is relatively inexpensive in terms of energy and can be easily dismissed when the actor leaves the stage (3.5). Damasio's 'as-if' body loop is a strategy used by the brain to guide decision making without the huge expenditure of energy that accompanies an intense emotional reaction. It depends on the brain's ability to simulate the peripheral feedback that accompanies a visceral response to a challenging situation, without that response taking place in full. The brain reacts 'as-if' in the throes of a full-scale emotional response (2.7).

Scenic Emotion is defined in terms of the two concepts developed by Vakhtangov and Damasio. When the 'as-if' loop is activated by an act of the imagination, it simulates a full

emotional response, supporting the actor's conviction in their own performance and helping convince the audience that what they are watching is genuine. Partial activation of the emotional systems in the body conserves the actor's energy and enables them to play any emotion on the spectrum with a sense of joy. It is, I suggested, the mechanism that underpins the actor's 'emotional agility' and their ability to enjoy playing Lear's grief (1.1). I proposed Scenic Emotion as a useful model for the conservatoire, on the grounds that it is theoretically more satisfactory than the extremes of the 'Emotionalist' and 'Anti-Emotionalist' positions. It is safer and more energy-efficient than attempts to evoke life emotion. Finally, it is not as cold and empty as the form of acted emotion that Stanislavsky referred to as 'representation', the technical reproduction of the visible signs of emotion (3.7).

The argument explored two philosophies of pedagogy which I called *Science* and *Mystery*, making a case for a *Scientific* approach. *Mysterians* take the view that there are certain intangible elements of acting, such as instinct, charisma and acted emotion itself, which cannot be fully understood, discussed or taught. Moreover, they suggest, it is actively damaging to the creative process, if actors, directors or teachers attempt to articulate processes that are best left to the unconscious. *Scientists*, on the other hand, take the view that elements of acting, that might previously have been consigned to the realm of mystery, can and should be investigated in the light of new discoveries in science or the arts, so that they can be better understood and taught (4.2).

Part Two of the thesis applied the critical framework to a selection of training approaches, all of which attach a particular importance to the emotional component of acting: the Stanislavsky System (KSS), Lee Strasberg's Method (LSM) and Susana Bloch's Alba Method (Alba). In each case, the argument considered how the conceptual framework could be used to challenge or validate the practice. This process incorporated a review of the science that influenced the foundational principles of the training. It also included an examination of how developments in science might undermine or support those foundations. The chapters investigated in detail the role that emotion plays within each method and how it relates to Scenic Emotion. Finally, I discussed the degree of influence the approaches have had on the UK conservatoire and how they might be reconditioned, to ensure or enhance their usefulness, in the twenty-first century training environment.

I concurred with the scholarship that asserts there is scant commitment to reflex theory in Stanislavsky's work. There is, however, unmistakable evidence that psychologist Théodule Ribot shaped his view of acted emotion. I argued that Ribot's account of 'abstract' and 'concrete' emotional memory, and his analysis of a fundamental link between action and emotion at a cellular level are particularly influential (5.3). Ribot articulates the connection:

> We descend from the surface to the deeper strata, in order to arrive at the fundamental and irreducible fact at the root of all emotion: attraction or repulsion, desire or aversion, in short, motion, or arrest of motion.[20]

Insofar as Ribot's insights provide a scientific foundation for Stanislavskian actor training, they partly explain the longevity of the KSS, because aspects of Ribot's work are confirmed by more recent research. LeDoux's analysis of conscious and unconscious neurological

[20] Théodule Ribot, *The Psychology of the Emotions* (Walter Scott, 1897), p. 91, hereafter *Emotions.*

routes to the activation of the fear response, resonate with Ribot's accounts of the concrete and abstract levels of emotional memory (2.2, 5.2). Frijda's analysis of the function of emotion, in terms of priming the body for action, confirms Ribot's account of a profound bond between motion and emotion. It is a principle that was thoroughly tested by Stanislavsky's experimental practice. Participants in the Opera Dramatic studio repeatedly insisted on the 'indissoluble link' between mind and body, emotion and action (5.4, 5.6).

Although Stanislavsky stated a wish to be on 'good terms with science', he asserted his right to be guided by feeling, which he regarded as an intuitive and reliable methodology for an artist (5.3.1). Feeling as a form of epistemology and artistic methodology are just two of the multiple functions of emotion in the KSS. In addition, communication of emotion is the purpose of art and emotion plays a significant role in the activation of the performer's creativity (5.3.2, 5.3.3). Arguably, every element of the KSS is a tactic for luring emotion into being (5.3.4). In the KSS, acted emotion is the product of life experience that has undergone an aesthetic transformation, rendering it suitable for artistic purposes (5.3.5). In this sense, it provides the foundation for both Vakhtangov's Affective Emotion and my concept of Scenic Emotion (5.3.6).

I argued that Stanislavsky retained his interest in emotion throughout his career and in its final phase, represented by his activities at the Opera-Dramatic, emotion was thoroughly embedded in the work, without it necessarily being tackled explicitly (5.4). Furthermore, the principal fruit of this period, Active Analysis, is ideal for the contemporary conservatoire. It draws on the individual qualities of the actor and gives them creative agency in rehearsals

(5.5). To conclude the chapter, I offered an account of the ways Anatoly Vassiliev has reconditioned Active Analysis for the twenty-first century, including the concepts of 'Situational Theatre', 'operative facts', the 'exodus event' and a precise theory of action. Central to his rehearsal method is the use of the *étude*, for the specific purpose of practising action derived from the deconstruction of text. The dialogues between Vassiliev and a group of conservatoire teachers are one route by which his contemporary evolution of the KSS might inform the drama school curriculum (5.6).

Two branches of psychology, that dominated mid-twentieth century thinking in America, have been proposed as the major scientific influences on LSM, Freudian analysis and conditioning theory. I proposed that neither of what I called the 'twin pillars' can provide robust support for the continued use of LSM practice. Firstly, I argued that attempts to reconcile LSM with either form of psychology are incoherent. Although some exercises, particularly the emotional memory exercise, resemble psychoanalysis in some respects, their purpose and practical application are radically different. One aims to develop acting skills in a public arena while the other has a purely therapeutic intention and is carried out in private. Conditioned learning is common to both Pavlov's reflex theory and behaviourism. However, both exclude any notion of mind or inner life and are therefore irreconcilable with LSM's use of imagination, internal monologue and emotion memory. Secondly, the 'twin pillars' have very limited traction in contemporary science. Psychoanalysis, despite its enormous cultural influence, has never been accepted by mainstream psychology (2.4) and, as LeDoux and Barret point out, behaviourism gave way to cognitive science in the mid-twentieth century (6.3). I therefore suggested that the most secure scientific foundation for

LSM is the same as that which supports the longevity of the Stanislavsky System, some of the enduring ideas of Ribot (6.3). His case studies of emotion memory read like a description of an LSM acting exercise (6.2).

Close colleagues of Strasberg from the days of the Group Theatre attest to his almost fanatical pursuit of what he regarded as 'true' emotion and to the emotional damage done to some actors by his demanding approach and abrasive personality (6.6). His demand for a genuine emotional response suggests that he had little interest in a modified version of the emotional experience such as Scenic Emotion. However, he also insisted, in an echo of Vakhtangov's account of Affective Emotion, that all his work was rooted in emotional memory, rather than present experience. Accounts of the Actor's Studio, and of the curricula of the schools eventually founded in his name, suggest The Exercise ceased to be the blunt instrument of Strasberg's early days. It was used sparingly, to solve specific acting problems for more experienced students. Some actors did not require it at all (6.2, 6.4). Sense and emotion memory exercises might still form part of a conservatoire actor training, because they are a strategy for stimulating a physiological response to imaginary circumstances. However, the work would need to be constrained according to a strict protocol, including, for example, consideration of the needs and experience of the group, avoidance of obviously traumatic past events and methods of de-briefing students.

Susana Bloch's background as a psychologist and neurologist places her in a club of which she is the only member. She is both a trained scientist and a pedagogical *Scientist*, in the sense used in this thesis. Her actor training method is rooted in her experimental work,

conducted in partnership with Pedro Orthous and Guy Santibañez-H, in the early 1970s. Although the scientific foundation of Alba is unusually clear, its authority is subject to the same principles of 'falsifiability' discussed by McConachie (1.3). There is no definitive list of basic emotions, so there are numerous accounts competing with that of the 'BOS' team (7.2). Furthermore, the Alba approach takes little account of appraisal and constructivist theories, which are incorporated in my working definition of life emotion (2.10).

Bloch explicitly aligns Alba with Diderot's position and can therefore be seen as what Archer calls an 'anti-emotionalist' (3.4, 7.3). However, Alba practice confirms a hypothesis, proposed by both William James and Ribot, that voluntary adoption of the 'special organic and motor manifestations' of an emotion might induce its subjective quality.[21] Personal accounts of the execution of the effector patterns provide abundant examples of the experience of 'induction', the arousal of the subjective 'flavour' of an emotion free of any emotional memory (7.3, 7.5). Bloch recommends avoiding induction in performance, but I argued the subjective experience of emotion helps the actor build conviction in their role and is usually harmless. Moreover, I suggested that induction is a manifestation of Scenic Emotion, because it is free of real-world associations and the actor enjoys the sensation of controlling their emotions through subtle adjustments of the effector patterns (7.3).

Alba has made few inroads into the UK conservatoire and I accounted for this in terms of the lack of qualified teachers and what Bloch calls the 'robotic' phase of learning. This phase

[21] Ribot, *Emotions*, p. 96. See also William James, 'What is an Emotion?', *Mind*, 9.34 (1884), pp. 188-205 (pp. 192-97).

risks alienating students because of the use of prototypical expressions, which can generate widely reported feelings of self-consciousness while patterns are acquired (7.4). However, I also argued that it is an approach that some students definitely prefer to the use of emotional memory. It is one that gives a high priority to student wellbeing (7.5). For these reasons, Alba is well suited to the current higher education climate. The KSS and LSM incorporate emotion as a central element of a comprehensive actor training, including technical work in a wide variety of skills. Alba, on the other hand, focusses exclusively on acted emotion and is an approach that might form the basis of what might be called an 'emotion class', comparable to a voice or movement class (7.5).

The principal element of Part Three of the thesis is an account of a practice-based enquiry, conducted jointly by myself and psychologist Kate Muir. Muir and I set out to compare the impact of the Alba effector patterns with emotional memory exercises, to investigate the role of interoception in actor training and to define a 'third space', which synthesised the research techniques of the social sciences and the acting studio. We offered preliminary support for the contention that levels of interoceptive awareness (IA) mediated response to the two types of exercise. We concluded that, insofar as IA is a predictor of what conservatoire teachers call 'emotional availability', it had potential as an audition tool that supported the EDI agenda. However, such a proposal is problematic in the case of neurodiverse candidates, because of the complex relationship between IA and conditions such as autism. It is an evolving area that requires considerable further research. A more immediately promising application of measures of IA, from the perspective of the theatre pedagogue, is its capacity for predicting which acting technique might suit which student.

9.2 The Conceptual Framework

One aim of the thesis was to develop a critical tool that could be used to evaluate approaches to the emotional component of actor training. The premise that guided the project was that the core topic, the pedagogy of acted emotion, occupied a space at the intersection of life emotion, Scenic Emotion and a *Scientific* philosophy of teaching. In practice, it has proved difficult to integrate the three elements of the framework. However, study of each individual element has generated useful insights. For example, the definition of life emotion has a number of implications for actors. It reveals emotion as a complex physiological process with a phenomenological dimension, which is an example of enactive, situated cognition. In other words, it has a purpose within the human environment. In a functional account of emotion, its subjective dimension is, arguably, the least important of its features. This suggests that actors need not feel inadequate if their emotions fail to ignite on stage. Taking an action that relates to an imagined emotion is what counts, not least because it is visible to the audience. Moreover, theories of constructed emotion reassure the actor that they need not be the victims of their emotions. Rather, they are the authors of their own experience, even if this is not necessarily a conscious process. The ecological dimension of emotion, shaped by infinitely varied cultures and eras, provide rich pickings for the theatre artist. Exploring how different settings and display rules shape emotional expression has clear potential for supporting transformative acting.

My model of Scenic Emotion scaffolds a particular view of acted emotion onto a base of neurological theory, the 'as-if' body loop. The model underpins an approach that has both

historical roots and a contemporary resonance. It views acted emotion as the result of the artistic processing of life experience. Comparable ideas can be found in, for example, Diderot's *modèle idéal*, Archer's 'mimic' and Frijda's 'virtual' emotion (3.3, 3.4, 2.6). Scenic Emotion has the subjective flavour of life emotion, and so supports the conviction of the actor. It is always enjoyable to play, even in the case of so-called 'negative' emotions, and it is less exhausting than life emotion. The actor can rapidly switch from one Scenic Emotion to another. Scenic Emotion provides a challenge for the actor, but its distinction from life emotion helps preserve mental and physical health.

The notion of *Mystery* and *Science* has proved less productive than the other binaries discussed. These epistemological opposites provide a lens through which it is possible to examine some intriguing aspects of conservatoire thinking. But, when the selected approaches were viewed through this particular critical lens, it generated limited insights, perhaps because all the practitioners discussed could be seen as pedagogical *Scientists*. The binary, therefore, offered a minimal challenge to existing practice. However, discussion of these two positions did highlight some of what I have called the 'intangibles' of acting. I have focussed on acted emotion. There are many others that remain to be explored further, such as charisma, charm and presence.

9.3 Current and Future Research

The ideas explored in this thesis contribute to a number of current discourses in acting, such as contemporary Stanislavsky studies and the protection of students in higher education. In their interdisciplinary investigations of Active Analysis, both Richard Kemp and Rhonda Blair

have developed comparable arguments, that the conclusions reached by intuition and experimentation in the studio can be validated by cognitive neuroscience. Kemp outlines the scope of this comparatively new discipline. It 'studies the structure and functions of the nervous system, focusing on the brain and its relationship to behaviour and cognitive functions. These include thinking, perceiving, imagining, remembering, speaking, planning, and doing'.[22] Kemp's article draws on the work of neuroscientist Vittorio Gallese and cognitive linguist David McNeill, among others.

Blair continues to draw on the '4Es' to illuminate performance studies, in her exploration of the links connecting Stanislavsky's final phase of work with embodied, embedded, extended and enacted cognition (1.5).[23] This study complements the work of Kemp and Blair. It re-examines both familiar and unfamiliar actor-training practice, from the perspective of cognitive science, which, in its broadest construal, incorporates emotion in addition to functions such as reasoning, memory and language. The emphasis on emotion prompted a different range of reference, despite some crossover. Blair, for example, also discusses Damasio.[24] This thesis drew, in addition, on a contrasting body of work that addresses the psychology and biology of emotions, particularly that of LeDoux, Frijda and Barrett (2.3, 2.6, 2.8).

[22] Richard J. Kemp, 'The Secret of Action: A Cognitive Exploration of Eyewitness Accounts of Stanislavsky's Active Analysis', *Stanislavski Studies*, 11.2 (2023), pp. 189-201 (p. 189), doi.org/10.1080/20567790.2023.2255603.
[23] Rhonda Blair, 'Linguistic Bodies: Cognitive Science and Stanislavsky's Last Words', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 15.1 (2024), pp. 114-127 (p. 121), doi:10.1080/19443927.2024.2295737.
[24] Ibid, pp. 120-21.

Andrea Moor and Evi Stamatiou respond to an on-going debate about how actor training in higher education needs to be reshaped, to create safe and inclusive spaces for students. Moor considers the educational environment in the conservatoires of Australia and the UK, placing consent at the heart of the curriculum. Her discussion encompasses intimacy training and student autonomy. She also considers the perspective of indigenous Australians and 'de-roling', i.e., using formal methods to mark the transition from character to self.[25] Stamatiou uses Bourdieu's theory of social power, in order to develop a framework for actor training that enables actors to 'mobilise the positive representation of communities with multiple and intersecting marginalised identities'.[26] Her discussion encompasses the redistribution of power in training institutions and the use of Bourdieu to critique actor-training lineages.[27] This thesis explores additional means of protecting and empowering students, particularly through the discussion of the Alba step-out procedure and the 'actor-author' element of Active Analysis (7.3, 5.5). Furthermore, the argument presented here fills a gap in the literature by tackling what is, arguably, the highest-risk element in actor training, its emotional component. It acknowledges that embodiment of lifelike emotion is likely to remain a requirement for the professional actor for the foreseeable future. Therefore, the training must include either completely new techniques or existing methods reconditioned.

[25] Andrea L. Moor, 'Consent-Based Actor Training as the Only Way Forward', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 14.2 (2023), pp. 86-102, doi:10.1080/19443927.2023.2191986.
[26] Evi Stamatiou, 'Pierre Bourdieu and Actor Training: Towards Decolonising and Decentering Actor Training Pedagogies', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 13.1 (2022), pp. 96-114 (p. 96), doi:10.1080/19443927.2021.1943509, hereafter 'Bourdieu and Actor Training'.
[27] Ibid., p. 97.

The discoveries made during this project suggest some future directions for research that might further illuminate the topic of acted emotion. These include new models of training pedagogy and additional interdisciplinary studies. Muir and I proposed that the link between interoceptive awareness (IA) and emotional responsiveness might have fruitful implications (8.6). Firstly, an assessment of IA at audition stage could furnish drama schools with an effective tool for identifying candidates who are likely to have the trait of emotional availability. Secondly, the assessment could provide a reliable guide to the mode of training likely to best suit the student, either a somatic approach or an appeal to sense and emotion memory. Further studies might test the feasibility of using IA tools at audition and pilot their use in the sector.

Attempts to determine exactly what is going on when an actor embodies emotion on stage continue to be hampered by methodological difficulties, particularly the vagaries of self-report (2.3). Konijn argues that actors who believes they experience the same emotion as the character are mistaken. They confuse the character's passion with the emotional and physical arousal of performing in public (3.6). Her position is consistent with the conclusion of Schachter and Singer's seminal study, which demonstrated that the interpretation of one's own bodily state can be manipulated by situational cues and the administration of hormones (2.3). Their conclusions suggest we are poor judges of our own emotions. It is therefore tempting for researchers to make use of the physiological indicators of emotional response that are independent of conscious control.[28] Arguably, the body cannot lie.

[28] Konijn mentions two examples where this has been attempted. Villiers measured pulse rate and blood pressure in actors (1942). Similarly, Konijn and Weisweiler measured physiological activation, such as heart-

Emotion scientists use a range of parameters to measure emotional response, including heart-rate, body temperature, skin conductance and respiration. The technology exists to monitor such indicators in performance. One example is the NeXus Q32, a compact device equipped with sensors for recording a wide range of autonomic responses associated with emotional arousal. NeXus systems have been used in over 1500 scientific experiments, including studies of emotion detection, mental health and cortical activation in table-tennis players.[29] It uses Bluetooth technology to transmit data to a computer for recording and analysis. It is portable and relatively unobtrusive, so could be carried by an actor reasonably comfortably during a performance. With this equipment, researchers could track bodily changes at the emotional high points during a play or film. Barret might point out that such an experiment could not definitively reveal which emotion the actor experienced, because there is no stable link between physiological fingerprints and specific emotions (2.8). However, the NeXus would certainly shed light on what happens to the body in performance.

The thesis explored a number of models of acted emotion, including Vakhtangov's 'Affective Emotion', Konijn's 'task emotions' and my own 'Scenic Emotion' (3.5, 3.6, 3.7). However, current attention is shifting from models of the actor or acted emotion, to new conceptions of the acting pedagogue. Rosemary Malague, for example, does not reject LSM per se, but

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rate in rehearsal and performance. See Elly A. Konijn, *Acting Emotions: Shaping Emotions on Stage* (Amsterdam University Press, 2000), pp. 74-75.

[29] 'NeXus Q32', MINDMEDIA, n.d. https://www.mindmedia.com/en/products/nexus-q32 [accessed 5 December 2024].

challenges the attitude of the authoritarian, sexist teacher (6.6). Stamatiou calls for a renewed approach influenced by Brecht's idea of the *gestical* actor. Its purpose is to raise the teacher's awareness of unconscious bias in themselves and trainees.[30] New models of the actor trainer might be usefully developed in contrast to some of the historical figures discussed in this thesis, including Stanislavsky, Strasberg and Doreen Cannon.

An ambiguous image emerges from the Stanislavsky literature. His alter-ego in the published works, Tortsov, is avuncular, direct, but encouraging to the students. He is usually patient, but does not hesitate to assert his authority. On several occasions, he puts the argumentative Grisha in his place.[31] The participants in the Opera-Dramatic Studio tell a somewhat different story. Although the real Stanislavsky is also revered by colleagues and students, his feedback is blunt to the point of comedy. Vasily Toporkov recalls a revival of *The Embezzlers*. Having played the role of Vanechka many times, he was confident he would impress. He ran on stage and Stanislavsky instantly stopped the rehearsal, crying 'awful! What are you doing? Who told you to do that?' They spent four hours rehearsing the same scene.[32] Another actor, appearing in *Dead Souls*, received similar treatment: 'awful! […] You have just ruined everything we've been doing. I didn't understand a word of what you said'.[33] Even experienced actors were not exempt from severe criticism in the pursuit of excellence.

[30] Stamatiou, 'Bourdieu and Actor Training', pp. 105-09.
[31] See, for example, Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work* (Routledge, 2008), pp. 27-31, 201-03.
[32] Vasili Toporkov, *Stanislavski in Rehearsal,* trans. by Jean Benedetti (Methuen, 2001), p. 36.
[33] Ibid., p. 98.

Knebel describes a strange blend of joy and rigour in her work with Stanislavsky. She remarks that 'an atmosphere of a festive celebration prevailed in his classroom'.[34] However, students were often shaken by his repeated cries of 'I don't believe you', an expression which 'has become proverbial in the Russian theatre'.[35] It is one that has also reverberated throughout the studios of UK drama schools. However, Knebel insists that the overall effect galvanized the students: 'the fact that his demanding sternness could quickly give way to an almost childlike joy at the student's slightest success, filled them with an inspiring sense of freedom and self-belief'.[36] Knebel describes a pedagogy characterised by high standards and tough love. An abrasive exterior conceals a profound affection and concern for the students a model that might be called the 'veteran schoolteacher'.

In the Actor's Studio transcripts, Strasberg uses medical metaphors to describe his work. He is challenged by a playwright, who has witnessed an exercise and found the discussion of the actor's personal difficulties embarrassing and unproductive (6.5). Strasberg responds by comparing his procedures to those of a doctor, doing what is necessary.[37] His medical metaphor implies the job of the actor trainer is to diagnose the 'disease' and apply the 'cure', however painful and uncomfortable that may be. The difficulty with this comparison is that while a minimum level of expertise and knowledge is guaranteed by obligatory medical training for a doctor, no such barriers exist for aspiring actor trainers. The theatre

[34] Maria Knebel, *Active Analysis*, ed. by Anatoly Vassiliev, trans. by Irina Brown (Routledge, 2021), p. 134, hereafter *Active Analysis.*
[35] Vassiliev in Knebel, *Active Analysis*, p. 134.
[36] Knebel, *Active Analysis*, p. 134.
[37] *Strasberg at the Actors Studio: Tape-Recorded Sessions*, ed. by Robert H. Hethmon (Theatre Communications Group, 1991), p. 47. Hethmon echoes the language of medical procedures and diagnosis in his contextual remarks, see pp. 42 & 170.

pedagogue might be highly knowledgeable and capable of acute observation, but their authority is of a different order to that of a doctor, whose diagnosis if founded on a profound knowledge of human anatomy.

In one example from the UK conservatoire, pedagogical practice echoes that of Stanislavsky. At the Drama Centre, with Doreen Cannon as the Head of Acting, students dreaded their teacher's cries of 'I don't believe it'. John Beschizza, who trained under Cannon, describes her style as demanding and laconic, but despite 'taking no prisoners', she was also very kind.[38] Cannon was seen as something of a guru figure, rather than the 'veteran schoolteacher' (4.5). The guru is entitled to be the arbiter of good acting and to make pronouncements without challenge.

A question for future researchers is, what model is demanded by tomorrow's conservatoire? If the 'schoolteacher', 'doctor' or 'guru' is no longer acceptable, in a climate that is eroding hierarchy and demanding better care for students, what will replace them? The pedagogical approach of the 'facilitator' or 'enabler' might be the answer, but it remains to be seen whether such approaches will adequately prepare young actors for the rigours of what remains a notoriously tough profession.

[38] Robert Price, 'John Beschizza and Annie Tyson discuss Doreen Cannon: the History of Actor Training in the British Drama School', Apple Podcasts, 18 August 2021 <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/john-beschizza-and-annie-tyson-discuss-doreen-cannon/id1535319541?i=1000532390121> [accessed 5 December 2024].

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Appendix 1: Laura Bond's Analysis of the Effector Patterns

Mode of Breathing	Identifier/ basic emotion	Breath	Postural Attitude	Facial Expression
0 Nose and Mouth	**0** Neutral, balanced	Deep breathing in through the nose and out through a slightly opened mouth. Inhale and exhale are equal in duration.	Standing with weight evenly balanced on both feet, maximum relaxation in the muscles while maintaining an upright stance.	Mouth slightly open, relaxed jaw, lips horizontal across the face. Eyes are soft, yet focussed on a distant point on the horizon.
1 Nose	**1a** Tender love	Inhale and exhale through the nose, in a soft, even and relaxed manner. Deep breathing engaging the abdominal muscles, exhale slightly longer than inhale.	Posture is relaxed, directly facing object of focus, slightly curled towards them/it. Muscle tension is released. Head is slightly tilted to one side; chin is slightly tucked in.	Corners of the mouth pull up slightly into a small smile. The muscles along the temples and below the eyes pull gently towards the ears, so the eye-mask area widens.
	1b Anger	Tense and controlled inhale and exhale through the nasal passages, with slight hold at the end of each inhalation/ exhalation. Deep breathing engaging the abdominal muscles.	Tense, rigid posture with entire thoracic cage pulled upwards and forwards. Posture directed towards the object/person who is the focus of the attitude.	Tension under the eyes pressing towards the bridge of the nose pulls the lower eye-lid upwards, narrowing vision toward the object. Lower eye mask area pressing inwards constricts the nose.
2 Mouth	**2a** Sexual Love	Inhale and exhale are relaxed and easy with no holds in between. Duration and evenness of cycle varies according to intensity. Deep breathing from the abdominals is mirrored by undulating movement from pelvis to neck, up and down the spine.	Relaxed and open posture, with head titled back, exposing neck in 'receptive' mode and with slight forward direction in 'active' mode. Pelvis presses forward, arching the lower back. As intensity increases, the torso undulates with neck and pelvis rocking back and forth.	Eyes almost closed, looking through eyelashes like a veil in receptive mode, slightly more open in active mode. Mouth slightly open with a small smile, muscular tension outwards rather than upwards towards nose. In active mode, tension shifts from upper to lower lip.
	2b Fear	Rapid inhalation using chest breathing only, holding the breath, with tiny, quiet inhalations and exhalations as necessary.	Pressing backwards away from the object/person in focus, with stillness and tension in 'passive' mode and actively retreating in 'active' mode. Chin is tucked in and chest rising	Eyes wide open with a sense of the eye pushing forward, as if to improve peripheral vision, so eyelids are, as it were, pushed out of the way. Eyes dart around quickly, looking for danger,

			sharply to protect the neck.	without moving the head. Mouth drops open in an 'O' shape.
3 Nose and Mouth	**3a** Joy	Abdominal breathing, beginning with a light, relaxed but rapid inhalation through the nose, followed by an extended exhale, interrupted by tiny holds, without further inhalation. Exhale to 'below empty', followed by a few slight 'empty' exhales, looking for more air to exhale.	Posture is open, relaxed and loose, to the point of unpredictability in movement, oscillating around a centre axis point. Movements are 'floppy' and bouncy, including lurching to the side or back. Head and eyes directed towards the object/person in focus.	Corners of the mouth pull open into a big smile with a wide-open mouth. Corners of the eyes, temples and lower-mask area (tops of cheeks and sides of nose) pull outwards, with eyes narrowing and cheeks pulling upwards.
	3b Sadness	Deep breathing, engaging the abdominals. The Cycle begins with a few quick, short sniffs through the nose, followed by a very long exhalation through the mouth, deflating the lungs to 'below empty'. Pause at the end and look for even more air to exhale.	The neck sinks towards the chest, while the back of the pelvis tilts, causing the chest area to sink forwards and downwards, creating a sense of deflation on the exhale. The sternum presses towards the spine, so the shoulders fold inwards. The body is devoid of energy and feels limp and weighty.	The eyes are focussed on the floor, while the eyebrows are knitted, pinching inwards and lifting at the same time. The corners of the mouth pull downwards and the jaw sinks, creating a classical mask of grief.

Appendix 2: 'Individual Differences in Acted Emotions'

Jackson, David, and Kate Muir, 'Individual Differences in Acted Emotions: An Exploratory Study into the Role of Interoceptive Awareness in Feelings Prompted by Emotion Eliciting Acting Techniques', *PsyArXiv Preprints* (2019), doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/shf72

- Differential Emotional Scale
- Multidimensional Self-Report Questionnaire
- Bespoke questionnaire reporting impact of technology
- Qualitative feedback from participants recorded by video documentation

Abstract

A significant part of the creative art of acting consists of arousing emotions appropriate to the character's fictional circumstances and communicating them to an audience. This article describes a novel exploratory study which is a joint investigation of acted emotion from the perspectives of both psychology and acting pedagogy. We compare the impact on subjective emotional experience of two contrasting actor training techniques designed to enable performers to elicit and express emotion in aesthetic contexts: Emotion Memory versus Alba Emoting. We further explore how interoceptive awareness as an individual difference (sensitivity to bodily signals) influences an actor's emotional response to the two techniques. Trainee actors (*N* = 8) attempted to arouse three target emotions (anger, sadness and joy) using each of the two techniques and recorded the level of subjective emotion experienced. Although both techniques were successful in eliciting the target emotion, reported emotional intensity was higher for Emotion Memory exercises. Further, high interoceptive awareness resulted in greater emotional intensity generated by Emotion Memory compared to Alba Emoting exercises, but vice versa for low levels of interoceptive awareness. Our results have implications for acting pedagogy in terms of the relationship between individual differences in interoceptive awareness and the effectiveness of selected acting exercises and have the potential to contribute to both psychological and artistic theories of emotion generation.

Keywords: Emotion, Acting, Interoceptive Awareness, Actor Pedagogy

In virtually every role they undertake, professional actors are required to persuade an audience of the authenticity of the character's experience. Characters in theatre, television and film drama are frequently placed in extreme circumstances which require the actor to produce a convincing portrayal of intense emotion. Actor trainers, therefore, must continually seek innovative strategies for enabling students to meet such challenges.

Acting theory provides a range of theoretical models that underpin approaches to the artistic embodiment of emotion. Konijn (2000), for example, identified three schools of thought: 'involvement', 'detachment' and 'self-expression'. The *involvement* school seeks to create a realistic portrait of emotion by stimulating actual feelings in the actor that are similar to those of the character. In an extension of this idea, Vakhtangov proposed the notion of 'affective emotions', which are "*governed by quite different laws from those that guide our emotions in life itself*" (Vakhtangov, as cited in Benedetti, 2005, p. 133). For example, affective emotion, unlike 'real life' feelings, can be readily dismissed once the actor leaves the stage. In contrast, the *detachment* school rejects the notion of a close identification between actor and character and focusses instead on the external representation of feelings. Finally, *self-expression* proposes the theatrical role as a vehicle for self-revelation of the most intimate yet self-disciplined kind.

The techniques taught to trainee actors are rooted in the philosophy and practice associated with one or other of these models. Actors often select a technique on the basis of a subjective sense of 'what works for them'. However, there are a paucity of empirical data relating to how effectively such techniques stimulate a physiological and subjective response appropriate to the target emotion, nor do we have an explicit rationale for matching the technique employed to an individual performer. There is therefore a gap in the literature for empirical research which identifies a secure theoretical basis for actor training practice.

In this exploratory pilot study, we examine two contrasting techniques with foundations in the involvement and detachment schools of thought, *Emotion Memory* and *Alba Emoting* respectively. *Emotion Memory* is a technique drawn from the Method acting branch of the Stanislavskian tradition, which defines re-experiencing of emotion as a vital

part of the creative process (Stanislavski, 2009; Strasberg, 1988). Practitioners seek to use their personal history as the foundation for a convincing portrait of affective life. Emotion memory exercises require actors to vividly recall moments of intense experience, which are used by the actor to generate emotions on cue when the portrayal of a particular emotion is required. *Alba Emoting* is a less familiar approach among professional actors that was conceived as an alternative to the Method that avoided perceived ethical concerns about emotion memory exercises (Bloch, 1993). Alba Emoting evokes emotion by using three 'effector patterns' that can be consciously controlled: respiration, facial expression and body posture (Bloch, Orthus, & Santibáñez, 1987). The technique is designed to allow the actor to reproduce the appearance of a target emotion and to reliably 'induce' the relevant subjective sensation without recourse to memories of personal experience.

The exploratory pilot study we describe in this paper provides novel empirical evidence for the relative effectiveness of the two approaches, in terms of their capacity for stimulating subjective emotional experience. Furthermore, we explore *interoceptive awareness* as an individual difference which could influence subjective emotional experience in actors and thus moderate the effectiveness of the two techniques. We therefore also suggest a pedagogical rationale for predicting which approach would be most productive for individual acting students.

Theories of acted emotion

Contemporary psychology offers a wide range of theories of emotion generation that might potentially provide a secure basis for acting practice (see Moors, 2009 for a review). The spectrum of theories includes physiological response based basic emotion models, cognitive appraisal and social constructionist views of emotion (Gross & Barrett, 2011). A full review of psychological emotion theories and what each has to say about acting techniques is beyond the scope of this article, as is an analysis of the relationship between acting and emotion science throughout history. Instead, we illustrate the potential of psychological theories of emotion to contribute to acting theory, by briefly describing three schools of thought in relation to the initiation of subjective emotional feelings in actors.

Emotion can be defined as a collection of components, including subjective feelings, expressive behavior, and peripheral physiological responses (Gross & Barrett, 2011, p. 2). *Embodied emotion* theories (i.e., Damasio, 1994; James, 1884) propose that external stimuli activate somatic/motor responses, which in turn produce the conscious feeling of an emotion; thus, subjective emotional feelings spring from our awareness of physiological reactions. In contrast, *appraisal* theories of emotion generation (i.e., Scherer, 2001) describe the process of the cognitive appraisal of external stimuli, which determine motivations, physiological responses and behaviour, all of which contribute to the subjective feeling of emotion. Finally, *network* theories propose that emotions are recorded in distributed memory nodes. When an emotional episode takes place, information about the stimulus, cognitions, subjective feelings, physiological and behavioural responses are all encoded in connected nodes in memory. For each specific emotion, nodes are organized within schema (Leventhal, 1980) or networks (Bower, 1981). Emotional schema (and the associated behaviours, responses and subjective feelings) can be activated in a variety of ways, such as by external stimuli or physiological responses, and activation can occur consciously or unconsciously.

Emotion theories disagree on many aspects of emotion causation (see Moors, 2009). Pertinently, emotion theories disagree on the order in which components of emotion occur during an emotional episode, leading to varying predictions about both the effectiveness of acting techniques in eliciting emotion, and the mechanisms by which they operate. For instance, James (1884) posits that physiological reactions occur *prior* to subjective emotional feeling. Reproducing the visible physiological aspects of emotion (as in Alba Emoting) is therefore sufficient to generate the related subjective feelings of the emotion in the actor. In contrast, appraisal theories argue physiological responses and subjective emotional feelings occur *after* cognitive processing of the emotion eliciting stimuli. According to this account, simply reproducing the physical appearance of emotion is insufficient to generate a genuine subjective emotional feeling; higher-level cognitive processes are necessary, such as those deployed by emotion memory techniques. Network theories of emotion support the 'effectiveness' of *both* emotion memory and Alba emoting techniques in generating genuine subjective feelings of emotion. Retrieving an emotional

episode from memory activates the associated emotion schema including subjective emotional feelings. However, reproducing physiological responses can also activate emotion schema, similarly leading to subjective emotional feelings.

Clearly, the varying predictions offered by psychological emotion theories about the effectiveness of acting techniques pose a quandary for theatre practitioners seeking an evidence- or theory-based guide for their acting choices. In this paper, we begin to address this issue by directly assessing the subjective emotional feelings in trainee actors prompted by Emotion Memory versus Alba Emoting techniques.

Individual Differences in Emotional Awareness

Individual differences in emotional awareness within actors may influence the appropriateness of a particular technique for emotion elicitation for that actor. Goldstein (2009, p. 6) proposes that among the skills considered to be necessary and important in acting ability are a perceptive theory of mind, empathy and effective emotional regulation. Hence, the ability to understand, experience and express emotions freely are vital parts of the creative work of acting. However, there is a lack of empirical work examining the relationship between individual differences that impact the extent to which actors feel and regulate their own emotions, to the effectiveness of various acting techniques designed to elicit and represent emotional experience.

One individual difference that is proposed to play an important role in the subjective experience of emotions is interoceptive awareness, which refers to sensitivity to internal bodily signals. Common brain regions are activated in the evaluation of emotional and bodily states (Terasawa, Fukushima, & Umeda, 2013). The perception of bodily signals is therefore thought to contribute to subjective emotional experience (Craig, 2003). Studies have indeed demonstrated that higher interoceptive awareness is related to higher experienced intensity of subjective feelings (Wiens, Mezzacappa, & Katkin, 2000). Therefore, individuals with high awareness of their own internal biological processes are likely to be more sensitive to their own emotional landscape, and therefore be more emotionally responsive to external stimuli. Logically then, interoceptive awareness should moderate emotional responses to Emotion

Memory vs. Alba Emoting techniques: higher interoceptive awareness should be related to higher subjective emotional feelings.

The present study

Volunteer trainee actors completed two acting exercises designed to generate emotion: Alba Emoting vs. Emotion Memory. Within each exercise, participants attempted to generate three separate target emotions: anger, sadness, and joy. After each attempt to generate a target emotion, participants rated the intensity of subjective emotional feelings experienced. Participants also completed a measure of interoceptive awareness. We examined the intensity of subjective emotional feelings prompted by the two techniques and the moderating impact of interoceptive awareness.

Method

Participants

Eight participants (five females and three males) took part in the study, aged between 20 to 23 years old (M = 22.32, $S.D.$ = 1.21 yrs.). Participants were all students at the Birmingham School of Acting and had received at least two years full-time training in a range of acting techniques. The study took place in a studio space suitable for practical acting exercises and participants attended in two separate groups of four (group 1: one male and three females, group 2: two males and two females). Participants were treated in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society. The Research Ethics Committees of Birmingham City University and University of the West of England granted ethical approval for the study.

Design

The study utilized a 2 (Acting Exercise: Alba Emoting vs. Emotion Memory) x 3 (Target Emotion: Anger vs. Sadness vs. Joy) within subjects design. The order in which participants undertook the two acting exercises was counterbalanced, and target emotion also counterbalanced within each acting exercise type. Thus, group 1 undertook Alba Emoting (anger, joy, sadness) followed by Emotion Memory (sadness, anger, joy) whilst group 2

undertook Emotion Memory (anger, joy, sadness) followed by Alba Emoting (sadness, anger, joy).

Procedure and Measures

Measure of Interoceptive Awareness

The Multidimensional Assessment of Interoceptive Awareness (MAIA; Mehling et al., 2012) was used as a self-report measure of interoceptive awareness. The MAIA consists of 32 items in total, assessing eight dimensions of interoceptive awareness: awareness of body sensations (*noticing*); not distracting oneself from sensations of discomfort (*not-distracting*); not worrying about sensations of discomfort (*not-worrying*); ability to control attention to body sensations (*attention regulation*); awareness of the connection between body sensations and emotional states (*emotional awareness*); ability to regulate distress by attention to body sensations (*self-regulation*); listening to the body for insight (*body listening*); and trusting one's body as safe (*trusting*). Items consists of statements to which participants indicate how frequently each statement applies to them generally in daily life from 0 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). High scores on the MAIA indicate high levels of interoceptive awareness. The MAIA shows good construct validity (Mehling et al., 2012).

Acting Exercises

Upon arrival, each group of participants took part in a short, playful, physical game to enable them to relax, release inhibitions and prepare for the tasks to follow. Each group then engaged with the acting exercises to elicit the target emotions in the prescribed order (see *Design*) for a period of 10 minutes per target emotion. After the end of each 10 minute period, there was a brief relaxation exercise to allow each participant to return to a neutral emotional state, before completing a rating scale to capture the intensity of subjective emotional feelings felt during the exercise.

For the Emotion Memory exercises, participants were asked to select an experience from memory, according to specific criteria designed to prompt the recall of a memory associated with either anger, sadness, or joy. Participants were asked to recall and seek to re-experience the sensory information and physical experiences from the original emotion-eliciting event. Participants were not told the target emotion specifically, but rather were

guided to recall one of the following experiences from memory: (a) a situation when you had a confrontation with someone and you felt like lashing out – as if you could annihilate the other person (*anger*); (b) a situation when you realised you had lost something that you valued very much (*sadness*); (c) a situation when you were enjoying yourself a lot. Perhaps a friend said something that made you laugh so much it was almost painful (*joy*).

For the Alba Emoting exercises, participants were guided to adopt one of three sequences of specific breathing patterns, facial expressions and posture (Bloch, 1993). Participants were encouraged to execute the exercises with precision and energy, but not to consciously attempt to arouse the relevant feeling state (i.e., they aim for a precise reproduction of selected physical elements of the emotion without focusing on the subjective response). Participants were not informed of the target emotion, but rather were guided to adopt a pattern designed to portray either anger, sadness, or joy.

Subjective Feeling of Emotion

After each ten-minute period eliciting the target emotion participants reported the intensity of subjective emotional feelings experienced, measured using a single item scale from 1 (*not at all intense*) through 7 (*very intense emotions*). At the end of the study all participants were fully debriefed and thanked.

Results

Subjective feelings of emotion

Table 1 presents mean intensities of subjective emotional feelings experienced by participants for each target emotion in each acting exercise. Emotion Memory exercises prompted slightly higher intensities across all three target emotions (anger, sadness, joy) compared to Alba Emoting exercises.

Table 1.

Mean intensity of self-rated subjective emotional feelings as a function of target emotion and acting exercise

Target Emotion	Alba	Emotion Memory
Anger	5.25 (2.25)	5.75 (1.38)
Sadness	3.75 (2.49)	5.12 (2.03)
Joy	5.50 (1.07)	6.12 (1.12)

Note. Standard deviations are presented in brackets.

Interoceptive awareness

We next inspected how an individual's interoceptive awareness might moderate the effects of acting exercise upon intensity of emotional feelings. We conducted a moderation analysis using model 1 of the PROCESS macro for SPSS. Use of the PROCESS macro enables statistical testing of single and multiple moderator models, including estimation of interactions, simple slopes and regions of significance for probing interactions (Hayes, 2013). We tested if the relationship between acting exercise (x, coded as 0 = Alba Emoting, 1 = Emotion Memory) and emotion intensity (y) was moderated by interoceptive awareness, as measured by scores on the MAIA (m).

There was no significant main effect of acting exercise type (b = -4.99, 95% CI -11.03, 1.04], t = -1.65, p = .10) or interoception (b = -.03, 95% CI [-.20, .13], t = -.38, p = .70). However, the interaction between interoception and acting exercise type approached significance (b = .21, 95% CI [-.03, .45], t = 1.69, p = .08, R^2change = .04, F (1, 66) = 2.87, p = .08). We probed the interaction further by predicting subjective emotional intensity ratings for each acting exercise and target emotion at the mean, 1 S.D. below the mean and 1 S.D. above the mean of MAIA scores (see Table 2, below). Higher interoceptive awareness was associated with higher intensity of subjective emotional feelings experienced during Emotion Memory compared to Alba Emoting exercises, but lower levels of interoceptive awareness was associated with higher intensity of subjective emotional feelings experienced during Alba Emoting compared to Emotion Memory exercises. Further, the same moderating effect

of interoceptive awareness upon subjective emotional responses to the acting exercises applied across all three target emotions of anger, sadness and joy.

Table 2.

Predicted mean intensity of self-rated subjective emotional feelings as a function of target emotion, acting exercise, and MAIA scores (- 1 S.D below the mean, at the mean, and + 1 S.D. above the mean).

	Alba			Emotion Memory		
	MAIA Scores					
Target Emotion	- 1 S.D	M	+ 1 S.D	- 1 S.D	M	+ 1 S.D
Anger	5.74	5.45	5.15	5.26	5.63	6.00
Sadness	5.33	4.27	3.20	4.63	4.81	4.99
Joy	4.35	4.72	5.10	4.10	5.09	6.08

Discussion

In the course of their careers, actors encounter a wide range of projects with different emotional demands. In the event of close identification with the role, they are often able to access the character's emotions intuitively and easily. If intuition fails, they will search in their toolkit of techniques for means of consciously stimulating the required emotional response. As far as we are aware, this is the first instance in which the success of these techniques has been objectively measured in a quantifiable manner. Our results indicate both techniques were effective in generating subjective feelings of emotion in trainee actors, although Emotion Memory resulted in slightly higher intensity of emotional feelings. Thus, our results have important implications for acting pedagogy from the standpoint of establishing empirical evidence for the most effective techniques for stimulating emotions in the actor's toolkit.

Notably, our results are consistent with several psychological theories of emotion generation. For instance, the finding that subjective emotional feelings were elicited by the Alba Emoting technique is consistent with Jamesian theories of emotion, and evidence that

adopting the physiological characteristics of an emotional state can sometimes stimulate the corresponding internal state (i.e., Ekman, Levenson, & Friesen, 1983). The finding that subjective emotions were *also* prompted by the recall of a past emotional experience is consistent with (among others) network theories of emotion. We thus provide some tentative support for the idea that not one process alone (i.e., top down or bottom up processes exclusively) is involved in emotion elicitation, and genuine emotional experience can be generated from a variety of external and internal stimuli (i.e., Ochsner et al., 2009).

We further provide novel insight into another factor which could guide an actor's choices in performance: the importance of the interaction between individual differences in emotional awareness and techniques designed to elicit emotion. Increasing interoceptive awareness was associated with greater self-reported emotional feelings to recalling emotional memories (Emotion Memory) but not to reproducing the outward physiological signs of emotion (Alba Emoting). Where individuals have high levels of interoceptive awareness, they are able to use information from their body to evaluate their own emotional state, which results in higher intensity of subjective emotional feelings upon recalling past emotional memories. Our results suggest that although both techniques provoke an emotional response, an actor's level of interoceptive awareness influences which technique may be the most effective or appropriate for that individual. Further, although interoceptive awareness is conceptualized as a stable personality trait (Mehling et al., 2012), one implication of our research is that if actors could be trained to be more aware of internal bodily signals, this may enhance their emotional sensitivity and ability to effectively use Emotion Memory techniques in performance.

This study was exploratory in nature with a small participant sample; we thus acknowledge that any conclusions we draw from the data are necessarily limited. Further, we recognize that the arousal level of target emotions was not fully-counterbalanced. This was due to time and ethical constraints in the current study: performing acting exercises is both physically and emotionally draining, so we purposefully limited the number of target emotions to protect participant wellbeing. In future larger scale studies we intend to also include a low arousal positive emotion (such as tenderness) in order to fully counterbalance the experimental design. Future directions this research could take include considering the

relationship between the subjective feeling and physiological signs of emotional experience prompted by differing acting techniques, and the moderating influence of interoceptive awareness. Another interesting avenue of exploration relates to examining if, and how, the subjective feelings experienced by the actor is associated to the subjective emotional experience of the audience. Finally, further work needs to be done to investigate the contrasts between models of emotion in psychology and acting and how these interdisciplinary theories might be linked.

In conclusion, some scholars believe that little is actually known about the emotional underpinnings of acting (Goldstein, 2009). We make preliminary steps towards illuminating the subjective emotional journey undertaken by actors during performance, and how individual differences within actors could impact on this journey. We thus provide an initial insight into the psychology of acted emotions, relevant to both the art and science of emotion.

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Appendix 3: Experimental Protocol

The Impact of Actor Training Exercises Designed to Elicit an Emotional Response in Terms of Physiology and Subjective Experience: A Mixed Methods Pilot Study.

PROTOCOL

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Date 17.07.14.

Final version

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1 Synopsis

Emotion research is of interest to both theatre practitioners and the scientific community. In the humanities, how real experience should be used to shape the representation of emotion in performance has been the subject of theoretical debate and practical experimentation for more than two thousand years. The James-Lange theory, which proposed a physiological basis for emotion in the late 19th century, is still relevant to the investigations of contemporary neuroscience, physiology and psychology[1]. Both actors and emotion scientists need to arouse emotions at specific times, the first group to enact dramatic moments in plays, the second to study the emotional process in the laboratory. Nevertheless, to date, there have been very few attempts at a joint investigation of the nature of emotion that satisfy the requirements of both science and the arts and generate new knowledge in both areas.

There have been some attempts to understand the nature of acted emotion. Konijn (2000)[2] concluded that actors adapt their 'task emotions', i.e. the emotions aroused by doing the job of an actor, to the requirements of the fictional scene. The Swiss National Science Foundation is currently engaged in the study of the difference between acted and spontaneously occurring emotion using both professional actors and 'lay' people as subjects[3]. In the Stanislavsky tradition, practitioners seek to draw on the natural processes of emotion and memory to produce 'affective' emotion in performance[4], which resembles 'the real thing' but is controlled for aesthetic purposes[5]. This theory of acted emotion has been verified by theatrical practice, but not in the laboratory. This paucity of scientific studies in the field suggests that either acted emotion is too difficult to measure and assess, or there's a lack of synergistic thinking between disciplines. The research team feel the technology now exists to measure emotional state/s, albeit using adjunct measures. However, coupled with complementary qualitative measures, this mixed method study may produce interesting results with practical utility for the acting profession, psychology and neurophysiology.

In brief, the aim of the study is to take advantage of advances in the scientific understanding of emotion to illuminate the acting process and to deploy acting techniques and expertise to contribute to the understanding of the interaction of imagination, physiology and emotion.

2 Objectives

2.1 Main objective

The primary objective of the proposed study is to investigate physiological and psychological changes elicited by specific actor training exercises.

2.2 Secondary objectives

i. To ascertain whether there are differences in physiological parameters before training, during training and after training;
ii. To compare and contrast different techniques used in the training of actors, specifically Alba Emoting and emotion memory exercises;
iii. To qualitatively assess if actors, as a result of training or inherent tendency, have higher than average interoceptive awareness, and if they therefore experience emotions more intensely than groups with lower interoceptive awareness.
iv. To compare and contrast the physiological response to emotion eliciting exercises of actors and non-actors.
v. To investigate the relationship between physiological and self-reported responses to emotion eliciting exercises.

3 Study design

3.1 Volunteers

Participants will be gated via initial email contact to appropriate undergraduate and graduate groups and briefing sessions. Those who meet the inclusion criteria but do not meet the exclusion criteria will be asked to volunteer in this study.

There will be consideration of the time involved in participating in this study and if at any time the participants do not wish to continue they will be supported in their decision without prejudice

If any of the participants are dissatisfied with some aspect of this research, they can make a formal complaint to the School of Acting at BCU.

3.2 Inclusion criteria

Subjects who meet the following criteria will be asked to participate:

- 20 – 30 years of age on September 3rd 2014
- Male or female, in approximately even numbers
- Group A (actors) to have a minimum of two years, full-time training at the Birmingham School of Acting or comparable institution.
- Group B (non-actors) to have little or no training, experience or interest in acting and in particular having no experience of conservatoire training at undergraduate level or above.

3.3 Exclusion criteria

Subjects who meet any of the following criteria will not be asked to participate:

- Ill health;
- On contraindicated medication;
- Any musculoskeletal disorder that may inhibit physiological measurements to be taken.

3.4 Study protocol

3.4.1 Study type

Prospective crossover trial/ Design of the study is a 2 (Acting Experience: Actors vs. Non-Actors) x 2 (Task: Alba vs. Emotion Memory) x 2 (Emotion Valence: Positive vs. Negative) mixed design. The first factor varies between-subjects and the other two factors vary within-subjects.

3.4.2 Study scope

This study will include participants who are registered or former students at Birmingham City University, either the School of Acting or other schools within the institution. The ethics committee of the Faculty of the Arts, Design and Media has formally approved the project and 12 student actors have enrolled for the study. The non-acting group will be recruited in September 2014.

3.4.3 Study procedure

Subjects will be invited to participate in the study via email contact, posters and briefing sessions targeted at appropriate student groups and recent graduates. They will be given time (one week) to reflect on whether they would wish to take part in the study. Informed consent will be signed prior to the beginning of the study.

Participants will be invited to attend the study in two groups, one consisting of trained actors, the other a control group consisting of psychology and/or English undergraduates. The groups will be briefed on the procedure for the day and will have the right to leave at any time. Participants will engage in a short, playful, physical game in order to reduce potential self-consciousness and inhibition that might interfere with the experimental results. They will then practice four Alba patterns that will be used for the collection of data, those associated with tenderness, happiness, anger and sorrow. Participants will then be grouped in pairs and given appointment times to return and engage with the two styles of exercise, immediately followed by completion of the questionnaires. Tasks will be counterbalanced in terms of two conditions, styles of acting exercise and valence of target emotion, in order to minimize order effects.

1 Emotion Memory Task

Participants will be asked to select four real events that have provoked an intense emotional response, two with a positive and two with a negative valence. After a period of formal physical relaxation, they will be prompted to recall in precise detail the sense-impressions associated with the day of the eliciting experience, such as the colour of the walls of the room in which it took place, audible sounds or noticeable smells. Participants are encouraged to remain physically relaxed in the event of a re-experiencing of the emotional response provoked by the event.

2 Alba Emoting Task

After an introduction to the four 'effector patterns', consisting of a precise adoption of specific breathing patterns, facial expressions and posture, subjects will be asked to execute the patterns associated with happiness, sadness, anger and tenderness. They will be encouraged to execute the exercises with precision and energy, but make no conscious attempt to arouse the correlative subjective response.

3.4.4 Study measures

- Physiological data recorded during execution of the tasks
- Cortisol levels taken at intervals throughout the day
- Verbal feedback after each task
- Post-task interviews/questionnaires assessing response to each task

3.4.5 Study equipment

NeXus 4 or Lab Tutor with laptop[6], including sensors to measure:

- Heart rate
- Skin conductance

- Respiration
- Body temperature

3.4.6 Criteria for discontinuation

Subjects may be discontinued from the study at their request.

Reasons for withdrawal include, but are not limited to:

- Voluntary withdrawal from the study from any participant
- Any type of injury that may be detrimental to physiological
- Poor quality physiological data

4 Variables measured and measurement methods

4.1 Variables measured

- Intensity of emotion
- Valence
- Emotion experienced
- Fading affect (for emotion memory tasks)
- Interoceptive ability
- Impact of technology on ability to execute tasks

4.2 Measurement methods

- Cortisol assay
- Differential Emotional Scale
- Multidimensional Self-Report Questionnaire
- Bespoke questionnaire reporting impact of technology
- Qualitative feedback from participants recorded by video documentation

5 Number of participants included

Group A: minimum 12, maximum 16

Group B: minimum 12, maximum 16

6 Modification of protocol

Any amendments to the protocol must be prepared by the coordinator and approved by the Ethics Committee before implementation.

7 Material and legal aspects

7.1 Written informed consent

All participants enrolled in the study will read and sign a written informed consent form prior to the start of the protocol. The consent form will outline the relative advantages and disadvantages to participation in the study as well as the study objectives.

7.2 Participant confidentiality

Participant confidentiality is ensured by assigning identification numbers to each participant. The written informed consent form will have both participant name and study ID code to be used as a master reference. The code will consist of a six-figure date of birth plus initial letter of place of birth. All written informed consent forms will be kept separate from the actual data collection forms to minimise opportunity of individual identification.

7.3 Data archives

Collected data will be archived after analyses are conducted and kept for a period of 5 years in locked cabinets.

7.4 Stipends

Participation in the study is voluntary. There is therefore no remuneration available for participants.

8 Study centre

The study will be conducted at the Birmingham School of Acting in a studio space suitable for practical acting exercises and all the data analysis undertaken in the Faculty of Health, BCU. Analysis of psychological profiles will be undertaken at the University of the West of England.

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