

HISTORICAL ACTING TECHNIQUES
AND THE 21st-CENTURY BODY
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CONTENTS

Jed WENTZ	7
Introduction: 'I was <i>just saying the lines</i> .'	

POINTS OF DEPARTURE

Mary CARRUTHERS	
Of Notes and Unfolding Sounds. Perspectives from Grammar and Geometry	37

Anne SMITH	
Reflections on Historical Acting and the Alexander Technique	41

HABITUS AND THE EMBODIED QUALITIES OF ARTISTIC RESEARCH

THE DUTCH HISTORICAL ACTING COLLECTIVE	
A Roundtable on Embodiment in Research	47

Bernhard HOMMEL	
Embodiment in Action	57

Paul CRAENEN	
Roundtable: The Artist-Researcher Inside Out: Strategies, Methodologies, Refractions	61

THE BODY AND THE VOICE

Laila Cathleen NEUMAN	
'Despairing Rage' and 'Courageous Pride': Exploring the Acting Style of Johannes Jelgerhuis through Practice-Based Research	71

João Luís PAIXÃO	
Facing the Passions: An Embodied Approach to Facial Expression on the Eighteenth-Century Stage	97

Martina PAPIRO	
The Plates of Morrocchesi's <i>Lezioni di declamazione e d'arte teatrale</i> (1832): An Introduction and Analysis	120

Anne SMITH	
A Translation of the ' <i>Lezione dei gesti</i> ' and the ' <i>Lezione di compostezza e passo</i> ' from Antonio Marrocchesi's <i>Lezioni de declamazione e d'arte teatrale</i> (Florence: Tipografia alla insegna di Dante, 1832)	141

Jed WENTZ
 ‘And the wing’d *muscles*, into meanings fly’: Practice-Based Research into Historical Acting Through the Writings of Aaron Hill 157

Sabine CHAOUCHE
 Acting Through the Lens of the Press: Impulsive Styles, Truthful Tones and Scenic Expressivity in Eighteenth-Century France 197

Andreas GILGER
 Tempo in Declamation According to Gustav Anton Freiherr von Seckendorff 237

Kat CARSON
 Testimony. Past into Present: Breathing Life into Contemporary Performance with Historical Acting 245

THEATRE, HO!

Xavier VANDAMME, Jed WENTZ
 Seven Propositions Towards the Establishment of a New Kind of Theatre Festival 253

A LIST OF VIDEO MATERIALS RELATED TO THIS VOLUME 257

ABSTRACTS 259

BIOGRAPHIES 273

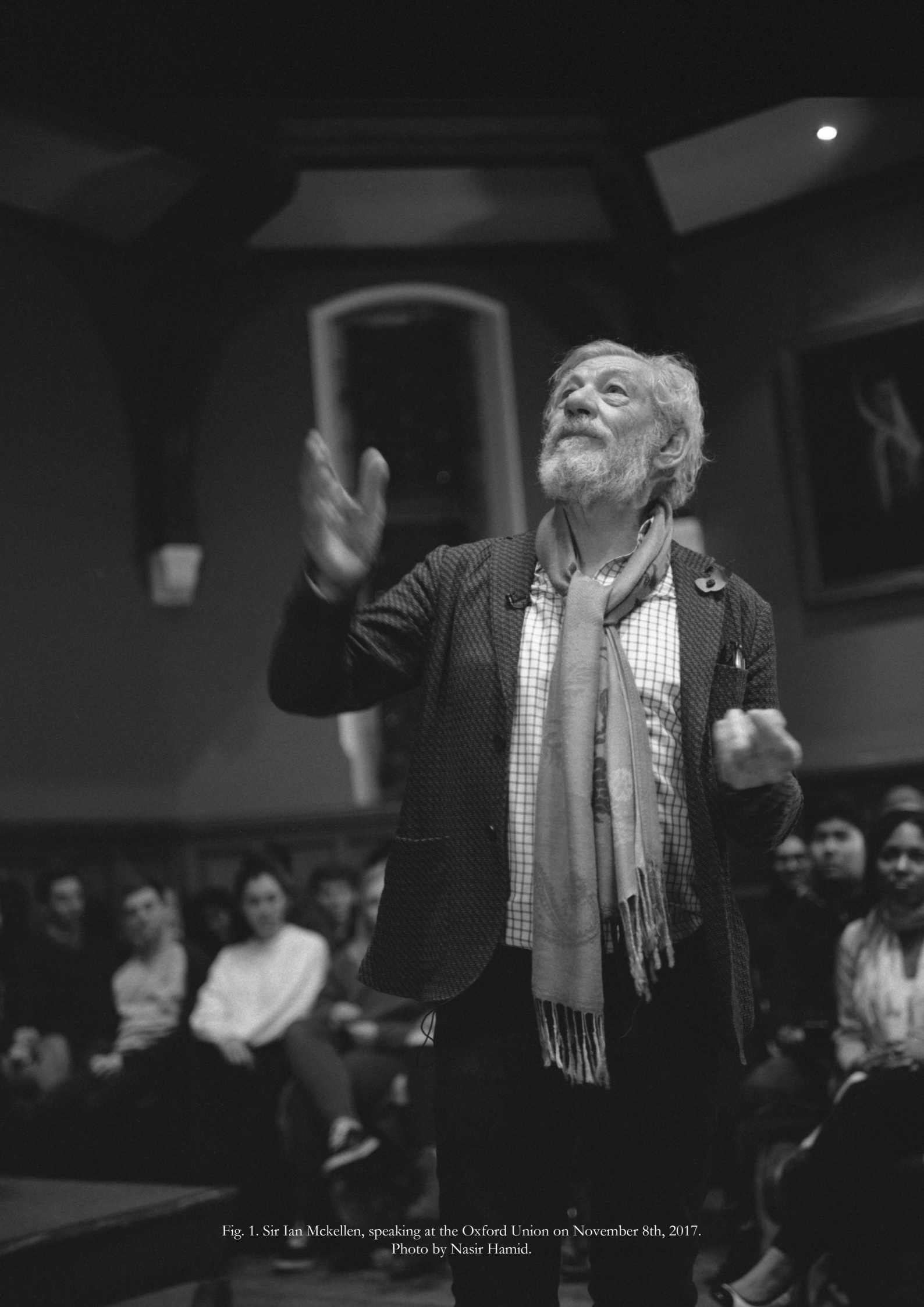


Fig. 1. Sir Ian McKellen, speaking at the Oxford Union on November 8th, 2017.
Photo by Nasir Hamid.

INTRODUCTION

'I was just saying the lines'

On November 8th, 2017 the Oxford Union hosted Sir Ian McKellen, an actor of irreproachable credentials, who delivered a free-wheeling oration to a packed hall. Striking a pose reminiscent of a Baroque actor making an appeal to the heavens, McKellen, as is his wont, spent much of his time advocating social justice, but he also made a remarkable digression – remarkable, that is, to those interested in questions of acting style (see Fig. 1).

The passage is an extensive and candid confession concerning a 2017 production of *King Lear* in which McKellen had played the eponymous role. This unbosoming deserves to be carefully examined here, as it serves as a starting point for the arguments made in this introduction, and indeed, in this volume:

I discovered something in *King Lear*, which I'm going to have to develop in some way in other plays, I think. It's expected, in these post-Freudian days that we live in, that actors will, following 'the Method', delve into the backstory of the character, you know...Now, it's an odd thing to do that with Shakespeare because Shakespeare wouldn't have known what you meant by 'character'. The play just happened; the action just happened. And to delve into the past isn't very helpful.¹

It is remarkable that a Shakespearean actor who famously follows the Method should underscore a fundamental problem when applying backstory to the Bard: whether or not he realized it, McKellen called his past work into question by pointing out that the study of Shakespeare's texts and characters does not, in fact, benefit from a Freudian psychoanalytical approach. McKellen then explained how he had prepared his role of Lear in the past:²

I mean *King Lear*...why did he not have his first daughter until he was forty years old, you might ask. Why did he have his second daughter when he was sixty years old? They couldn't have had the same mother. Oh, he had two wives. Who are they, what [were] they called? What were they like? Don't know. I used to wear two wedding rings for the observance, but it's no *help* if you're playing *King Lear* to know that he had two wives, it's nothing to do with the story. [...] So always in Shakespeare you're looking to the next scene. You're always moving forward; you're moving to the end of the line. And looking back is no help to anybody [chuckles].³

Even a physical reminder of Lear's backstory (the two wedding bands that McKellen had worn while onstage) was of little use to the actor; the text simply was not suited to the Method. McKellen, however, is keen to tell about a very different acting approach, one that was found to work exceptionally well:

¹ Sir Ian McKELLEN speaking at the Oxford Union Society, 8:46: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVH0nM4_IaU&t=1933s (last accessed 19-06-2020).

² For a discussion of this earlier production, which involved method acting, see: Ian McKELLEN: Understanding *King Lear*, the Character, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahFtoCq6CHw&t=1s> (last accessed 13-09-2020).

³ Sir Ian McKELLEN speaking at the Oxford Union Society, 9:28: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVH0nM4_IaU&t=1933s (last accessed 19-06-2020).

So, this time, for the first time in my life, I didn't think, 'What sort of person is King Lear? Does he have a limp? What's his heart like? What's his favourite food?' These are the sort of questions; I often ask them. The audience never get to know the answers, but *I* know them, so it sort of comforts me, that I'm being real. But I decided on this occasion not to be real, but to say the lines. That's all. And, do you know, if you say the lines, and live in the moment, and don't say to yourself '*Why* am I saying this?' but rather '*How* am I saying it?' and 'Will people *understand* it?' [suddenly loudly shouting] 'AND AM I FURIOUS?' ... that's the interesting thing. It came from a suggestion the director made, he said 'Surprise yourself. Don't *know* [...] *surprise yourself*.' And it really worked.⁴

McKellen was intrigued by how well it worked to 'be in the moment' with the lines, rather than consulting a fantasized backstory. Moreover, this new manner of acting provoked a palpably different reaction from the audience, who – not merely passive spectators – generated an understanding of what they were seeing in a co-creative act:

And it allowed the audience to write the play, oddly. And people said to me, 'I loved the moment where you remembered your fool', the dead Fool, King Lear's best friend at the beginning of the play who vanishes halfway through. And I said, 'Well, what do you mean?' and they referred to something that I'd done that didn't mean that to me, but did to them. In other words, they'd *written* the play, a little bit. And there was a heightened attention from the audience that I haven't noticed before.⁵

The positive reactions of critics and audience emboldened McKellen to say that he intended to experiment further with this new manner of acting, although he worried that it would only be appropriate in performing the greatest works. Lesser plays, he mused, would still require a backstory to be successful:

So I just pass that on, that's how I played King Lear and I had some of the best reviews of my life...for acting, but I wasn't acting, really. I was *just saying the lines*. So, I am going to try and do more of that, and I don't know if it would work with lesser writers, it probably wouldn't. Often, with plays, if they're not by Shakespeare or by Anton Chekov, the actors are often having to fill in a few of the gaps, you know. Lead the audience over the chasms of nonsense that lesser playwrights land you with [chuckles].⁶

No one viewing the clip would accuse McKellen of being ingenuous: indeed, he displays an engaging enthusiasm for the possibilities his new technical discovery offers him, and sincerely looks forward to developing it in future. His assertion that he received good critical notices is borne out by the following advertisement of the play's 2018 revival:

The production, directed by Jonathan Munby, is a transfer from Chichester Festival theatre, where it had a short, sold-out run in 2017 and was praised by critics. McKellen's 'superbly detailed performance' in an intimate staging, wrote Michael Billington, offered 'a permanent closeup of a soul in torment'.⁷

What is interesting about McKellen's confession – at least in the context of this issue of *European Drama and Performance Studies*, entitled 'Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body' – is that it challenges the supremacy of method acting.⁸ The great and fêted actor, at the age of 78, revels, awestruck, in the potency of a more immediate style, one predicated purely on an embodied

⁴ Ibid., 10:25: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVH0nM4_IaU&t=1933s (last accessed 19-06-2020).

⁵ Ibid., 11:49: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVH0nM4_IaU&t=1933s (last accessed 19-06-2020).

⁶ Ibid., 12:34: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVH0nM4_IaU&t=1933s (last accessed 19-06-2020).

⁷ See: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/feb/08/ian-mckellen-to-play-king-lear-in-london-transfer-chichester> (last accessed 19-07-2020).

⁸ The techniques most specifically discussed in this volume date from 1698-1832; from the appearance of Charles le BRUN's *Conférence de Monsieur Le Brun premier peintre du roy de France, chancelier de directeur de l'academie de peinture et sculpture* Sur l'Expression generale & particuliere (Amsterdam & Paris: B. PICART, 1698) to Antonio MORROCCHESI, *Lezioni di declamazione e d'arte teatrale* (Firenze: 1832). Their application, it could be argued, remained common – though not ubiquitous – up until about 1930.

delivery of the lines. This latter technique, I propose, was fundamental to the historical, text-centred acting style prevalent in the period under scrutiny here.

Despite the Baroque pose evident in Figure 1, it would be a leap to infer that, because he unwittingly had embraced a basic principle of historical acting, McKellen was somehow himself engaged in Historically Informed Performance (HIP): and, indeed, no such unfounded assumption is intended here. Surely, despite his protests, he *was* acting. Although it felt to him like he was ‘just saying the lines’, he was undoubtedly doing more than that and the effect on the audience must have been different from that which would have been produced by an inexperienced, untrained person ‘just saying the lines’. He was using his embodied knowledge, a knowledge acquired over the course of a long and illustrious career as a professional method actor; but he was not accessing that knowledge via his normal procedure. Thus, McKellen presents himself as the ideal advocate for the point I hope to make, namely, that the study of the European theatrical past can enrich our current practice. We do not present past techniques here, in this collection of essays and source materials related to historical acting styles, as a wholesale replacement for current theatrical practices, nor as the instruments of an aesthetic ultimatum based on theatrical authenticity, but rather as the contents of a rich and ample treasure chest from which today’s actors are invited to draw whatever thespian pearls may best adorn them in any given role; or, more aptly, as the too-long neglected contents of a trusty craftsman’s box, from which the actor may draw those implements most suited to the completion of a given theatrical task.

In order to develop this theme, and to place the contents of this volume in context, I now introduce the individual contributions as they relate to a number of points raised by McKellen: the relationship between acting and psychological theories of character; embodied technique (including declamation, gesture and the concept of ‘passionating’); audience participation; and finally, the texts (plays) themselves.

PSYCHOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY, METHODOLOGY: ‘IN THESE POST-FREUDIAN DAYS THAT WE LIVE IN’

It would, perhaps, be unfair to attribute to McKellen a belief that the Method was a fundamentally Freudian technique purely on the basis of his statement: ‘It’s expected, in these post-Freudian days that we live in, that actors will, following ‘the Method’, delve into the back story of the character’. He may simply have been acknowledging the primacy that Sigmund Freud’s work has for the Method generally. Whatever his personal view might be, the psychoanalytical approach to the human mind would be a logical starting point for actors of McKellen’s generation, who first trod the professional stage in the 1960s, when Freudianism still enjoyed high favour in the West. However, Konstantin Stanislavski’s ‘System’ – which later was altered into ‘the Method’ in America – was certainly not originally conceived of as a Freudian technique, as Patrick C. Carrier reminds us:

Current scholarship has identified the Freudian bias in the erroneous understanding of the System that has become Method Acting, and pointed to the more pertinent works by William James on emotions and the “life of the external stimulus,” Ribot on affective psychology, Pavlov on behaviorism, or Sechenov’s psycho-physical approach as influences of Stanislavski’s approach to inciting emotion in the actor.⁹

⁹ Patrick C. CARRIERE, *Reading for the Soul in Stanislavski’s The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself: Orthodox Mysticism, Mainstream Occultism, Psychology and the System in the Russian Silver Age*, doctoral thesis, University of Kansas, 2010, p. 15.

This is significant in the context of the essays presented here, for Théodule-Armand Ribot, whom Stanislavski mentions at one point in his writings, saw himself as belonging to quite a different school of thought from that which brought forth Freud.¹⁰ In the preface to *The Psychology of the Emotions*, Ribot describes the differences between the *intellectualist* camp of Herbart (who influenced Freud) and the *physiological* camp, to which he himself belonged:

According to one, they [the emotions] are secondary and derived, the qualities, modes, or functions of knowledge; they only exist through it; [...] that is the *intellectualist* thesis. According to the other, they are primitive, autonomous, not reducible to intelligence, able to exist outside it and without it; [...] that is the thesis which under its present form may be called *physiological*. [...] The intellectualist theory [...] has found its most complete expression in Herbart and his school [...]. The doctrine which I have called physiological [...] connects all states of feeling with biological conditions, and considers them as direct and immediate expression of vegetative life.¹¹

We will be returning again and again in this volume to a *physiological* approach to emotions and acting. We believe this to be both necessary and fruitful due to recent shifts in our understanding of the relationship between mind and body. Rhonda Blair, in rehearsing the relationship between Stanislavski and reflexology (as represented by Ribot, Pavlov and Sechenov) has noted that:

All of the neuro- and cognitive sciences take a monistic view of the person; mind and body are not separate. Rather, they require us to think in terms of “embodied mind” or the “conscious body,” depending on which aspect is being privileged at a given moment. In terms of acting in the 20th and 21st centuries, there is good reason for holding a monistic view of the actor’s process.¹²

Our monistic emphasis here will undoubtedly cause concern and perhaps even derision amongst some readers, for the current view of the relationship between historical acting and the actor’s body is generally a negative one: it is widely held that before the System actors engaged in mere outward display, that they regarded acting as mere representation. As an article in *Backstage* (a popular on-line magazine for actors) informs us:

Prior to Stanislavsky, most acting (particularly in the United States) was considered presentational. That is, it was superficial. Actors relied on broad and big gestures that were codified for large-scale, easy interpretation with little emotional depth.¹³

Such sweeping generalizations and facile negation of the art of acting before the Method have been repeated to me personally, whenever I try to explain to ‘theatre people’ just what I find valuable in historical acting. In doing so I have again and again been met with disbelief, indifference and dismissal. Many of today’s actors and directors seem sadly ignorant of the goals and achievements of their predecessors; by insisting that they themselves are at the vanguard of a great thespian movement forward, they often merely cling, blindfold, to what has already become an outmoded approach to humans and their emotions. The point I wish to make here (in exploring McKellen’s linking of Freud to the Method) is that, whatever one may think of this American twentieth-century acting school (and I know that it is both adored and criticized), one cannot say that it is psychologically *au courant*: McKellen speaks of a ‘post-Freudian world’, but surely we now

¹⁰ It appears that Stanislavski started using Ribot’s ideas ca. 1914. For a chronology of the System and the Method, see: Paul GRAY, ‘Stanislavski and America: A Critical Chronology’, *The Tulane Review*, 9:2 (Winter, 1964), 21–60.

¹¹ Th. RIBOT, *The Psychology of the Emotions* (London: Walter Scott, LTD., 1897), pp. vii–viii.

¹² Rhonda BLAIR, ‘Cognitive Neuroscience and Acting: Imagination, Conceptual Blending, and Empathy’, *TDR* (1988-), 53:4 (Winter, 2009), 92–103, p. 93.

¹³ Alex ATEs, ‘The Definitive Guide to Method Acting’, <https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/the-definitive-guide-to-method-acting-65816/>. Last updated, 27-05-2020 (last accessed 15-08-2020).

live in a post-post-Freudian world? If Freud gained ascendancy over the physiological school (Ribot et al.) in the twentieth century, in what is currently called the ‘first wave’ of psychology, his reputation has by now lost much ground to physiological, cognitive and mindfulness practices. These schools set the body front and centre in psychology; and this in turn invites us to engage with historical acting techniques not out of a misplaced nostalgia for past practices, but rather with a sense of excitement, pride and legitimacy, knowing that by doing so we are simply working within the current *Zeitgeist*, inspired by scientific advances in knowledge of what the body does.

For the historically inspired actor – as McKellen in some sense discovered – does not emphasize the unspoken ambiguities of a character, but rather invites the audience to co-author the play by paying attention to *how* the lines are said. This co-authorship arises naturally between performer and audience, as emotions are shared experiences, co-created in acts of embodiment and perception. As Thomas Fuchs and Sabine C. Koch noted already in 2014 when discussing affect attunement and interaffectivity:

The emerging affect during a joyful playing situation between mother and infant may not be divided and distributed among them. It arises from the “in-between” or from the over-arching process in which both are immersed. [...] Thus, emotions are not inner states that we experience only individually or that we have to decode in others, but primarily *shared states* that we experience through interbodily affection.¹⁴

I shall be returning to the work of Fuchs and Koch in the course of this introduction.

The writings presented in this issue, as well as the numerous audio-visual materials that illustrate them, can all be related to the activities of various members of the Dutch Historical Acting Collective (DHAC). Indeed, most of the articles have been written by active DHAC members. DHAC is a non-hierarchical and fluid group of theatre scholars, musicians and musician-actors dedicated to practice-based research. Its field of inquiry centres on the relationship between rhetorical, musical and thespian techniques up to the advent of sound film. Just as notions of the mind-body relationship (both historical and contemporary) are fundamental to the essays in this volume, so too one particular essay – which does not appear here – is fundamental to the work of the collective more generally: Anne Smith’s ‘Standing with Ease and Grace, or the Difficulty of Reading Historical Sources and Acting Treatises Objectively’.¹⁵ It was originally intended for inclusion in this volume. However, as the dimensions of the article and the number of illustrations it contained increased, it became preferable to place it on the webpage of the DHAC, and to link it here. Therefore, although it is external, I encourage readers to engage with Smith’s article. It addresses not only questions of stage deportment, but, more importantly, the *habitus* of the performer-researcher. By *habitus* I mean the subjective interpretation of the world in both a larger and a narrower (historically engaged) sense, based on each individual’s own physical make-up or *being*.

Understanding *habitus*, I wager, is essential to the proper carrying out of practice-based research. The topic of *habitus*, therefore, is also treated *within* this issue: in Anne Smith’s much shorter contribution ‘Reflections on Historical Acting and the Alexander Technique’; in ‘A Roundtable on Embodiment in Research’; in Bernhard Hommel’s ‘Embodiment in Action’; and in the roundtable crafted and moderated by Paul Craenen, ‘The Artist-Researcher Inside Out: Strategies, Methodologies, Refractions’. Smith’s ‘Reflections’ documents how acting was, at one

¹⁴ Thomas FUCHS and Sabine C. KOCH, ‘Embodied affectivity: On moving and being moved’, *Frontiers of Psychology*, 5:508 (2014), 2–9, p. 7.

¹⁵ A PDF file is available for download here https://jedwentz.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Smith_Standing-with-Ease-1.pdf (last accessed 02-02-2022).

point, F. M. Alexander's 'fall-back method for teaching the Technique', and points towards the possibility that one therefore can reverse the progression and use the Alexander Technique to better understand historical acting. This theme returns in 'A Roundtable on Embodiment in Research', in which various DHAC members discuss their subjective experiences in carrying out research through practices both theatrical and musical. The roundtable was shown in turn to Bernhard Hommel, who responded to DHAC's experiences from the perspective of current medical science and, more specifically, cognitive physiology. Finally, the DHAC roundtable, and Hommel's response to it, served as catalysts for Craenen's roundtable, in which artistic researchers connected to the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts of Leiden University, address concerns of objectivity, performance and the concept of 'flow' in practice-based research. Craenen's roundtable also examines divergent ideas about *how* artistic research can be carried out, especially as it relates to performance. The more traditional model is one in which performances are carefully prepared and executed in order to test hypotheses. The performances thereafter serve as *loci* for reflection and criticism, eventually becoming starting points for further experimentation. However, some artist-researchers prefer to raise their research questions – perhaps even to create hypotheses – *during* the performance itself, an event which they experience as indistinguishable from the research process. Craenen's roundtable does not reach consensus on this point, but it seems that the nature of the individual project and the temperament of the artist-researcher are determining factors in the choice of an appropriate research mode. I consider these roundtables to be not merely interesting in and of themselves, but fundamental – essential! – to understanding the materials published here because they expose heterodoxy within the research community today.

Practice-led (or body-based) research, the trajectory that we follow in this volume, was prepared, impressively and many years ago, by Joseph Roach in *The Player's Passion* (1985). Roach's ground-breaking book, which brought the actor's body sharply into focus in its historical-scientific context, certainly has remained an inspiration for many over the years. However, our approach here differs in one significant way from Roach's work: we reject the Foucauldian framework. We avoid the virtuosic Post Modern scholarly juggling act (so valued in academia currently) in favour of a sincere and structured *doing*. I, as an actor, in conjuring up affect out of my body in the act of performance before a live audience, look inward, concentrating foremost in my experience in performance is the act of *saying the lines* and *the feeling of how I am saying them*; the awareness of emotion as a movement in my body *while* I am saying them; and the *transitions* that occur *in my body* towards the affective state needed for the following line. Performers have no need for the structural framework so desirable to the scholar when writing or speaking to other scholars in traditional academic modes. Conversely, researchers have very different concerns from performers. The relatively new discipline of artistic research, however, has brought these two worlds together, allowing theory and practice to enter into a rich discourse. In this research model, it is up to the individual performer-scholar to craft an argument by balancing these two modes of scholarship as she or he sees fit. This often involves preparing the body and imagination taking historical texts as a guide, and then carrying out performance-experiments. The articles presented here are *for performers*, and mostly *by performer-scholars* engaged in artistic research – although I am convinced that the arguments proposed will also be useful to academics working in more conventional modes of scholarship. From this perspective, tracing theatrical traditions and continuity becomes more important than searching for epistemological epiphanies: experiencing that which remains the *same* over time in acting (the movements within the performing body) is of greater use to the performer than labelling the changing intellectual frameworks used to describe those movements.

CLICHÉS AND THE NATURAL: ‘BUT I WASN’T ACTING, REALLY’

I have argued that even though McKellen claimed ‘but I wasn’t acting, really’, he was in fact still accessing his embodied knowledge. In doing so, he most likely produced a style of acting authentic to himself, while safely nestled within the limits of what today’s critics and audiences find acceptable. My point is that the *aesthetic* or style of this particular performance of *King Lear* was probably not so very different from what it would have been had McKellen used the Method: not having seen the production I cannot say with authority, but I doubt that he would have reminded anyone of the sculpted body and gestural language associated with historical acting, derided in *Backstage* as ‘broad and big gestures that were codified for large-scale, easy interpretation with little emotional depth’. Indeed, we have seen that one reviewer described McKellen’s *Lear* as a ‘superbly detailed performance’.¹⁶ This is not to say that McKellen, in producing this portrait of *Lear*, did not fall back on codified acting or clichés: these, however, would have been the embodied clichés associated with our twenty-first-century acting style. Method actors in general may stress the fresh and natural in their art, and condemn conventions as lifeless, but as Claudio Vicentini noted in *The Art of Watching Actors* (2013), the cliché in acting is still very much with us. Indeed, Vicentini cites as examples thereof the stance and strut of the cowboy, the ‘lightning speed of pulling out the revolver’ in Westerns, or the swagger of the mafia boss in a crime drama.¹⁷ As he puts it: ‘Even nowadays performers can resort to ‘*cliché acting*’ in order to represent characters and their states of mind, that is, they can use conventional forms of expression which have gradually become imposed on the practice of acting’.¹⁸

As Stanislavski abhorred clichés, and because method actors try to avoid them at all costs by connecting with their subconscious and creating backstories, discussing contemporary acting in terms of clichés and conventions will be anathema to many, but that is neither courageous nor wise. Vicentini sees the conventional in acting as a fundamental means of satisfying audience expectations, and of effective storytelling:

There are an infinite number of theatrical *clichés* and each period will privilege some which seem absolutely indispensable to spectators of the period. They constitute a dominant code of acting. And habituation to their use produces a very curious effect. While they are all gestures and expressive forms which are highly conventional, typical of the stage and often at some distance from the way we would behave in real life, the spectator, accustomed to their use, welcomes them as if they were absolutely obvious and necessary.¹⁹

Vicentini stresses that these clichés are only useful because they are accepted by the spectators of any given period. They therefore become invisible to the audience, and can function without disturbing the viewer’s sense of the natural. However, John J. Sullivan argued, in his 1964 article ‘Stanislavski and Freud’, that etiquette and ideals of moral behaviour shift over time, and with them, the audience’s willingness to accept certain clichés:

In a society run closely by ordered rules, in which behavior and manners are regulated by strong group pressures, social codes and stereotypes can be widely understood and accurately communicate meanings commonly shared. The disappearance of these commonly shared meanings, the dissolution

¹⁶ See: <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/feb/08/ian-mckellen-to-play-king-lear-in-london-transfer-chichester> (last accessed 19-07-2020).

¹⁷ Claudio VICENTINI, *The Art of Watching Actors: a practical manual for spectators of theatre, cinema and television*, tr. Jennifer LORCH (2013: Napoli: Acting Archives), p. 33.

¹⁸ VICENTINI, *ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁹ VICENTINI, *ibid.*

of the social codes regulating manners and behaviors, meant that actors had to find a new method of portraying and communicating states of mind.²⁰

Though we distinguish with difficulty the clichés of our contemporary actors, their near invisibility is merely proof that they are still functioning within the current societal context. I, however, propose to remove the stigma now often associated with words like ‘codified’ and ‘conventions’ by rebranding Vicentini’s ‘clichés’ and Sullivan’s ‘mannerisms’ as acting *commonplaces*, using the word in its rhetorical sense. For an orator, commonplaces are the essential building blocks of any oration. With them the speaker taps into the *doxa*, or the unexamined prejudices, of the audience, and thus commonplaces allow the orator to hijack the belief system of his hearers and use it for his own purposes. Stanislavski’s System, and later the Method, exposed the commonplaces of nineteenth-century acting to the audience, and thus turned them from tools to fulfil audience expectations into unacceptable clichés that triggered audience derision: once a magician’s tricks have been understood, once the sleight-of-hand has been exposed, the audience’s astonishment will turn to disgust. As Sullivan noted: ‘to Stanislavski’s credit, with his energy, with his autocratic will and determination, he [...] exposed as ‘not believable’ the stage mannerisms of a previous generation of actors’.²¹ Method acting, in completely razing the thespian temple of its immediate predecessors, established its own invisible commonplaces, trained its audience to accept and expect them; and these too, as society changes, will be exposed and derided as clichés by a future generation of actors and directors. This is natural, the theatrical reification of the ongoing Oedipal struggle that leads one generation to overthrow that which came before, naively unaware that it, too, must be overthrown in turn as society and culture evolve.

The commonplaces of today are less overt than the grand gestures of the past, residing mainly in conceptions of how behaviour can be codified on a very small scale. This emphasis on discretion, coupled with technological changes to theatres themselves (lighting, amplification), has logically led to a devaluation of basic theatrical techniques that once were vital to an actor’s success. If the style of acting that developed in noisy, candlelit theatres demanded heightened declamation, facial expression and grand postures – that is to say, an emphasis on technique and artfulness – we now, when performing in our silent and technically enhanced theatres, have run to the opposite extreme, favouring seemingly spontaneous commonplaces, nearly imperceptible and ‘naturalistic’ (that is to say, not based on the works of Renaissance or Baroque painters and sculptors). As Carriere put it:

One of the common critiques of Strasberg’s version of the American Method has been that his focus on emotional truth has led to a fixation on the manipulation of the psychological make-up of the actor and the concept of unleashing the subconscious. Therefore it has not paid enough attention to physical work of the actor and the creation of artistic form in acting.²²

This criticism, I believe, points the way forward: though the clichés of today are still largely functioning, they will not do so forever. Change must come: indeed, the recent revival of interest in silent films, and the success of the (mostly) silent film *The Artist* (2011), point toward the potential for broader acting styles to move the audiences of today; just as McKellen’s enthusiasm for ‘just saying the lines’ awakens us to the potential for historical techniques to vivify contemporary practice.

Many of the articles in this volume directly address such acting techniques as presented in historical sources, and offer not only insight into how certain things were done (the conveying of

²⁰ John J. SULLIVAN, ‘Stanislavski and Freud’, *Tulane Drama Review*, 9:1 (Autumn, 1964), 88–111, p. 97–8.

²¹ SULLIVAN, *ibid.*, p. 97.

²² CARRIERE, *op. cit.*, pp. 14–5.

emotion through facial expression, gesture and attitude), but also suggest, through linked audio-video presentations, how we can use these techniques today. It is perhaps most useful, in this context, to take one of the most heavily criticized sources for reconstructing historical acting as a case study: Martina Papiro, in ‘The Plates of Morrocchesi’s *Lezioni di declamazione e d’arte teatrale* (1832): An Introduction and Analysis’ examines the illustrations of that actor’s performance of a monologue from Alfieri’s *Oreste* from the perspective of the art historian. Actors and artists enjoyed something of a symbiotic relationship in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and drawings, prints, paintings and statues form important sources for reconstruction today.²³ It is therefore important to have an art historian react both to a set of images, and to their ‘realization’ in performance (in this case by João Luís Paixão). Morrocchesi’s plates have been deemed (by scholars and performers alike) unfit to serve as models for actors, due to their extreme postures and hyperkinetic ‘choreography’. It is worth noting that even such seemingly extravagant illustrations of an actor’s attitudes can yield surprising and valuable insights when subjected to open-minded critical study in the service of performance. A translation into English of two lessons from Morrocchesi’s book has been included in this volume, see Anne Smith, ‘A Translation of the ‘*Lezione dei gesti*’ and the ‘*Lezione di compostezza e passo*’ from Antonio Morrocchesi’s *Lezioni de declamazione e d’arte teatrale* (Florence: Tipografia alla insegna di Dante, 1832)’.

In ‘Facing the Passions: An Embodied Approach to Facial Expression on the Eighteenth-Century Stage’, João Luís Paixão both proposes the efficacy and documents the implementation of a methodology for research into acting techniques, in order, more specifically, ‘to expand current technical knowledge on the use of facial expression by focusing on specific instances in its history’. Paixão’s work not only explores the fine lines between repetitive training and ‘spontaneous’ inspiration, between ‘presenting’ and ‘real feeling’, but expands on the presence of the past in the actor’s body, in the instant of creation.

Facial expression was of course a primary means of moving the passions: both Act III of Racine’s *Mitridate* (the famous ‘*Seigneur, vous changez de visage*’) and Act IV of Quinault’s *livret* for *Roland* contain scenes designed to be performed with extraordinary physiognomic prowess. In them, the actors have to express the feelings of the character without resorting to speech: there is no text. However, the face (and with it, the actor’s imagination) can also be called upon to aid the timing by means of proprioception in the act of declamation itself. Léon Brémont attributed such a technique to Talma, citing the latter’s delivery of the famous lines of Néron in Act II, scene 2 of Racine’s *Britannicus*:

*Excité d’un désir curieux,
Cette nuit je l’ai vue arrive en ces lieux,
Triste, levant au ciel ses yeux mouillés de larmes
Qui brillaient au travers des flambeaux et des armes.
Belle sans ornement, dans le simple appareil
D’une beauté qu’on vient d’arracher au sommeil.*²⁴

Brémont informs us that the timing of the lines was affected by Talma’s facial expression at the word ‘*belle*’:

²³ See for instance: Jed WENTZ, *The Relationship Between Gesture, Affect and Rhythmic Freedom in the Performance of French Tragic Opera from Lully to Rameau*, doctoral thesis, Universiteit Leiden (2010), pp. 143–153.

²⁴ Cited in Léon BRÉMONT, *Le Théâtre et la Poésie* (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1894), p. 139.

*Talma faisait attendre ainsi the b du mot belle; il préparait l'attaque tandis que sa physionomie exprimait l'ardente admiration qu'il avait éprouvée, puis il articulait fortement cette consonne en n'accordant au contraire à la voyelle qu'une sonorité mystérieuse.*²⁵

Thus, declamation and facial expression joined forces in order to express Néron's desire, significantly changing sound of the line. Of course, one cannot know exactly how he performed the text, but trying out Brémont's description for oneself already suggests various ways in which the development of affect in the face, as well as of the pressure of the breath against the lips forming the as yet unspoken 'b', could be used expressively in delivery. Here the actor would have consulted his personal taste, and have drawn on his knowledge not only of painting (facial expression), but also of music (declamation).

The article, 'Tempo in Declamation According To Gustav Anton Freiherr Von Seckendorff', documents musician-declamer Andreas Gilger's engagement with an historical source that explicitly brings spoken and sung practices together within a didactic context. This article was created to accompany five audio recordings of poems made according to indications in actor-declamer Seckendorff's *Vorlesungen über Deklamation und Mimik* (1816). It seemed important, in putting together this volume, to look beyond the English and French stages: although these played an unquestionably important role in the unfolding of the Western European acting tradition, it is unreasonable for theatre scholars to pass over the work of actors from neighbouring lands. Therefore, articles referring to performance-related texts from Italy, The Netherlands and – in Gilger's case – Germany can be found in this volume. The wide range of tempi (linked to different literary genres) that Seckendorff advocates (and that Gilger performs) may help us to rethink the peaceable and uniformly stately pace which has often been associated with the declamation practices of the past.

In counterpoint to Gilger's exploration, Sabine Chaouche's 'Acting through the Lens of the Press: Impulsive Styles, Truthful Tones and Scenic Expressivity in Eighteenth-Century France' looks at changes in acting and declamation in the latter days of the *Ancien Régime*. Chaouche's article makes clear that the demands of a new genre of theatre – the bourgeois drama – led actors to experiment with more naturalistic styles of acting, even when performing the tragic repertoire that had preceded it. The resulting distortions of the carefully-crafted alexandrines caused the audience to respond with enthusiasm while critics in the press resorted to mockery. The various, varied and even contradictory videos that illustrate Chaouche's article are examples of how artistic research sometimes can aim to raise questions, rather than to reify the past. No attempt is made here to present an absolute historical 'truth'. Because there are different potential interpretations of the satirical descriptions that serve as a starting point for the videos, *possible*, rather than *definitive* versions are presented. These can in turn inspire further debate and research into declamation in France in the late eighteenth century.

²⁵ 'Talma retarded the 'b' in the word 'belle' in the following manner: he prepared the attack, while at the same time his physiognomy expressed the ardent admiration he was experiencing; then he strongly expressed this consonant while on the contrary only affording a mysterious sonority to the vowel'. (BRÉMONT, op. cit., p. 139). All translations are by the author.

FEELING: ‘AM I FURIOUS?’

Expressive techniques, even in pre-Method acting, had to be animated by real feeling, which has been considered essential to an actor’s art for centuries.²⁶ It would be nonsense to promote Stanislavski as the originator of an idea that in reality goes back at least to the tale of the actor Polus, who is said to have mourned over the ashes of his own dead son on stage in order to trigger his personal emotions of grief while acting.²⁷ This story is retold in Charles Gildon’s *Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton* (1710), the source to which we turn now. Gildon’s book is an important document, offering insights into English Restoration acting; but modern scholars are careful not to attribute all of its sentiments to Betterton himself: from the distance of 300 years, the extent to which Gildon merely used Betterton as a ventriloquist’s dummy to advance his own opinions is difficult to judge. The book, however, makes clear that ‘real feeling’ in acting, as a means of emotional contagion, was considered to be essential:

When you are therefore to speak, you ought first with Care to consider the Nature of the Thing of which you are to speak, and fix a very deep impression of it in your own Mind, before you can be thoroughly touch’d with it your self [sic], or able by an agreeable Sympathy to convey the same Passions to another.²⁸

Real feeling is, according to Gildon, to be achieved through the imagination, but it is clear that personal experience can also be called upon by the actor in his quest: indeed, Gildon turns to Shakespeare and glosses Hamlet’s famous Hecuba speech. He begins with the actor’s consciousness (‘soul’):

The first place is the fixing this in the [actor’s] *Soul*, to engage that thoroughly in the Passion, and then from her Working will his Visage warm, his eyes flow with Tears, and Distractions spread over all his Face; nay, then will his Voice be broken, and every Faculty of his Body be agreeable to this strong Emotion of the Soul. Though in the first seven lines [of the Hecuba speech] he [Shakespeare] seems to have expressed all the Duties of a player in a great Passion;²⁹

Gildon then describes accessing one’s personal grief:

yet in the following seven he derives a yet stronger Action when the Object of Grief is real; which justifies what the Ancients practis’d in heightening their theatrical Sorrow, by fixing the Mind on real Objects; or by working yourself up by a strong imagination, that you are the very Person and in the very same Circumstances, which will make the Case so very much your own, that you will not want Fire in Anger, nor Tears in Grief: And then you need not fear affecting the Audience, for Passions are wonderfully convey’d from one Person’s Eyes to another’s; the Tears of *one* melting the Heart of the *other*, by a very visible Sympathy between their Imaginations and Aspects.³⁰

Gildon, channelling Polus – via Michel Le Faucheur’s *Traité de l’action de l’orateur* (1657) – and *Hamlet*, recommends to actors both the stimulation of the imagination and the utilization of personal experience in order to create ‘real feeling’. More than one hundred years after Gildon, Jean-Baptiste Sarlandière, in his *Physiologie de l’action musculaire appliquée aux arts d’imitation* (1830), associates a similar monistic understanding of body (muscles) and mind (emotion) with the French actors Molière and François-Joseph Talma. Sarlandière describes the movements of the ‘muscles

²⁶ The author here resists the temptation to enter into the argument about what Diderot meant in his *Paradoxe du Comédien*.

²⁷ See Leofranc Holford-Strevens, ‘Polus and his Urn: A Case Study in the Theory of Acting, c. 300 B.C. – c. A.D. 2000’, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, Spring, 2005, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Spring, 2005), 499–523.

²⁸ Charles GILDON, *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton* (London: 1710), p. 113.

²⁹ GILDON, *ibid.*, p. 71.

³⁰ GILDON, *ibid.*

of expression’ as those which very precisely correspond to emotions, causing the muscles to contract either voluntarily or involuntarily with great refinement:

*pour concourir à produire ce qu’on appelle l’expression. C’est ce qu’on observe dans les émotions douces, dans les passions affectueuses. D’autres fois ces muscles se contractent avec énergie et dessinent des saillies rudes et des dépressions très marquées; c’est ce qui a lieu dans les émotions vives et dans les passions violentes, principalement dans les passions haineuses et dans l’effroi; ces contractions énergiques sont plus souvent involontaires que volontaires, et encore lorsqu’on veut s’efforcer de les représenter sans avoir reçu naturellement l’impression qui les détermine, est-on obligé de se procurer mentalement une sensation forte, afin que le centre nerveux réagisse sur les muscles d’expression et les force à lui obéir. C’est de cet artifice qu’usent les bons acteurs[.]*³¹

Sarlandière then specifically names the two well-known actors as having made use of this ‘artifice’: *‘j’ai souvent entendu dire à Talma qu’il s’identifiait avec les caractères qu’il voulait représenter, en se préparant par des fortes impressions; Molière est mort pour avoir trop bien joué le rôle qu’il venait de créer’*.³²

However, we can find an even more complex descriptions of how muscles and emotions are linked in eighteenth-century anglophone sources: in my article on Aaron Hill’s acting exercises (“‘And the wing’d muscles, into meanings fly’”: Artistic Research into Historical Acting through the Writings of Aaron Hill) I explore his circular technique for generating passion, starting either from the actor’s imagination, or from the muscles. Hill described a monistic mind-body loop in which the perception of the physical sensation of emotions occurring in the body (i.e. changes in muscle tension) and the actor’s imagination worked upon each other. This phenomenon he called ‘the mazy Round’. Gilbert Austin and Edmund Burke would later also describe emotion as a body-mind circuit.³³ Yet, as I underscore, this emphasis on feeling does not exclude the possibility of sculpted presentation and strong facial expressions: although Hill insists on personal feeling and physical engagement, he is no proponent of a ‘proto-Method’. In this context, I further propose that the acting of David Garrick, with whom Hill corresponded, was perhaps more traditional than many theatre scholars (particularly those who search for epistemological shifts) have imagined.

Within this context of ‘real’ feeling and technique, Laila Cathleen Neuman’s article “‘Despairing Rage” and “Courageous Pride”: Exploring the Acting Style of Johannes Jelgerhuis through Practice-Based Research” is particularly enlightening. It offers – by introducing readers to the rich archive of Dutch actor Johannes Jelgerhuis – a glimpse into the private emotional world of an early nineteenth-century actor *mid-performance*. Jelgerhuis’s manuscripts describe (sometimes line by line) both what he *felt* and what he *did* in performing some of his favourite roles. Neuman has analysed these descriptions and drawn conclusions from them. Moreover, she has used performance as a research tool in the process. If Paixão’s practice-based research was one of self-observation, Neuman’s was collaborative. Having prepared her own body by following Jelgerhuis’s acting precepts, she then proceeded to function as stage director, calling upon fellow members of DHAC to help her recreate scenes from one of Jelgerhuis’s favourite plays. Neuman, in order to ‘set’ Jelgerhuis’s descriptions onto the actors, found herself comparing what she had read in

³¹ ‘in order to contribute to the production of what one calls *expression*. This is what one observes in gentle emotions and affectionate passions. At other times these muscles contract with energy and draw rough protrusions and very marked depressions; which is what occurs in lively emotions and violent passions, principally in hateful passions and in terror; these energetic contractions are more often involuntary than voluntary, and again when we want to force ourselves to represent them without having naturally received the impression that determines them, one is obliged to get a strong mental sensation, so that the nerve centre reacts on the muscles of expression and forces them to obey. This is the artifice used by good actors[.]’ Jean-Baptiste SARLANDIÈRE, *Physiologie de l’action musculaire appliquée aux arts d’imitation* (Paris: 1830), pp. 12–3.

³² ‘I have often heard it said of Talma that he identified himself with the characters he wanted to represent, by preparing himself with strong impressions; Molière died from having too well played the role he had just created’. SARLANDIÈRE, *ibid.*, p. 13.

³³ See: Gilbert AUSTIN, *Chironomia* (London: 1806), p. 294n.

Jelgerhuis's manuscripts, not only to what she was seeing the actors do, but also to what she herself had experienced in her own body during her preparations for the experiment.

Kat Carson's testimony documents a different kind of process, but also one in which the performer cannot determine the outcome entirely alone: her 'Past into Present: Breathing Life into Contemporary Performance with Historical Acting' documents work carried out with fellow-musician Punto Bawono. Mutual influence (listening, reacting) and artistic give-and-take are required in order to create modern performances of spoken text with musical accompaniment. Based on historical techniques and models, but without submitting them to a restrictive notion of 'authenticity', Carson's creative work shows not only how voice, text and gesture can interact, but points a way forward towards new artistic forms. More vitally, Carson demonstrates how actors can radically alter the emotional content of the performance (in this case, from vengefulness to guilt and horror) without changing either the text or gestures: it is the performer's imagination and consequent *manner* that gives meaning to historical acting.

Until now the emphasis of this introduction has been on *techniques*. Yet the actor had to do more than just train the *body*: the *role* also had to be prepared. In order to do so, emotional states needed to be identified in the text; for it was there, in the text, that the character – with whom the actor was encouraged to identify through acts of will and imagination – was revealed, by means of the passions assigned to the role. Indeed, Tiffany Stern has remarked that, already in Shakespeare's time: "The interpretation of a text into the appropriate pronunciation and gesture involved breaking the script down into relevant "passions" (the emotional stuff of tragedy): a term often used to describe the art of acting at the time was "passionating".³⁴

Rather than inventing, down to the smallest detail, a backstory, actors closely examined their text, especially looking for the distinct and varied emotions expressed in it. This emphasis on passionating reminds one of Ian McKellen's confession that in *King Lear* he paid attention not to *why* he was saying the lines (backstory) but to *how* he was saying them ('AM I FURIOUS?'). Actors in the past moved from one affect to another in deliberate and pre-planned sequence, based on their understanding of the character as revealed in the lines themselves: Aaron Hill worked with professional actors in London in the 1730s, not only helping them prepare their bodies to act with his passionate exercises, but also marking up the passions of specific roles for them. To my knowledge none of these parts survives, but we are fortunate to have a letter written to David Garrick on August 3rd, 1749, in which Hill proposes just how such an annotated version of a role could be created. Hill's description gives precious insight into at least one historical method used to prepare for performance. He advises making a little separate notebook for each new part:

Then, as fast, as you *discern* the passions, on *examining* the part, draw, under those, you so discern, *black lines*, and *red*, alternatively, to preserve each difference *distinct* (whether *dramatic* passion, *complex* passions, *topic*, or *reflection*) and, in the same *ink*, mark the *margin*, with a *single* figure, one, two, three, four, and so on, in successive order. Each such *figure* but referring to its *explanation*, in the *note book*; where, at the same *mark*, insert *what* passion, grace, or elegance it is; and *add* all proper *memorandum's* on the attitudes, rests, breaks of *voice*, and other *beauties*, which concern the *force* you propose to *express* it with.³⁵

Such preparations required the actor carefully to study the lines, and to find in them the characteristic passions of the character they were to play: this process was not to be hurried. Even though historically there was relatively little rehearsal on stage (and here Stern's *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* is revelatory), it is clear that actors did take the necessary private time to

³⁴ Tiffany STERN, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 75.

³⁵ Aaron HILL, *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill, Esq.*, Vol. 2 (London: 1754), p. 384.

study new parts, often working one-on-one with the theatre's prompter as a kind of coach or director. Adequate preparation of the individual role would allow the actor to 'say the lines, and live in the moment' (as McKellen put it) and deliver a convincing performance. Many anecdotes from the period make clear that not all actors were convincing, however; indeed, many seem not even to have understood their lines properly, let alone having a grasp of the character they played.³⁶ The great Sarah Siddons discovered to her chagrin that even roles with relatively few lines needed time to be fully understood. She notes of her preparations for *Macbeth*:

It was my custom to study my characters at night, when all the domestic cares and business of the day were over. On the night preceding that in which I was to appear in this part for the first time, I shut myself up as usual, when all the family were retired, and commenced my study of Lady Macbeth. As the character is very short, I thought I should soon accomplish it. Being then only twenty years of age, I believed that little more was necessary than to get the words into my head, for the necessity of discrimination, and the development of character, at that time of my life, had scarcely entered into my imagination.³⁷

Siddons relates how powerfully she was affected by her study of the role, however, even to the extent that her imagination began to play tricks on her. Going deep into the character filled her with dread:

I went on with tolerable composure, in the silence of the night (a night I never can forget), till I came to the assassination scene, when the horrors of the scene rose to a degree that made it impossible for me to get farther. I snatched up my candle, and hurried out of the room in a paroxysm of terror. My dress was of silk, and the rustling of it, as I ascended the stairs to go to bed, seemed to my panic-struck fancy like the movement of a spectre pursuing me.³⁸

Mrs. Siddons attributed a profound and lasting reformation of her work habits to the following day's poor performance: 'At the peep of day I rose to resume my task; but so little did I know of my part when I appeared in it at night, that my shame and confusion cured me of procrastinating my business for the remainder of my life'.³⁹

A scene from [Antoine?] Le Tessier's one-act comedy *Le Maître de Déclamation* (1783) prescribes the kind of care actors *ought* to have taken to study great roles. In it, Le Tessier proposed a much longer period of study than the young Siddons had allotted herself before her Lady Macbeth debut. The play's main character, Rainville, *homme de qualité*, is a former actor who has decided to establish himself as:

*Maître de Déclamation, d'y faire des écoliers en Tragique & Comique, dans ceux qui se destinent au Théâtre, ainsi que dans les Orateurs, qui, par état, doivent savoir parler en public, & en un mot, aider à développer le talent de la scène chez toutes les personnes de société qui se plaisent à jouer des Pièces entr'eux, autant pour la perfectionner leur langue, que pour leur amusement.*⁴⁰

³⁶ For such criticisms, see, for instance, the writings of Aaron Hill, particularly in *The Prompter*, Numbs. LXIV, CXIII, CXVIII, etc: https://books.google.nl/books?id=yikTAAAAQAAJ&pg=PR129&dq=%22it+is+true,+this+Instrumental+Eloquence%22&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwia76K34_zrAhWJMewKHUggBmcQ6wEwAHoECAAQAQ#v=onepage&q=%22it%20is%20true%2C%20this%20Instrumental%20Eloquence%22&f=false (last accessed 23-09-2020).

³⁷ Cited from Mrs. Clement PARSONS, *The Incomparable Siddons* (London: Methuen & Co. 1909), p. 39.

³⁸ PARSONS, *ibid.*, p. 39.

³⁹ PARSONS, *ibid.*, p. 40.

⁴⁰ 'a declamation master, to create students in tragedy and comedy from those who aim for the theatre, as well as orators from those whose state requires them to know how to speak in public, and, in a word, to help develop theatrical talent for all members of society who enjoy acting plays amongst themselves, as much to perfect their language as for their own amusement.' (Le TESSIER, *Le Maître de Déclamation*, (Amsterdam: 1783), p. 2.

Rainville's very first pupil is the Marquis de Craquignac, a provincial nobleman with a heavy Gascon accent who expects to be able to learn the role of Orosmane (from Voltaire's *Zaire*) in time for an amateur performance that very evening. To Rainville's amazement, the Marquis whips out a handkerchief, wraps it round his head like a turban and begins to declaim:

*Bertueuse Zairé, abant qué l'hyménée
Joigne à jamais nos curs & notre destinée,
J'ai cru sur mes projets, sur bus, sur mon amour,
Déboir en Muzuman bous parler sans detour.*⁴¹

Rainville, incredulous at the speed with which the Marquis intends mastering this part, informs his pupil that: '*un Acteur consommé demanderoit, au moins, un mois pour apprendre ce role & deux pour le raisonner. [...] J'entends, Monsieur, pour raisonner un role avant de le jouer, le disséquer.*'⁴² When the dim-witted Craquignac protests against making a skeleton of Orosmane (by dissecting him), Rainville changes vocabulary, explaining that an actor 'chats' [*causer*] with his role. He waxes lyrical about the actor's art, that is brought to its perfection only in the presence of an audience:

*Causer avec son role, Monsieur, c'est, primo, d'en bien developper et approfondir le caractere & la situation; en apprécier toutes les phrases, en connoître la force & en définir tous les sens, en vous pénétrant de la phrase, vous vous rendez en état de donner la vie aux mots, la chaleur aux expressions l'éclat aux pensées. En causant bien avec son role, avant de l'apprendre, on parvient lorsque l'on le sait, à savoir s'occuper sur la scene pendant les interlocutions de jeu muet, des réponses des phisionomies, à mettre en usage les changements de masque.*⁴³

Rainville then compares the art acting to that of painting, explaining that to 'chat' is to:

*commencer par le dessiner, en suite preparer les teintes & les distribuer avec gout, éloigner par leur variété la triste monotonie, ce tourment des yeux & des oreilles: au moyen du savant art des nuances, vous repandez avantageusement dans le debit & le jeu de votre role, des jours, des clairs, et jettez artistement des ombres & des bruns, vous adoucissez ensuite tous les traits, leur donnez de la grace, & les terminez par un vernis léger brillant & agréable, à travers lequel on voit percer l'esprit et le genie du Comédien peintre: par tous ses soins faisant admirer & l'Auteur & l'Acteur, ce modele n'attend plus pour sa perfection que les applaudissemens du public, c'est de ces rayons ardents que tous les plus beaux tableaux recoivent leur veritable lumiere.*⁴⁴

The historical actor, thus, although he may be fixated during performance on *how* he is saying the lines, and on *what* he is feeling when he says them, has, ideally at least, a long and arduous period of preparation behind him before he displays his labours on stage.

This preparation is only brought to perfection, however, in the very special light of public observation: Le Tessier, through the lips of Rainville, insists that it is the gaze of the audience that turns the mere preparatory sketch of a character into a finished work of art. It is by interacting

⁴¹ Le TESSIER, *ibid.*, p. 10. For the original text, see: Voltaire, *Zaire*, I.2.

⁴² 'a consummate actor requires at least one month to learn this role and two to ponder it. [...] I mean, Sir, by pondering a role prior to playing it, to dissect it.' (Le TESSIER, *ibid.*, p. 11).

⁴³ To chat with one's role, Sir, is *primo* to develop and deepen the character and emotional situations; to appraise all the phrases, to know their force and to define all their meanings; by fully understanding the phrases you make yourself capable of giving life to the words, warmth to the expressions and brilliance to the thoughts. By thoroughly chatting with one's role, before memorizing it, one arrives, before one knows it, at a knowledge of how to occupy oneself in pantomime during dialogues on stage, responding with facial expression and making use of changes of physiognomy. Le TESSIER, *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴⁴ 'to begin with a sketch, thereafter to prepare the colours and to distribute them tastefully, and to banish by their variety that torment for the eyes and ears, sad monotony; by means of the deep art of nuances, you advantageously strew bright spots and flashes of light, you artistically throw shadows and darkness in the declamation and action of your role; you then soften all the features, give them grace and finish them off with a light, brilliant and charming varnish, through which one sees the spirit and genius of the actor-painter breaking through; this [preliminary] model, which [...] makes both the author and the actor admired, only awaits the applause of the audience to be perfected, for it is from these ardent rays that the most beautiful paintings receive their real light'. Le TESSIER, *ibid.*, pp. 12–3.

with supportive and critical spectators that the metamorphosis occurs. It is to this audience that I turn now.

THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE : ‘THEY’D WRITTEN THE PLAY, A LITTLE BIT

In the opening scene of *Le Maître de Déclamation*, Rainville had already discussed with a fellow actor named Bonval the active role taken by the audience in shaping the players’ performances: Rainville praised the Paris audience for supporting young actors and encouraging them as they grow in their craft. Bonval, incredulous, asks in what way the public does this, and Rainville responds:

*En quoi! En ce qu'ils saisissent dans un Acteur un rien fait à propos, qu'ils lui tiennent compte sur la scene du plus petit mouvement, du moindre coup d'œil, du jeu muet le plus imperceptible, & que connoisseurs délicats en talent ils savent démêler sur la phisionomie du Comédien tous les projets de son ame.*⁴⁵

It is noteworthy that a style now broadly associated with overacting is here considered to be subtle and delicate, and to require a perceptive and attentive audience to achieve its perfection. It is similarly remarkable that actors were supported as well as distracted by the rowdy audiences of the past.⁴⁶ Jeffrey S. Ravel has examined disruptive audience behaviour in *Ancien Régime Paris* in his *The Contested Parterre: Public Theater and French Political Culture, 1680–1791*, but he also noted that the excitement generated by the untamed public was considered, at least by Diderot, to be beneficial to performance. The passage Ravel cites comes from the *Réponse à la lettre de Madame Riccoboni* (1758), where Diderot, looking back nostalgically, describes the French theatres of the 1740s as:

*des lieux de tumulte. Les têtes les plus froides s'échauffaient en y entrant, et les hommes sensés y partageaient plus ou moins le transport des fous. [...] On s'agitait, on se remuait, on se poussait, l'âme était mise hors d'elle-même. Or, je ne connais pas de disposition plus favorable au poète. La pièce commençait avec peine, était souvent interrompue; mais survenait-il un bel endroit? c'était un fracas incroyable, les bis se redemandaient sans fin, on s'enthousiasmait de l'auteur, de l'acteur et de l'actrice. L'enjouement passait du parterre à l'amphithéâtre, et de l'amphithéâtre aux loges.*⁴⁷

Diderot painted the audience’s experience as a kind of rapture:

*On était arrivé avec chaleur, on s'en retournait dans l'ivresse; les uns allaient chez les filles, les autres répandaient dans le monde; c'était comme un orage que allait se dissiper au loin, et dont le muremure durait encore long-temps après qu'il était écarté. Voilà le plaisir.*⁴⁸

⁴⁵ ‘In what way! In that they perceive in an actor a little detail performed appropriately, in that they are grateful to him on stage for the smallest movement, for the slightest glance of the eye, for the most imperceptible pantomime, & that, talented and perceptive connoisseurs, they can distinguish on the actor’s face all the intentions of his soul’. Le TESSIER, *ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴⁶ It is beyond the scope of this introduction to address varieties of behaviour in audiences of different countries and epochs in detail. The author is aware of the dangers of reducing audience reactions to a too-great uniformity, but general conclusions have been drawn by theatre scholars. For the seventeenth-century context, for example, see Sylvaine GUYOT and Clothilde THOURET, ‘Des émotions en chaîne: Représentations théâtrale et circulation publique des affects au XVIIIe siècle’, *Littératures classiques*, 2009/1, No. 68, 225–241.

⁴⁷ ‘places of tumult. The coldest heads became heated upon entering, and reasonable men more or less shared the transports of madmen. [...] There was agitation, milling about, pushing, the soul was infuriated. However, I know of no more favourable disposition for the poet. The piece got started with difficulty, was often interrupted; but if there were a beautiful spot? There was an unbelievable fracas, endlessly demanded encores, ecstatic reception for the author, the actor and the actress. The joy passed from the pit to the seats and from the seats to the boxes.’ Denis DIDEROT, ‘Réponse à la lettre de Madame Riccoboni’, in *Œuvre de Denis Diderot*, Tome Quatrième, Ire partie (Paris: 1818), pp. 731–2. It is worth noting that Diderot’s description is of theatres ‘il y a quinze ans’. At the time of his writing, the placement of armed soldiers on the stage had greatly suppressed audience behaviour, to Diderot’s chagrin.

⁴⁸ ‘One had arrived warm, and departed drunk; some visited prostitutes, others circulated in society; it was like a thunderstorm, dissipating at a distance, and whose rumblings lasted long after it had moved on. *Voilà le Plaisir*’. DIDEROT, *ibid.*, p. 732.

Diderot, returning to the present, laments that the stationing of armed soldiers on either side of the stage has tamed the audience, diminishing its pleasure: ‘*Aujourd’hui on arrive froids, on écoute froids, on sort froids, et je ne sais où l’on va*’.⁴⁹ While it is still usually expected of our present-day audience to sit obediently and quietly in the darkness, waiting to be mentally challenged by Brechtian ‘distancing’ in order to draw intellectual satisfaction from an evening at the theatre, Diderot, on the contrary, looks back lovingly on an agitated, irascible throng, crowding in upon itself to attain an experience that was physically and emotionally (and cognitive science tells us this is the same thing) close to ecstasy: *Voilà le plaisir!* As Ravel put it: ‘Rather than preserving the critical sense of detachment that we value when we attend the theatre today, eighteenth-century parterre patrons insisted on collaborating within the playhouse in physically demonstrable and emotional ways.’⁵⁰ Indeed, Sabine Chaouche, in discussing eighteenth-century theatre, stresses that:

*Ce que nous concevons comme la théâtralité (celle qui est propre aux acteurs, à la mise en scène, à la représentation théâtrale) n’est pas forcément symbolisée par la division entre la salle et la scène, et n’a pas lieu exclusivement sur le plateau par l’intermédiaire du jeu des acteurs. Elle s’apparente plus à une sorte de collage (pas de séparation nette entre actants et regardants, mais une juxtaposition d’éléments comme toute hétéroclites puisque tout spectateur n’est pas forcément ‘plaisant’), voire à une collusion entre membres du public.*⁵¹

Thus, the actors, alternately scrutinized and ignored by the viewer, received tangible censure and praise during performances, with (as Diderot tells us) audience members eliciting repetitions of favourite passages in ‘endlessly demanded encores’ [*les bis se redemandaient sans fin*].

Such engagement was in part made possible by the fact that ‘fans’ returned to the theatre night after night and knew both the star players’ delivery and the standard repertoire by heart. Moreover, they were prepared not only to comment upon, but to *act along* with the performance, to experience it in their own bodies. In his *Tooneel-Aantekeningen* (1786), Dutch actor Marten Corver described the Amsterdam audience’s behaviour during performances of *Don Louis de Vargas, of Edelmoedige Wraak* (1668). This work, a translation by Dirck Pieterszoon Heynck of Juan Ruiz Alacón y Mendoza’s *El tejedor de Segovia* (1619), premiered successfully in 1668 and ‘became a stock play for the Amsterdam Municipal Theatre, being performed regularly up until 1788’.⁵² Corver describes events of the 1741 season: at one point in Act V, where the villainous Count faces justice at the hands of a vengeful Don Louis, the patrons in the standing room were moved to softly exclaim (of the actor Schmit, who was playing the role of the Count): ‘*Kijk! kijk den Graaf! Kijk Schmit eens veranderen!*’ [‘Look! Look at the Count! Just look at Schmit react!’] while the fans [‘*Liefhebbers*’], in their usual places behind the orchestra, said to one another in rapture: ‘*de Graaf is om hals*’ [‘The Count is a dead man’].⁵³ Corver recounts that star actor Jan Punt’s delivery of the significant line which caused Schmit’s reaction, ‘*Dat gij niet meer zult leven*’ [‘That you no more shall live’], was so remarkable that the audience, afraid to disturb him but seemingly unable to repress

⁴⁹ ‘Today one arrives cold, one listens coldly and one leaves coldly, and I do not know where one goes.’ DIDEROT, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Jeffrey S. RAVEL, *The Contested Parterre: Public Theater and French Political Culture, 1680–1791* (S.L.: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 56.

⁵¹ ‘What we conceive to be theatricality (that which is specific to the actors, to the staging, to the theatrical performance) is not necessarily symbolized by the separation between the hall and the platform, and does not take place exclusively through the acting on stage. It is closer to a collage (no discrete separation between actors and viewers, but the sum total of heterogeneous elements, since not every spectator is necessarily ‘pleasant’) or a collusion between members of the public’. Sabine CHAOUCHE, ‘Les Spectateurs dans la Lorgnette des Anecdotes: Fait Divers ou Fait Théâtral?’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 32:4 (2009), 515–527, p. 516.

⁵² Rena BOOD, ‘The Barke is Bad, but the Tree Good’: Hispanophilia, Hispanophobia and Spanish Honour in English and Dutch Plays (c. 1630–1670), *Literary Hispanophobia and Hispanophilia in Britain and the Low Countries (1550–1850)*, ed. Yolanda RODRÍGUEZ PÉREZ (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 145–164, p. 157.

⁵³ M[arten]. CORVER, *Tooneel-Aantekeningen, vervat in een omstandigen Brief, aan den Schrijver van het Leven van Jan Punt* (Leyden: Cornelis HEYLIGERT, 1786), p. 13.

themselves entirely, whispered the text along with him: ‘*het publicq sprak, door elkanderen aantezien, met stomme gebaerden, ja met zachte fluisterende woorden zelfs, om die aandacht niet te storen, het vonnis des doods over den Graaf uit*’.⁵⁴ A different reaction, however, could accompany more fiery passages, as Corver notes of the audience support given to Punt in 1753, in the title role of Balthazar Huydecoper’s *Achilles* (1719). At his delivery of the line ‘*ik zal ten strijd gaan*’ [‘I’ll go to battle’]: ‘*een algemeen handgeklap hem vereerde, benevens een algemeen geroep, de d...r dat is speelen! dat is schoon! dat is fraai! dat is het regte, enz. en waarlijk het was ook schoon*’.⁵⁵ The audience knew the contours of the standard repertoire, and the actors’ potential to move them through it, well enough to gage just when and how to pay attention to what was happening onstage, looking out for what Diderot calls ‘a beautiful spot’ [‘*un bel endroit*’]. As Tiffany Stern has noted:

The process of watching successful plays was cumulative, involving building up a complex knowledge of the ways of text, action, and actors over successive performances. A new play thus emerges a completely different entity from an old play, to be watched from a different perspective.⁵⁶

It was thus, I propose, that the public shone light on the actor’s performance, illuminating the carefully crafted theatrical *tableaux* (as Le Tessier put it in *Le Maître de Déclamation*). Indeed, Simon Stijl in his *Leven van Jan Punt* (1781) informs us that the audience in Amsterdam was frequently moved to imitate publicly the declamation of Punt, whose:

uitvoering was zo doordringende, dat zy dikwyls op de Aanschouwers een al te diepen indruk maakte. Men deed niet zelden tusschen de bedryven de Muziek van het Orkest zwijgen, om de rollen van het afgebroken bedryf luidruchtig te herhaalen; en 't scheelde weinig of men zou dit zelfs onder 't speelen gedaan hebben, geelyk de Franschen in de Opera gewoon zyn hunne begunstigde Zangers met een gansch koor te verzellen.⁵⁷

Only a thorough knowledge of, and passion for, Punt’s performance of a well-loved text could have called forth such a reaction from the audience, eager to experience in their own bodies what they had just seen performed onstage.

Such anecdotes help us to reflect on the process by which artists and audiences internalized the sights and sounds of past performances in order to co-create new ones. Mary Carruthers’s ‘Of Notes and Unfolding Sounds. Perspectives from Grammar and Geometry’, placed at the very beginning of this issue, reminds us of something fundamental to historical, real-time experiences of the spoken word: the seemingly magical affective power of declamation that resided in the united forces of meaning, breath and musicality. Although this volume does not otherwise deal with Medieval texts, I personally continue to draw inspiration from Carruthers’s writings, and can recommend them to practitioners dealing with later periods as well, particularly her essay on the role of *ductus* in performance.⁵⁸ In this volume, in ‘Of Notes and Unfolding Sounds’, Carruthers elucidates the importance of making ‘the raw sense data received from outside comprehensible

⁵⁴ ‘the audience—by looking at each other, with silent gestures, yes even with soft, whispering words, in order not to disturb the concentration [‘*aandacht*’]—pronounced the death sentence over the Count.’ (CORVER, *ibid.*, p. 14).

⁵⁵ ‘he was honoured with general applause as well as a general cry of *by t[hunde]r, that is acting! that is beautiful! that is fine! that is right, etc.* and truly it was also beautiful’. (CORVER, *ibid.*, p. 59).

⁵⁶ STERN, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

⁵⁷ ‘performance was so piercing, that it regularly made an all too deep impression on the audience. Often they would silence the orchestral music between the acts in order noisily to repeat the roles of the act that had just finished; and they were at a hair’s breadth from doing this during the performance itself, just as the French have the habit of accompanying as an entire chorus their favoured singers at the Opera.’ Simon STIJL, *Levensbeschryving van eenige voornaame meest Nederlandsche mannen en vrouwen. Het leven van Jan Punt* ([Petrus CONRADI, Amsterdam; Volkert VAN DER PLAATS, Harlingen] 1781), p. 18.

⁵⁸ See Mary Carruthers, ‘The Concept of *Ductus* or Journeying through a Work of Art’, *Acting on the Past*, ed. by Mark FRANKO and Annette RICHARDS (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 190–213.

and memorable in a way that we can later recall and use creatively’ – that is to say, how we transform perception into images. Surely these images not only inspired actors, but also the audiences who had seen them act so often before? A basic openness on the part of the viewers, a willingness to be moved, and receptivity to the power of the drama were undoubtedly essential. As Dutch theatre historian Ben Albach noted, the audience was: *‘veel ontvankelijker, naïver en spontaner dan in onzen tijd. Het leefde mee met het gebeuren op het tooneel alsof dit werkelijkheid was, en er bestond een hartstocht voor het tooneel, zooals men dien nu niet meer kent’*.⁵⁹ Here, however, we run into a difference between historical and contemporary ideals of theatre: ‘receptive; and ‘naive’ are not characteristics currently applied to audiences as praise. Berthold Brecht (1898–1956), of course, championed an ‘epic’ theatre which rejected Aristotelian empathy on the part of the audience. In his 1936 essay ‘Verfremdungseffekte in der chinesischen Schauspielkunst’ [‘Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting’] he spoke glowingly of ‘ein künstlicher und kunstvoller Akt der Selbstenfremdung’ [‘an artificial and artistic act of self-alienation’] on the part of the actor that *‘verhindert die vollständige, das heißt die bis zur Selbstaufgabe gehende Einfühlung des Zuschauers und schafft eine großartige Distanz zu den Vorgängen’*.⁶⁰ Indeed, according to Brecht, if audience members identified with such an actor at all, it was as fellow observers, recognizing a self-observing actor.⁶¹ While it is not my intention to censure such ideas *an sich* – attuned as they are to the ideals of the Neue Sachlichkeit [New Objectivity] movement of the 1930s – I *would* suggest that historical sources indicate other options are available to us today. Past audiences, with a committed group of spirited connoisseurs at their core, were engaged in a symbiotic creative process with the actors on stage in which the generation of strong emotion in all the bodies present – those of the *actors* and the *audience* – served as the ultimate reward. There was a physical-affective connection. It was believed that this strong emotional symbiosis improved the actor’s performance and heightened the audience’s pleasure even into a kind of ecstasy. As Aaron Hill noted in a letter to playwright David Mallet: ‘You must have remarked, how much the *claps* in a *Tragedy* can contribute to its *success* on the *Stage* – as well by raising the *Spirits* of the *actors*, as by awakening the *hopes* of an *audience*’.⁶²

This interplay between the actor’s body and the affects of the audience reminds me of the description of interbodily resonance found in an article by Thomas Fuchs and Sabine C. Koch that appeared in *Frontiers in Psychology* in 2014. Affect as a social phenomenon between individuals is there described as a circular interplay, in which bodily states are constantly being modified by the mutual interaction. These ‘expressions and reactions’:

have become parts of a dynamic sensorimotor and interaffective system that connects both bodies in *interbodily resonance* or *intercorporality*. Of course, the signals and reactions involved proceed far too quickly to become conscious as such. Instead, both partners will experience a specific feeling of being connected with the other in a way that may be termed “mutual incorporation”.⁶³

⁵⁹ ‘much more receptive, naive and spontaneous than in our times. They sympathized with what happened on stage as if it were real, resulting in a passion for theatre the likes of which is unknown today’. (Ben ALBACH, *Jan Punt en Marten Corver: Nederlandsche Toneelleven in de 18e Eeuw* (P. N. van KAMOEN & Zoon: Amsterdam, 1946), p. 29.

⁶⁰ ‘prevents the full – that is to say, going to the point of self-abandonment – empathy of the spectator, and creates a magnificent distance to the events’. Bertolt BRECHT, ‘Verfremdungseffekte in der chinesischen Schauspielkunst’, *Schriften zum Theater: Über eine nicht-aristotelische Dramatik* (Berlin und Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1957), 74–89, p. 77.

⁶¹ It has been argued that when he saw the Chinese actor Mei Lanfang perform in Moscow in 1935, ‘Brecht was already armed with a formulated theory and a synthesizing concept, and [...] was eager to interpret what he saw in the interests of his own theory’. Brecht seems to have recognized something familiar in the ‘other’ which was more the result of projection than perspicuity. See Min TIAN, “‘Alienation-Effect’ for whom? Brecht’s (Mis)interpretation of the Classical Chinese Theatre”, *Asian Theatre Journal*, Autumn, 1997, Vol. 14, No 2 (Autumn, 1997), 200–222, pp. 203–4.

⁶² HILL, op. cit., p. 208.

⁶³ FUCHS and KOCH, art. cit., p. 6.

The authors continue:

Each lived and felt body reaches out, as it were, to be extended by the other. In both partners, their own bodily resonance mediates the perception of the other. It is in this sense that we can refer to the experience of the other in terms of an embodied perception, which, through the interaction process, is at the same time an embodied communication.⁶⁴

The authors of course are here referring to private interpersonal interactions rather than to public theatrical experiences. Yet is most tempting to use such a model to explain what was happening in theatres of the past, where patrons flocked again and again into overcrowded firetraps to be jostled, irritated and ultimately enraptured by beloved texts performed by admired actors. It was not through gazing at the stage, observing and reflecting thoughtfully upon what they saw that audiences then experienced theatre. This again calls Fuchs and Koch to mind: ‘emotions are not inner states that we experience only individually or that we have to decode in others, but primarily *shared states* that we experience through interbodily affection’.⁶⁵

However, when Ian McKellen spoke of the strong audience reaction to his King Lear he was not implying that they approached a level of engagement typical of audience behaviour of the past: I doubt they demanded, in the delirium Diderot described, that he repeat some of his lines. It is, however, telling that he noticed a significant difference in their engagement with the play, and that he attributed this to his new-found acting method of ‘just saying the lines’. It is to the lines themselves, to finish this examination of McKellen’s ‘confession’, that I turn now.

TEXTS: ‘CHASMS OF NONSENSE THAT LESSER PLAYWRIGHTS LAND YOU WITH’

Plays, unlike ballets or pantomimes, are made up of words that are shaped by the playwright into lines, scenes, acts. McKellen, speaking at the Oxford Union, mused that his new-found acting style would probably only be effective in plays by Shakespeare and Chekov, chuckling over the ‘the chasms of nonsense that lesser playwrights land you with’. It is no surprise to hear a contemporary Shakespearean actor praising The Bard; but I would argue against McKellen’s hypothesis that ‘just saying the lines’ will not work in ‘lesser’ repertoire. Quite the contrary, formerly popular works by the likes of Southerne, Rowe and Voltaire, were written to provide the actors with opportunities to shine in performance: we therefore cannot divorce historical theatre from the core repertoire it brought forth. It is not my intention to dispute the greatness of Shakespeare here, but rather to propose that the repertoire in vogue during the seventeenth, eighteenth and much of the nineteenth centuries can only be fully understood in relationship to the acting style it was created to display: scenes were written with the knowledge that actors could excel in them, thrill the public and guarantee frequent performances to a full house. These texts, however, imposed a number of performative imperatives on the actor. Rhetorical figures had to be performed rhetorically, with vocal inflexions, accompanied by physical gestures, that correspond their meaning. Indeed, Nancy L. Christiansen has argued, in examining the training of boys in Renaissance England, that: ‘[w]ith actions identified as figures and figures as actions themselves, both mental and physical style amounts to the same thing as delivery. As a consequence, any written text is automatically a set of

⁶⁴ FUCHS and KOCH, *ibid.*

⁶⁵ FUCHS and KOCH, *ibid.*, p. 7.

directions for oral performance'.⁶⁶ Indeed, I would argue: a set of directions for oral and *physical* (gestural) performance.

Therefore works of 'lesser' playwrights will, I warrant, benefit from historically inspired performances, because HIP helps unlock their embedded affective power. Seeing text as a set of directions for performance allows us to re-evaluate the effectiveness of this now-neglected repertoire. A concrete example of words dictating performance will not be out of place: Aaron Hill wrote a letter to fellow playwright David Mallet on December 21, 1741, encouraging him to compose his works more carefully, with the vocal delivery of the actor in mind, for such care would: 'always enable a writer of skill, to prepare, in all his *strong*, or his *passionate*, speeches, as many *Clap-traps*, for the most part, as *couplets*.'⁶⁷ Hill then re-worked a speech from Mallet's masque *Alfred* (1740) with the express purpose of allowing spaces for the audience to fill up with their applause. These places are marked with an asterisk: '[f]or the actor, at every mark of a *star*, being compelled by the sense, to pause full – (I suppose him, however, an *actor of genius*) as many *claps* would infallibly follow, and throw the *house* into an *uproar of pleasure*'.⁶⁸

A comparison of Mallet's original lines (to the left) with Hill's proposed improvements marked with asterisks gives an idea of how he believed plays could be crafted in order to promote interaction between actors and audience:

Now, just heaven forbid,	— High Heaven forbid
A <i>British</i> man should ever count for gain,	One, <i>English born</i> , should ever count, as <i>gain</i> ,
What villainy must earn. No: are we poor?	What villainy procur'd him* — Are we <i>poor</i> ?
Be honesty our riches. Are we mean,	Be honesty our <i>riches</i> !* — Are we <i>low</i> ?
And humbly born? The true heart makes us noble.	Let an ennobled scorn of baseness <i>raise</i> us!*
These hands can toil, can sow the ground and reap.	'Tis the try'd <i>heart</i> alone, that stamps <i>distinction</i> .
For thee and thy sweet babes. Our daily labour	Hands, that dare <i>toil</i> for peace — despite <i>pollution</i> .*
Is daily wealth: it finds us bread and raiment.	Our daily <i>labour</i> is our daily <i>wealth</i> ,
Could <i>Danish</i> gold give more? ⁶⁹	And never <i>wishing</i> what we <i>want</i> ,
	<i>Bribes</i> are disgrace, <i>beneath</i> us.* ⁷⁰

Hill significantly changes the tone of the lines: Mallet's original verse expresses nobility, humility and courage, while Hill, by substituting *English* for the original *British* in the text 'for the sake of impertinent partiality',⁷¹ fully expected his reworked lines to enable the actor 'of genius', through his performance, to so move the pride of the audience that they would interrupt him five times with expressions of their uncontainable excitement. The lines were crafted to create a slowed tempo in performance, by providing natural pauses to follow striking expressions of stirring sentiments. Hill notes that the thoughts must be:

drawn short, into a strong and sententious *expressiveness*, and pointed out to the *apprehension*, by a closing *rest*, and full *pause*, upon the sense; for *that* both gives *time* for more perfect *conception* of the *beauty* expressed, and for the *applause*, that approves and rewards it. Whereas, most *actors* indiscreetly *run on*, when they do not *forsee* such applause, and *lose* it, by not stopping on a *thought*, that invites it, unless the sense is cut short, so as, in a manner, to *constrain* them to allow it the *weight*, that is proper to it.⁷²

⁶⁶ Nancy L. CHRISTIANSEN, 'Rhetoric as Character-Fashioning: The Implications of Delivery's "Places" in the British Renaissance Paideia' *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, 15:3 (Summer 1997), p. 329.

⁶⁷ HILL, op. cit., p. 209.

⁶⁸ HILL, *ibid.*, p. 209.

⁶⁹ [David MALLET and James THOMSON], *Alfred: A Masque* (London: 1740), p. 9.

⁷⁰ HILL, op. cit., pp. 209–210.

⁷¹ HILL, *ibid.*, p. 210.

⁷² HILL, *ibid.*, pp. 208–9.

Even in this prose passage, Hill shows, by his use of italics and commas, just how an author can shape the tempo and emphasis of the text with his words. Hill encourages Mallet, ‘without changing a *thought*’, to consider how the lines could be divided ‘into *turnpikes*, for *claps*, to *pay toll* at’ by changing the pace and weight of the actor’s delivery.⁷³ Current taste looks down on this kind of clap-trap as audience manipulation, but Hill declares that the applause is simply the physical reaction of a house in an ‘uproar of pleasure’. As we have seen earlier, he further expected these transports to raise the spirits of the actors and to improve their performances.

This explains how theatres functioned before the era of the stage director, when – although the theatre managers and the prompter could shape performances to some extent – the main burden of interpretation fell to the actors themselves. They relied on the passions chosen and arranged by the poet, as revealed in the lines, to guide them over any ‘chasms of nonsense’ towards a successful performance. During the twentieth century, however, this tight relationship between text and the successful realization of theatrical characters lost its importance, at least for some stage directors. To give one example, the influential innovator Jerzy Grotowski turned away from text and brought acting to the borders of a spiritual practice:

I don’t feel that theatre is the aim for me. There exists only the Act. It might have happened that this Act was close enough to the dramatic text as a basis. However, I can’t ask myself whether it was or wasn’t a realization of the text. I don’t know. I don’t know whether it was faithful to the text or not. I have no interest in the theatre of the word, because it is based on a false vision of human existence. I have no interest in physical theatre. Because what is it anyway? Acrobatics onstage? Screaming? Wallowing on the floor? Violence? Neither the theatre of the word nor the physical theatre—not theatre, but a living existence in its revealing.⁷⁴

In contrast, the very goal of historical theatre was to give actors the chance to ‘scream’ and ‘wallow’; virtuosity was expected, savoured and even demanded by audiences. Actors, dancers and musicians shared a common aesthetic in which technical display was not considered intrinsically inimical to feeling or taste, but rather a means of exciting admiration, warming the hearts and stimulating enthusiasm in the audience. Like choreographers and composers, playwrights, too, took the skills of the performer into account when creating their works. The study of the lines themselves not only helped actors to identify the motivating passions and characteristics of their character, it also provided concrete information as to how the lines were to be spoken. The text was a performative and interpretative acting ‘score’. Therefore, historical theatre brought together a knowledgeable audience, trained actors and texts written to showcase passionate, rhetorical and elaborately technical performances, in order to create an interaffective experience in the bodies of all present. The goal was to elevate the spirits of a public intent on being enraptured. This warmed, thrilled and receptive state enabled playwrights and actors to administer morally improving and stirring thoughts (‘sententious’ is not used by Hill as a pejorative), justifying the theatrical experience as one of societal moral improvement.⁷⁵ Research into historical theatre therefore must strive to take three factors – text, technique, theatregoers – into account.

In ‘Seven Propositions Towards the Establishment of a New Kind of Theatre Festival’, which closes this volume, Xavier Vandamme and I put forward a vision for bringing historical texts and

⁷³ HILL, *ibid.*, p. 212.

⁷⁴ Jerzy GROTOWSKI and Kris SALATA, ‘Reply to Stanislavski’, *TDR* (1988-), 52:2, *Re-Reading Grotowski* (Summer, 2008), 31–9, p. 38.

⁷⁵ For Hill’s vision of theatre as a moral force in a civilized society see Christine GERARD, *Aaron Hill: The Muses’ Projector, 1685–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 152–3. Of course, given the potential of emotional performances to convince, the conscientious choice of material to be presented is essential to the health of today’s society. This aspect of the responsibilities of theatre-makers and producers cannot be addressed in any detail here; the subject of this volume is acting *techniques*. However, the importance of choosing texts for performance *responsibly* cannot be overemphasized. See Proposition Seven of the article under discussion.

acting techniques together with contemporary audiences in a way that can be meaningful both as research and as entertainment. Cognitive approaches to the mind-body relationship open up meaningful avenues for interacting with the physically virtuosic acting styles of the past, and the cultivation of a new ‘parterre’, a core audience sub-group with a sense of ownership and agency, could stimulate the actors to new avenues of communication using emotions drawn from historical texts. Musicians at heart and by profession, Vandamme and I hope to have learned an important lesson from the wearying authenticity debates that have plagued the HIP music field for years, and to move beyond them by avoiding nostalgia in favour of science.

Having established – with the aid of a statement made by a major actor of our times – an understanding of the relationship between the topic of this volume and the acting of today, we now leave Sir Ian McKellen’s confession to the Oxford Union, which has served as our Ariadne’s thread through this thespian labyrinth, as I turn my attention to scholarship.

CONTEXTS OF CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARSHIP AND PERFORMANCE

It is traditional in introductory essays of this nature to place the newly-appearing articles within a context of recent scholarly work in the field. In this case, however, difficulties of various sorts arise: firstly, the point of this volume is to address practice-based research into historical acting techniques. I therefore feel little motivation to discuss scholarly work that does not place performance front and centre. Analysing pure performance, on the other hand, let’s say in the form of productions created by HIP stage directors, is hindered by a dearth of scholarly work describing how particular productions were prepared. Lacking clear guidance from stage directors and actors as to their motivations and methods, I can only note that many of the theatrical performances in HIP mode that I have seen appear to take twentieth-century standard works – such as those by Dene Barnett (*The Art of Gesture*, 1987) and Eugène Green (*La Parole Baroque*, 2001) – as their starting points. These two works, written before the ascendancy of practice-based research, were, of course, created in times (and informed by attitudes) very different to those of today. For instance, while the pioneering Barnett engaged in serious academic research and immediately placed his discoveries in the service of operatic performances, he did not describe his *artistic* process, its criteria and methodologies or even how the performative results were evaluated. Barnett instead presented his artistic work uncritically, as a ‘pure’ realization of source material. Without any accompanying critical reflection, the work he carried out cannot be seen as practice-based research as we now know it, despite its rich documentation in the form of photographs, video,⁷⁶ lectures and a seminal book.⁷⁷

Eugène Green, although he no longer actively works in theatre, remains well-known for his HIP revivifications of classic French texts and for his involvement with the Théâtre de la Sapience (founded in 1977). Moreover, he has established an influential school of followers:

Depuis ma retraite effective du théâtre – mais non de l’activité artistique – il y a seize ans, le théâtre baroque continue. Des comédiens-metteurs en scène comme Benjamin Lazar et Louise Moaty sortis des ateliers du lycée Montaigne, ou des

⁷⁶ For a performance prepared under Barnett’s supervision, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILqaXiNbeX0>. (Last accessed 29-12-2021).

⁷⁷ For an excellent examination of Barnett’s work, see Magnus TESSING SCHNEIDER, ‘Dene Barnett’s Eighteenth Century, Or, What is Historically Informed Performance’, *Performing Premodernity Online*, Vol. 2 (January 2015), 1–8.

*comédiens avec qui j'avais travaillé, comme Anne-Guersande Ledoux, Manuel Weber, Julia de Gasquet, Sophie Delage, et Alexandra Rübner, continuent à créer des spectacles et à enseigner des techniques dérivées de ma proposition initiale.*⁷⁸

Unlike Barnett, Green's approach – as he very openly notes in *La Parole Baroque* – was *not* a scholarly one: his motivations were both artistic and *spiritual*. Much like Bertholt Brecht before him, Green was inspired by the theatre of the East:

*Des troupes en tournée à Paris m'ont fait découvrir les théâtres classiques de l'Asie: le Nô, le Kabuki, le Kathakali, et le Kanqu. [...] J'ai orienté mes études en suivant une attirance, ressentie depuis mon adolescence, pour la Renaissance et l'époque baroque. Je me suis aperçu que cette conception du théâtre que j'ai trouvée si bouleversante, et si familière, dans les théâtres d'Asie, avait également existé en Europe pendant ces grands siècles de création artistiques. D'autre part, le renouveau de l'interprétation de la musique de ces périodes, à la fin des années 70, a fourni l'exemple d'un héritage culturel actualisé par un effort de retrouver un passé au présent.*⁷⁹

The emotional impact of viewing this 'other' theatre gave birth to Green's conviction that what he saw twentieth-century Asian actors doing on stage surely must also have been characteristic of acting in Europe during the Renaissance and Baroque periods. The burgeoning Early Music movement – which during the 1970s was slowly freeing itself from the ideals of *Neue Sachlichkeit* – further inspired Green, though whether or not he was aware of its tendency to update the past according to Modernist taste is unclear.⁸⁰ Some in Early Music circles (where scholarship has been repeatedly honed by long-running debates regarding the concept of historical 'authenticity') may view Green's continuing influence with scepticism, yet one must be wary of evaluating his choices using source-based arguments, for he clearly states in *La Parole Baroque* that his goal was never to achieve historical or scholarly accuracy in performance: '*contrairement aux universitaires, mon but n'a jamais été de faire apparaître une vérité historique, ma recherche n'a de valeur que par rapport à un chemin artistique et spirituel.*'⁸¹

⁷⁸ 'Since my actual retirement, sixteen years ago, from the theatre – but not from artistic activity – baroque theater continues. Actor-directors like Benjamin Lazar et Louise Moaty, who came from the workshops of the lycée Montaigne, or actors with whom I have worked like Anne-Guersande Ledoux, Manuel Weber, Julia de Gasquet, Sophie Delage, et Alexandra Rübner, continue to create productions and teach techniques derived from my initial proposition.' Cited in Julia GROS DE GASQUET, 'Eugène Green et la Déclamation Baroque: Réinventer la Langue?', *Revue Sciences/Lettres* 6/2019, 1–11, p. 8. <https://journals.openedition.org/rsl/2459> (last accessed 04-02-2022).

⁷⁹ 'I discovered Asian theatre through troupes on tour in Paris: No, Kabuki, Kathakali, Kanqu. [...] In organizing my studies, I followed an attraction, felt since my adolescence, to the Renaissance and to the Baroque era. I perceived that this conception of theatre which I found so overwhelming and so familiar in Asian theatres had existed equally in Europe during these centuries of great artistic creation. On the other hand, the revival (at the end of the 1970s) of the interpretation of the music of these periods provided an example of cultural heritage updated by the attempt to rediscover the past in the present.' Eugène Green, *La Parole Baroque: essai* (Paris: Desclée de BROUWER, 2001), p. 13.

⁸⁰ For the relationship between the Early Music and *Neue Sachlichkeit* see Anne SMITH and Jed WENTZ, 'Gustav Maria Leonhardt in Basel. Portrait of a Young Harpsichordist', *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis*, Band 34 (2010), 229–244. See also Jed WENTZ, 'Gustav Leonhardt, the Naarden Circle and Early Music's Reformation', *Early Music*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (February 2014), 3–12; and Jed WENTZ, 'On the Protestant Roots of Gustav Leonhardt's Playing Style', *Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute*, Vol. 48, No. 2 and Vol. 40, No. 1, 2018, 48–92. Interestingly, both Barnett and Green greatly admired Leonhardt: I was very kindly given, by his family after his death, the copies (with handwritten dedications) of *The Art of Gesture* and *La Parole Baroque* which these authors had presented to Leonhardt upon publication. For the relationship between Leonhardt and Green's work see Gros de Gasquet, art. cit., p. 2. For the relationship between Green and Early Music from an insider's perspective, see Céline Candiard, 'Le Théâtre Baroque Aujourd'hui en France: La Musique pour Modèle', *Littérature Classiques*, No. 91, 2016, 153–161. For the relationship between Dene Barnett and Early Music see Magnus TESSING SCHNEIDER, art. cit., p. 1.

⁸¹ 'unlike academics, my goal was never to reveal an historical truth, my research has no value except as it relates to an artistic and spiritual path.' Green, op. cit., p. 14. Unfortunately, the discourse surrounding Green's work often ignores this crucial point. For instance, Julia Gros de Gasquet wrote of her mentor: '*Il [Green] a en effet œuvré à retrouver, à restaurer, à reconstituer la langue dite baroque et avec elle, le corps de l'acteur baroque. L'habitation sur les verbes rend compte de la difficulté à définir ce geste qui est une réactivation d'un état de la langue, à travers sa phonétique historique, son rythme et son intonation, mais aussi un geste esthétique qui invite à une pensée de l'acteur ancien*' (He [Green] actually has worked to *rediscover*, to *restore*, to *reconstitute* the so-called baroque language and with it, the baroque actor's body. The hesitation surrounding the verbs is a realization of the difficulty to define this gesture, which is a reactivation of a state of the language, through its historical phonetics, its rhythm and its intonation; but it is also an aesthetic gesture which invites one to

I hope that this will clarify how the work presented here potentially differs from that of some of my colleagues who may still be operating within parameters staked out by Barnett and/or Green: I have already argued that the intention of these articles is to situate research within the context of ‘third wave’, body-based (cognitive) psychology, by means of practice-based methodologies. Because most of the active members of DHAC have an Early Music background, and because Early Musicians in general have been forced to reflect on notions of subjectivity, bias and ‘authenticity’ by on-going debates within the field, those members of DHAC have already thought through the role of historical sources and personal habitus in the context of their *musical* performances. This means that we as a group have quite consciously chosen, when working on historical *acting*, to experiment with what the sources have to offer without forcing the results to conform to whatever may be aesthetically popular in theatrical performance today, or to any spiritual criteria.⁸² We place the physical manifestation of the passions in the actor’s body front and centre. We take the suite of passions inherent in a given historical text as the main structural support on which the acting framework is created, and then seek to allow these passions to manifest themselves in sequence within the trained acting body, using historical sources of various kinds. Therefore, to engage more fully with older visions of historical acting, particularly as they relate to the expression of emotions, would be counterproductive for us.⁸³

However, this choice that DHAC has made – to situate its work within ‘post-post-Freudian’ thought – hardly places us ‘in advance of the wave’ as far as the larger context of theatre studies is concerned: already twenty years ago Bruce McConachie and like-minded scholars argued for a cognitive approach to historical theatre studies. In ‘Doing Things with Image Schemas: The Cognitive Turn in Theatre Studies and the Problem of Experience for Historians’ he wrote:

While I am not prepared to urge that all performance historians reconstruct performance history within parameters of cognitive science, I do want to give it a nudge in that direction. Cognitive scientists investigate what they call a “cognitive unconscious” that shapes all perception.⁸⁴

McConachie, however, does not intend to ‘collapse all of history and culture into cognitive psychology’.⁸⁵ Following the ideas of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Philosophy in the Flesh*:

contemplate the actor of the past.’). Although this passage tempers any expectations on the reader’s part of historical accuracy (viz. ‘so-called baroque’, and also ‘invites one to contemplate’), no word is mentioned here of *spiritual* priorities. However, Green himself has identified one way in which he reifies his spiritual aspirations into staging and blocking practices in his films: his manner of directing dialogue passages involves having his actors speak in turns while looking not at each other, but straight at the camera. In an interview published to mark the release of his film *La Sapienza* in 2014, Green speaks extensively of his spiritual beliefs and conception of ‘energies’. Responding to the question ‘What is it that you’re seeking that goes beyond two people talking in a room in front of a camera?’ he formulated his answer thus: ‘It’s the spiritual energy which I consider present in all elements of the universe – in human beings, of course, but also in plants and immaterial things, and all these energies are in symbiosis with each other. It’s something that most great filmmakers have managed to capture and make perceivable. Every element of my formal language is intended to do that. For example, the way I film things: often, people are struck by my dialogue scenes because the actor looks straight at the camera. In a conversation between two people who are face to face, a great part of the energy and the effect come from *le regard* [...]’ While the context here is one of film direction, it seems clear that the dialogue scenes in historicized stage works by some of Green’s followers (I am thinking specifically of scenes in the productions by Le Poème Harmonique of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* and *Cadmus et Hermione* in which the actors directly face the audience), are inspired by Green’s choices, whether or not they are motivated by the same spiritual concerns. See Eugène GREEN and Nicholas ELLIOTT, ‘Eugène Green’, *Bomb*, Winter 2014–2015, No. 130, 138–143, p.139.

⁸² For a succinct statement of DHAC’s philosophy see: <https://jedwentz.com/what-is-dhac/> (last accessed 30-12-2012).

⁸³ Barnett was wary of the actor’s personal feeling, believing that Baroque acting ‘was rather formal and often symbolic’, and that ‘it was considered more important that the actor consciously know the appropriate gesture and posture than that he himself should feel the passions strongly.’ See Jed WENTZ, ‘Mechanical Rules Versus *Abnormis Gratia*: Revaluing Gilbert Austin’s *Chironomia* (1806) as a Source for Historical Acting Techniques’ in *Theatrical Heritage: Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. by Bruno FORMENT & Christel STALPAERT (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015), 41–57, p. 56.

⁸⁴ Bruce MCCONACHIE, ‘Doing Things with Image Schemas: The Cognitive Turn in Theatre Studies and the Problem of Experience for Historians’ in *Theatre Journal*, Dec., 2001, Vol. 53, No. 4 (Dec., 2001), 569–594, p. 577.

⁸⁵ MCCONACHIE, *ibid.*, p. 577.

The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought (1999), he asserts that '[a]nthropologists and historians may translate and interpret among different cultures and time periods because certain spatial relation and bodily action concepts are universal to human perception and experience'.⁸⁶ However, McConchie also stresses that the 'embodied realism' proposed by Lakoff and Johnson is roomy enough to encompass general (physical) and specific (historical) experiences of theatre, a point he is especially keen to make in the face of scepticism from post-structuralist critics, including those of the 'linguistic turn':

it appears that experience might best be understood as occurring at two levels, the cognitive and the historical. The universals of the cognitive level always shape how people experience their lives in history but because of the many possibilities of cognitive experience, the cognitive level, though it constrains, never determines the historical level.⁸⁷

He continues:

In effect, it may be possible for historians to incorporate the cognitive unconscious in their explanations of experience and context in much the same way that some historians have used Freudian or Lacanian unconscious as a foundation for their history writing. To paraphrase Marx, people, not texts, make history, though they never make it in ecologies and with brains of their own choosing.⁸⁸

Most comfortingly for us performers, McConachie notes that '[t]o understand how the cognitive level has constrained the historical experience of theatregoing, embodied realism requires that the performance historian rejoin theatrical rhetoric and aesthetic style'.⁸⁹ Here our bodies trained by practice-based research spring into the breach; here the skills of the practitioner are essential, indispensable, and in all senses...vital. Fortunately, there are also theatre scholars who see performance as an important starting point for their inquiries. Their work inspires, challenges and supports actor-researchers like ourselves. Unlike Green – who chose to follow his artistic and spiritual vision without either situating his work within rigorous academic method or opening it up to scholarly debate – practice-based researchers joyfully interact with contributions made by theatre scholars, especially those with a heart for performance. In this regard, special emphasis must be placed on the on-going importance and influence of Sabine Chaouche's work, which, from the appearance of her dissertation onwards, has not only forged new paths but has also undoubtedly smoothed the way for scholars like Claudio Vicentini (*La Teoria della Recitazione. Dall'antichità al Settecento*, 2012), Laurence Marie (*Inventer l'Acteur*, 2019), David Wiles (*The Payer's Advice to Hamlet: The Rhetorical Acting Method from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, 2020), James Harriman-Smith (*Criticism, Performance, and the Passions: The Art of Transition*, 2021) and Terry F. Robinson (*Reading the Acting Body in the Romantic Age: Performance and Its Truth Effects, 1750-1830*, forthcoming with Oxford University Press). The work of these scholars, as well as many others, has enriched the activities of DHAC, and supported and inspired our research.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ McCONACHIE, *ibid.*, p. 579

⁸⁷ McCONACHIE, *ibid.*, p. 580.

⁸⁸ McCONACHIE, *ibid.*

⁸⁹ McCONACHIE, *ibid.*

⁹⁰ See, for example, the recent contributions to scholarship are those made by the members of the Théâtre Molière Sorbonne to volume 2 of *European Drama and Performance Studies*, 14, 2020–1.

HOW THIS VOLUME WORKS: STRUCTURE AND EXTERNAL LINKS

The contents of this volume have been grouped together according to their function within the whole. The opening volleys (Carruthers and Smith) disclose some fundamental scholarly and practical biases. The articles grouped under ‘*Habitus* and the Embodied Qualities of Artistic Research’ (DHAC, Hommel and Craenen) were conceived of and created to interact with each other. They serve to establish the metalevel topics on which we reflect throughout the volume. The body and voice of the actor are examined in the light of historical sources in the section that follows (Neuman, Paixão, Papiro, Wentz, Chaouche, Gilger and Carson). These contributions are linked to videos or other supplementary materials that have been uploaded to the DHAC webpage. Readers are encouraged to consult the linked materials, which supply performative content, as well as supplementary images and texts. Moreover, the reader is invited to explore the other materials on the DHAC webpage,⁹¹ which are often closely related to the topics at hand: for instance, Julia Wedman’s ‘Using Historical Acting Techniques to Bring Music to Life: The Embodiment of Affect’ was originally commissioned for this volume, but was later transferred to the website due to its strong emphasis on musical performance and its didactic framing. I would like to point out, however, that Wedman’s article, like other materials on the website, enrich the discourse around historical acting, its didactic and societal potential and its place in contemporary performing arts practices. The volume closes with a gauntlet thrown down (Vandamme and Wentz), one that we hope can be taken up in the form of a new kind of research festival; a festival that points not backwards but towards the future by connecting historical acting techniques to research into science and the humanities.

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Special thanks must be extended to Anne Smith – both for her encouragement and for her translations – as well as to a number of kind, patient and engaged allies for their reading skills, technical assistance, helpful comments and advice: Julia Muller, Rosalien van der Poel and Susanne Vermeulen.

Jed WENTZ
Universiteit Leiden

⁹¹ <https://jedwentz.com/dhac/>

POINTS OF DEPARTURE

This approach is based on the understanding that non fundamental separation exists between theory and practice in the arts. After all, there are no art practices that are not saturated with experiences, histories and beliefs; and conversely there is no theoretical access to, or interpretation of, art practice that does not partially shape that practice into what it is. Concepts and theories, experiences and understandings are interwoven with art practices and, partly for this reason, art is always reflexive. Research in the arts hence seeks to articulate some of this embodied knowledge throughout the creative process and in the art object.¹

¹ Henk Borgdorff, *The Debate of Research in the Arts* (2006), p.7.
https://www.ahk.nl/fileadmin/download/ahk/Lectoraten/Borgdorff_publicaties/The_debate_on_research_in_the_arts.pdf
(last accessed 05-02-2022).

OF NOTES AND UNFOLDING SOUNDS

Perspectives from Grammar and Geometry

The Latin term *nota* simply means a ‘marker’. Medieval manuscripts frequently admonish their users ‘*nota bene*’ (‘take note well’); in later manuscripts this command is accompanied by a long-fingered hand pointing to the particular ‘notable’ words to be remembered. The written marks in chant manuscripts evolved from a general collection of written signs, including the ancestors of modern punctuation marks. In ancient manuscripts, scribes wrote texts out continuously, without divisions between the words or indications of how to group them into units of meaning; editorial signs were placed above the writing to indicate grammatically coherent divisions. Since texts were written to be read aloud, these marks could indicate to their readers where to pause for breath, where particular emphasis should lie, and (since Greek and even early Latin were tonal languages) whether particular syllables should be read aloud with a rising voice or a falling one or one that rose and then fell; in later Latin markers could indicate the duration of syllables (for a long or short time). Such editorial conventions gave rise within Christian liturgical practices to ‘neuming’. Carolingian neumes, like the editorial marks that they developed from, were ways of visually indicating the articulation of sounds (not inchoate ‘noises’ like thunder or falling trees) that humans actually experience through their ears. That observation is fundamental to the ways in which sound was conceived and considered for a very long time in western languages, including melody and harmony. And because medieval cultures did not make the sharp division in kind between language and music, reading and singing, that we now do, the analysis of grammar had a nourishing, synergistic relationship with that of music – poetic meters were studied as part of music as well as of the language arts, and Vergil (70bce–19bce) starts *Aeneid* by singing of arms and a man, ‘*Arma virumque cano*’. There is no reason to suppose that was an empty idiom to his Augustan audience. Describing what he regarded as the best education for an orator, Quintilian recommends four subjects – grammar, music, geometry, and acting (to educate one’s spoken performance, referred to as *actio* in earlier manuals of Rhetoric and as *pronunciatio*, ‘sounding aloud’, in later ones. By all accounts, a Christian sermon, like a Ciceronian oration, was a notably theatrical performance.

Grammar texts begin by discussing voiced sounds (*voces*, ‘voices’ and also ‘words’) before they discuss letters and syllables. For the letters of the Latin alphabet were considered to be visual signs of particular *sounds*, an assumption demonstrated by the later practice of assigning each sound a letter, so that to ‘read music’ is to read sounds as though they were words.¹ As material things, sounds also have a physics: every sound, in the Pythagorean definition, is caused by a pulsation, an event that ‘hits’ the surrounding air, causing it to vibrate (like the harmonious hammers hitting anvils heard by Pythagoras, a tale that was never lost in western cultures). Because air has physical mass, a sound is geometrically a solid, measurable in three spatial dimensions (pitch, duration, and volume) and unfolding temporally as articulated parts of the melodic ‘lines’ that humans hear. A single sound, the grammarian Priscian said (around 500 CE), is a very delicate vibration of a volume of air (*aer tenuissimus ictus*) that then pulses sequentially and moment by moment as packets (or ‘atoms’, a word often used) of aery vibration until it ‘hits’ human ears. Once received from the air,

¹ See especially Priscian’s discussions of *vox* and *litterae* in *Inst. gram.* I. 1–2; this is foundational for all medieval considerations both of grammar and of music.

that still-vibrating pulse moves along through our body's 'animating spirit' within 'channels' (sometimes called *nervi*) from our ears to our brains, where we hear it as a sound at the moment it arrives. But our minds cannot retain a sound in the form of that raw vibrating pulse. To be recorded for our minds to use, heard sounds need to be made into 'thought objects' (as they are now often called), the embryonic mental shapes with which we fashion our understanding. This is the process of perceiving and conceptualizing – making the raw sense data received from outside comprehensible and memorable in a way that we can later recall and use creatively. Such mental concepts were called 'images' in medieval psychology, and the image-forming ability of our minds is 'imagination'. Imagination isn't a thing in the brain but a complex of its activities. Notice the clear causal sequence of motions which this analysis supposes from the initial strike of the air, to those same vibrations being carried through the material air to human ears, to the vibrating pulses carried along auditory *nervi* to our receiving brains, where they are 'made knowable' as mental images.

Thus, the elements for human knowing and learning are physical movements which through their motion cause our mental perceptions of them to change as well. We must be able somehow to measure these changes as they appear to our reasoning minds. This brings us from Language and Physics also to the subject of Geometry, or *mathesis* as it is also called by medieval writers, a term for 'measuring' that includes both what we call arithmetic ('numbers') and geometry ('lines'). Boethius's text on the basics of Arithmetic includes them both. The geometrical figures (called *geometricalia* in medieval Latin) are conceived fundamentally in the Middle Ages as the 'footprints' and 'tracks' (*vestigia*) left by prior movements, all motions both linear and circular occurring as sequential changes of location that are concurrently changes of time. The basic principle of ancient and medieval physics is constant change: any physical change is a motion and a motion is both temporal and spatial. The geometric lines that we humans measure with our drawn figures are thus only the traces of now completed movements that were first 'drawn out', 'extracted' and 'unfolded' from an initiating point.² Ancient texts considered these movement-traces mathematically either as 'discrete' and thus 'countable' as separate units of space-time, or as parts in a whole sequence unfurled like a scroll of space-time. But whether considered numerically or geometrically, the motions of physics all start from one single dimensionless and thus timeless point. As a ninth-century cleric wrote of musical sounds, 'a sound (*vox*) is both the material and the initiating energy with which music is made, just as a point (*punctus*) is in geometry, One (*monad*) is in arithmetic, a letter (*littera*) is in grammar'.³ Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) cites a medieval etymology that linked *mensura* (measure) and its verb form *metior*, *mensus* with *mens* (mind) for, he says, it is through being able to measure the great variety of the forms we perceive in our world that we humans can know and understand them at all. Latin *modus* also means measure – 'modulation' is another way of measuring. The medieval universe as seen and heard, smelled, tasted and touched, was always changing, and always in motion from past to present into future, unfolding infinitely but in measurable forms and mensurate ratios from its originating point in space-time. God *spoke* the creating command 'Fiat lux' and simultaneously with light also initiated sound and time.

²The concept of lines, including of sounds, as 'unfolding' from a single, dimensionless point into measurable space-time is ancient. Of great importance for medieval thinkers are Augustine's *De quantitate anime* (ca. 388 ce), and Calcidius's translation and commentary on the earlier sections of Plato's *Timaus* (ca. 321 ce). On the dissemination and expansion of this and similar theological-mathematical ideas, see David ALBERTSON, *Mathematical Theologies: Nicholas of Cusa and the Legacy of Thierry of Chartres* (Oxford University Press, 2014), which focusses on Thierry of Chartres and Nicholas of Cusa in particular, but also discusses writings from later antiquity. The key concept, prominent in Aristotle's *Physics*, is that all change is a movement in temporal space. Theologically it is the basic concept that the created cosmos is temporal in nature, the reversed 'mirror' of divine Eternity, which is without time, movement, change.

³Cited in Calvin M. BOWER, 'Sonus, Vox, Chorda, Nota: Thing, Name, and Sign in Early Medieval Theory', *Quellen Und Studien Zur Musiktheorie Des Mittelalters*, Vol. 3, ed. by Michael BERNHARD (Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2001), 47–61, p. 53.

Such a harmonious, dynamic, creative cosmos exists best in philosophy, of course. The writing of musical sounds could be sustained only within groups who shared an understanding of the peculiarities of their local conventions with regard to written scripts. Such localism was the cultural and political situation in Europe in the sixth through eighth centuries. And such communities, located in various monasteries and particular small courts, produced and performed from their various scripts in which they also (sometimes) recorded their music, as is convincingly demonstrated in Susan Rankin's 2018 study, *Writing Sounds in Carolingian Europe*.⁴ But, as these small polities became larger and less internally coherent while also more able to communicate and travel, they also became more centralized and their conventions of writing, their understanding of what letters and notes are, came to be accepted as 'normal', even 'universal'. The first attempts in western Europe to write sounds systematically in neumes can be dated to the first half of the ninth century, the earliest 'musical staff' convention for visualizing pitch intervals from the late eleventh century. And now, we assume 'normal' reading to be primarily a silent visual experience, and only very young children are encouraged to sound out the words they read. Calvin Bower describes this sea-change well in his 2001 essay on the words *sonus*, *vox*, *chorda*, *nota*:

The individual pitch is indeed like the letter in grammar or the point in geometry to the medieval musician; its meaning and function must unfold within a larger sonorous context. ... [O]ur concept of a keyboard comprised of notes with internationally defined pitch would have been utterly inconceivable.⁵

Mary CARRUTHERS
New York University

⁴ See Susan K. RANKIN, *Writing Sounds in Carolingian Europe: The Invention of Musical Notation* (Cambridge University Press, 2018). Of equal interest, see Paul SAENGER, *Space between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford University Press, 1997), for written scripts changing from the continuous lettering favoured in ancient writing (and designed for oral public reading by a trained amanuensis) to the monastic method of grouping letters into separate words for ease of individual study, also a fundamental Carolingian development.

⁵ BOWER, art. cit., pp. 47–61.

REFLECTIONS ON HISTORICAL ACTING AND THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

In August 2021, the Dutch Historical Acting Collective (DHAC) met for a workshop in preparation for the making of some of the videos associated with this volume of *European Drama and Performance Studies*. After more than a year of virtual meetings due to the corona virus, we were finally able to meet again in person, to experience acting directly, both as actors and audience, and in my case, also as a teacher of the Alexander Technique. For the last four or five years I have been working with the group as a teacher, and for the last three years also developing my own skills in acting. Although I have written a lengthy essay on standing in the context of historical acting, found on the DHAC website, in which I demonstrate how certain aspects of the Alexander Technique are influenced if not derived from F.M. Alexander's (1869–1955) training as an actor, I was once again struck by how much of the Technique seems to have acting as its original source, and at the same time, how much better I understand the Technique the more I am myself involved in historical acting.¹

When I am teaching the Alexander Technique I am constantly analysing how individuals are using themselves mechanically in carrying out their activities, whether the process is efficient, or whether their goals might be better attained by different means. As the activities concerned are often the basic ones of life – sitting, standing, walking, speaking, etc. – this often calls habitual behaviours into question, forces one, as Alexander writes, to 'boldly to make the necessary change, should he find that the fundamental principles concerned are defective'.² As I discuss in the article mentioned above, some of his most basic approaches are taken from his acting training at the end of the nineteenth century. Therefore in working with the Alexander Technique, one is indirectly building up some of the basic methods of the past, which then evidence themselves in the increased confidence in the actors' appearance, in the flow, balance and flexibility of their movements; their passions become clearer, there is an immediacy of expression.

In my training – no doubt due to the fact that it is not that aspect of his career that receives much attention in one's training – I had somehow gotten the impression that Alexander was not really an actor, but only an elocutionist, and that his choice of texts was hopelessly sentimental. In reviewing the evidence available, however, it becomes clear that this is an aesthetic judgment from a later period, that his choice of texts and his activities as an elocutionist, as an actor were in line with the aesthetics of his time. In fact, as late as 1933 when F.M. Alexander staged performances of *The Merchant of Venice* in the Sadler's Wells' and Old Vic Theatres as an exercise for the members of his first training course, *The Daily Telegraph* review commented that

Shylock was played – uncommonly well, too – by F. Matthias Alexander, who left the stage thirty years ago in order to teach a system of self-control and self-development of which he was the inventor [...]

¹ See: Anne SMITH, 'Standing with Ease and Grace: or the Difficulty of Reading Historical Sources Objectively', (https://jedwentz.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Smith_Standing-with-Ease.pdf).

² Frederick Matthias ALEXANDER, *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual* (London: Victor GOLLANCZ Ltd., 1992), p. 74.

His was an arresting Shylock, clear of enunciation and expressive of gesture, and erring only in being a little too quiet for so large a theatre. He adhered to the reading, which makes Shylock the hero rather than the villain of the piece, toning down the savagery of the Trial Scene.³

whereas *The Times* wrote of the same performance:

Mr. Matthias Alexander, as Shylock, gave a performance which was full of nervous energy. His Shylock was a man who made up for a certain lack of dignity by a passionate belief in his particular religious creed and his own philosophy of life.⁴

In the following year, the same group of people performed Hamlet again in both locations, and *The Daily Telegraph* remarked of Alexander's performance that 'there was balance, rhythm, and intelligence in every line that he spoke.'⁵ Thus it seems that London critics saw him as being a well-trained, expressive actor, high praise indeed coming from those newspapers.

At the same time, this is just the period when a shift away from the older passionating, singing acting and to realism was taking place, as is made so obvious in the remarks made by Sir John Gielgud (1904–2000) and Sir Lawrence Olivier (1907–1989) in a video about a production of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1935 in which they both participated.⁶ In the video Gielgud speaks of realizing that Olivier's method of reciting Shakespeare was modern, in line with the modern world, and that in looking back he suspected that he himself sounded a bit like an 'old operatic diva'. It is therefore not surprising that Alexander, who at that time was in his mid-sixties, was seen by some as being a little old-fashioned, adhering to an older tradition. It does not, however, mean that he was a poor actor. The newspaper critiques are more than sufficient evidence against this.

The like could not be said for his students. To begin with, Alexander had never trained students to become teachers before. As Michael Bloch expresses it:

The course was inevitably something of a challenge. Yet from the beginning, he had doubts about the whole enterprise. He thought that the students ought to be able to find things out for themselves, as he had done, and was irritated by their constant questioning. He foresaw that, when they graduated, some would imagine they could teach, though in fact barely competent to do so, whereas others would leave him and become successful in their own right, possibly perverting his principles in the process. He did not believe that any of them would ever approach his own standard of teaching and understanding.⁷

To make matters worse, the class was divided about the quality of the course of instruction. As Erika Whittaker, one of the students in the first course, once wrote:

During the first training course, which began in 1931, some of the students became frustrated that they were not, as they saw it, being 'taught how to teach'. [...] We knew FM did not believe in telling people what to do, it was up to us to make our own discoveries. We each, in our own way, gradually became aware of the changes in ourselves, our 'use', our attitudes and 'posture' (as others saw it). The training-to-be-a-teacher was not mentioned until sometime later when several of the students felt FM was not

³ William Aubrey DARLINGTON, 'A "Come-back" as Shylock: One-Night Show at Sadler's Wells', *The Daily Telegraph*, London, 21 November 1933, p. 8.

⁴ N.n., "'The Merchant of Venice': F. M. Alexander Trust Fund at Sadler's Wells', *The Times*, London, 21 November 1933, p. 10.

⁵ N.n., 'Training School Actors' "Hamlet": New Methods Displayed', *The Daily Telegraph*, 14 November 1933, p. 8.

⁶ Here is one performance of Sir John Gielgud in the balcony scene of *Romeo and Juliet*, in which perhaps some of the singing style may be heard: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHwCBg574Iw> (last accessed: 08-08-2021).

⁷ Michael BLOCH, *F.M. Alexander: The Life of Frederick Matthias Alexander, Founder of the Alexander Technique* (London: LITTLE, BROWN, 2004), p. 150.

teaching us to teach. I do not think FM ever intended teaching us to teach in the usual way that training for a profession is considered correct.⁸

By the time it got to the third and originally final year of the training, and the students did not seem to be far enough, Alexander came up with the plan of having them perform the two Shakespeare plays. As Jackie Evans writes, ‘he had adopted this idea successfully many years before with his pupils in Sydney and he believed that the lessons learnt were so vital to the pupils that the exercise should be repeated in London.’⁹ Needless to say, the training in that year was insufficient for a performance of Shakespeare on one of those two stages. Indeed, they received scant praise the first year, with the *Times* observing that ‘it only needed a little more sense of the value and rhythm of Shakespeare’s lines to have made this production of *The Merchant of Venice* commendable’. By the second year, however, the critic of the *Daily Telegraph* noted that ‘it certainly speaks well for his methods that his pupils were able to bear themselves with such confidence and to speak so clearly that their manifest lack of stage technique was discounted.’ And here, too, apparently, the students also gained sufficient confidence in their understanding and ability to teach the Alexander Technique, as Michael Bloch writes that following the performance of Hamlet ‘most of the students did make the breakthrough which had hitherto eluded them, and at last felt confident to teach’.¹⁰

In retrospect, it seems almost ironic that Alexander chose to use the same method that had served him when he set out, namely by having them learn how to stand and move on stage in a flexible and easy manner; by teaching them how to make the transition gracefully from one attitude to another; how to use their voice, both dynamically as well as in colouring the expression. Thus, for him, acting was at this particular moment the fall-back method for teaching the Technique. It was just this experience, this new awareness that made my current experience at this workshop so valuable to me. I saw how teaching the Alexander Technique allowed both my colleagues and myself to go deeper into ourselves thereby allowing our vision of the characters to come through. And equally, my efforts in acting have given me new insights into the Technique. And the knowledge we gained is not only valuable on the theatrical stage, but also the stage of life.

Anne SMITH
Emerita, Schola Cantorum Basiliensis;
University of Applied Sciences
Northwestern Switzerland

⁸ Erika WHITTAKER, ‘Alexander’s Way’, *STAT Alexander Journal* No 13 (Autumn 1993) ed. by Adam Nott, pp. 13–18. Cf. also John S. HUNTER, *The First Training Course in 1931: a different perspective* (2013) <https://upward-thought.com/2013/08/13/the-first-training-course-in-1931-a-different-perspective> (last accessed: 26-08-2021).

⁹ Jackie A. EVANS, *Frederick Matthias Alexander: A Family History* (Frome and London: Butler & Tanner Ltd, 2001), p.189.

¹⁰ Michael BLOCH, op. cit., p. 152.

HABITUS AND THE EMBODIED QUALITIES OF ARTISTIC RESEARCH

The actor feels very, very swiftly, almost the moment he steps *on* the stage, the temper of the audience; and, of course, it is his business to control this temper. You're – oh – driving a horse, as it were, you're going through, in great detail the exact movements which have been decided on, you're going through the 'ballet' part of it as it were, and you're also listening to the audience, as I say, keeping if you can very great control on *them*; and then you're also slightly *creating* the part, in so far that you're *refining*, consciously *refining* the movements and perhaps inventing tiny other experiments in new ones; and then, at the same time, you *are really* living in one part of your mind, what is happening. Acting is to some extent a controlled dream. In one part of your consciousness, it really and truly is happening; but, because to make it true to the audience *all* the time the actor must at any rate *some* of the time believe himself that it is really true. But this, in my experience at any rate, this *absolute* reality – this layer of *absolute* reality – is a comparatively small one. The rest of it is technique, as I say, of being very careful that the thing is completely *accurate*, completely *clear*, completely *as* laid down, completely *as* shaped beforehand; what you're *reshaping* – because in every performance you're trying to find a *better* way to do it – these experiments were very, very small indeed, and quite unnoticed indeed by your fellow actors, but they're working all the time. But three or four layers of consciousness are necessary, or *work*, during the time of playing.¹

¹ Sir Ralph Richardson, speaking in 'The Late Show Presents Great Acting' (1989), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0dIF4nVJVU&t=16s>, 9:50 (last accessed 02-02-2022).

A ROUNDTABLE ON EMBODIMENT IN RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

On the 29th of October, 2021, during one of the regularly scheduled online meetings of the Dutch Historical Acting Collective (DHAC), a roundtable discussion concerning the role of embodiment in research was organized expressly with the intention of preparing a contribution to this edition of *European Drama and Performance Studies*. The following DHAC members participated (a brief epithet indicates that aspect of their professional lives that served as a lens for their remarks here):

Lucía Caihuela (singer), Ivo Haun (singer specialized in sixteenth-century repertoire), Laila Cathleen Neuman (singer and doctoral candidate at Universiteit Leiden, researching historical acting techniques through the legacy of Johannes Jelgerhuis), João Luís Paixão (singer and doctoral candidate at the Universiteit van Amsterdam, researching historical acting techniques), Martina Papiro (musicologist, art historian and researcher at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis/FHNW), Anne Smith (flautist specialized in sixteenth-century repertoire and teacher of the Alexander Technique) and Jed Wentz (assistant professor with a research position in historical acting at Universiteit Leiden). All participants of the roundtable are involved in the Historically Inspired Performance (HIP) movement.

In order to prepare the roundtable participants were encouraged to reflect on the following questions:

- How does one experience the embodiment process?
- How does emotion function within embodiment; the emotion both of the actor and inherent in the text to be expressed?
- How does the imagination change as embodiment takes hold?
- How does one's belief in oneself change as embodiment takes hold?
- What does one do when aesthetics and embodiment collide?

Jed Wentz moderated, transcribed and edited the roundtable for publication.

ROUNDTABLE

Anne Smith: I kept on putting off thinking about this question of embodiment, because I didn't really know what one could say. My main interest in the topic is not really in the process of finding myself in acting or something, because that's something that I have been doing my entire life with music. I just don't see how one can actually approach historical sources and performance unless one is actually trying it out with one's organism. If that's embodiment, it's sort of trivial. And for

myself, that which has really been far more interesting is... discovering how much I could learn about the Alexander Technique through historical acting, and experiencing how it has radically changed my ideas about the Technique itself by seeing what aspects of historical acting have actually entered into and become part of the Alexander Technique...and this is for me something that's very concrete which I can actually articulate [...] because it actually has to do with *ideas* that are different and how I perceive things differently from that which I learned when studying the Alexander Technique per se. If I were to write about AT, however, I would *also* not be able to describe in any words that would *mean* anything to anybody who had no experience with the Technique what actually had taken place differently in my body with doing the Alexander Technique than without it; because you can only speak about it if you've had some experience of it, you can only understand what somebody's writing if you've had some experience of it. And so, I find it very difficult to know what one could actually write about, when talking about embodiment in terms of historical acting. This is just a reflection of my own private world, because for me the whole question of body work is more central than performance practice, which I've been doing all of my life.

Jed Wentz: Maybe it's useful just to look at a definition of embodiment? My dictionary says 'embodiment is a tangible or visible form of an idea, quality or feelings. The representation or expression of something in a tangible or visible form.' Well, what we're talking about is the *quality* of movement, and the *expressive* quality of movement. But maybe that's not really what we mean when we say *embodiment*?

Laila Cathleen Neuman: When I read the questions Jed sent around beforehand, I instantly thought of my work with images of actors in attitudes, how I at first would copy the images in my body and how then I would see something completely different in the mirror than I had thought I would see. I learned how I could be mistaken in my expectation regarding the effectiveness of certain illustrations or engravings. Drawings that seem mediocre or even worse, can actually have a very powerful effect, and can be useful for the stage...that for me was a surprise and that can only happen through embodiment, through the process of setting the images on the body.

JW: What relationship does that have to the passage of time, or to specific training...or do you not feel that it's related?

LCN: Well, the process of putting your *idea* of the image in your body takes time. Getting acquainted with that feeling, with that position, attitude, or facial expression (which enables you to make it your own through practice, reflection and repetition that it becomes natural), this takes time as well. The mind is then free to make sure that the body, the imagination and the emotion are in balance with the other aspects of the performance. You can use these images because they are there in your mind...you can use them onstage and you can improvise with them. They become fluent and they take on their own life, so to speak. They become tools, something for you to use onstage.

JW: It seems to me that there are two different ways in which you use these images: you use the Jelgerhuis images very specifically in order to come as closely as possible physically to his attitudes or gestures, whatever you want to call them...but I think you also use images to trigger emotion.

LCM: Yes.

JW: Is that the same, does it feel the same?

LGN: No, they can be practiced separately. I *can* see an image and only copy the form, the body, without inviting the imagination or inviting the emotion. But sometimes the physical reaction to a certain attitude or some image is so strong that the emotion or the imagination gets triggered by itself. And so there's this back-and-forth between imagination and embodiment, there are two ways of interacting. However, the imagination triggered through embodiment is difficult to calculate precisely in advance. Even when a physical sequence is repeated (in a seemingly identical manner), the imagination seems to pick up the smallest variation in physical tension, balance, or movement, which can create a completely new image in the mind's eye.

JW: But do you feel that is something that you learned to allow to happen, or was that something that was there from the beginning? I'm just curious about the pathway to get there...

LCN: In the past I wasn't aware that there are different ways I can go about the training. Apart from a few images from Austin [*Chironomia*], I had not worked with images and the body before as I have more recently been doing in my work with Jelgerhuis. That was a new experience for me.

JW: The interesting thing is, Laila, that I have been running into more and more references [in the sources] to this use of images by actors and public speakers...now that I am aware of their importance, I see them popping up all over the place. Elizabeth Dobbin came to speak in my [historical acting] class in Basel last weekend, and she talked about the seventeenth-century French sources, and this use of images...I think it actually goes back to Quintilian, doesn't it? It's just what they [actors and orators] were doing, and we've been told this story by certain theatre historians that the actors only worked from outside in, but it's not really true. Ivo, do you have any thoughts about embodiment, perhaps bringing in more from the musical perspective?

Ivo Haun: I am particularly interested in the last question that you proposed, Jed, 'What does one do when aesthetics and embodiment collide?' Making a performance style your own, making it second nature to you, that is our main goal. But the problem is that we are usually dealing with something that is chronologically and geographically very far away and unnatural for us, both in music making and in acting. My dilemma – and this is an underlying concern about the whole idea of historical performance, and the idea of embodiment as well – is how to bridge the gap between the aesthetic of the re-creation of a *kind* of performance and yet make sure that this phenomenon that you try to replicate is also received by the audience in the same manner. We have two sides of the coin that are very hard for us to control simultaneously. It's very hard to make sure that (even if you are able to incorporate the style) it's also *received* in the manner that was intended. It's much more a question of *reception*, than a matter of performance.

JW: So your concern is that it will be foreign to the audience even if it is embodied for you?

IH: Exactly. Of course, I think you have to start from the premise that you have to convince yourself of the naturalness of whatever you are doing. There's no way, if they perceive or have the feeling that it is not 'natural' for you, that you are going to be able to convince and move an audience, of course.

JW: Your diminution practice [for sixteenth-century vocal music] is very highly developed. I assume you took a long time to develop that skill, but I don't really know, I never asked you about it.

IH: Yes, this is a very *boring* process, in the sense of just putting yourself in front of the mirror, turning a metronome on and just repeating things in a very mechanical way, so that you can create these patterns in your mind and be ready to recall them as quickly as possible without giving the appearance of it being something that requires much effort. This is the goal. Of course, I don't know how well I manage to do it, but this is what I aim for.

JW: And does that feel different to you than the acting? I suppose it does.

IH: I would not say it is different. I think the main process behind it is that of trying to build very concrete ideas in your mind, and to familiarize yourself with them, so they become a kind of second nature... I think that's what we should aim for, and hope that the audience is either knowledgeable enough to be able to appreciate it or at least tries to make the effort of bridging the gap between our present-day conditioning and the historical reality.

JW: It's very interesting because both you and Laila are emphasizing the *conception* over the body... of course, the conception manifests itself in the body. So, we're talking about embodiment, but we *really* should be talking about *conception*. Would you agree with that Lucía, because you have been working with the emotions, and not purely in a historical but also in a more contemporary way. What is your response?

Lucía Caihuela: Yes, I am going more into the direction of physical awareness and bodywork, linking it to singing. And Laila and Ivo, you've both mentioned this ability to go in and out of an embodied state, so really to try to make it automatic. This *is* embodiment. I think this is very important. For instance, when we are looking at images and adopting some attitudes and we want to be able to do this on *stage*, that it seems 'natural', then you need the ability to be able to go in and out, to get involved, but also know when you have to stop it.

JW: Why would you have to stop it?

LC: Well, I am thinking, for instance, of a situation in which you are rehearsing, or practicing at home; embodiment can be very *tiring*. If you understand what is happening in the body and how to embody... if you *train* how to embody certain emotions, certain passions, then I think it is *easier* to disconnect, because I think you know what is happening, so that it becomes a *skill*.

JW: And *what* is your somatic awareness... what are you feeling, when you say 'I have to be aware'...

LC: Well, I'm expanding the work I did on this topic for my master's research, and I am reading about many things, both historical and contemporary, artistic and scientific. So now I have a lot of information to work with. I am trying to make a map of emotions and passions – first, five basic emotions – to make a body map: what's happening in my chest, what's happening in my ribs, what's happening in my pelvis, my face, my neck, my *eyes*... and all of these related to my breath. I use the breath as an anchor. So, the breath is like a signal for me, [gesturing] 'my breathing is high,

my breathing is low'. And from here, recognizing all these elements for each emotion, I start to train. 'OK, I can disconnect my chest', if it's getting too tight and is uncomfortable. I mean, it's a very long process, but at least if you make a body map of, let's say, five passions, or emotions, and you start to understand how it works; then it's easier to switch on and off, because otherwise you don't know *what* you have to switch on and off.

IH: What you just said reminded me about a difficulty that I personally have, which happens whenever I want to conciliate a specific emotional state with the reality of being on stage, *singing*, which can be very challenging, because these things can go in opposite directions. For me, personally, whenever I have to portray a very negative emotion – sadness or anger, specially – it is very hard to make sure that one does only what is actually needed for the external expression of the emotion without allowing it to...

LC: Yes, to take over.

IH: ...to disturb whatever you have to do, whatever you *really* need to do in order to sing. For *speaking* it is also a very challenging thing, whenever I have to speak something with a very loaded voice (in terms of emotion), it's very hard not to destroy the instrument, and lose the effectiveness of the performance because of that.

LC: I try to think of qualities, what is the quality of the emotion? What can I use *for* performance, and what works *against* my performance. For example, in anger the quality is hot, it's active, it's abrupt...so I try to go for these qualities, instead of thinking of anger [makes angry grimace and gestures] by going like this [straining the jaw]. Usually the music and the text are in accord with the emotion we are portraying, perhaps there will be sort syllables, or large musical intervals and jumps, and I try to emphasize this and think about it in terms of the qualities of anger. What are the qualities of sadness? Sadness is slow, dense. So, then you find these qualities in the body, let's say you embody the qualities of the emotion, but you don't let it *possess* you. This has helped me a lot, in my experiments at home and with some colleagues: just to think of the qualities of the emotion.

JW: Our current standards of 'good singing', of course, very much limit the amount of disruption that emotion is *allowed* to cause in the voice. And this is where we run into that question you raised, Ivo, what to do when aesthetics and embodiment collide...Aaron Hill (speaking of actors, for whom, admittedly, more is possible and desirable in terms of vocal expression than for singers) differentiates between what he calls 'breaks' in the voice, which are essential to expression and beautiful, and 'cracks' in the voice, which are the result of poor technique. So maybe both singers and actors can do more with 'breaks' without conflating them with 'cracks'?

AS: What is clear from what everybody has been saying up until now, is that it's the mental work in relation to the performance, that comes first. It's the act of the imagination and thinking necessary for the execution of any movement that is actually very important. And the process in working on it, of asking 'if I think *this* way what happens to the body, or if I think *that* way what happens to the body', so that one becomes more and more able to choose in one's mind how one's going to behave to create the image that one wants to have on stage. I see the Alexander Technique as tool that can unlock many doors to the realization of one's imagination in the body, and

therefore a great aid in interpreting our imagination in a manner that is truly congruent with what we envision.

JW: Yes, I would agree! Martina, you, as the ‘freshest’ of us all, in terms of your training in historical acting techniques. What do you make of all of this? You’re right in the middle of the process, in the heart of the ‘volcano’...

Martina Papiro: Yes. Exactly. That’s why I am just listening, and absorb it all like a sponge.

JA: Don’t you want to contribute?

MP: I don’t know if it will be useful. My axis now runs in parallel, but more as an art historian. My most concrete involvement up until now with the group has been writing about the plates of Morrocchesi.¹ I can certainly say that sharing experiences and trying out embodiment is absolutely changing my perception and way of thinking about these images of actors, and even of works of art – artworks and illustrations, these are different categories; I have realized that this approach has changed completely the way I think of them and use them to draw conclusions. It’s about the epistemic process. So, what does it do to me, working with embodiment? It’s activating potentials, activating senses and resources that I have never used, and then connecting these potentials or elements not only in my own body, but also in connecting past and present...when looking at historical works of art, I see now that I have to imagine what that pose, that attitude or that scene meant to a historical, contemporary beholder – although I had already asked myself this question ten years ago, now I am considering it in a more embodied fashion and this makes a dramatic difference. And then, the third point, *activating*, *connecting* and then, the *interaction* between all these elements, that is kind of difficult for me to describe, but goes right away to what has been said, by Lucía, by Ivo, also by Laila...how do you interact with images for which you have different codes of interpretation, or that you have different ways of using?

JW: I can see this embodiment process taking place in you, in your acting, during the lessons in Basel; you probably see it less clearly than I can, but certainly your last performance of the ‘Brutus Speech’ [as annotated in Gilbert Austin’s *Chironomia*] was a big jump forward, you were not just making gestures, but really acting. And I had a bit the feeling that you were shocked at yourself.

MP: I was shocked, yes.

JW: And what does the experience when you’re suddenly *acting*...what did that feel like? Can you verbalize it? Or is it too hard to put into words?

MP: No, no, I would not...for my feeling I was not *acting*; but technically, now, I know that I was. I mean, I was in a complete *flow* at that moment, and I felt that I was just acting out what I had conceived before, as you have been saying, the mental work...I had read the play [Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*], and thought about Brutus’s situation, and I was just acting that out. I was shocked at the moment I realized that I was yelling at the [imaginary] crowd, and I was so *loud*, I never have been so loud before in my life; and then I realized that my conception of Brutus actually was *not* the one I want to create, because he is trying to *persuade* his audience. So, I had all the energy

¹ See, in this volume, Martina PAPIRO, ‘The Plates of Morrocchesi’s *Lezioni di declamazione e d’arte teatrale* (1832): An Introduction and Analysis’.

required for authenticity, and yet I was already starting to think ‘Hey, you cannot yell like this, or they will not be moved by you.’ It was really interesting. This experience has completely changed the way I will approach the next steps.

JW: You’ve introduced this idea of flow...it is also really important to the experience of doing, of being in the body. João, do you have something to add to this mix?

João Luís Paixão: I was thinking about what has been said now about keeping a certain...well, distancing oneself enough from vehement passions to be able to sustain a performance. I think that the extent to which one does that is *reduced* the more one does it. By that I mean to say that the amount of experience maybe *we* get in comparison to an actor or a singer would have had in the past – someone who performed every night to noisy audiences – is different, and I think that there *is* a way to scream anger for many acts *and* still scream the next night. It’s one of those embodied developments of technique, the organization of one’s body and imagination, that improves. I think that even some experienced actors of today can be very ‘uncareful’ and they can afford to be more ‘uncareful’ than maybe *we* feel we can be. They are just better at it. One can be better not just at *expressing* emotions but I think one can be better at the whole emotion ‘business’...by this I don’t mean to say the natural, instinctive, ‘beginning-of-time’ emotions, because I do not really know what that means, but this, that we are talking about, this kind of mixture or cultivation of something that we have inside us...we *do* cultivate it, we do grow it and I think the more one grows it, the better one gets at it, or the more comfortable with it, and able to do more things with it. I think that we give a preference to certain emotions that are, we think, less harmful, therefore we practice them more. Let’s say joy, love and maybe grief are things we are more comfortable with than horror, astonishment, rage. I feel – I am saying we, but I actually mean *myself* [chuckles] – I feel that I go less often to those places. I know I will get more tired, I know that it *will* be more challenging, but I am not so sure, perhaps it is because I am just less good at it, that I could be better at it. I have a feeling that it is lack of experience; because in other areas I have worked on, I have improved, in areas that I also thought were extremely challenging.

I want to say something, though, about embodiment from the point of view of research. I see that there is, of course, a side to embodiment with the specific purpose of *performance*, of presenting something, that always demands efficiency: ‘This has to be ready by tomorrow’. Not only that, but also ‘Will the public get it?’ All sorts of expectations that are all of the moment, and from which we are liberated when we do research. And so, the concept of embodiment that I manage to isolate, when I am researching, is a bit *clearer* for me than when I am performing. Although I am the same person, I just don’t manage to put it in as clear terms when I am performing as when I am researching, which just is a calmer environment. I think the added factor of embodiment – it’s strange, a paradoxical thing – in research is a sense of shrinking, a sense of ever narrowing, with an incredible liberation happening at the same time. If I retrace by trajectory, step by step, from the moment I started working on gesture using [Austin’s] *Chironomia*, this was a process of stopping myself from doing *other* things, a deliberate attempt at *reducing* my range of possibilities. But, after a while, the gesture became something that was ‘there’, and that *increased* my range of possibilities. What is interesting is that embodiment is a gate – and I think it’s a hopeful, a positive thing, but it could be seen negatively as well – a sort of gate into a place of no return. Embodiment closes doors. Not only can I no longer do the things I could do *before* I started the process with *Chironomia* – not that I valued them especially – but I don’t even *remember what they were*. It’s such an overwhelmingly transformative process that it affects what I can see. I just *can’t* see those things

any more. For example, if I read now a piece of twentieth-century music, some Ravel or Fauré, I swear to you that I see things there that are made possible by what I have been doing with historical acting, but I don't see the things I saw before. And I don't think I'll ever be able to see them again, they're just gone. What I mean is that the embodied work has an aspect of sacrifice to it. I don't see it as an 'add-on'. It's not that I get more and more, and I keep everything I have and I then add even a bit more. I feel that I give a bit, and I lose, and I give, and then I lose a bit more. But what I *do* ultimately gain – and that is why it feels liberating – is, in the field that I then am focusing on, a degree of *power*, over myself and in a sense over materials around me, that is *unprecedented*, that I have never felt in any other artistic experience in my life.

JW: I was thinking, while you were speaking, that if you were to shift your focus again and retrain your imagination, that you might find those same things that you found before...but, I realize that probably you wouldn't, because you've become a different body now.

JLP: I don't know if, *before*, I had ever experienced such an *organized* technical process as that to which I submitted myself while studying historical acting...this research process through embodiment was also the first time, in years and years, that I submitted myself continuously to (what seemed to be) a solid set of parameters and challenges. Until I was about 26, I did what people told me to do, and so I had a lot of technical knowledge, there was a technique there, but I can't say that I was *clear* about what I was doing, that I knew exactly all the choices I was making. So, I don't feel that I jumped from a tradition and a style that I knew, to another. Maybe with you, Jed it was different...you were later in your career...

JW: Yes, though the acting and declamation were completely new for me, I do feel that I take a lot of things from my musical practice into the acting unconsciously, like the timing and certain qualities of the voice, dynamics. Those *must* be influenced by my lifetime of experience in music?

JLP: The way that the embodiment changed my imagination...now when I *read* things I see things there that I didn't see there before, in a score or a recitative, in a monologue; I feel that it is an embodied imagination that is feeding all sorts of possibilities, [I see] possibilities *there*, and *there*, in the middle of that line, in that word, in that section, which I don't think I could have perceived, if I were a brilliant scholar sitting at my desk.

AS: I just wanted to say something to what you first said. I have noticed a real difference in my short time of doing these things, that when I first began going to these places of the passions, I was shocked by *me* having these passions; and over time it has become very clear to me that I'm *not* the person that I am presenting. I think as long as there is some question in one's mind about 'Am I allowed to have these emotions as Anne Smith?', that makes it more difficult to put it into a character, because if I don't allow it for myself then I can't put it into the character. But as soon as there's more clarity that I'm just playing a role that's not me, then I can put *anything* into it. And I think that this is the process that actors must go through...while, on the other hand, there are certain muscular activities that are associated with emotions, that we *feel* as emotions; so that even a good actor doing a miserable part over a long period of time says 'I can't do this anymore, because it is affecting my own personal life'. I think that there is a range, yes, of being able to separate oneself from emotions if one is a good actor, but at the same time, not completely.

LCN: Just to return to João's comment about moving away by learning, moving away from what you had before, because you see more and more...on the one hand I understand what you mean, on the other, I would explain it, for myself, more as finding ways of expressing what I always wanted. Bringing it closer and closer and closer, by finding more tools. Now when I see a musical piece, the imagination is indeed amplified because I see more options, more depth in emotion or more contrast, other possibilities in the text and expression, but whichever of the sources I was using, it always felt like I was getting closer to my own body and my *own* way of expressing the images that I saw, and what I had *wanted* to express before. The video that I made of Jelgerhuis's attitudes is the extreme form of that.² It's so close to me, but it is also true technique. Do you feel that as well, João?

JLP: I feel it slightly differently, but I do relate in a sense. For example, when I did all the runs of [Jean-Jacques Rousseau's] *Pygmalion*, over many years, I did find that in the last performances the feeling of what I did, the memory I had of what I did, was closer to what I actually produced on stage, so that when I looked at the videos, it was just a confirmation: 'Oh yes, that's exactly what I thought it would be.' As far as that goes I would agree...but I am not sure that it coincides with what I wanted *before*. Perhaps there is not an optical, but a *mental* illusion, that in retrospect things appear that I am not sure were there...so I developed a process and I became happier and happier and more convinced about it...I mean, if it's on a scale of two weeks, six weeks, even a couple of months, I can say 'Yes, I got closer to what my conception was two months ago.' But, when I started working on the *Pygmalion*, for example, I had such a different conception! What makes me happy now, about the last performances, I can see that they represent what I wanted *then*; I started wanting different things.

JW: But Laila, your aesthetic had always been very close to what you did in the video of the attitudes, so that's why you feel like you are getting closer and closer...

LCN: Yes, all the attitudes and movements seem to fit into the complete picture (both onstage and in my imagination).

JW: While João is saying that his aesthetic, or what he is looking for, has been changing. Am I putting words in your mouth now, João?

JLP: No, I don't think you are. The capacity to imagine what's possible, what's going to be possible, what my body *can* do, what I can pull off on stage, meaning that I know, I am confident that I can pull this off onstage and therefore I am going to plan it...that capacity grows. I remember being embarrassed playing the role of *Pygmalion*, being embarrassed many times at positions and images...like when I had to kneel at a certain point, I just felt '*I CAN'T be like this for five minutes! I am NOT that kind of person!*' [smiling and laughing] You know, the conception of what you *love* in it, and of what you believe you can *sustain* in your imagination, that changes a lot through the years, over the larger scale of time.

² See *A Sequence of Passionate Attitudes drawn from* Theoretische lessen over gesticulatie en mimiek by Johannes Jelgerhuis. <https://jedwentz.com/neuman-edps/> (last accessed 25-02-2022).

CONCLUSION

The roundtable discussion reinforced a feeling of shared points of view among participants, as well as pointing out differences of experience and interpretation. It seems significant that all those present with the exception Martina Papiro are professional musicians, and that Martina herself is a musicologist: historical acting, from our perspective, is a discipline closely related to music.

Although participants had not discussed the topic of embodiment beforehand, there seems to be a clear understanding of it as a conception, a *mental* event reified in a body well-trained to receive it. This is not to say that the starting point for embodiment is not the body itself; for at least some of the members of the group, the mind is simply a body aware of itself.

Jed WENTZ
Universiteit Leiden

EMBODIMENT IN ACTION

This contribution emerged as a commentary on a roundtable discussion on embodiment in research, held online on October 29th, 2021. The nature of this commentary reflects the background and interest of the author: the mechanistic understanding of human cognition and action. The commentary will thus make an attempt to translate the contents of the discussion between theoretically interested practitioners into mechanistic terms that, ideally, help to form a bridge between our mechanistic understanding of human embodiment and ‘embodiment in action’, as discussed in the roundtable. My goal is to contribute to a better understanding of what we can theoretically learn from practical experience, and how practical experience can be informed by theoretical conceptualization.

The practical examples that the roundtable discussants refer to reflects their experience as artists. Artists need and perform for an audience, which brings at least two agents into the theoretical game. Embodiment is a complicated concept for which no agreed-on definition exists,¹ but it in any case refers to some kind of interaction between one’s body and one’s experience and/or cognitive processes (which need not be strongly related)². So let us begin with the individual units of the interaction of which performance is comprised. From a philosophical viewpoint, perceiving and identifying oneself includes sensory information about the here and now (the so-called minimal self) and more conceptual information about one’s personal history (the so-called narrative self). The minimal self was aptly described in 1739 in *A Treatise of Human Nature* by David Hume (1711–1776), who suggested that it reflects the total of all currently available sensory information about oneself.³ This includes visual information, as I can see myself both directly (e.g., by looking at parts of my body and their movements) and indirectly (e.g., by watching an event from an angle, a perspective that in a sense implies the location and posture of my own body), hear myself creating sounds, feel myself moving, and so forth and so on. Hence, the minimal self is a multimodal stream of information that directly or indirectly specifies me in the here and now. What Hume did not consider is that not all components of this ongoing stream are equal. Humans are known to be rather selective with respect to the information they attend to and process, so that my effective minimal self will never be complete with respect to the resulting perception, but will rather highlight sensory components that are currently of interest for me. If I play sports, the quickness and effectiveness of my body movements will matter more than if I engage in acting, where the emotional qualities of my movements and my body posture may play a bigger role.

According to Hume, our self in a sense disappears if we fall asleep, because we no longer attend to the sensory information related to ourselves. And yet, our self-perception does not necessarily start from scratch every morning when we wake up, as we are familiar with ourselves,

¹ See Bernhard HOMMEL, ‘Embodied Cognition According to TEC (Theory of Event Coding)’ in *Foundations of Embodied Cognition, Volume 1: Perceptual and Emotional Embodiment*, ed. by Yann COELLO and Martin H. FISCHER (Psychology Press: 2016), 75–92. See also Bernhard HOMMEL, ‘The Future of Embodiment Research: Conceptual Themes, Theoretical Tools, and Remaining Challenges’ in *Handbook of Embodied Psychology: Thinking, Feeling, and Acting*, ed. by Michael D. ROBINSON and Laura E. THOMAS (Springer: New York, 2021), 597–617. See further Margaret WILSON, ‘Six Views of Embodied Cognition’ in *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 9, 2002, 625–636.

² See HOMMEL (2016), art. cit.

³ Available online at: <https://librivox.org/treatise-of-human-nature-vol-1-by-david-hume> (accessed 10-07-2021).

know who we are and what we commonly do, and more. This aspect of self-experience is captured in philosophical approaches by the concept of a narrative self.⁴ It consists of all the knowledge that we have about ourselves. Again, not all that knowledge will be active at the same time, so that even our narrative self will be selective to some degree. But we do have a lot of knowledge about ourselves available, so that we can make sense of our minimal self and create conceptual cues that try to capture some aspects of it. Importantly, a conceptual cue like ‘I am laughing’ can never really capture the richness of the sensory information it represents. It can also never achieve the reconstruction of the exact same sensory configuration that was present when the cue was created. If we are laughing frequently, say, this laughter will be accompanied by a present minimal self, including our sensory experience of our mood and affective attitude, that will be so complex that an exact copy of that experience will be impossible to create. According to the logic of Heraclitus, we can never be happy twice in the exact same way. If so, using conceptualizing cues, like the description ‘I am laughing’ or ‘I am happy’, can help us and others to re-create internal states that are similar to previous states associated with these cues, but this similarity will always be incomplete. Experiencing oneself at one particular moment in time will thus consist of two components: the currently attended components of all sensory information related to one’s body and its movements (the components of the current minimal self) and the currently activated components of all knowledge one has about oneself (the components of the current narrative self). I will refer to this weighted mixture of information as the ‘current self’.⁵

Artistic performance commonly includes at least two agents: the performer and the audience, which both bring their current selves with them. Let us now try to reconstruct the main themes of the roundtable discussion in our theoretical terms. The discussion about the Alexander Technique basically speaks to the fact that the contribution of the minimal self to the current self is determined by at least two important factors. First, there is the selection of sensory cues. The more I attend to some, the more I neglect others. This trade-off relates to other parts of the discussion, such as the relationship between the affective and aesthetic qualities of a performance, and the problem that increasing attention to one necessarily reduces one’s capacity to consider the other. Practitioners try to deal with this trade-off by trying to automatize their behaviour to some degree. Indeed, research on human attention traditionally assumes that making use of highly overlearned routines need less attentional capacity than novel or uncommon behaviour, so that automaticity can be expected to free up capacity to attend to other aspects. However, there are limits to this distribution, given that one can simply not attend to two different dimensions at the same time (try to consciously attend to the shape and colour of an event). Hence, to some degree this trade-off between different qualities of a performance will remain a structural problem. There is, however, another important factor that the Alexander Technique tries to exploit: the amount or kind of sensory information. Behavioural control requires feedback, as we cannot control processes without knowing what our control efforts can and have achieved. This is why we cannot learn to control our breathing or heartbeat without valid information about how our control attempts effectively change breathing and heartbeat. Accordingly, any measure to increase the effectively available sensory information about one’s body posture and movements, be it with mirrors, biofeedback, or reactions of others, will increase one’s options to control one’s performance.

⁴ See Shaun GALLAGHER, ‘Philosophical Conceptions of the Self: Implications for Cognitive Science’ in *Trends in Cognitive Science*, 4, 2000, 14–21.

⁵ See Bernhard HOMMEL, ‘The Me-File: An Event-Coding Approach to Self-Representation’ in *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10:3389, 2021.

Another question being discussed is the degree to which one can truly capture and re-create the degree to which the original audience has reacted to historical performances. From a theoretical point of view, this question falls into two different sub-questions. The first relates to the relationship between the performer in the present and a possible, implied, or actual performer in the past (e.g., an actor playing Hamlet around 1603 in Shakespeare's Globe Theatre). How tight can this relationship be, how well can a present performer reconstruct the current self of a past performer? With respect to the sensory (minimal-self) contribution to the current self, this relationship can be very tight indeed. Dramas and similar instructions try to steer and constrain the ways performers think, feel, and move, at least to some degree, and given that our sensory hardware hardly changed during the past 200,000 years or so, the overlap between the self-perception of present and past performer will be very substantial. However, the conceptual (narrative-self) contribution is likely to depend rather strongly on culture and *Zeitgeist*. For instance, the full conscious experience of emotions strongly varies between cultures and even between individuals,⁶ so that a few hundred years are likely to have a very strong impact on how people conceptualize the total of their sensory experience.

The second sub-question relates to the relationship between performer and audience. Both are different, interested in different things, and likely to have a different background, so that it can be hard for the performer to predict how the audience might react. Accordingly, even if the performer knows what exactly she wants to create or re-create in the audience, this might be hard to achieve. Again, the probability of success depends on the component of the current self. While the sensory, minimal-self component is likely to be easier to transmit, as it can rely on the substantial overlap between performer and audience in terms of their cognitive and bodily hardware, the conceptual, narrative-self component might depend much more on more volatile commonalities between performer and audience. This has interesting implications for performance theory, like Stanislavski's system, Method Acting or Brecht's distancing technique. The latter relies much more on conceptual cues that only point to, but do not actually present embodied cognitive and affective states. This need not necessarily be less effective than actually embodying such states, as the Stanislavski method requires. But the success of transmission depends much more on shared cultural, educational, perhaps even economic background and other aspects of people's lives that are likely to affect the way they interpret their internal states. With respect to the relationship between past and present performer, successful re-creation of particular states in the present audience might in some cases even require entirely different strategies than those having been used by past performers. Whether this does or does not make sense depends on the goals of the present performer: does she want to re-create the internal states of the past performer as validly as possible, or does she want to re-create the internal states of the past audience? Different goals are likely to require different strategies and techniques.

Two other themes emerging from the roundtable discussion relate to identity. This is a complex, commonly ill-defined term that is difficult to deal with. If we accept that the current self is a mixture of weighted perceptual experience and conceptual knowledge, and that the current self provides the basis for one's identity (perhaps with a stronger impact of sensory sources on one's perceived identity, and a stronger impact of conceptual sources on one's ascribed identity), we can theoretically reconstruct the two themes. One relates to the performer and the way she changes over time. Both components of the current self are likely to change over time, even though the sensory component is likely to change much more quickly than the conceptual one. But once they

⁶ See Lisa FELDMAN BARRETT, *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: 2017).

have changed, they are different from the previous self, which in turn is unlikely to leave any overly literal memory about what it was. Accordingly, it makes sense to assume, as the discussion concludes, that engaging in a different way to represent artistic pieces, be that in drama or in music, by increasing or changing one's way to embody them, makes it impossible to somehow 'go back'. Naivety cannot be regained.

The other theme relates to the identities of the performer and the character she is playing. A character is unlikely to have shared the exact same past experiences as the performer, so that some discrepancy may always exist. However, this aspect is restricted to the conceptual component of the current self. As mentioned already, the current self is not a reflection of all the conceptual information we have about ourselves, but only a tiny selection of those aspects that are currently of interest for the agent. With a strong 'Method Acting' attitude, this component may well be close to zero, thus leaving a very strong, dominant contribution from the sensory component. Depending on the weighting of the sensory information related to this component, the overlap between performer and character may thus be very high, so that in some sense the self-representation of the performer may more or less fully overlap with the self-representation that a writer might have envisioned for a particular character. In other words, under certain circumstances and with particular techniques emphasizing embodiment, a performer might actually merge her identity with that of a character, at least for some time.

Bernhard HOMMEL

Biological Psychology, Institute of Psychology,
Technische Universität Dresden, Dresden,
Germany

Department of Psychology, Shandong Normal
University, Jinan, China

ROUNDTABLE: THE ARTIST-RESEARCHER INSIDE OUT: STRATEGIES, METHODOLOGIES, REFRACTIONS

What follows is a transcript of a roundtable discussion that took place online on February 4th, 2022, moderated by Paul Craenen. The participants, all of whom are currently involved in practice-based research, were: Kevin Toksöz Fairbairn, a trombonist, composer, instrument-maker and experimental sound artist; Anna Scott (Leiden University), a Classical pianist working on the performance practice of Romantic repertoire by creating precise imitations of historical recordings; Suzan Tunca (Leiden University) a professional dancer and doctoral candidate who explores the types of knowing that can be generated by dance practice; and Jed Wentz (Leiden University), who is researching historical acting techniques and their relationship to musical practices. Paul Craenen (Royal Conservatoire of The Hague) is a classically trained pianist, experimental composer and research professor.

Paul Craenen: Let me try to give some context: the motivation for this roundtable came from a meeting last year of an interdisciplinary research group at Leiden University in which Jed and I participate. Jed presented his work on late-nineteenth-century melodramas and historical declamation, and he invited his colleague Anna Scott to listen to his presentation and to respond to it. At a certain point Jed referred to a conflict in his practice as a researching artist: the necessity of being immersed in the performance, embodying, feeling and even *believing* what was conveyed in the text he was reciting at that moment,— and in this particular case that included late-Romantic ideals of beauty, the infinite, et cetera — which are not necessarily *his* ideals and beliefs. So, in stepping out of his performance, it was as if Jed became someone else, who actually, from an intellectual viewpoint, was very critical of the content and the message he had conveyed and embodied as a performer. There was an expression of a kind of tension between the researcher in the *flow* of performance, and the researcher *outside* of this flow, reflecting on it, contextualizing it and so on. In Anna's response, she expressed a somewhat different take on this, which opened up a space for discourse.

Afterwards, Jed and I had a conversation via email. We felt that this was an interesting and recurring issue in the context of artistic research, although often only addressed in an implicit way, seldom explored in depth. I have the impression that people assume that the artist-researcher always adopts a first-person perspective, in the sense of direct access to experience in practice, even when *writing* or *speaking* about their work: let us try to challenge this a bit. Are we indeed talking about the same kind of perspective or even the same personality speaking in both modalities, is the 'I' that performs the same as the 'I' speaking, reflecting or writing discursively? Does the immersion in the flow of time in performance — in music and probably also in dance — does that create a situation that is fundamentally different from the one in which you take distance, in which you need some mental 'bandwidth' to reflect on the experience in very different ways, or to engage with sources in different ways? Is the access that we have to the experience in performance actually from the outside? Or do we rely completely on sensory memory, on the feelings or impressions we had while performing? How do these feelings relate to what we later

can hear or see on a recording of the event? And, how can these kinds of questions be answered by all of you in the context of your very different research practices?

My main question is, how do your two selves ‘converse’, concretely and practically; what conversation takes place between the two positions – and perhaps there are more than two – of being inside the time of performance itself and being outside of it? Perhaps during the rehearsal process, or Anna, when you are copying a recording, there is a close relationship between them, a stepping in and out in quick succession; something distinct from reading a source and reflecting on it. And finally, a sub-question: what is the status of the gap between? What happens when we interrupt the flow of performance? There is a silence in between that often functions as a digestive phase. How do we relate to that pause?

Jed, maybe we can start with you and have Anna respond, in order to recreate this initial situation, so that Suzan and Kevin can in turn react to it.

Jed Wentz: In fact, I have been thinking about this a lot since Anna and I had our discussion. It is so important to have good sparring partners! My point of view had always been that during performance I *have* to believe that whatever version I am doing is the *only* possible best version. There may be other versions, sure, but they will not be the *best* one. The version I am doing now is absolutely the best one, because if it weren’t I wouldn’t be doing it. I would not give the public something that was not the best in my power at that moment. So somehow, as a researcher preparing to perform, I have to get myself into a state of belief. As soon as I get off the stage, I can question whether the performance was indeed any good *at all*, but not in the moment itself. I have been reflecting on and questioning this position since the discussion with Anna, however, and wondering if I can challenge myself on it in the act of performance; but I have not taken that step yet and I am not sure that I ever really will dare to, because it seems to me that this belief is essential to my practice.

For me, therefore, the preparation is the place where the artist and the researcher interact the most closely: the researcher-me has to convince the artist-me that this will be the best possible performance, so that by the time I get on stage I have absorbed the parameters of what I am doing to such an extent that I can work within them to create that ‘most beautiful, most moving and most convincing’ performance.

Anna Scott: There’s a lot in which Jed says that I recognize and that rings true for me, especially this idea of a version of a performance that you really believe in, and that you try to deliver that and communicate that as effectively as you can to an audience. I understand what that is, it’s part of what I do, as well as this process of questioning afterwards. I think what I was referring to more specifically when we first had this discussion was that through the performance-research I have been doing, those two modalities have become *reversed*. I find myself increasingly doing my questioning in the moment of performance, and thinking about versions, messages and intentions afterwards. I think that is because of how my more research-focused performance work is turning me into a performer that isn’t trying to deliver a message, but that is asking questions, trying to provoke responses, questions and reactions. In the moment of performance, I find that I am searching for what those provocations might be and I am finding myself really alert to forces that might be constraining my performance, and to make a conscious decision in the moment to break through those constraints to see what happens. Not in every performance, of course! But increasingly in contexts that are not research related at all, it’s just something that’s been developing: more and more I’m finding *questioning* happening during the moment of performance.

That being said, in my research-performance work I engage with very old Classical music recordings, precisely embodying these. In the past that involved extremely labour-intensive analytic work, working with software, really working out exactly what these performers were doing – often they're not playing the notes on the page, they're doing things that you need to transcribe in a lot of cases – so I would work in a very close analytical way. Then, at the piano, I would try to recreate those performances, going from a lower-level procedural focus to the higher level overall 'sweep' of their performances, and then working, working, working until I had what I *used* to call a full copy or imitation of these recordings, that I could sit down and perform. However, I did a project in October which added a second step to this process, revealing [laughs] that all of that work, though not pointless, was *not* the most important in creating faithful imitations of these recordings. Actually, sitting in the studio with an engineer and working on the sound and the atmosphere and the feeling of these performances – of course having *done* all of that detailed work – resulted in something that was actually closer to what I wanted. Indeed, my copying work now involves, almost entirely, listening, and much less analysis. I'm doing almost everything by ear. So, previously I viewed my performances along the lines of what Jed was saying, I believed that what I had created were true and faithful copies; but what I am finding now is that they were more like riffs on the originals...whereas the ones that I am doing now, based on a totally different approach, can actually be overlaid on the originals, they're *that* close! [smiling] It's *really* annoying. The result is that my copying work now is following the path of my pure performance work: questioning, provoking, trying to find the blockages and push through them. For me there's no separation any more between performing and reflection – there's none.

JW: I think that I had assumed – when you were talking about remaining analytical, questioning, in your performance – that it was something that would pull you away from your audience; but in fact you're describing it as a search for connection with the audience.

AS: I don't know if my approach is that generous, to be honest. I think it's less about communicating and more about provoking a reaction – and I guess that is a form of communication – but there's a nuance there. The one tries to share something, the other is trying to say 'what do you think of this? Isn't this terrible? Aren't you angry?' [both laugh] It has a lot to do with beauty. It's really interesting to work in a repertoire and idiom that's still so ruled by this obsession with beauty, because when you step outside of that the reaction is instantaneous. I can feel that from the audience. I'm transmitting a message and getting a reaction back; I feel that and adjust like a barometer to the pressure that I receive. I don't know if it's a conversation, in that way; I don't know if it's that generous, to be honest.

PC: I am interested in something that Jed said, going back to the somewhat artificial distinction I made at the beginning, about the place where the two personalities of the artist-researcher meet...that it is in the preparation. This is something that I too recognize, when composing or working with instruments: that indeed it's often in creating *conditions* for performance that the real research takes place. You create performance conditions informed, perhaps, by previous performances; but it's *there* actually where the experiment happens, in the creation of conditions, and *then* it goes into performance. What happens next will differ depending on the kind of practice. Kevin, is that something that you recognize, that the preparatory moment is a research moment?

Kevin Toksöz Fairbairn: I work in a slightly different medium than Anna or Jed, primarily with experimental music, where a lot of the techniques and physical performance strategies are

developed in preparation of a performance. I perform on instruments that I build myself, which means that a significant construction period is often part of the preparation for a performance, and that when I approach research with ideas or musical elements, it's strongly informed by the handwork and craftsmanship of also having to create objects to perform them on. That means that – in the parlance that Paul was using of 'out of time' and 'in time' aspects of performance and research – I am extremely cognizant of quite an array of 'out-of-time' elements that *precede* the performance, that are *part* of the performance. I will do something to an instrument which will foreclose certain acoustic possibilities, knowing that then I will have a certain set of predefined parameters available to me within performance. So, the phrase that popped out at me from what Jed was saying is this idea of a suspension of disbelief, this performing of a singular, *only* version. This is quite provoking/provocative to me, [laughs] because I *don't* think that way. I really never submit to that sort of a suspension of disbelief; for me the performance is always embedded in an extremely broad scaffolding of other types of research, and collaboration with other performers, and working on objects that are part of the performance. In a way it feels like the performance then *is* the reflection on those other research modalities, that the performance is, in a sense, performing a function of checks and balances where, periodically, everything gets 'checked in' during a performance. As Anna said, it can be terrible or it can be wondrous, it can be any number of things, but it is the key part of a feedback loop that is *not* primarily constituted by the performance itself

PC: The role of the material is also very interesting to take into account. We all work with material in some sense, either with instruments or bodies or space; in your practice this really comes to the forefront, a kind of material resistance, perhaps as well.

KTF: A lot of the interest in research like this lies in allowing the material to take over. I work – not exclusively, but mostly – with materials that have been rubbished from professional instrument manufacture, that have been deemed a failure in some way, which means that they already have certain flaws – or predilections – built into their body. Finding ways to use those, and let them be magnified in performance is a large part of what I do. This means that a lot of the performance is a curation of conditions that will allow these strange and broken instruments to transform into something else. Indeed, there are many moments in performance where I am not actively involved, where something may start and then I actually step away and allow it to work by itself; which as a performer – and I am by profession a trained performer, performing contemporary music, that's my upbringing – that's a really alienating moment to actually become a kind of spectator, even if I've curated a little bit of what is going on. But it is also a large part of what makes it worth it, because then the materials really do take over, and a lot of the work I've done 'out of time' for days or weeks before hand becomes relevant in a very precise moment.

AS: I really like the idea of 'spectatorship' and I wonder if what we're talking about when we discuss the binary between performance and reflection is actually talking about performance and reception. Can you be both performer and your own audience in the moment of performance? When you are in your reflective mode, you are more of a spectator; whereas when you're in a pure performance mode you're a performer, but I think the state that Kevin is describing and where I see my performance as going is that I am watching myself as I play and I'm thinking about what I am doing and I am trying things; and I just keep thinking and searching and trying things to see what happens – not so much in a reflective mode as an external spectator mode.

PC: I wonder what we do, as researching-artists, with this experience of spectatorship and how we can make use of this position. Does the position of observing while performing produce knowledge? How do we describe it, subjective/non-subjective? Somehow it chimes with what I have read of your work, Suzan...perhaps you can connect with this in some way?

ST: Hearing this description of a reflective distance in the moment of performing – which an artist-researcher cultivates, I believe, to a greater extent than an artist normally would without also being a researcher – I think it's an extra space that is gained through critically observing your practice over a longer period of time. Anna, it seems to me that you are breaking open what for dancers is the fourth wall. Dancers don't have an object or an instrument, so we *are* the material. You are *yourself* the matter that you are engaging with. By taking reflective distance during the performance, you open a fourth wall; probably that experience is transferrable to musicians, and to anyone performing live. I conceptualize this entity of my body, and the reflective distance of the researcher during performance, as a psycho-physical resonating space. Making an analogy to a violin, a space that resonates, but because it is psycho-physical there are many layers of consciousness that happen at the same time. In terms of preparation, I try retrospectively to elaborate on attunement procedures, I try to analyse and describe the various layers involved that happen during performance on a non-verbal level. There is a relationship between the verbal/non-verbal and the analytical/intuitive modes. I try to navigate the border between what is rational and intuitively intelligible, and then attempt to find words for that navigation. I think, however, that I have deviated a bit from Paul's question...the thread of your conversation conjured up this 'observer'. There are different aspects of the personality that are very much at play in performance. For the body to take over, you have to *allow* it to take over, there is something that needs to happen so that it *can* take over. You disengage from control by means of a very complex inner mechanism – especially when it's your own body and movement. So, I think that the edge between automatization and de-automatization is at the core of questioning, as a researcher, what happens during performance. Also, Jed, we have had conversations backstage about this...so we do certainly share overlapping concerns or experiences, maybe even sometimes *numinous* experiences, almost what I would call 'otherworldly' experiences, that so deeply inscribe your experiential field that you cannot but question what kind of knowledge that could be. What kind of knowing? In transforming my dance by embedding it in an academic context, I am working on how I can verbally approximate intuitive knowledge *through* dance. So, I separate the non-verbal (which can rise towards the numinous) and the verbal. And one of my great curiosities is how they interrelate, how they correspond and inform each other.

PC: Indeed, one of my questions is, how to verbalize the process? To what extent is your writing or speaking a continuation of your practice? Do you try to carry out this part of your research in an artistic way, or do you put on your 'scholarly hat'? On the one hand one must try to find words for the non-verbal, but you have also spoken elsewhere about how the study of academic and esoteric thought can infiltrate your practice. When I was going through Kevin's dissertation I was confronted with an impressive number of contemporary theories, from Arendt to Haraway, Barad and so on¹, and it's a question I often have, especially at the PhD level, how can we make clearer for the reader that such concepts and theories can, indeed, play themselves out *in the performance* – indeed, *change* the performance – rather than being there only as a kind of contextualization – or perhaps, in the worst case, as a *legitimation* of what we are doing.

¹ See Kevin TOKSÖZ FAIRBAIRN, *Poiesis and the Performance Practice of Physically Polyphonic Notations*, doctoral thesis, Universiteit Leiden, 2020. <https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/handle/1887/100478> (last accessed 06-02-2022).

KTF: For a concrete example of how the theoretical/conceptual part of artistic research can be appreciable in artistic performance: a large number of the theories in my work deal with some form of embodiment, the way that learning an art can unfold *with* and *because of* the body that it is in. As part of this, I looked at how performers interact with notation. I suggested a way of interacting with the notation – within contemporary music, which is often focussed on extended techniques – that is more an imitation of an apprenticeship-style learning process, rather than a traditional academic learning process, one in which you are not transmitting verbal information, but are learning embodied information. You are learning *how* to do it – the way that you would learn in a physical environment, where you don't understand how to brace yourself until you do it, even though you've *watched* it; and there's a constant interplay between these elements. What I found was that it does appear to have an impact on performance. I have spoken to performers who take the more intellectual approach, who have a hierarchy of elements within a score, and their performance sounds completely different to one predicated on the embodied approach, which only proceeds by a concatenation, an amalgamation of non-hierarchical elements. This is not to say that either one is better or worse, because I think they both sound wonderful; but it does show how working with abstract theories about what it means to have a body can translate into a specific learning strategy in artistic research which can produce an appreciable difference in the performance of repertoire.

ST: Is it worth turning our attention to this intuitive/analytical dichotomy? Anna, I don't know if you would use the word intuition...

AS: I think intuition is a really nice word, but in my field it has become a mask for the gap between what people *say* they are doing and what you can actually hear and see with your own two eyes and ears. I don't have anything against intuition as a concept, but I don't tend to use it – which isn't to say that it's not involved! But I no longer trust my intuition, because all the things that I thought that I liked, that I thought were in good taste, have proven to be really malleable, really changeable, interesting and beautiful in different ways to what I was taught.

ST: In my work I search for an approximation of an epistemology of that moment of *knowing* in performance. I've talked to Jed about this as well, that you as a performer *know*...and indeed it is tricky because you also have to *not* know.² So, I understand your reservations Anna, it is a kind of a paradox: but I derive my questioning about the epistemology of performative insights from moments of almost absolute knowing. *This is how I need to do it now*. As you said, Jed, a *belief* in performance: it's *here* and it's *there* and it cannot be otherwise. I search for a relationship between this moment of knowing – and you don't know *what* you know or *how* you know and there is also a *not*-knowing of *what* you know. [smiles] I investigate how this kind of knowing resonates with *gnosis*, which is an intuitive form of insight. Gnosis is an important epistemological description within esoteric studies. Gnosis can be described as being located between reason and faith, between science and religion. In my academic work, I position my dancing body between science and religion by navigating this epistemological tension field. I am searching for the possibility of an embodied dimension of gnosis. Anna, I think there has been an inflation of the word intuition and that indeed it can mask something, replacing the effort of really describing what is happening. But, in fact, I meant to distinguish between the intuitive and analytical more in relation to time. I think Bergson makes a clear distinction between being *in* the duration, or *out* of it: being in the

² See Jed WENTZ, 'And the wing'd *muscles* into meanings fly': Practice-Based Research into Historical Acting through the Writings of Aaron Hill', published in this volume.

duration would be an intuitive relationship to time. To that he would oppose an analytical relationship, which is out of the duration, something that takes place either before or afterwards, if I have understood his thought correctly.

JW: I would say that intuition at its worst is simply falling back on *habitus* and labelling it ‘my intuition’, which is not something that any of us really wants to do. I have to say, Suzan, that since I started working on acting, on gesture and declamation, this feeling of the ‘spiritual’, this ‘giving in’ or ‘submitting’ has become much stronger than it ever was in my work as a professional musician, when I was playing the flute. Could it be that the more the body is involved, the more that particular paradigm makes itself known?

ST: I also very much question the word spiritual: but it seems to me to be a part of the experience of deep-body practices. We know, as artist-researchers, that through the act of verbalizing you open the experience up to an epistemological dimension. In dance it is evident that you need some kind of translation, either symbol-based notation, or a word-based notation referencing intentionality to form the basis for academic discussion. Otherwise, there is no way to demonstrate that it has something to do with knowledge. But how can one verbalize the experience of movement? *Up-down-up-down*; which words can accompany physical movements in relation to space? My doctoral supervisor has coached me to try to write as I dance – but how can I? Once it becomes too academic it loses the ‘guts’, the *truth* of the experience. You change tone, you feel you have to defend yourself; whereas for me the most abstract, dense writing – so abstract that it tends to become inaccessible – *that’s it!* That’s closest to my experience.

AS: One of my concerns, in writing things down, is that I am trying to make sense of something that didn’t make sense to me *in the moment*, in order to allow that ‘nonsense’ to be made sense of by someone who wasn’t even there and didn’t feel it and doesn’t know what was special about it. In writing it down I am making sense of it, afterwards, as an observer. It’s like a loss: I think artistic research involves a kind of grieving. [smiles] Here I am, pinning something down, describing something that was special and ephemeral: and we must accept, grieve that loss and move on.

PC: It depends, perhaps, on what you want to achieve. You can strive for clarity, for getting as close as possible to the experience. Or we could strive to *provoke* something as you do in performance, Anna: that too can be a fruitful outcome of artistic research. It reminds me of my own engagement with the exercises in declamation that Jed presented to our interdisciplinary research group. I think that we are too hesitant to try out *combinations* of formats. I have often experienced that when you *do* something (even if it’s only on a basic level) with people *before* you explain it to them, giving them a physical entry to the topic before giving the verbal one, that it changes their understanding completely. How can we give the reader or the audience some kind of aesthetic or artistic entry into what we are doing? It can open up suddenly – like a flash! – the imagination, and then they join you in thinking not *only* on a verbal level. What could be the best way for us to trigger something in the audience or the reader? We need to explore this much further.

THE BODY AND THE VOICE

The space that surrounds me is not a piece of neutral, extended manifold, determined by a Cartesian system of co-ordinates. Experienced space is action-space; it is my space of action. To it, I am related through my body, my limbs, my hands. The experience of the body as mine is the origin of possessive experience.¹

In experiencing, man finds himself always within the world,
directed toward it, acting and suffering.²

¹ Erwin Straus, 'The Upright Posture', *The Psychiatric Quarterly* 26 (1952), 529–561, p. 545.

² Straus, *ibid.*, 560.

‘DESPAIRING RAGE’ AND ‘COURAGEOUS PRIDE’ EXPLORING THE ACTING STYLE OF JOHANNES JELGERHUIS THROUGH PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH

een Electricque Schok greep my aan door met de geheele Lighaams gestalte de felle Spijt uittedrukken [...] de handen dan tot Vuijsten brengende en de spieren spannende, de oogen Vinnig opwaarts heffende met een Eenigsints agter over geworpen hoofd, en de trek der Spijt op het gelaat maalende, [...] vergat ik de teedere gevoelens tot almais en gedroeg mij als of ik al wilde verslinden Wat Zig op dat oogenblik by mij bevond.

an electric shock went through me, by expressing spite with my whole body, [...] my hands then forming fists, and the muscles tensing, lifting my eyes furiously with my head slightly inclined backwards, and painting the image of spite on my face, [...] I forgot my feelings for Almaïs, and behaved as if I wanted to devour everything in front of me.¹

Johannes Jelgerhuis, *Toneel Studien*, 1811

Thus Johannes Jelgerhuis Rienkszoon (1770–1836) describes one moment in his rendition of a role in which he excelled: Siméon, in the Dutch translation of Pierre Marie Louis Baour-Lormian’s five act tragedy *Omasis, ou Joseph en Egypte*.² It is one of many examples in Jelgerhuis’s manuscript *Toneel Studien* [*Stage Studies*], an illustrated journal of 1811, which provide insight into the actor’s stage actions, and reveal the passionate actor behind the treatise on acting theory.

Jelgerhuis was a Dutch painter, draughtsman, educator, and a member of the acting company at the Koninklijke Hollandsche Schouwburg (the main theatre in Amsterdam, hereafter referred to as the Amsterdam Schouwburg) from 1805 until the year of his death. The skills and experience garnered from his various professions are discernible in his treatise, entitled: *Theoretische Lessen over de Gesticulatie en Mimiek* [*Theoretical Lessons on Gesticulation and Facial Expression*] published between 1827 and 1829.³ This handbook contains the material Jelgerhuis presented in his lessons at the school for aspiring young actors connected with the Amsterdam Schouwburg, and treats theoretical aspects of stagecraft from basic acting tools to stage perspective, and costume design.⁴ The treatise is a well-known source of reference for many present-day performers and stage directors working with historical acting techniques, and in scholarly work on (Dutch) historical theatre practice.

However, Jelgerhuis’s various illustrated manuscripts, although they have received comparatively less (international) attention, reveal information on acting which can help us better

¹ Johannes JELGERHUIS: *Toneel Studien Bevattende Ontwikkelingen der Gedachten van Onderscheydene Toneel Studien Welke slegts tot op de helft van het Voorgenomen plan zijn afgeschreeven door den Hollandschen Toneel Speeler J. Jelgerhuis RZ.* [*Stage Studies Containing Reflections on Various Stage Studies, of which Only Half of the Predetermined Plan Has Been Completed by the Dutch Actor J. Jelgerhuis RZ.*] Ms, 1811, Allard PIERSON, University of Amsterdam, theatre collection, BK B 10, pp. 138–140. All translations are the author’s own. For an analysis of a quite different and better-known manuscript by Jelgerhuis that also dates from 1811 see Laila NEUMAN, ‘Three Jelgerhuis Manuscripts’ in *European Drama and Performance Studies*, ed. Sabine CHAUCHE, 2019–2, No. 13, 115–142.

² Pierre-Marie-François BAOUR-LORMIAN, *Omasis, of Jozef in Egypte; Treurspel*, tr. Maarten WESTERMAN (Amsterdam: Ambrabram MARS, 1810).

³ [Johannes] JELGERHUIS RZ. *Theoretische lessen over de gesticulatie en mimiek, gegeven aan de kweekelingen van het fonds ter opleiding en onderrichting van tooneel-kunstenaars aan den stadsschouwburg te Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: P. MEYER WARNARS, 1827/1829).

⁴ See JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, p. 315.

to understand the *Theoretische Lessen*. It must be noted that the latter is not a complete acting manual; it was intended to cover theory only. The actual lessons on acting and declamation were given at the acting school by Jelgerhuis's colleagues, and were therefore not repeated or mentioned in his treatise. It was in his private writings that he described the more personal elements of acting, such as interpretation, character creation and emotion, which are pivotal for a more complete understanding of his way of performing. Particularly detailed, the manuscript *Toneel Studien* not only documents Jelgerhuis's account of performing selected roles from his repertoire, but also the preparation, thoughts, and emotions behind his acting. Using the information in Jelgerhuis's manuscripts to supplement the *Theoretische Lessen*, not only in scholarly work, but also in productions using historically informed performance practice, seems therefore overdue. The two works provide a rare opportunity to combine didactic and private material, written (and drawn) by the same actor.

This article documents how one of these studies from the *Toneel Studien* manuscript – the abovementioned study of the role of Siméon in *Omasis, of Jozef in Egijpte* [*Omasis, or Joseph in Egypt*] – was compared to and combined with the *Theoretische Lessen* in order to create and stage a character based on Jelgerhuis's oeuvre.⁵ By engaging with both sources through analysis, comparison and artistic practice, my aim is to cast light on the lesser-known side to Jelgerhuis's techniques and acting style, and to investigate how actors today can make use of Jelgerhuis's manuscripts in historically informed performance. In this endeavour, the following observation will be considered: the manuscript's text records Jelgerhuis's acting like a camera zooming in on one detail only of his performance; his passionate style of writing, full of strong adjectives, captivates the reader and sweeps them through successions of details. But the reader does not experience the full range of simultaneously occurring acting parameters which an actor requires to execute the scene described. The challenge for the actors lies in staging scenes from *Omasis, of Jozef in Egijpte* in line with Jelgerhuis's writing, thereby attempting to create as complete a picture as possible of the actor's actions on stage.

TONEEL STUDIEN, THE MANUSCRIPT

Of all Jelgerhuis's extant unpublished works, this manuscript (*Toneel Studien*) presents the most detailed and intimate record of his own acting technique and performance practice. Written in 1811, after Jelgerhuis's first six years at the Amsterdam Schouwburg, it reveals his passion and dedication to his new profession, and the desire to document and share his knowledge. In those years he performed more than one hundred and fifteen different roles, the majority of which were new to him; but this period was also extremely trying on a personal level, as Jelgerhuis lost six close relatives.⁶ As he states on the title page, he wrote most of the 1811 manuscript while sitting at the sickbeds of various members of his household.

In the preface, Jelgerhuis expresses his wish to reveal the work behind the performer, so that this information may be shared with his contemporaries and left for future generations, counteract the ephemerality of the attended performances, and serve as a memento to the reader/spectator. Time and again throughout the manuscript, Jelgerhuis addresses the reader, drawing attention to the role's most difficult passages and to the preparation, thought and practice involved in the creation of a character. His chosen characters are all from Dutch tragedies or from tragedies

⁵ JELGERHUIS (1811), op. cit. pp. 115–180.

⁶ Fons Asselberg listed the roles Jelgerhuis performed in *Johannes Jelgerhuis rzn. acteur-schilder, 1770–1836* (Nijmegen: Gebr. JANSSEN n.v., 1969), pp. 217–221; A. E. D'Ailly, 'Johannes Jelgerhuis Rienksz' in *Amstelodamum*, 35 (1938), p. 228.

translated into Dutch: Koning Lear (in *Koning Lear*); Avogaro (in *Gaston en Bayard*); Gysbrecht van Amstel and the Bode (both roles from *Gysbrecht van Aemstel*); Siméon (in *Omais, of Jozef in Egijpte*); and Nero (in *Epicharis en Nero*).⁷ Of those six roles, only Jelgerhuis's study of Koning Lear was published during his lifetime, in 1832, whereas Gysbrecht and the Bode were not published until in 1987 by theatre historian Ben Albach.⁸ The studies relating to the roles of Avogaro, Nero, and Siméon are as yet unpublished.

The study of Siméon has my special interest, and was selected for the staging experiments described in this article because of Jelgerhuis's passionate interest in the role, the amount of detail, and the practical information on acting that Jelgerhuis describes regarding specific lines of text.

THE FIFTH STUDY: SIMÉON

Jelgerhuis singles out the role of Siméon for its unique quality and its goal 'de folteringen van een kwaad geweeten levendig voor te draagen de woorden daartoe zijn wel gekoozen en geeven den Acteur gepaste gelegenheid zig te kenmerken'.⁹ Praising the 'respectworthy' subject of the play, Jelgerhuis recounts his preparatory research into the background, costume, and character of this cherished role.¹⁰ While he refers to the Bible as a source to contextualize the play in terms of the time, the place and Siméon's age, Jelgerhuis turns to the visual arts, treatises on costume, and illustrations in his quest for historically accurate costumes and Siméon's hairstyle and beard. For instance, he consults engravings by Charles-Nicolas Cochin (1715–1790) in *Gewoonten der aloude volken* as a reference for Siméon's costume.¹¹ Several pages of this book can be found in a large portfolio Jelgerhuis created, containing illustrations by himself, as well as assembled pages with engravings by others such as Cochin and Jan de Bisschop. He intended this collection to serve as study material concerning all ages and cultures, to be used by actors and painters.¹² Jelgerhuis also examined and used Jan Luyken's (1649–1712) Bible illustrations for Siméon's costume, even allowing himself to 'follow them blindly'; the more so as Cochin himself stated that he had copied his plates on Egyptian costume from Jan Luyken. Jelgerhuis included two illustrations with his study of Siméon; one of his costume, and one of Siméon's portrait in profile, clearly showing the style of his headdress and beard (See Fig. 1-3).

⁷ Jean-François DUCIS (1733–1816), *Koning Lear*, tr. Maria Geertruid DE CAMBON; Pierre-Laurent BUIRETTE DE BELLOY (1727–1775), *Gaston en Bayard*, tr. Jan Gerard Doornik; Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679), *Gysbrecht van Aemstel*; Pierre-Marie-François Baour-Lormian (1770–1854), *Omais, of Jozef in Egijpte*, tr. Maarten WESTERMAN; Gabriel-Marie LEGOUVÉ (1764–1812), *Epicharis en Nero*, tr. Pieter Johannes UYLENBROEK.

⁸ Johannes JELGERHUIS RZ., *De tooneelspeler J. Jelgerhuis RZ., in zijne voornaamste Treurspel-Rollen, op den Amsterdamschen Schouwburg vertoond sinds 25 jaren* (Amsterdam: Gebroeders VAN ARUM, 1832); Ben ALBACH, 'Johannes Jelgerhuis over zijn rollen in Gijsbrecht van Aemstel: twee van zijn Toneel-studien ingeleid en uitgegeven', *Spektator*, 17 (1987–1988), pp. 415–430.

⁹ 'To display the tortures of a bad conscience in a lively manner, through well-chosen words, which give the actor the appropriate opportunity to distinguish himself', JELGERHUIS (1811), op. cit., p. 116.

¹⁰ JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, p. 115.

¹¹ *Gewoonten der aloude volken*, tr. Michel-François DANDRÉ-BARDON (Amsterdam: ALLART EN HOLTROP, 1786) Vol. 3. The engravings are by Charles-Nicholas COCHIN.

¹² *Studien van klederdrachten voor alle tyden en volken tot nazigt van den Tooneelspeler of Kunstschilder verzameld door J. Jelgerhuis RZ.*, Allard PIERSON, University of Amsterdam, theatre collection, t000725.000, (n.d.).



Fig. 1 (left). Headdress for the role of Siméon by Johannes Jelgerhuis. Ink and wash, from *Toneel Studien*, Ms, 1811, Allard Pierson, theatre collection, BK B 10.

Fig. 2 (right). Headdress for Siméon, engraving by Johannes Jelgerhuis in *Theoretische Lessen*, plate 64. Author's collection.

Almost twenty years later, Jelgerhuis included these two illustrations as engravings in the publication of his *Theoretische Lessen*, along with costume illustrations for two other roles from the same play: Jakob and Joseph.¹³ Not only the costume, but the entire picture of the latter is clearly copied directly from either Cochin or from Jan Luyken's engraving of 1708, depicting Joseph selling corn to his brothers.¹⁴ It is interesting to see that Jelgerhuis has only elaborated, but not changed the concept of Siméon's headdress and costume in the timespan between the writing of the manuscript (1811) and the publication of his treatise (1827–1829).

After describing his choices regarding Siméon's costume, Jelgerhuis depicted various aspects of Siméon's character. He created a sad, sombre Siméon oppressed with painful remorse. A Siméon with sudden passionate outbursts at the smallest offence, and oversensitive to everything, including the beauty of Almaïs, with whom he's secretly in love. Jelgerhuis even decided not to add 'roodsel' ('rouge') to Siméon's make-up, so that his pallor might mirror 'de inwendige foltering der Ziel' ('the inner torture of Siméon's soul').¹⁵ Jelgerhuis's preparation of the character, then, is a complete creation, involving the outer aspects as well as the role's historical and emotional background, Jelgerhuis's feelings in the moment, and as he himself repeatedly puts it, even his character's soul.

¹³ JELGERHUIS (1827/1829), op. cit., p. 209. Costume illustrations for Jakob and Joseph/Omasis: illustration 63, Siméon: illustration 64. Images available here: <https://jedwentz.com/neuman-edps/>.

¹⁴ JOHANNES LUYKEN, *Joseph verkoopt Koorn aan syn Broeders* (1708). Amsterdam Museum: object number: A 52503, <http://hdl.handle.net/11259/collection.61417> (last accessed 27-10-2021); COCHIN, op. cit., Vol. 3, plate 74, pp. 33 and 34.

¹⁵ JELGERHUIS (1811), op. cit., p. 119.



Fig. 3. Costume for Siméon, engraving by Johannes Jelgerhuis, in *Theoretische Lessen*, plate 64. Author's collection.

Once Siméon's background, costume, make-up and character are clearly outlined, Jelgerhuis moves to the staging. Starting with his first entrance on stage, he writes about Siméon's state of mind, his gestures, and emotions. But more significantly, he tells the reader his own thoughts about the motivations behind Siméon's actions: the thoughts or words triggering the emotions that make him react, recoil, lash out, and lower or raise his voice. The intensity of Jelgerhuis's writing is heightened in the more dramatic scenes, which show instances of a profound identification with

Siméon's character.¹⁶ The following passage gives an idea of Jelgerhuis's involved state of mind while writing; the most dramatic moments are marked by confusing phrases, an almost breathless successions of his actions and thoughts, and a remarkable alternation between the personal pronouns 'ik, mij' ('I, me') and 'zijn' ('his'). *'Daar nu Almaïs [...] van haar aanstaande Huwlyk Spreekt met Omasis, word eenen minnenijidigen trek op zijn gelaat gebooren, de oogen dan eensklaps opslaande en Brandende van de Eene naar de andere Zeijde wendende, deed ik ontvaaren wat in mij omging'*.¹⁷ Jelgerhuis continues with the passage that was partially quoted in the introduction to this article.

Here it is in full:

*maar een Electricque Schok greep my aan door met de geheele Lighaams gestalte de felle Spijt uitedrukken op het booren bevestigen dat zijn Vader en broeders in Waarheid koomen Zullen de handen dan tot Vuijsten brengende en de spieren spannende, de oogen Vinnig opwaarts heffende met een Eenigsints agter over geworpen hoofd, en de trek der Spijt op het gelaat maalende, drukte ik de Woedende Spijt uijt die Simeon alle de felle gemoeds drijft opbruijtschend deed gevoelen, met eene Sterk onderscheidenden toon en Luijder Stemme Welke ontzetting baarde, vergat ik de teedere gevoelens tot almais en gedroeg mij als of ik al wilde verslinden Wat Zig op dat oogenblik by mij bevond.*¹⁸

Passages such as these may also explain why the role of Siméon left Jelgerhuis emotionally drained after a performance. He writes: *'Veelen Mijner Rollen geeven dien Lighaams Vermoeying teevens Welke afmat, maar in deese Rol was mij altoos over eene Vermoeying der Ziel welke naa afloop der taak naar rust Snakte'*.¹⁹ His exhaustion is not surprising when one takes his manner of acting into account: not only does Jelgerhuis change between various emotions more than one hundred and twenty times in this role, the high level of physical and emotional tension also indicates an extremely intense acting style.

ANALYSIS OF AN ACTING STYLE

The following analysis of Jelgerhuis's preparations and acting style as described in the manuscript focusses on six points. For the sake of brevity and legibility, I will use the term 'actor' to refer to persons of all genders.

1. Direct references to lines from the play text.
2. Jelgerhuis's own interpretation of Siméon's character and the thoughts and mental images behind his acting.
3. Emotions/passions (the term passion can be understood as a strong but specific emotional state, such as love, hate, joy or anger).
4. The voice: declamation, vocal colour, volume.
5. Notes on acting: eye movements, gestures, muscle tension, stance, etc.
6. Indications regarding the actor's position and movements on stage.

¹⁶ Jelgerhuis's manuscript is grammatically confusing in some places, making translation problematical, as certain passages or words can be interpreted in several ways. In order to stay as closely as possible to the original text, I have prioritized the meaning of Jelgerhuis's words or phrases over English grammar, even when this occasionally results in a slightly awkward translation.

¹⁷ 'As Almaïs now speaks of her coming marriage with Omasis, an expression of jealousy is born in his face, the eyes then suddenly opening, burning, and turning from side to side, I showed what was happening inside of me.' JELGERHUIS (1811), op. cit., p. 138.

¹⁸ 'but an electric shock went through me, by expressing spite with my whole body, on hearing that his father and brothers truly would arrive, and my hands forming fists, and my muscles tensing, lifting my eyes furiously with the head slightly inclined backwards, and painting the image of spite on my face, I expressed the angry spite that Simeon felt in that moment, with a most characteristic tone and a loud voice, which caused dismay, I forgot my feelings for Almaïs, and behaved as if I wanted to devour everything in front of me.' JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, pp. 138–140.

¹⁹ 'Many of my roles cause extreme physical fatigue, but after this role there was an enervation of the soul, gasping for rest.' JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, p. 179.

DIRECT REFERENCES FROM THE PLAY TEXT

The three levels of text used here are: the published text of the play *Omasis, of Jozef in Egijpte* (hereafter *Omasis*), Jelgerhuis's study of Siméon in the *Toneel Studien* manuscript, and Jelgerhuis's quotations of the *Omasis* play text in the manuscript. The quotations which Jelgerhuis inserted in the manuscript made it clear which stage actions and emotions he performed in which scenes, lines, or on which exact words of the play text. These could be lines and words of Siméon's text, as well as words spoken by the other characters. Jelgerhuis's thoughts on his interpretation clarified why certain actions and emotions came together in specific lines of text – not only when he speaks, but also when he listens and reacts to the other characters in the play. Jelgerhuis also listed several passages from the *Omasis* text which illustrate Siméon's character. These are mostly lines spoken by different characters than himself, but indeed are indicative as they depict Siméon's '*verbrijzelt hart*' ('shattered heart'), his '*verkropte smart*' ('suppressed pain'), his untameable anger, and a fire which he tries to conquer in vain, but which devours him.²⁰ By thoroughly analysing the text of the play in this manner, and through his understanding of Siméon's past, Jelgerhuis created and assembled thoughts and mental images which later served him on stage. He wrote:

*Beoordeelt hoe veel verbeeldens kragt 'er verEyst word om zulke Een mijmerende Zin verwarring wel aftebeelden [...] Wat kan daar toe leijden, dan alleen het geheele Character alle de Omstandigheeden voor af klaar te doorgronden en te vatten, al eer men Zelfs tot het memoriseeren der Rol overgaat. — en dan levendige denkebeelden en geestkracht door naadenken optezamelen om het vermoogen van voorstelling te verkrijgen.*²¹

JELGERHUIS'S OWN INTERPRETATION OF THE CHARACTER, THE THOUGHTS AND MENTAL IMAGES BEHIND HIS ACTING

Again, we see three different levels here: Jelgerhuis's interpretation of Siméon, thoughts which may be defined as technical (ensuring control over the voice, preparing a transition, etc.), and the construct of Siméon's inner thoughts. This preparatory process, based on the understanding of his character, enabled Jelgerhuis to draw on a mental storehouse of thoughts and images, to trigger a particular emotional reaction in Siméon. Having created a Siméon whose main emotion is remorse, he worked with a character who repeatedly relives the past in his mind. In the following example, we see how Jelgerhuis used Siméon's vivid childhood memories, provoked by a dialogue between Siméon and Omasis, to generate feelings of remorse and anger:

*dit nadenken bragt hem levendig voor den geest, [...] het beginzel van de Oorzaak zijner wroeging, snel gelijk een bliksem straal schiet dat gevoel hem door de Zinnen. — en hoorende ondervijl Een voorstel van het geen hem tans door de Zinnen Zweeft, Zegt hij in volle woede, geheel in zig zelve gekeerd, met donderende wrevel en woede de tanden op Elkander slaande en trillende van razernij als in een vlaag van geheel zig Zelfen te vergeeten, en nu niets meer om zig heen bespeurende de Zeer opmerksaame Reegels.*²²

Such passages illustrate how Jelgerhuis manoeuvred Siméon from one emotion to the next, but they also explain the reason behind Siméon's actions. Through the process of imagination,

²⁰ 'in *Zijn verbrijzelt hart* | *dring ik tot de oorzaak van zijn verkropte smart*'; '*Wel dra zal ik zijn woede ontembaar bruijschen zien* | *vergeefsch bestrijd hy t vuur, waar door hij word verslonden*'. JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, pp. 120–1.

²¹ 'Judge how much imagination is necessary to represent well such a pensive and confused state of mind. How else can one reach this other than by grasping, and thoroughly understanding in advance[,] the entire character and situation before one even starts to memorize the role.- and then through reflection to gather lively mental images and strength of mind in order to acquire the ability to imagine.' JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, p. 136.

²² 'This thinking vividly brought to his mind's eye, [...] the origin of the cause of his remorse. Swiftly as by lightning, this feeling strikes through his senses, and meanwhile hearing a proposal of what is on his [Siméon's] mind, he speaks in full rage, completely withdrawn into himself, gnashing his teeth with thundering resentment and anger, and trembling with rage as if in a fit of complete self-abandonment, and not noticing anything around him anymore, the very remarkable lines' JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, pp. 155–6.

Jelgerhuis created Siméon's character and inner world to such extent that he could move seamlessly between his own thoughts and memories and those of Siméon. Such thoughts also continue during the lines of his fellow actors, so that he can react accordingly, and build up the right tension for speaking his next lines. In the third act, for instance, he constantly navigates between Siméon's feelings of anger and offence – now triggered by the words of another character, now by his own thoughts – and the dissimulation of these emotions by looking away, or by a sombre appearance and a soft tone of voice.

Observations such as these reveal why Jelgerhuis made certain choices in his interpretation of this role. In understanding which thoughts he used to create the image of Siméon, and how he guided his imagination to achieve the passions he sees fitting for the lines in the text, we get an idea of the actor's mental work and preparation.

EMOTIONS / PASSIONS

By separating the emotions Jelgerhuis describes in the manuscript from the other parameters mentioned above, two observations stood out as supplements to the information in the *Theoretische Lessen*. I noticed that Jelgerhuis went through a large number of passions in various passages of Siméon's role, and that he predominantly described combinations of emotions which are not listed in the *Theoretische Lessen*. In the treatise, Jelgerhuis includes almost thirty passions – such as joy, anger, and fear – which he mostly explains and compares separately. But the study of Siméon displays a broader range of passions, including those mixed with and coloured by other passions, such as '*Woedende Spijt*' ('angry spite'); '*moedige trots*' ('courageous pride'); '*Wanhoopende Razernij*' ('despairing rage'); and the combination of; '*Schrik en Schaamte en hartverscheurende Wroeging*' ('fright, shame, and heart-wrenching remorse').²³ In the manuscript, combinations of passions such as these can rapidly follow each other within a few lines of text, suggesting Jelgerhuis's thorough command of the actor's craft. In fact, there are more than seventy-five different passions and combinations of passions in his description of Siméon's scenes. Where such emotional states of mind are accompanied by Jelgerhuis's (or rather, Siméon's) thoughts, vocal colour, facial expression, gestures, postures, and movements, it shows the layered and complex construct of Jelgerhuis's way of acting and perceiving his role. Again, this adds to the information in the *Theoretische Lessen*, in which the various layers are didactically separated, and not all the layers are present. In contrast, the *Theoretische Lessen* contains illustrations and basics of posture and gestures that are lacking in the manuscript. For instance, chapters thirteen to twenty of the treatise concentrate on facial expression and postures for each passion. Jelgerhuis uses examples from Gerard de Lairese's (1640/1641–1711) *Groot Schilderboek*, Johann Jakob Engel's (1741–1802) *Ideen zu einer Mimik*, Le Brun's (1619–1690) *Méthode pour apprendre à dessiner les Passions*, and his own examples, to illustrate and describe the characteristics of each passion in the face and in full body postures.²⁴ He advises the students to observe, compare and reflect on the examples he provides, to reread the descriptions, and imitate the illustrations in the lessons in order to become so familiar with the images that they may easily recall them while acting.²⁵ Jelgerhuis thus shares his knowledge of the basic passions, but there is no indication in the treatise of how to bring variation to the

²³ JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, pp. 139, 172, 145 and 171.

²⁴ GÉRARD DE LAIRESSE, *Groot schilderboek* (Amsterdam: Hendrick DESBORDES, 1712); J. J. ENGEL, *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (Berlin, 1785), Dutch translation by J. KONIJNENBURG: *De kunst van nabootzing door gebaarden*. (Vol. I, J. VAN WALRE, Haarlem, 1790; Vol. II, F. KAAL, Amsterdam, 1791); LE BRUN, *Méthode pour apprendre à dessiner les Passions* (1702), Dutch translation by F. DE KAARSGIETER: *Afbeelding der Hertstochten, of middelen om dezelve volkomen te leeren afteekenen, door de Heer Le Brun* (Amsterdam: François VAN-DER PLAATS, 1703).

²⁵ '*De bespiegeling dezer zaken kunnen niet anders dan den Tooneelspeeler nuttig zijn, die dikwerf te beschouwen, natelezen, natemaken en er eigen mede te worden, is het doel dezer lessen.*' (JELGERHUIS (1827/1829), *op. cit.*, p. 138); '*maak U bekend met deze afbeeldingen, dat ze gemakkelijk voor den geest komen onder het spelen, en bedien uw altoos van de beste.*' JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, p. 142.

passions, or how to convert the given information into a role. That is where the manuscript comes in: Jelgerhuis's descriptions in the Siméon study can be seen as the key to the next level of the curriculum, as the private lessons with an acting teacher, and a glimpse of what happens on stage as well as in the actor's studio.

THE VOICE: DECLAMATION, VOCAL COLOUR, VOLUME.

Every aspect of Jelgerhuis's use of the voice in the Siméon manuscript directly enriches the *Theoretische Lessen*. Jelgerhuis stated in his treatise: '*ik handel van Gesticulatie en Mimiek, en mag dus van geen spreken gewagen; dit is anderen aanbevolen.*'²⁶ In the manuscript, however, he could write freely. He used various parameters to describe the vocal colour for Siméon's lines: emotion, volume, articulation, contrast, but also indications such as '*holle*' ('hollow') and '*zuivere*' ('pure') tones.²⁷ In several passages, he expressed Siméon's emotional state by adding sighs, whispers, stammering, or pauses in his text.²⁸ Naturally, the exact interpretation of such indications is subjective, but by using them as a guideline, the actor's vocal progression of the spoken lines changes significantly.

The observation of the vocal indications and their application throughout the Siméon study suggests an acting style marked by contrasts, oftentimes manifested through emotional colour and volume. Such contrasts can be achieved by rapid alternation of contrasting passions, but also by a slow crescendo of emotion and volume throughout an entire passage, reaching an extreme against which yet another contrast could be placed. Jelgerhuis even made use of vocal colour to emphasize the contrast between single words within the same sentence:

*deese Reegel gaf ik dan de Onderscheijding waar voor hij vatbaar is, naamlijk in den wenschenden en verlangenden toon te paaren, het gepaste geluid der stem Zagtheid op kalme en daar teegen overstaande Ruuwen toon voor 't woord verscheurd en vermeerderde alzoo eene toonwisseling die my voorkwam Zoo te behooren.*²⁹

Descriptions of rapid changes such as these indicate Jelgerhuis's attention to detail to create a particular dramatic effect. He also used vocal expression to hide or reveal Siméon's true feelings. In Scene 5 of Act III, for instance, the words spoken by Omasis anger Siméon; instantly forgetting that someone else is with him, he raises his voice in dismay, but quickly checks himself by disguising his anger behind a softer, even a slightly sweet, flattering tone of voice.³⁰

In his search for a differentiated performance, Jelgerhuis took the audience into account, and organized his vocal build-up to achieve the desired effect on them. Knowing which passages were the most moving, and which ones '*ontzetting baarde*' ('caused dismay'), he made sure such moments were well prepared.³¹ In the important moments he made sure to be perfectly understood by placing himself mid-stage when the situation allowed for it, and by articulating clearly.³² Yet Jelgerhuis does not hide the difficulty he experienced in performing certain passages to perfection, nor the fact that he does not always succeed. He relates of one passage in the third act, so touching that he would be almost overwhelmed by his own emotions. Here, Jelgerhuis feared not being able to speak the simple words '*o ja*' ['oh yes'] in the right tone, and needed to muster all his

²⁶ 'I deal with gesticulation and facial expression, and therefore am not allowed to speak of declamation; this is dealt with by others'. JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, p. 108.

²⁷ JELGERHUIS (1811), *op. cit.*, pp. 145, 168 and 169.

²⁸ JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, p. 141.

²⁹ 'I gave this line the differentiation of which it is capable, namely combining it with a wishing and desiring tone. The appropriate soft tone on [the word] calm and in contrast the rough tone for the word toru thus increased a change of vocal colour which I deemed appropriate'. JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, pp. 137–8.

³⁰ JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, pp. 152–5.

³¹ JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, p. 140.

³² JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, p. 143.

concentration to suppress his true feeling and postpone his tears until after he had uttered those words, so that his voice would still be audible.³³

NOTES ON ACTING: EYE MOVEMENTS, GESTURES, MUSCLE TENSION, STANCE, ETC.

The previous quotations from the Siméon manuscript show that Jelgerhuis's thoughts and emotions are also reflected in his descriptions regarding acting such as eye movements, muscle tension, gestures, and full body postures. Jelgerhuis mentions the intensity of the eyes (wide open, burning, fiery, vacant, direct) as well as their direction (eyes cast down, heavenwards, darting from side to side, looking away, etc.). And again, he also explains the expression of the eyes by indicating the emotion (boldly looking forward, casting the eyes down in sadness). Some stage actions seem to reflect an instinctive consequence of the emotion felt in that moment: covering the face with both hands in shame, anxiously wiping the forehead with the hand, recoiling in fear, and clenching the hands into fists during an angry passage. Other passages describe entire, full body sequences of movements, the physical action always being preceded by the emotion:

*mijne Reeden gestuijt ziende door Haar, deed ik Eene allerfelste ontroering, door het geheele gestel ontwaaren, die mij [...] het vermoogen benam om Zonder Steun punt te blyven, Ja geheel ontzet greep ik de bystaande Zeetel om my te ondersteunen, de hand op 't hart leggende en met het booffd op de andere hand neederdaalende op den Rug des Zeetels, trilde ik met het geheele Lighaam.*³⁴

These relatively instinctive movements on one hand, and extremely dramatic sequences of movements on the other, are essential to deepen our understanding of Jelgerhuis's acting style.

INDICATIONS – REGARDING THE ACTOR'S POSITION AND MOVEMENTS ON STAGE.

The *Theoretische Lessen* focusses mainly on an actor's own acting technique and less on interacting with other characters – apart from a section on groupings, and the advice to search for contrast between the actors' positions, instead of standing exactly like one's counterpart.³⁵ But Jelgerhuis's directions for Siméon consist of his own movements as well as interactions between him and other actors. Siméon's monologue in Act III even contains several dynamic elements: Jelgerhuis recounts how he left the mid-stage position, and continues: '*naar eene Zijde snellende, en ontzet met alle de Schrik op het bezef der misdaad als Eene geoopende affgrond, waande ik die te zien en deijnsde agterwaards.*'³⁶ This rapid succession of movements caused by intense emotion and imagination does not exclude the actor's speaking and moving simultaneously. We see this again in a scene with Siméon's young brother Benjamin: '*week ik eijzende van Benjamin af, agter uyt, en verliet woest het Toneel onder het uijtroepen van de Woorden Zorg voor al dat gy mijn Schreeden vlied.*'³⁷ Elsewhere, the manuscript displays moments of seemingly straightforward physical interaction between the actors. Even when performed with decorum, the actions themselves are still uncomplicated expressions of communication. Such examples include Siméon pushing Omasis from him with both hands; Ramnes seizing Siméon's

³³ JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, pp. 159–161.

³⁴ 'seeing my words interrupted by her, I felt a most vehement emotion throughout my system, [...] which impeded my capacity to remain standing without support. Yes, in full dismay I grabbed the chair near, to support me, placing my hand on my heart and lowering my head onto my other hand on the back of the chair, my entire body trembled.' JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, pp. 140–1.

³⁵ '*niets is lelijker, dan dat twee Acteurs eveneens staan, omdat de contrasten zoowel in het geheele tafreel moeten heerschen, als in een bijzonder personaadje; hierop moeten wij leeren letten, als wij en scene staan*' ('nothing is more hideous, than two actors standing in the same position, because the contrasts must reign in the entire picture, as they do in a single character; we have to learn to pay attention to this, when we are on stage'). JELGERHUIS (1827/1829), *op. cit.*, p. 90.

³⁶ 'hastening to one side, and filled with horror at the realization of the crime as an open abyss, [I] imagined seeing this, and recoiled'. JELGERHUIS (1811), *op. cit.*, p. 144.

³⁷ 'I chillingly shrank back from Benjamin, moved backwards, and wildly left the stage while crying out: "above all, make sure that you stay away from me."' JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, p. 170.

hand; Siméon placing his arm around Benjamin's neck; Siméon dragged forward in chains '*met die decentie welke de Sombere Ernst van dit Toneel vordert*' and thereafter being unchained on stage;³⁸ Benjamin assisting Siméon to reach the arms of his father, who receives him in his arms and lifts him up.³⁹

Additional stage directions as well as acting indications are listed in the appendix that follows this article. They are the result of a comparison between the Siméon study and the *Theoretische Lessen*. As Jelgerhuis's observations on technique, character and emotion at times require lengthy explanations, I have selected only the practical information on acting and staging practice.

METHODOLOGY AND BOUNDARIES

It is important to state at this point the problematic sides of transforming written text into physical action, and putting the results of artistic practice back into written words. Both the interpretation of the source and the description of artistic research are, although subjective in nature, essential for an understanding of the physical and mental processes the actor engages in when preparing a role. Historically informed artistic practice is by default performed by a different person, usually in a different physical surrounding (the costumes, sets, and theatre) than in the original version, and with a contemporary audience. This means that in our search for a 'historically informed staging' we must be able, at least on reflection, to distinguish the actual indications in the source from our own additions. Our aim in this project has therefore not been to recreate a historical event, to show 'how it was done', but rather an attempt to learn about the sources by doing, and recognizing tendencies in the acting style as Jelgerhuis describes it. My work in the staging project and its preparations involved training with the actors as well as leading the project. The following paragraphs therefore include sections written using the personal pronouns 'I' and 'we', as well as descriptive sections.

The following questions were the basis of our investigations: how could the process of staging three scenes from *Omasis* contribute to our knowledge of preparing and staging a role in agreement with Jelgerhuis's writings? Following Jelgerhuis's indications in his study of Siméon, how could we extend our understanding of the *Theoretische Lessen*, and consequently of the acting style in the Amsterdam Schouwburg in the early nineteenth century? The answers to our questions were to be sought through experimentation and comparison with other sources, generally in the following succession: question, research (whether through artistic practice or consulting and comparing sources), discussion, hypothesis, experimentation, reflection, answer or new question.

In order to stage the scenes in this style, the actors were to base their stances, gestures and the other elements inherent to acting on their knowledge of and experience with historical treatises on acting and painting, both before and during Jelgerhuis's time. In particular, the actors and I intended to optimize our interpretation of Jelgerhuis's acting style by working with the material in his *Theoretische Lessen* – such as the examples concerning facial expression, contrast in the body and gestures, and '*attitudes*' – according to Jelgerhuis's idea of '*welstand*'. I will use the Dutch word *welstand* from here on, as its complete definition is lost when translated into one single word in English. The concept of *welstand*, essential to Jelgerhuis's teaching, may be defined as: gracefulness

³⁸ 'with that decorum which the somber seriousness of this scene requires'. JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, p. 171.

³⁹ JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, pp. 147, 158, 168, 171 and 178.

and beauty created through a physical balance of contrapposto⁴⁰ and contrast in the body and gestures, thereby depicting Nature ‘*minder zoo als zij is, dan wel behoorde te zijn*’.⁴¹ The attitudes presented in Jelgerhuis’s acting manual can be described as full body stances, including gestures and facial expressions, which follow the rules of contrapposto and *welstand*. The attitude is more than one moment’s beautiful but static image only; in fact, it can include a passion, and therefore contain movement (of the eyes, of the arms and hands, or of the body).

This project’s approach to rehearsing, analysing, documenting, discussing and experimenting is not a historical one, but an opportunity for us to engage with and obtain an understanding of Jelgerhuis’s interpretation of Siméon. This was the role we had the most information about, and the interpretation of the other characters was adjusted in order to come closer to our reading of Jelgerhuis’s manuscript. I selected the scenes in which Jelgerhuis was the most generous in his descriptions – Act III, Scenes 3, 4, and 5 – so that we might incorporate as many details from the manuscript as possible. As these scenes only involved three roles, this also made the project more manageable in terms of participants, time, and – as 2020 and 2021 presented the complications caused by Covid-19 – logistics. At this stage of our endeavours, the aim of this project was not to obtain a perfectly finished end product, but to learn through experimentation, and it will remain a work in progress until such collaborations in a theatre are possible again.⁴² I will not expand here on all aspects of delivery such as the poetic metre, speed of delivery, vocal pitch and historical Dutch pronunciation, but only on those parameters which were discussed extensively in Jelgerhuis’s manuscript, such as vocal volume and colouring the voice through affect.

In order to stage the selected scenes from the manuscript according to the ideals of decorum and stage behaviour of the early nineteenth century, I wanted to work with actors who would be willing to use historical acting techniques. Jed Wentz, João Louís Paixão and Andreas Gilger, three colleagues from the Dutch Historical Acting Collective (DHAC) who, in previous years had studied and trained according to various principles in the *Theoretische Lessen*, kindly agreed to collaborate. With their cooperation, the project could commence with a collective understanding of this source. Moreover, they were familiar with other treatises (such as Gilbert Austin’s *Chironomia* and Aaron Hill’s *An Essay on the Art of Acting*), and had experience with acting techniques as described in these sources.⁴³ This facilitated communication and group work, as we could easily refer to a mutual frame of reference regarding decorum, techniques, and sources. Our focus during this staging process, however, was on sources directly concerning or mentioned by Jelgerhuis. The *Theoretische Lessen* was the main manual of reference and Jelgerhuis’s other works have been consulted time and again in search of answers to the questions that arose during the preparation and staging process. The treatise would also serve as our guide to staging the gestures and attitudes described in the manuscript, according to Jelgerhuis’s ideals of stage practice.

Rather than seeing myself as the director of the staging process, it was my aim to let Jelgerhuis be our guide and teacher. I suggested working on elements of the staging, such as entrances, exits, etc, and assisting the actors with inserting most of Jelgerhuis’s descriptions in their staging in the appropriate acting style. But there was one complication: I soon realized that I needed to be

⁴⁰ Definition of contrapposto in Lexico.com: An asymmetrical arrangement of the human figure in which the line of the arms and shoulders contrasts with, while balancing, those of the hips and legs. Origin: Italian, past participle of *contrapporre*, from Latin *contraponere* ‘place against’. <https://www.lexico.com/definition/contrapposto>. (last accessed on 27-10-2021).

⁴¹ ‘den slechten smaak die te algemeen heerscht, leeren verbannen en welstand bewaren, de Natuur leeren afbeelden, minder zoo als zij is, dan wel behoorde te zijn.’ (‘learning to ban the bad taste which reigns too much in general, and maintaining *welstand*, so as to depict Nature less as she is, than as she should be.’) JELGERHUIS (1827/1829), p. 119.

⁴² I will leave aside any comparison between the Dutch translation of *Omasis, of Jozef in Egypte* and the French original, as well as between *Omasis, of Jozef in Egypte* and the biblical narrative, as such comparisons were, at this stage, beyond the scope of our project.

⁴³ Gilbert Austin, *Chironomia, Or, A Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery* (London: T. CADELL and W. DAVIES, 1806); Aaron HILL, ‘An Essay on the Art of Acting’, *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill, Esq.* (London: 1753), Vol. IV, 353–414.

mindful of the distinction between simply voicing Jelgerhuis's indications, and interpreting them. Although I was more familiar with this material than the other actors, through my previous research on Jelgerhuis and my experience as a performer and teacher of acting techniques based on the *Theoretische Lessen*, and could provide suggestions accordingly, they had their own expertise which I valued, and I wanted to leave them as much artistic freedom as possible.⁴⁴

At this stage of the project, we neither had the opportunity to work in a theatre, nor to have actual costumes, but Jelgerhuis's costume illustrations for Siméon, Omasis, and Jakob gave us an idea of the style of costume and headdress to envision for these characters. As Jelgerhuis did not mention any stage sets in his study of Siméon, I turned to the theatre critics in *De Tooneelkijker* to discover which kind of sets were used for *Omasis, of Jozef in Egypte* at the Amsterdam Schouwburg. The authors of *De Tooneelkijker* comment on sets depicting a Roman court hall in the *Omasis* performance of August 1817. Although they deemed the Roman court hall 'little suitable for the time', I used their description to search for similar sets designed for the Amsterdam Schouwburg in the early nineteenth century⁴⁵. The Allard Pierson collection in Amsterdam holds set designs for a court hall and a court gallery by the Dutch set painter François Joseph Pfeiffer jr., who worked for the Amsterdam Schouwburg in Jelgerhuis's day.⁴⁶ Again, even if we could not work in a theatre at the time, it was inspiring to have an idea of the surroundings in which the acting should be placed.

THE STAGING PROCESS

ACT III, SCENE 1.

The first project was to prepare and stage Act III, Scene 5 of *Omasis, of Jozef in Egypte* with Jed Wentz as Siméon and João Louís Paixão in the role of Omasis. In order to follow Jelgerhuis's remark on thoroughly understanding the entire character before even starting to memorize the role, the actors and I read the play and the manuscript together and discussed the characters and their function in the play. Wentz and Paixão then memorized their own parts as well as Jelgerhuis's descriptions from the manuscript corresponding to their specific lines. Another reading followed in which they incorporated the descriptions concerning affect and vocal colour in their declamation. Only then did we proceed to the actual staging. Throughout the staging process, we followed Jelgerhuis's basic advice on contrast as presented in the *Theoretische Lessen*: to search for contrast not only within the actor's own posture and gestures, but also between two actors on stage. This meant that two actors mirroring one another, or adopting each other's attitude or gesture immediately, had to be avoided at all times. From the very beginning, the two actors had to work in different ways: Wentz, as Siméon, had to insert a multitude of Jelgerhuis's descriptions into his acting, whereas Paixão had no descriptions for Omasis, but interacted with Wentz by anticipating and acting in a way that made Siméon's actions and reactions more plausible. It took adjusting on both sides to create the right emotional build-up and tension between the characters,

⁴⁴ A video, created in 2021, documenting some of my work with Jelgerhuis's *Theoretische lessen* can be found here: <https://jedwentz.com/neuman-edps/> (last accessed 26-02-2022).

⁴⁵ *De Tooneelkijker*, (Amsterdam: Delachaux, 1818), Vol. III, p. 41.

⁴⁶ François Joseph PFEIFFER jr., *Decorontwerp voor hofgalerij*: t003448.000, and *Decorontwerp voor een hofzaal*: t005787.000, Allard Pierson, University of Amsterdam, theatre collection. The Allard Pierson collection also holds images of sets depicting a court hall from before Jelgerhuis's time, including *De Aloude Hofgallerij* by Gerard De Lairese, which burnt down with the previous Schouwburg in 1772, but of which many prints remain, such as *Het coulissendecor "De Aloude Hofgallerij" met scène uit Het huwelijk van Orondates en Statira*, g002183000, and various designs by Pieter Barbiers, such as a court hall dated 1781–85 for the miniature Slingelandt theatre: *Decor "de hofzaal" voor het Slingelandttheat*, Allard Pierson, University of Amsterdam, theatre collection, p.00022.008.

but this process enabled Wentz to obtain the desired vocal colour, affect, gestures, eye movements, and accentuation of specific words.

As Scene 5 began to take shape, the dramatical construction of the text, guided by Jelgerhuis's remarks, propelled the actors into an ever-increasing intensity of passions, and the volume reached a high level, resulting in an overwhelming impact on the observers. The question emerged whether this loudness did not exceed the limits of stage decorum in Jelgerhuis's time. In Scenes 3 and 4 of Jelgerhuis's *Siméon* study, Jelgerhuis regularly mentions taking the voice to its extremity, and using a rising tone. It is not certain whether Jelgerhuis here speaks of vocal pitch, volume, or perhaps both. While the question of pitch for now remains unsolved, the following sources provided information on vocal volume on stage. *De Tooneelkijker's* review of his performance as *Siméon* in August 1817 praised Jelgerhuis for his management of the passions, yet criticized him for his excessive screaming:

Jelgerhuis heeft in de rol van Siméon uitgeblonken: minnenij, hoogmoed, hoop, wroeging van het geweten waren in zijn stem, houding en gebaren sprekend te lezen; en hoezeer wij in het vijfde bedrijf, bij de bekentenis van de op het hart brandende misdaad, meer bedaardheid en innige weemoedigheid verlangd hadden, boven zijn ontzettend geschreeuw, zettende zijne duidelijke uitspraak (iets, dat niet altijd bij hem het geval is,) zijn spel, dezen avond, niet weinig luister bij.⁴⁷

Surprisingly, even though the authors of *De Tooneelkijker* had similarly criticized Jelgerhuis on several other occasions, he himself had already written, in an unpublished document of 1808, that too much shouting took place among the tragedians of the Amsterdam Schouwburg, particularly at the end of an important line.⁴⁸ He related how one actor induced the other to shout, and how this habit persisted because it was applauded by the audience. He also remarked: '*Hij, die het waagt, daarvan af te wijken, verliest het openlijk handgeklap en vervalt dus, tegen beter weten in, tot navolging. Hoe moeilijk is het, deze dwaling te overwinnen! [...] Het natuurlijk verbeven spel, dat de zinnen betoovert, ontbreekt nog geheel.*'⁴⁹ Jelgerhuis compares this behaviour with the acting of the famous French actor François-Joseph Talma (1763–1826), who impressed Jelgerhuis in his role as Nero, in which he seemed to remain '*in het vermogen zijner kracht*' ('within the bounds of his power') during the entire performance.⁵⁰ Jelgerhuis added:

Angst en wroeging was het hoofddoel van zijn spel, en ofschoon hij bij al den eenvoud van zijn spel dikwerf deed ijzen, schreeuwde hij nooit. Zulks was om nimmer te vergeten! Zonder hier iemand te noemen, zeg ik alleen, dat men van niet één onzer Hollandsche Tooneelsten hetzelfde zeggen kan.⁵¹

⁴⁷ 'Jelgerhuis has shone in the role of *Siméon*: jealousy, haughtiness, hope, remorse of the conscience were clearly readable in [his] voice, posture, and gestures; and however much we would have preferred more calmness and inner melancholy to his terrible screaming in the fifth act, at the confession of his heart-burning crime, his excellent diction (something which is not always the case with him) added lustre to his performance on this evening.' *De Tooneelkijker* (1818), Vol. III, p. 41.

⁴⁸ *De Tooneelkijker* (Amsterdam: Delachaux, 1817), Vol. II, pp. 19 and 433; See also NEUMAN, art. cit., pp. 127–8.

⁴⁹ 'He, who dares to diverge from this, loses the applause and, against his better judgement, is reduced to conform. How difficult it is, to master this error! [...] The naturally elevated way of acting, which enchants the senses, is as yet entirely missing.' Johannes Jelgerhuis, 'Antwoord op de vraag: Welke was de verleden staat van het Nederlandsch Tooneel, welke is de tegenwoordige, en welke zoude die behooren te zijn? 1 Januari 1808', *Noord- en Zuid-Nederlandsche Tooneel-Almanak voor 1877* (G. Theod. BOM: Amsterdam, 1877), p. 111.

⁵⁰ JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, p. 121. François-Joseph Talma was a famous actor at the Comédie Française. It is likely that Jelgerhuis here refers to Talma's performances at the Théâtre Français, in 1803 and 1806. See Dr J. A. WÖRP, *Geschiedenis van den Amsterdamschen schouwburg: 1496–1772* (Amsterdam: S. L. VAN LOOY, 1920) p. 254.

⁵¹ 'Fear and remorse were the main aim of his acting, and although he often caused cold chills with the simplicity of his acting, he never screamed. This was unforgettable! Without naming names, I only say that one cannot say the same of any one of our Dutch actors.' JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, p. 121.

These examples suggest that Jelgerhuis was aware of the current imperfections, but also conscious of the difficulty in eliminating bad habits within the acting company, as the audience's approval was crucial to the actor's career. Desirous of change, Jelgerhuis reflected upon solutions to improve both the audience's taste and the acting level. However, judging by Jelgerhuis's own *Toneel Studien* of 1811 and *De Tooneelkijker*'s reviews between 1816 and 1819, the issue of screaming on stage had not yet been resolved. These reviews still mention Jelgerhuis's excessive screaming, but also decry this tendency as a general flaw among the actors of the Amsterdam Schouwburg.⁵²

Now that we had learned that there had been a tendency among the Dutch actors to raise their volume to a level described as screaming, we faced that dilemma which so often tortures historically informed performers: do we offer our interpretation of what we think actually happened in the performance (reality), or do we apply our interpretation of what the performer may have desired had it been possible (Jelgerhuis's ideal)? As the passionate moments in Scene 5 had naturally brought Wentz and Paixão to raise their voices, I decided not to ask them to limit their volume. The impact of their vocal crescendo created a contrast with moments of sensibility which I found effective. Vocal volume has been listed for our future research, as one of the elements to experiment with in an actual theatre, when the occasion arises, particularly Siméon's behaviour in Act V, which had given rise to *De Tooneelkijker*'s criticism.

TRAINING, IMAGES, WORKING WITH THE CAMERA

The second project involved staging Scenes 3 and 4 of Act III with Wentz as Siméon and Andreas Gilger as Ramnes. In this case we had more time to train and experiment before the actual staging began. Apart from understanding and creating the characters before staging the scene, I wanted us to think more profoundly about the notion of *welstand* and incorporate Jelgerhuis's advice to create lively images in the mind, as he describes it in both the manuscript and the *Theoretische Lessen*. In the treatise, Jelgerhuis encourages the observation of antique statuary as a vast source of inspiration in our study of the attitudes: '*Slechts de oppervlakkige kennis van den Griekschen Apollo, - of van den Laocoon, [...] geeft ons de beste denkebeelden, van onder pijn en smerten, nog edele en groote schilderachtige bewegingen, voortstellen.*'⁵³ Elsewhere, regarding his illustrations on gesticulation, he remarks: '*men dient zoo lang daar op te zien, tot men de eene uit de andere als het ware ziet voortvloeijen, en als Gesticulatie voor het oog zwoeven ziet [...]*'⁵⁴ By visualising the transition from one image to the next, the actor trains his imagination to transform a still image into movement. The movements are then executed by the actor, and adapted to the character he is studying. The actor's training therefore takes place on an imaginary as well as physical level. With this in mind, I asked both Wentz and Gilger to select visual images as inspiration for their characters, attitudes, and gestures. These images were mainly paintings and illustrations mentioned or drawn by Jelgerhuis, but also included other contemporary sources. Wentz and Gilger then each inserted these images into their text, creating a visual roadmap for their movements and attitudes, while reflecting on a possible route for the passions behind these movements.

The process of combining images with the text of Scenes 3 and 4 was done in alternation with preparatory readings and discussions of the text, similar to the work done earlier on Scene 5; however, due to Covid-19 restrictions, all meetings had to be held online. In a series of 'virtual' sessions, I proposed physical training in combination with readings, discussions and videos made of Scenes 3 and 4. The training consisted of exercises – based on the lessons on facial expression,

⁵² *De Tooneelkijker* (Amsterdam: Delachaux, 1816), Vol. I, p. 29.

⁵³ 'Even the superficial knowledge of the Greek Apollo or of the Laocoon [...] gives us the best images for representing noble and grand movements as in a painting, even in great pain and suffering.' JELGERHUIS (1827/1829), op. cit., p. viii.

⁵⁴ 'One needs to observe these images until one can see one gesture flow into the next, as it were, as gesticulation, floating before the eyes.' JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, p. 86.

gesticulation, and full body attitudes in the *Theoretische Lessen* – as well as work on embodiment of the images Wentz and Gilger had selected. Although these exercises did not exist in the sources, I designed them closely following the instructions in the *Theoretische Lessen*, so as to lead to intuitive moments on stage, based on our interpretation of Jelgerhuis's ideal of *welstand*.

In working on facial expression, we observed that some of Jelgerhuis's indications in the *Theoretische Lessen*, particularly on the movement of the eyebrows, proved more of a challenge to some of us than to others.⁵⁵ It also became clear that the passion we tried to convey through facial expression was not always recognizable as such to the other observing two. It became clear why Jelgerhuis urged aspiring actors to study their own facial features, and to learn which traits can become strengths or weaknesses in the expression of a character. By knowing how to accentuate or cover the specific visual features with make-up, and through awareness of the effect of one's facial expression on the observer, the actor can mould these elements to his advantage. He might use this knowledge so that the imitation of the passions on stage '*in de oogen der Aanschouwers, dezelfde denkebeelden zigbaar verwekken, die de natuur elkander nabij staande doet.*'⁵⁶

This last observation on the distance between the actor and his audience raised questions concerning the intensity of the facial expressions in our staging. As the facial expressions in the treatise were taught to the students of the Amsterdam Schouwburg (the theatre at the time of Jelgerhuis's lessons could hold an audience of more than one thousand), were we to adapt such strong features to the situation of online meetings, using a camera?⁵⁷ Or were Wentz and Gilger to soften their facial expressions so as to return to the situation of a person 'standing nearby', and consequently adapt a facial *welstand* appropriate to the distance to the camera? The aim of the project was to stage the *Omasis* scenes as described in the manuscript, which is directly based on stage experience. In addition, this project and its staging process are a preparation for ultimately working on an actual stage. Deviating from Jelgerhuis's instructions so early on in the process, by definitely moderating the expression, would be likely to influence our result. Scaling down the actor's actions then, though it might be an effective exercise to obtain more contrast with the grand version, was not adapted as a new goal.

The online format became particularly problematical in the final stages of recording Scene 4. Wentz and Gilger were working from their respective homes in differently shaped rooms, impeding their moving at the same distance to the camera. This resulted in video recordings with disproportionate images of Wentz and Gilger: one of the two looked significantly smaller, while supposedly on stage they would be standing near one another. Both actors were also restricted in their movement, as certain movements could cause a body part to be left out of the frame. In addition, the unstable internet connection occasionally hindered the dialogue, causing delays, and even momentarily blocking the video entirely. Not having better options at the time of the recording (larger rooms with a better internet connection), we decided to keep these recordings for documentation only of our work in process, instead of adding them as an accompaniment to this article as planned.

⁵⁵ JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, pp. 117–184. Jelgerhuis presents examples from sources by, among others, Charles Le Brun, Gerard de Lairese and Johann Jakob Engel, which he accompanies with comments, comparisons, and solutions of his own.

⁵⁶ 'that the imitation on stage noticeably induces the same mental images in the eyes of the spectators as they would naturally experience when standing next to one another.' JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, p. 117.

⁵⁷ For calculations of audience capacity at the Amsterdam Schouwburg see Henny Ruitenbeek, *Kijkcijfers: De Amsterdamse Schouwburg 1814–1841* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2002), pp. 104–110.

STAGING EXAMPLE: ACT III, SCENES 3 AND 4.

The staging process of Scenes 3 and 4 involved elements of timing, gestures, and interaction between Siméon and Ramnes which are found neither in the *Omasis* text, nor in the *Theoretische Lessen*. Jelgerhuis wrote about an increase in intensity towards the final lines of Siméon's monologue, where, having reached the extremity of volume and despairing rage, he changed his tone to speak the next line as follows: '*grillende van de daad Zelve Zeijde ik die Vreeslyke Woorden, tot den Heemel spreekende Kgehoorzaam Ja, Maar weer de Wroeging uit mijn hart terwijl ik met Eene vuijste slag op het hart, Een afgewend gezicht en oog ten Heemel maakte*'.⁵⁸ Jelgerhuis's interpretation of this passage is manifested in physical action (the act of striking his heart with a fist, and the direction of his face and the eyes), in thought and emotion ('while abhorring the deed itself'), as well as Jelgerhuis's own opinion of Siméon's text '*Zeijde ik die Vreeslyke Woorden*' ['I said those terrible words']. After this passage, Jelgerhuis mentions a gesture and a pause before speaking the next line, '*Ach Wat heb ik gezegt*' ['Alas, what have I said']:

*Hier Sloeg ik dan beide de handen voor het voorhoofd; bezon mij en een Pauze maakende Zeijde ik de genoemde Woorden, onder de Uytdrukking van angstig herroepen van't geheugen, en van zig zelven gruwende nu in Een geheele Sombre gedagten Stortende, kwam ik tot die gewoone mijmering te rug, waarin ik mij het Eerst vertoonde.*⁵⁹

Not only are the gestures in this monologue an addition to the vocabulary of gestures in the *Theoretische Lessen*, but Jelgerhuis's description of words, gestures and vocal pauses also cast light on the timing. Jelgerhuis's use of gestures while speaking the text is at least as valuable for the actor working with the manuscript as the gestures which occur in silence. Regarding the matter of timing, the 'how long' and 'how short' will remain unknown variables. But the fact that there was a pause at all, and that the pause was filled with a gesture and with Jelgerhuis's/Siméon's thoughts, is crucial to the interpretation of the entire role. The options of an expressive pause, and of movements in silence, give the actor the freedom to construct his timing according to his interpretation, even between lines of text. At the beginning of Scene 4, Jelgerhuis depicts Siméon's interaction with Ramnes: '*Op Zijn gezicht, swoegt hy [Siméon] van deeze ruwe bestorming en deijnst een weijnig te rug, waar op deeze [Ramnes] hem aan de hand grijpt*'.⁶⁰ Again, these stage directions are not found in the published *Omasis* text, but they were clear indications for Wentz and Gilger to work with. Jelgerhuis continued using the pantomimic element of gestures and expression in Siméon's part during the dialogue with Ramnes:

*Het klamme angst sweet stelde ik nu voor mij uijttee breeken. eene handveege over het voorhoofd was de uijtdrukking daar van tevens eenige Rust Zoekende door Stille Stand en stem toonen die nu in den aanvang van dit gesprek Een angstig fluijstere gelijk waaren[.] deeze voorstelling paarde ik met Zeekere hartklopping te vertoonen die angst en gejaagdheid verraaden.*⁶¹

⁵⁸ 'while abhorring the deed itself, I said those terrible words, speaking to heaven I obey, yes!.. but ban remorse from my heart, while I struck my heart with [my] fist, with an averted face and eyes cast heavenwards.' JELGERHUIS (1811), op. cit., p. 146.

⁵⁹ 'Here I threw both hands before my forehead, considered, and pausing, I spoke those words, while expressing the memory of the fearful recollection, and disgusted with myself, now plunging into [...] entirely sombre thoughts, I returned to that habitual pensive state, in which I had appeared the first time.' JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, pp. 146–7.

⁶⁰ 'On seeing [Ramnes], [Siméon] pants from this rough assault and retreats slightly, upon which [Ramnes] seizes his hand.' JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, p. 147.

⁶¹ 'I now imagined breaking out in a cold sweat. Wiping my forehead with my hand was the expression thereof [...] at the same time searching for some calmness though a motionless stance and (soft) tones of voice, which in the beginning of this dialogue were like fearful whispering [...] I combined this representation by showing some [possibly unmistakable] palpitations which revealed fear and agitation.' JELGERHUIS, *ibid.*, p. 148.

This sequence of Simeon's actions proved to be more complicated to interpret than the previous ones. Firstly because expressing palpitations and breaking out in a cold sweat, apart from the hand's movement on the brow, may be performed in many different ways, and secondly because it is not evident from this passage during which lines of the play text this manifestation of anxiety should take place. In search of a solution, Wentz tried out various moments to act out the gestures and whispering that Jelgerhuis refers to. Some versions felt slightly better than others to him, Gilger, and myself as a spectator, yet we found most versions convincing as long as they arose from Siméon's underlying anxiety and agitation.

In both projects we saw how, by changing each acting parameter, the scene could change entirely, oftentimes resulting in multiple acceptable and unexpected outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Throughout the entire staging period and its preparation, the search for new information and answers to our questions was undertaken through a combination of artistic practice and comparison between sources. The continuous rotation between experimentation, comparison, and reflection was a creative process in itself, demonstrating the possibilities for various outcomes. Jelgerhuis's *Theoretische Lessen* and his Siméon study complemented each other in providing the material to create a basic construction of the characters. Where those two works could not bridge the gaps in our information, additional sources including Jelgerhuis's study of other roles in the *Toneel Studien*, articles in *De Tooneelkijker*, and Jelgerhuis's document of 1808, were useful aids in constructing historically informed pieces of our puzzle. The following list is the result of our project (including its preparation), and summarises (my interpretation of) the building blocks needed to create a character according to the acting style Jelgerhuis describes. The order is not fixed, as it will vary for each actor and each character, and most of these steps are interrelated. Elements of this list may seem like an obvious part of a modern actor's routine, but research is necessary as one cannot merely assume that this routine was the same in the early nineteenth century, since many of the acting treatises of that time do not include all of these elements.

Tools extracted from Jelgerhuis's study of Siméon to build up a character are as follows:

- The play text (including lines by others) is analysed to find indications of the character.
- Historical facts or narratives (and/or additional sources such as the Bible) are studied to understand the character's background and the context of the play.
- This information can be used to create the character's/actor's thoughts and emotions and to gather lively images in the imagination, which can be recalled on stage.
- Hair, headdress, and costume are based both on historical sources and the visual arts, and are adapted, as is the make-up, to suit the age and character traits of the part.
- The emotions and dissimulation of emotions allow for variety of expression in the voice.
- The actor organizes the build-up of his role while consciously planning its effect on the audience. He seeks to balance between emotion and technique, in order to represent the emotion sufficiently to move the audience, while attempting to stay in control of his voice.
- The actor uses nuanced transitions as well as contrasts of affect and effect. He can make use of artistic freedom in timing while speaking, and between his lines, while the continuity of thought guides the character throughout the play.

- The staging can include striking attitudes and gestures, pantomime, and physical exchanges between the actors (this can include taking someone's hand, pushing, etc. For more details: see appendix).

Modern actors engaging with these building blocks can increase their understanding of historically informed acting techniques and acting style based on Jelgerhuis's writings by:

- Training based on information in the *Theoretische Lessen* (such as basic attitudes, examples of *welstand*, gestures, and facial expression) and enhanced with information from the *Toneel Studien* manuscript (additional gestures, mental images, and emotions).
- Incorporating additional examples and inspiration (for attitudes, gestures, and postures, etc.) from the visual arts.

This list was devised taking the following results and observations, to be treated hereafter, into consideration: imagination, dissimulation and declamation.

IMAGINATION, IMAGES AND THE MENTAL ARCHIVE

The Siméon study reveals Jelgerhuis's use of imagination to create the thoughts and the passions at the core of his character, which may be built up from elements such as the character's age and character traits, the historical context in which the character finds himself, etc. Once the actor has established this core, all the acting elements, including gestures, eye movements, and vocal delivery and colour, can interact and become a unity: *they are connected, as they are generated from the same source*. This does not imply that practice or preparation have become superfluous; the actor can practise all these elements together or separately, as long as they come together to fit into the full picture on stage, including his costume, his colleagues, and surroundings. Starting from the unity described here, the actor can work with extreme contrasts as well as nuanced transitions and *crescendi* in vocal colour, volume and passion which Jelgerhuis describes. Moreover, Jelgerhuis's study indicates a certain freedom regarding timing between lines for expressive pantomime, as well as for movement on stage during a monologue, and physical interaction with other actors. The continuity of thought (as described in the manuscript) links these elements together, and results in acting and reacting not only during one's own lines, but also during one's entrance, or while another actor speaks. We found that these guidelines resulted in a major sense of artistic freedom for the actor as compared to working with the *Theoretische Lessen* only, and that this can be important for the construction or creation of other roles.

DISSIMULATION, AUDIENCE, EMOTION VERSUS TECHNIQUE

In the scenes we staged, the three characters are feigning most of the time. Their real emotions can be revealed momentarily during an aside, a monologue, when an actor is positioned so that his true intentions are visible to the audience only (i.e. not to the other character/s), or when the characters agree (Ramnes and Siméon, as their ambitions become the same - albeit for different personal reasons). The actor must ensure that the audience can perceive the difference between the character's emotional disguise and glimpses of the character's emotional sincerity. In the case of Siméon, the actor has to balance out three levels: the character's true emotions, the emotions the character wishes to show, and the emotions the character wants to hide. In addition, he also needs to consider the emotions the character tries to hide, but which become visible, as they overwhelm his own better judgement. Meanwhile, the actor (behind the character's emotions) continuously monitors his own feelings, kept in check through technique as much as possible. Among all these layers of real emotion and make-believe, the moments which Jelgerhuis signals as

most touching also stood out in our staging; they are those few moments in which the character opens up, shows his vulnerability, or is overcome by his feelings.

It seems clear from Jelgerhuis's own description that on stage, after all the preliminary work on thought and practice, he passionately dedicated his thoughts, emotions, and even soul, to his performance of Siméon, while ideally keeping enough control to continue playing his part, and to keep his voice audible. Yet he also openly draws the reader's attention to his struggle to control his emotions in particular passages. And even though strong emotions could be a hindrance to expressing himself on stage artfully (to speak the text as he had envisioned it), he did not block his feelings out. He allowed himself to engage with the emotional situation on stage, even at the risk of being overwhelmed. This suggests a prioritization (whether this was a conscious choice or not) of the passionate engagement with his role over technical perfection; at least in the most dramatic passages.⁶² For modern actors engaging with the acting style as described by Jelgerhuis, this is an invitation to explore the fine line of control between one's own feelings and technique, keeping in mind: the ideal to keep control, without sacrificing a moving performance.

In addition to the *Theoretische Lessen*: preparation and build-up of an actor's role include taking into account the passages that will move the audience most, and to ensuring such passages are well prepared and articulated with care. This preparation not only involves gestures and attitudes, but also skill in managing the various layers of emotional engagement between the actor and his character.

DECLAMATION

Jelgerhuis's descriptions in the manuscript did not provide answers to all the questions concerning declamation on stage in the early nineteenth century: we are still searching for more information on elements such vocal pitch, accentuation of the poetic metre, pronunciation, and speed of delivery. But his search for contrast in the different passages, and the variety of descriptions regarding the voice, including, sighs, pauses, stammering, and vocal quality coloured by emotion, fill in small gaps of information on declamation in the *Theoretische Lessen*. The staging process shaped our ideas on voice colour and volume, as it confirmed the emotional effect of the nuanced build-up and vocal contrasts described in the manuscript on the observers and the actors. By instinctively using a loud vocal delivery, we could address and investigate the issue of the delicate balance between a loud voice and screaming.

RESULTS OF THE TRAINING

One of the most surprising results was the importance of the training for Scenes 3 and 4, and the way that training developed during and after our work. As we alternated between working with the sources, stage work, and training, our understanding of the attitudes and mental images increased, changing the training itself. Instead of a predefined preparation routine, it had become flexible; ready to be adjusted as needed in order to better shape and understand the characters of Siméon and Ramnes. It was enriched by information from the sources and the practical work.

A next step, once the actor has achieved a basic understanding of ideal stage behaviour, is to adapt images and movements from daily life to extend one's repertoire of movements and expressions. The advice given by Jelgerhuis to the aspiring acting student is to learn from excellent actors, statues and paintings, and then to turn 'to nature' for further inspiration (such as someone's gesture, posture, or facial expression). The examples taken from nature are then to be adapted for the stage and perfected through the ideals of decorum, contrapposto and *welstand*, so that they are represented in their highest form, through art. This could give the actor *carte blanche* to fill in any

⁶² Possibly only in roles he felt particularly connected with, and not in those roles he considered a waste of his time.

gap in the historical information on staging. Here, again, the *result* cannot be called historical, as the modern actor creates in present time; but the *method* is. We did not take this last step, since it is important to see the gaps clearly first, so that the actor/researcher is aware of the moments he or she fills in with nature-inspired movement and expression. Staying as close to the sources as we did in this project, exposed these gaps, some of which may be filled in by future research projects.

Even when adding all the sources we had at our disposition, acting remains a living process, in which the outcomes cannot be pinned down as unchangeable facts. Wentz's experimentation with Siméon's expression of anxiety in the beginning of Scene 4 showed several acceptable outcomes of the same scene. Although the actors followed the same descriptions in the manuscript, knowing exactly which actions and reactions to aim for, the resulting staging and atmosphere differed slightly every time. Similarly, the dramatic tension and the energy with which Wentz and Gilger Scenes played 3 and 4 was very different when preceded by a reading of previous scenes in the play. It is no great surprise that the dramatic context changes a scene, but it meant that by staging only a small section of the play, we could not anticipate the influence a first and second act could have on these scenes. The ideal would be eventually to stage the whole play, or at least the entirety of Act III, so as to get an understanding of its impact on Scenes 3 to 5 of the same Act. Having experienced the limitations of working and recording online, however, I would certainly not stage a bigger project in a virtual format. The more so because the things to be explored further – such as vocal volume, timing, and staging scenes that involve multiple actors – depend on physical presence and a larger working space. On the other hand, having observed the benefits of working on the attitudes, some of us decided to continue this training online until it is again possible to travel internationally and work together in person. Other steps include having costumes made, based on Jelgerhuis's illustrations, so that we can see how the costumes affect the actors' gestures and delivery. In addition, Pfeiffer's illustrations of the court hall and court gallery will be used as point of reference in choosing stage sets, once the project can take place in a theatre setting, as was intended for May 2021 in the restored Valtice castle theatre. This has now been postponed until May 2022.

CONCLUSION

Jelgerhuis's study of Siméon reveals a passionate craftsman who recorded not only his manner of creating and performing a role, but also the difficulties he experienced in achieving his conception of an ideal performance. If the *Theoretische Lessen* prepares the actor's body, the *Toneel Studien* prepares his mind and emotions. This means that, although Jelgerhuis did not propose a didactic function for the 1811 *Toneel Studien*, elements of this manuscript can be used as teaching material, following the tradition of learning through imitation. Jelgerhuis's lesser-known works therefore deserve to be used alongside the *Theoretische Lessen* as a source for HIP practice and in the discussion of European theatre history of the early nineteenth century. When put into practice, Jelgerhuis's writings may bring us one step closer to understanding early nineteenth century acting techniques in the Netherlands, and can therefore contribute to a better comparison between acting practices across Europe.

Laila Cathleen NEUMAN
Universiteit Leiden

APPENDIX

What follows as an appendix to the previous article is a selection of staging indications, paraphrased from Jelgerhuis's study of Siméon in his 1811 manuscript *Toneel Studien*, that are not mentioned in the *Theoretische Lessen* (1827/1829).

SIMÉON'S STAGE ACTIONS AS DESCRIBED BY JELGERHUIS

- p. 122 Entrance – hands folded under the face
- p. 125 Facing the audience
- p. 132 Entrance in thought/pondering, somber
- p. 143 Positioning himself mid-stage
- p. 144 Running to one side
- p. 144 Recoiling (backwards)
- p. 147 Recoiling, another actor grabbing his hand
- p. 158 Pushing the other actor away with both hands
- p. 163 Turning away from the other actor
- p. 164 Turning his back to the other actor
- p. 165 Walking back and forth
- p. 166 Standing as if 'pegged down', petrified
- p. 167 Standing a while
- p. 168 Speaking with one arm around the other actor's neck
- p. 171 Dragged forward in chains, with that decorum which the somber seriousness of this scene requires
- p. 171 Being unchained on stage
- p. 175 Kneeling and bending downwards
- p. 177 Descending in the other actor's arms
- p. 178 Another actor, supporting him, leads him to his father, who raises him up and embraces him

OTHER NOTES ON ACTING

- p. 123 Slightly bowing
- p. 123, p. 134 Casting the eyes down
- p. 124 Facial expressions being made as reaction while the other actor speaks
- p. 126 Attentively listening to another actor, and expressing great surprise
- p. 127 Making sure his attitude had been brought back to that silent humbleness which the soul's situation causes on the body
- p. 127 Standing in that regal attitude of one who believes himself to be of the same rank as kings
- p. 135 Recovering, coming to his senses
- p. 140 Behaving as if wanting to devour whatever was near him at that moment.
- p. 148 Expressing of fear and sweating: wiping the hand over the forehead.
- p. 150 Being beside himself with rapture
- p. 158 Tears being wrenched from him

- p. 162 Looking boldly at the other actor
- p. 164 Interrupting the speech of the other actor with a movement, not wishing to hear anything more
- p. 175 Hitting one hand on the other, remaining in this pose
- p. 176 Raising the hands in front of the face

VOCAL EFFECTS

- p. 124, p. 170 Sighing
- p. 125 Speaking as a human who is oppressed by his own feelings
- p. 130 Taking a moment, breathing
- p. 131 Sighing in rapture
- p. 144 Stammering in a soft, interrupted tone, while calming himself, breaking into tears
- p. 144 The voice climbing continuously
- p. 145 Tone of dismay and strength in the voice
- p. 148 Despairing rage. – maximum volume in the voice (and pure tones) to prepare a strong change of tone
- p. 148 A still attitude and soft, fearful whispering tone of voice
- p. 149 Speaking with an expression of fear and oppression of the soul

COMBINATIONS: GESTURES, VOICE, EYES, STAGE MOVEMENTS

- p. 125 Reaction: eruption, stance and gestures expressing a certain alarm, opening the eyes wide and facing the audience, paring a loud voice to the vehement feeling Siméon suffered at the thought of seeing his father and brothers humiliated
- p. 138 Jealous expression on his face, the eyes suddenly opening, turning from side to side
- p. 139 Angry spite: hands to fists, all muscles braced, his eyes turned upwards in anger, his head slightly tilted backwards, and painting the expression of spite on his face, speaking with a loud voice which caused dismay
- p. 141 Unable to stand without support. One hand on his heart, and lowering his head onto his other hand on the back of the chair, his whole body trembled and expressed great dismay
- p. 143 Mid-stage: speaking with such emphasis and clarity so as to assure that he would be well understood
- p. 144 Leaving the mid-stage position, hastening to one side – imagining to see an open abyss, and recoiling in fear
- p. 146 Speaking to heaven: his eyes heavenwards, striking his heart with his fist, and his face averted
- p. 146 Throwing both hands before his forehead, pausing in consideration

- p. 148 Showing the heart's palpitations, revealing fear and agitation
- p. 149 Showing an ebullition of anger, kept in silence
- p. 170 Recoiling, away from another actor, furiously leaving the stage, while screaming
- p. 151 Omasis enters, Siméon tries to escape, but not daring to disobey Omasis's order to stay, he steps forward again
- p. 152 The fright striking Siméon's entire body at the sight of the person he will murder must shock him terribly. He tries to disguise this with the usual somber expression, now however combined with unrest
- p. 153 Siméon speaks with an insulted tone, but pretends to be pondering again by turning away with his eyes completely cast down so that they cannot be seen
- p. 154 Opening his eyes wide, looked forward, fiery, while shaking. Interrupting this entrancement with a sideward glance at Omasis, which [reminded Siméon] to disguise his true feelings and answer softly. While speaking, the feelings overrule this disguise, and Siméon forgets that he is not alone, and raising his voice in anger he speaks
- p. 156 Speaking in full rage, completely withdrawn into himself, gnashing his teeth with thundering resentment and anger, and trembling with rage as if in a fit of complete self-abandonment, not noticing anything around him anymore
- p. 157 Anger in the face, all muscles tensed, boldly looking forward

REFLECTION

- p. 142 This should be performed in a way that remains deeply engraved in the mind of the audience
- p. 150 The alternating thoughts of this role require true self-control and fully occupy the mind

FACING THE PASSIONS: AN EMBODIED APPROACH TO FACIAL EXPRESSION ON THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY STAGE

Ten years ago, I first encountered Gilbert Austin's (1753–1837) *Chironomia* (1806) while working on my degree of Master in Early Music Singing at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague. I was initially interested, like many other singers, in supplementing my singing practice with appropriate bodily expression, an objective which was soon to be turned on its head. The expressive demands illustrated in *Chironomia* outshone in such a way my performative aspirations, and put into question so many of my notions about singing, that very soon I was devoting all my time to spoken monologues and pantomime. Austin's treatise was a logical place to start. It holds detailed information regarding a specific rhetorical style of acting – represented by John Philip Kemble (1757–1823) and his sister Sarah Siddons (1755–1831) – in vogue in England and Ireland by the end of the eighteenth century, while surveying an impressive number of sources on oratory and acting, from antiquity to Austin's day. The title page makes clear that the work is devoted to rhetorical delivery in its three traditional divisions – voice, countenance, and gesture – but a significantly larger portion ends up being taken by gesture alone. Austin's particular goal was to advance a system for annotating gesture, and this is in part why he dedicated more than two thirds of the volume to it. But there are at least two other reasons for his having done so, which might betray a paradox in *Chironomia*. Despite advising public speakers to tend equally to voice, countenance, and gesture,¹ Austin preferred to leave vocal tone and, especially, facial expression to one's feeling, for 'if an orator is truly good and sincere, the expression of his countenance will not disappoint the feelings of his heart'.² Besides, he was confident that facial expressions, 'in all [their] modifications and smallest changes, have been classed and discriminated by every observer at all times',³ making them sufficiently understood to dispense further illustration. That something deemed so fundamental to a successful performance would be left to spontaneous, artless, behaviour left me intrigued. I began searching for an acting treatise which described facial expression with as much detail as *Chironomia* described gesture, but such a source was not to be found. I turned to recent scholarship, but few attempts seemed to have been made, at least in regards to onstage facial expression.⁴ In the meanwhile, research through embodiment undertaken by our group, the Dutch Historical Acting Collective, kept pointing to facial expression as a key element in plausible reconstructions of eighteenth-century dramatic performances. To be sure, and following Austin's advice, we were eagerly supplying whatever facial expression our feelings

¹ 'It may therefore be fairly concluded, that to neglect all or any part of the labour which constitutes correct delivery; whether it be the due management of the voice, the expression of the countenance, or the appropriate gesture, is so far an injury to the cause in which the speaker is engaged, and so far deprives his composition of its just effect.' Gilbert AUSTIN, *Chironomia; or a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery* (London: T. CADELL and W. DAVIES, 1806), p. 5.

² AUSTIN, *ibid.*, p. 96.

³ AUSTIN, *ibid.*, p. 385.

⁴ In one of the few recent monographs devoted to eighteenth-century theories on facial expression, Melissa Percival pointed out that, out of the three main components of the actor's performance – voice, gesture, and facial expression, the latter 'has probably been given the least consideration by dramatic theorists and historians of theatre', despite its central role in the acting of the period. See Melissa PERCIVAL, *The Appearance of Character: Physiognomy and Facial Expression in Eighteenth-Century France*, Modern Humanities Research Association Texts and Dissertations 47 (London: W. S. MANEY & son for the Modern humanities research association, 1999), p. 131.

dictated. Very often, however, these expressions fell short of the vehemence and exuberance demanded by the gesture. We felt we were missing, to use Jean-Georges Noverre's (1727–1810) insightful term, the 'interpreter' of our bodily expression.⁵

If the search for step-by-step precept on facial expression yielded poor results, other alleyways into eighteenth-century culture proved much more fruitful. Austin's suggested sources for the study of the countenance were revealing: works on philosophy and natural history, painting and poetry, and treatises on the art of reading and speaking. There was indeed a wealth of information on the topic, but now the problem was to devise ways of integrating it back into performance for the purpose of research. The present article proposes one such way. I picked out one piece from James Burgh's (1714–1775) *The Art of Speaking*, from 1761, and set out to compose one or more facial scores based on it. This is the *artistic* goal: to create a living sculpture crafted with my current facial skills. The *research* goal, however, is different. To embody past conceptions of facial expression is a long, iterative, process; and to attune them to the functionality they seem to have had is a largely imaginative one. These processes happen side by side, in a mutual discovery. The goal of this discovery, in its broadest sense, is to expand current technical knowledge on the use of facial expression by focusing on specific instances in its history. The nature of that discovery, therefore, is fundamentally experimental. This means that information collected from historical sources is tinkered with through experimental moments explicitly designed to test it. The case study presented in this article could be seen as a documentation of one such test.

During the past few years I have had the opportunity to develop a number of experiments, not all exclusively on facial expression, and I have had the good fortune of sharing them under many guises with a group of knowledgeable and enthusiastic colleagues. The discussions which took place raised my awareness of the importance of design in the elaboration of such experiments, and helped me to perfect ways by which to isolate the specific phenomena I intended to research. In order to better clarify the aims and methods of the present experiment, I found it necessary to reflect on those earlier moments when fundamental aspects of research through embodiment became apparent. To this reflection I dedicate, therefore, the first part of the present article, leaving the description and discussion of the experiment for the second half. I will begin by narrating, somewhat autobiographically, my encounters with key sources on facial expression and the passions, and how I set out to investigate them and integrate them into my playing. I will touch upon the expression of distinct pathetic states, aided by pictorial sources, and describe how I began using it to construct emotional scores for dramatic texts. After some considerations on emotional transitions, I conclude the first part with an outline of the methodology which structured the experiment.

⁵ *'Le visage est l'organe de la scène muette, il est l'interprète fidèle de tous les mouvements de la pantomime.'* [‘The face is the organ of silent drama, it is the truthful interpreter of all the movements of pantomime.’] Jean-Georges NOVERRE, *Lettres sur la danse, et sur les ballets* (Lyon: Aimé DELAROCHE, 1760), pp. 196–7. All translations by the author, unless otherwise noted.

PART I: INITIAL EXPERIMENTS

STARTING POINTS: THE PICTORIAL SOURCES

The historical source on facial expression I first experimented with was Charles Le Brun's (1619–1690) *Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière*, which I encountered through Jennifer Montagu's reference work *The Expression of the Passions*.⁶ Originally presented in 1668 to the Académie Royal de Peinture et de Sculpture, this lecture was devoted to pathognomy, or the discovery of a person's passing emotions from their physical appearance, and consisted of an introduction to the notion of *passion*, followed by a series of verbal descriptions of the characteristic facial expressions of distinct passions, each accompanied by diagrammatic drawings of the respective expressive heads. The work became extremely popular throughout the eighteenth-century⁷ – with numerous editions supplying both sketched and finished heads (See fig. 1) – and its influence on acting, particularly during the eighteenth century, has been well documented.⁸ I began incorporating Le Brun's expressions into my performance during an experimental production of Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter (1746–1797) / Georg Anton Benda's (1722–1795) melodrama *Medea*, in 2014. The piece required grand and distinct expressions of passion, and Le Brun's drawings seemed especially apt for the task. I dissected the expressions into their basic features, in much the same way as the painter, and devised exercises for each of them.⁹ It was important that at least eyebrows, eye-lids, nose, and mouth, could display a few configurations independently from each other. One should, for example, be able to raise or lower the eyebrows not only equally, but also unequally (i.e. the inner corners raised and the outer corners lowered, and vice-versa). Depending on the configurations of eye-lids, nose, and mouth, each of these eyebrow positions would see its meaning altered, helping to form a different facial expression. I began then mapping all the possible permutations (an exercise I still come back to now and then), sometimes stumbling upon an expression which would encapsulate a nuance of passion I had not planned to express. This was an important realization, and the beginning of a dialogue between my face and my emotional imagination. A prolific configuration, for example, consists of eyebrows raised at the inner ends and lowered at the outer, which Le Brun associates with 'an emotion of pain and sorrow',¹⁰ and mouth with corners raised, occurring 'when the heart is happy'.¹¹ Depending on the slight gradation of these two features together with a number of variations in the eye-lids and nose, an astonishing variety of emotions can be expressed, from mild pity or

⁶ Jennifer MONTAGU, *The Expression of the Passions: The Origin and Influence of Charles Le Brun's Conférence Sur l'expression Générale et Particulière* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

⁷ In 1753, William HOGARTH (1697–1764) would mention Le Brun's *Conférence* in familiar terms, and praise it for its taxonomy of the passions: 'It may not be amiss just to look over the passions of the mind, from tranquillity to extreme despair; as they are in order described in the common drawing-book, called, Le Brun's passions of the mind; selected from that great master's works for the use of learners; where you may have a compendious view of all the common expressions at once. And altho' these are but imperfect copies, they will answer our purpose in this place better than any other thing I can refer you to; because the passions are there ranged in succession, and distinctly marked with lines only, the shadows being omitted.' William HOGARTH, *The Analysis of Beauty* (London: J. REEVES, 1753), p. 127.

⁸ For Le Brun's influence on the English stage, see Alastair SMART, 'Dramatic Gesture and Expression in the Age of Hogarth and Reynolds', *Apollo*, 82 (1965), 90–97; and Alan HUGHES, 'Art and Eighteenth-Century Acting Style', *Theatre Notebook*, 41 (1987), pp. 24–31, 79–89, 128–39. For an overview of the debate in France surrounding Le Brun and acting style, see PERCIVAL, op. cit., pp. 131–158. In direct relation with acting sources, see Dene BARNETT and Jeanette MASSY-WESTROPP, *The Art of Gesture: The Practices and Principles of 18th Century Acting* (Heidelberg: C. WINTER, 1987), pp. 36–68.

⁹ Le Brun's diagrammatic heads, alongside their descriptions, have proven to be an inexhaustible source of inspiration throughout my performing career, and their imitation, despite being one of my recurrent exercises, still maintains its didactic appeal. I often integrate them in my teaching activity, and I recorded a series of four facial expression sequences, all based on Le Brun's heads, that was presented as part of the exhibition 'Let's Act', during the Festival Oude Muziek Utrecht in 2021. See 'Etude on the facial expressions of Charles Le Brun 1–4', by following the link: <https://jedwentz.com/paixao-edps/>

¹⁰ MONTAGU, op. cit., p.131.

¹¹ MONTAGU, ibid., p.132.

gratitude, to painful desire or incredulous joy (See fig. 2). Le Brun did not explicitly mention such configuration, so one should be careful not to ascribe it to his *Conférence*. However, in one of his most touching depictions, that of *Les Reines de Perse aux Pieds d'Alexandre*, it is to be seen in the youngest of Darius' daughters. André Félibien (1619–1695), court historian to Louis XIV, wrote in 1663 that a mixture of several passions shows itself on the princess' face, 'for Grief Appears in her Eyes still Wet with Tears; her Eye-Brows Advanced shew her Fear, and her Mouth somewhat Opened and Drawn up express her Admiration.'¹²

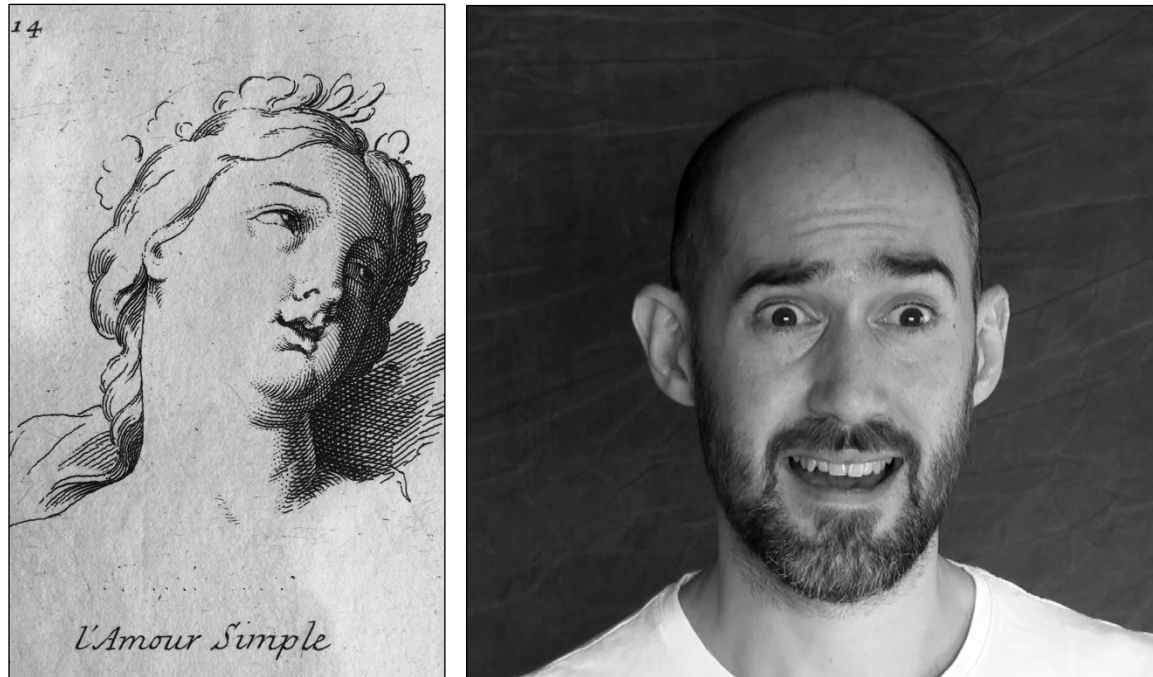


Fig. 1 (left). *L'Amour Simple*, finished head by Charles Le Brun, from his *Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière*. Collection Jed Wentz / Fig. 2 (right). Variation on PLEASURE AND DESIRE, as deduced from James Burgh's descriptions in *The Art of Speaking*. Frame extracted from the video material accompanying this article.

Much later, when I encountered Raphael's (1483–1520) Hampton Court Cartoons, a collection of seven large illustrations of episodes from the life of St. Peter and St. Paul, I found another striking variation of this facial configuration.¹³ Expressed by the healed lame man (the figure with praying hands on the right) in *St. Paul and Barnabas at Lystra*, it is described as 'Joy, with Gratitude' by

¹² 'car la douleur paroist dans ses yeux encore tous mouillez de larmes; ses sourcils avancéz marquent sa crainte, & sa bouche un peu ouverte & retirée fait voir son admiration.' André Félibien, *Les Reines de Perse Aux Pieds d'Alexandre* (Paris: Pierre le PETIT, 1663), p. 15. The translation is taken from André FÉLIBIEN, *The Tent of Darius Explain'd; or The Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander* (London: William REDMAYNE, 1703), p. 19. Interestingly, other writers saw in this expressive head similar, though not identical, passions, which adds even more depth to this particular facial configuration: Henri TESTELIN (1616–1695) named it 'Inquietude' [Restlessness], but Bernard PICART (1673–1733) called it 'l'esperence' [Hope]. See MONTAGU, op. cit., Appendix VI.

¹³ Melissa Percival has drawn attention to the divide observed in the second half of the eighteenth century between Raphael's expressions and Le Brun's. Both were frequently used to make drawing books, but as Raphael was increasingly seen as the model for 'graceful and subtle "female" renderings of the human passions', Le Brun became gradually relegated to 'the more "male" heroic passions'. PERCIVAL, op. cit., pp. 58 & 104. I have not yet had the opportunity to properly integrate this debate in my practice. However, my experience so far tells me that the difference between their expressive heads is mostly quantitative, meaning that the characteristic traits of a given passion are the same in both, only in a different gradation. Thus, I have chosen to collect from both indifferently, while remaining sensitive to the dynamic range of each expression.

Benjamin Ralph in *The School of Raphael* (1759).¹⁴ The sloped eyebrows, smiling mouth, and intense eye with a slightly raised under eye-lid, offer to my imagination a remarkable model of naïve, awe-inspired, incredulous joy. I also noticed that, after a couple of years of ‘dialogue’ between my face and pictorial sources, facial expression became more salient a feature for me in viewing works of art. When I looked, for example, at Gerard de Lairese’s (1641–1711) *Abraham en de drie Engelen*, the patriarch’s sloped eyebrows and humble smile tapped straight into a tacit gallery of familiar expressions, circumstances, and especially sensations which not only persuaded me of his predicament but also connected it to other similar situations – the daughter of Darius, the lame man healed, etc. – thereby enriching the circumstantial with the general. In a very physical sense, works of art were taking up residence in my face. If one is to trust the famous anecdote from Jean Blanchet’s (1724–1778) *L’Art, ou les principes philosophiques du chant*,¹⁵ describing the immediate effects of a painting on an actor’s whole expression, it is reasonable to assume that at least a number of players could have similarly populated their own face with pictorial expressions.

Studying eighteenth-century facial expression as it was seen by painters proved a reasonable way to map the gamut of possible configurations available to actors of the time. To apply them to acting, however, posed two main challenges. Firstly, I had to discover the passions laying hidden in the part, to paraphrase the acting theorist Aaron Hill (1685–1750). And secondly, I had to find ways to transition from one passion to the next. This was (and still is) a process involving a lot of trial and error. Nonetheless, some types of sources have proven to be particularly helpful, and I will try to explain why.

CREATING AN EMOTIONAL ‘SCORE’

Guessing the passions contained in a given text was a process which started invariably through intuition. More often than not, this intuition did offer a satisfying interpretation, one I saw as plausible enough. This created a temptation to leave many alternative options unchecked and to jump right into rehearsal-mode. However, and fortunately, there were points in which the pieces I was working on would not yield themselves to my emotional scoring. The first of those pieces was the tour-de-force in Austin’s *Chironomia*, a portion of Edward Young’s (1683–1765) *Night-Thoughts*. Celebrated as an exercise in recitation, Austin attributes the difficulty of the poem to ‘the multiplicity of the images, and the brevity of the expression’,¹⁶ and his gestural score is the embodiment of his pronouncement. Highly contrasting gestures fall so quickly in succession, and bodily posture is so frequently affected, that a proper emotional scoring would have to include, at times, four distinct expressions within five feet of poetry. Thinking about it now, at a distance of about seven years, I realize that the reason why I did not find in the text the variety and grandeur of passion which it required was probably due to the simple fact that I could not perform it. I lacked the embodied imagination that would have allowed me to look at the line ‘Helpless immortal! insect infinite!’ and receive from my physical memory, in that instant, a sense that

¹⁴ Benjamin RALPH, *The School of Raphael or The Student’s Guide to Expression in Historical Painting* (London: John Boydell, 1759), Plate 23. I.

¹⁵ ‘While taking a walk in one of the halls of the Palais Royal, he let his eyes fall on a painting that was boldly conceived, energetically and accurately executed. The liveliness of the colours, and the justness and sublimity of the drawing instantly struck him; the character of the central figure then lured and fixed his attention. His whole body took on naturally the same position as the object of his gaze, the same gradations of passion painted themselves round the outline of his mouth, in his eyes and across his whole face, and neither the noise of passers-by nor the remarks of people who had stopped to witness the scene could tear him from this kind of ecstasy – so powerful is the rule exercised by art and by talent.’ as cited in David WILES, *The Players’ Advice to Hamlet: The Rhetorical Acting Method from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 211. Laurence Marie sees the mid-eighteenth-century accessibility of galleries to a wider public as one of the reasons behind actors’ growing use of pictorial models in the practice of their craft. Laurence MARIE, *Inventer l’acteur: émotions et spectacles dans l’Europe des Lumières*, Theatrum mundi (Paris: Sorbonne université presses, 2019), p. 73.

¹⁶ AUSTIN, op. cit., p. 546.

performing four contrasting expressions in quick succession was a feasible task. In other words, I could not have conceived what I did not know was possible. It was only long after the gestural score had become easy and seamless that my emotional imagination wrapped itself around it, my idea of the passion imbuing the gesture with vigour and, in turn, the gesture chiselling my idea of the passion. Another piece which made me question my interpretive assumptions was Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) / Horace Coignet's (1735–1821) scène lyrique *Pygmalion*. Though never referred to by Rousseau as a melodrama, this work '*applique strictement le principe d'alternance mélodramatique entre texte (déclamé ou mimé) et musique*',¹⁷ and, together with Rousseau's *Le Devin du Village*, was the most discussed piece of its time. I was fortunate enough to perform it several times throughout a period of four years,¹⁸ an experience which changed deeply my views on eighteenth-century acting and singing. I remember starting to learn my lines, in the beginning of 2015, following the staging directions provided by Rousseau, and sketching out a sequence of passions throughout the piece. I did not pay too much attention to the musical ritornelli at the time, and left the pantomimic work for a later stage. To say I was surprised when I came around to it is an understatement. To give but one example, on a short piece of music, and even before my first line, I had to perform a number of actions: to get up, collect a mallet and chisel, walk up to a statue, attempt a few strokes, step back from the statue, and gaze at it despondently. Rousseau composed this ritornello himself and, according to his *Lettre à M. Burney*, the music and the *jeu muet* should form a harmonious whole.¹⁹ What I had to grapple with now, interspersed throughout my part, was a series of musical tableaux from which to derive pantomimic expressions, which in turn should be the manifestation of clear passions. During rehearsals for the first performance, I observed that the range of expressions I had deduced from Rousseau's stage directions diverged significantly from the corresponding expressions found in the music. Gestures and facial expressions I had prepared for the ritornelli had to be adapted or altogether discarded. New ones came in, which required time to be practiced and ultimately to be absorbed as yet another possible nuance to a given passion. As with Young's *Night-Thoughts*, the boundaries of what was expressively possible were expanding, and with it the capacity to tease emotional scores out of a text.

PASSION AND PLOT

Embodiment has been a determining factor in the enrichment of my emotional understanding. The above examples illustrate how this understanding is shaped by the expressive requirements of a piece. There is also another intuitive aspect associated with the process of emotional scoring. Passions, however abstractly one might consider them, must always regulate the relationship of a subject to an object, and therefore each of them carries an element of plot. For example, Le Brun describes Wonder as 'a surprise which causes the soul to consider attentively objects which seem to it rare and extraordinary'.²⁰ Like many other theorists, he advances Wonder as the first passion, meaning that no object is able to cause, say, Joy, Anger, or Fear, before causing first surprise. Next comes a judgment, on the part of the subject, as to the valence of the object (pleasant or

¹⁷ 'applies strictly the principles of melodramatic alternation between text (declaimed or mimed) and music' Jacqueline WAEBER, *En Musique Dans Le Texte: Le Mélodrame de Rousseau à Schoenberg*, (Paris: Van DIEREN éditeur, 2005), p. 17.

¹⁸ This was made possible by the research project 'Performing Pre-modernity', based at the Department of Culture and Aesthetics at the University of Stockholm, and by the inexhaustible enthusiasm of Maria Gullstam, who devoted much of her doctoral efforts to unveiling the practical implications of Rousseau's ideas on theatre.

¹⁹ 'The silence of the actor speaks more than his words, and if these hesitations are well positioned and well managed, and filled on the one hand by the voice of the orchestra and on the other by the dumb show of an Actor who feels both what he says and what he cannot say, then these hesitations, I say, have an effect actually superior to that of declamation.' as cited in WILES, op. cit., p. 214.

²⁰ MONTAGU, op. cit., p. 127.

unpleasant),²¹ which can go in one of two directions, worthy or unworthy, thereby motivating Esteem or Scorn. From these, a multitude of passions could follow, to each belonging a particular plot articulating the subject-object relationship. When scanning a text for passions, I often make guesses based on the character's situation. From a moment within the plot, I deduce the most likely passions based on their affinity to it. But to intuitively assess the plausibility of a passion within a given context only works when conceptions around that passion have remained unchanged since the eighteenth century and have arrived to me intact. To temper my own intuition and limit as much as possible the effects of my own biases, I have used philosophical works on the passions alongside acting handbooks. While the latter typically focus on expression, the former tend to favour the moral sphere of emotion, and comparing them has been a constructive and often enlightening exercise. For example, the combination of René Descartes' (1596–1650) *Les Passions de l'Âme*²² – from which Le Brun's drew extensively in his *Conférence* – and Jean-Léonor le Gallois de Grimarest's (1659–1713) *Traité du Récitatif*²³ allowed me to reconsider the nature of certain passions based not only on abstract plots but also on concrete dramatic situations. I was surprised, at a certain point, by a passage in Le Brun's *Conférence* where he presented Courage, alongside Pain, as a precondition for, and somehow residing within, Anger.²⁴ It was difficult for me, at first, to understand the practical implications. Past instances of anger and courage in my life had not enabled me to conceive of one as related, or occurring in proximity to, the other. I was ill equipped, therefore, to detect Courage if I came across it in a text. In Grimarest's treatise, instead of Courage, Audacity is analysed and illustrated by an excerpt of Jean Racine's *Mithridate* (act IV, scene 6). Hope is found to be its sustenance, since under this passion one cannot wait to arrive at the object which causes it. No Anger or Pain is mentioned, and yet the text chosen by Grimarest seems to allow for, and even invite, them as well. Mithridate has just heard that his army and his two sons have revolted against him:

*Ah! qu'est-ce que j'entends?
 Perfides, ma vengeance a tardé trop long-temps:
 Mais je ne vous crains point. Malgré leur insolence
 Les mutins n'oseroient soutenir ma presence:
 Je ne veux que les voir: je ne veux qu'à vos yeux
 Immoler de ma main deux fils audacieux.*²⁵

According to Le Brun, Pain would be followed by Courage before the onset of Anger, since in Courage 'the soul raises itself against evil to resist it' whereas in Anger the objective is vengeance, or aggression. This sequence of passions lent itself remarkably well, I thought, to Mithridate's words. In the first line, the king could still make manifest the Pain caused by his sons' betrayal,

²¹ Modern psychology describes 'affect' as a general feeling with two features: 'valence', or whether that feeling is deemed pleasant or unpleasant; and 'arousal', if it is a feeling of tranquillity or agitation. See Lisa FELDMAN BARRETT, *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017), p. 72. I use the term 'valence' in this context since it accurately describes the type of distinction which Le Brun, among others, applied to the passions.

²² René DESCARTES, *Les Passions de l'âme* (Paris: Henry Le Gras, 1649).

²³ Jean-Léonor Le GALLOIS DE GRIMAREST, *Traité Du Récitatif* (Paris: Jaques le FEVRE; Pierre RIBOU, 1707).

²⁴ 'ANGER is a turbulent agitation which pain and courage excite in the appetite, which causes the soul to retire into itself so as to withdraw from an injury which it has received, and at the same time to rouse itself against the cause of the injury in order to take vengeance.' Cited in MONTAGU, op. cit., p. 127. Montagu has traced back this description, not to Descartes' treatise, but to Marin Cureau de la Chambre's (1594–1669) *Les Caracteres des passions*, which incidentally, and unlike Descartes', was a work devoted to discovering people's motivations from their outer appearances. MONTAGU, ibid., p. 160.

²⁵ ('Ah! What do I hear? /Traitors, my revenge has too long awaited: /But I do not fear you. Despite their insolence, /The mutineers would not withstand my presence: /I wish only to see them: I wish only, before you, /To slay by my hand two reckless sons.') GRIMAREST, op. cit., p. 146.

after which Courage would take over, carried to an excess of daring Audacity in the middle couplet. The Hope, and almost certainty, which fuels this passion seems to develop into Anger during the last two lines, where Mithridate anticipates the moment of revenge. Grimarest did not hint to any of this, but the prospect was exciting. Aided by Le Brun's heads, I explored this and other sequences, attempting never to stray too far from Audacity, and yet nuance it with related passions. After a while, I had not only a specific context where Audacity and Courage would have been warranted, but also a few couplets in my head to symbolize it. This made it possible for me to quote, as it were, a passion by offering a specific instance of it. And by collecting a number of these quotations, I slowly began to see a common denominator arising for Courage. This in turn generated an increasingly abstract, general, conception, which bore some similarities to Descartes' notion of the same passion though still not to be compared to the latter's impressive breadth: he sees Courage as able to cause the agitation in the blood necessary for Anger, which occurs when one is personally attacked.²⁶ This seems to coincide with Le Brun's model, but for Descartes, Courage is a vaster category, encompassing all those situations where the soul is powerfully disposed to carry out whatever it wills. As such, 'one can consider it a genus, which subdivides itself in as many species as there are different objects, and in as many others as there are causes.'²⁷ One of these is *Hardiesse*, which would be comparable to Grimarest's Audacity, in that Hope, and even Assurance, motivate it.²⁸ What distinguishes it from mere Courage is that its object is greater and more difficult to reach. Not only was such a reflection as Descartes' fundamental in expanding my range of possible affective readings of a text, but also the very words I employed for each passion underwent a revision. *Hardiesse*, for example, which I had loosely conceived of as Courage, would be more accurately translated as Boldness, or indeed Audacity.²⁹ Slight as these distinctions may seem, they can alter considerably the emotional scoring of a passage. Some distinctions, however, were far from slight, and in my mind they all but severed a word from its meaning. A striking example was Pride, which I thought simply to be a positive feeling toward one's achievements and one's self. Descartes sees it instead as an unjust and exaggerated esteem of one's person and deeds, most frequently observed in the ignorant.³⁰ He opposes it to Generosity, or Magnanimity, which makes one esteem oneself as high as legitimately possible.³¹ This dichotomy, besides offering a fine blade to dissect instances of 'self-esteem', checked as well a blunt misconception in my emotional vocabulary.

TRANSITIONS AND THE GAZE

Assuming I had gotten to an acceptable emotional score and that I had found for each one a satisfying facial configuration, there was still the question of how to transition from one to the next. James Harriman-Smith, whose work has advanced much of my understanding on this topic, sees the particular handling of transitions as a distinctive feature in acting style, sometimes setting one actor apart from all others, as in the case of David Garrick (1717–1779). The speed, frequency, and vivacity, of his transitions seem to have been a world away from the heavy-paced delivery of James Quin (1693–1766) and other actors of his period.³² This speaks of transitions as an aspect

²⁶ DESCARTES, op. cit., pp. 265–6.

²⁷ DESCARTES, ibid., p. 237.

²⁸ DESCARTES, ibid., p. 238.

²⁹ MONTAGU, in her otherwise commendable translation, employs 'Courage' for *Hardiesse*, despite the fact that one of her period translations of choice – that of John Smith, published in London in 1701 – uses 'Boldness' instead. Compare MONTAGU, op. cit., p. 127. with Charles Le BRUN, *The Conference of Monsieur Le Brun* (London: John Smith 1701), p. 10.

³⁰ DESCARTES, op. cit., pp. 221–2.

³¹ DESCARTES, ibid., p. 210.

³² See James HARRIMAN-SMITH, *Twin Stars: Shakespeare and the Idea of the Theatre in the Eighteenth Century* (Doctoral Dissertation, Peterhouse, University of Cambridge, July 2015), Chapter 3.

of stage acting that might have undergone greater changes during the early-modern age than, say, the characters of the individual passions. If painting and sculpture had offered the eighteenth century enduring models on which to rely for expressing instants of passion, no such art was available to perpetuate the dynamism of transitions. My ideas and approach to this problem are still somewhat rudimentary and, thus, speculative. Nonetheless, one component of facial expression I did experiment with, which is potentially relevant to the performance of transitions, deserves being mentioned, and that is the management of the gaze. Harriman-Smith points out that, in Garrick's style and that of his mentor Charles Macklin (d. 1779), 'transition precedes vocalization',³³ meaning that before the vocal utterance of passion the whole frame has already announced it.³⁴ He quotes a passage from *The Prompter*, where Aaron Hill describes how transitions should be carried out:

He stops short, upon *pensive* PAUSES, and makes *Transitions*, (as the Meanings *vary*) into *Jealousy, Scorn, Fury, Penitence, Revenge or Tenderness!* All, *kindled at the Eye*, by the Ductility of a *Flexible Fancy*, and APPROPRIATING *Voice and Gesture*, to the very *Instant* of the *changing Passion*.³⁵

Hill seems to suggest that the cascade of expressive effects painting the appearance of each passion begins with the eye. The eye, in this case, would punctuate the train of passions with kindling movements, each of these corresponding to thoughts and images vivid enough to arouse an affect. A very similar method can be found in Austin's annotated examples in *Chironomia*, where indications as to the direction of the gaze often appear before the words and gestures. In practice, this means that a deliberate change of gaze from one point to another should precede any other action. Austin uses the eyes ostensibly as expressive means, organs to be seen instead of organs of sight. They are the indicators of the face, elucidating the audience as to the location of all those objects which interest the speaker, be they a lowing herd in the distance, the body of Caesar, or the voice of an angel.³⁶ Austin goes further and details a type of gaze – vacancy – in which the eyes' own redundancy is made conspicuous. This he employs to characterize deep thoughtfulness or, at other points, the looks of one intent on listening.³⁷ When I was first confronted with these technical demands, I remember having trouble 'sending' my gaze into a certain direction and, once there, to rivet it to a point for as long as needed without my eyes fidgeting ever so slightly around it. After some time, this became easier; and once my imagination was strong enough to insulate me from my immediate surroundings, my eyes ceased to be curious about them and succumbed to their mere expressive function. This was an important step, since it created a concrete bridge between my imagination and my facial expression. The sharper my gaze, the more convincing my facial transitions felt, not only to those watching, but also to me. The gaze felt like a thread, running

³³ HARRIMAN-SMITH, *ibid.*, pp. 110–1.

³⁴ This concatenation of bodily and vocal expression of passion is not exclusive to the mid-eighteenth century. In 1668, the actor Raymond Poisson put the following words in the mouth of his Basque Poet, a passage which David Wiles has seen as a commentary on the acting style fostered by the young Jean Racine: *Quand je ne diray mot observés mon visage, / Vous me verrez passer de l'amour à la rage, / Puis d'un art merveilleux, d'un surprenant retour, / Je sauray repasser de la rage à l'amour.* ['When I shall say no word, observe my visage, / You will see me going from love to rage, / Then with wonderful art, in a surprising turn, / I will be able to go back from rage to love.'] Raymond POISSON, *Les Oeuvres de Monsieur Poisson* (Paris: Jean RIBOU, 1679), p. 219. See also WILES, *op. cit.*, p. 114. This is not to say that a continuous line runs from French seventeenth-century acting down to Garrick and Macklin, nor to subsume all eighteenth-century acting of transitions to this pattern, but only to suggest that such a technical skill could have been seen before the 1740s.

³⁵ HARRIMAN-SMITH, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

³⁶ See Austin's annotated versions of works by William Shakespeare, Thomas Gray and Edward Young in AUSTIN, *op. cit.*, pp. 524–549.

³⁷ 'Listening, in order to obtain the surest and most various information, first presents the quick and comprehensive glance of the eye towards the apparent direction of the sounds, if nothing is seen, the ear presents itself towards the point of expectation, and the eye is bent on vacancy: but all this passes in a moment.' AUSTIN, *ibid.*, p. 488.

through the living facial canvas and tightening it. In technical terms, this could be explained as a complementary work between *indicative* and *expressive* movements. In his chapter on the significance of gesture, Austin touches upon Johann Jakob Engel's (1741–1802) notions on the subject:

The more particular or determinate modifications of the body he divides into *picturesque* and *expressive gestures*. The *picturesque* are descriptive, and answer to the kind of gestures which Cicero calls *demonstratio*, and the *expressive* relate to the feelings of the mind, and answer to those he calls *significatio*. Other movements he names *indicative* when an object is merely pointed out but not described.³⁸

While it would be conceivable to imagine some facial modifications as picturesque (for example, when imitating actions of people or animals, or, more analogously, to open all the features wide in order to describe a large object), I have experienced my facial work as mostly expressive, through the use of facial configuration, and indicative, through the use of gaze. Their combined efforts have offered infinite options adjustable to virtually any part I have had to play. And there is one other advantage in theorizing the gaze as an indicative gesture. When the eyes focus on a point, a rapport is established between the subject and a presumable object. Elements of plot are thereby made evident, since any moment of facial transition will be interpreted by the viewer in light of the eye movement preceding or accompanying it. To give an example, before Wonder is painted on the face, the eyes must have first fallen upon a wonderful object. Even in moments when a wonderful distant sound is heard, or when a wonderful thought arises in the mind, the very preceding movement of the eyes towards vacancy will still clarify the plot. This faculty of the gaze has allowed me, in turn, to look back at Le Brun's heads and distil from them additional information, ready for the stage: Scorn looks sideways down, Jealousy looks sideways up, Veneration looks straight up, Horror looks straight down, Love looks sideways, and Wonder looks straight ahead. Since passionate states do not occur in a vacuum but are embedded in a plot, the direction of the gaze, by providing a detail of that plot, defines, to a certain extent, the passion. Harriman-Smith comments on how David Garrick's transitional performance of the passions 'entailed not only the striking portrayal of each individual "dramatic unit" of feeling but the contrasts and connections between them as well.'³⁹ A masterful deployment of the gaze could have been key to either.

NEW METHODOLOGIES

The image of facial expression which arises from the points I have just discussed is one of emotional expression. Throughout the eighteenth century, and in line with the age-old discipline of physiognomy, the face was seen as an organ particularly apt to disclose the passions. For this reason, my research must rely on as detailed a knowledge of the passions as possible, which, incidentally, places me in the same predicament as that of many an eighteenth-century actor. In 1710, Charles Gildon (1665–1724) voiced Thomas Betterton's (d. 1710) opinion, that 'the stage ought to be the Seat of Passion in its various kinds, and therefore the Actor ought to be thoroughly [sic.] acquainted with the whole Nature of the Affections, and Habits of the Mind'.⁴⁰ By the middle of the century, Macklin made this the duty of the actor,

always to know the passion and the humour of each character so correctly, so intimately, and (if you will allow me the expression) to feel it so enthusiastically, as to be able to define and describe it as a philosopher; to give its operations on the looks, tones, and gestures of general nature, as it is ranked in

³⁸ AUSTIN, *ibid.*, p. 479.

³⁹ HARRIMAN-SMITH, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁴⁰ CHARLES GILDON, *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton, The Late Eminent Tragedian* (London: Robert GOSLING, 1710), p. 40.

classes of character; and to mould all this knowledge, mental and corporeal, to the characteristic that the poet has given to a particular character.⁴¹

According to Macklin, the passions should be the first concern of the actor. They should be known and felt by the actor to such an extent that they would equal philosophers in their definition, painters in their expression, and poets in their characterization. Most strikingly, this knowledge would be mental and corporeal, a research carried out through embodiment, embracing rigor but also enthusiasm. In another passage, Macklin seems to nail his colours to the Cartesian taxonomy of the passions, when he writes that 'each passion . . . has its *genus* of *looks, tones* and *gestures*, its *species*, and its individual characteristic.'⁴² At these words, the map of facial expression seems to extend beyond sight, making Macklin's eclectic method all the more enticing.

Two years ago, I conducted a facial experiment based on the premise that before getting the words and the particular character of a text in my head, I should first explore the passions contained therein and attain a reasonable familiarity with them. The idea was inspired by Macklin's teachings, but also motivated by the prospect of experiencing a mode of acting where actions are born of passions, instead of the reverse. For this, I would surely need an emotional score, to work with before engaging with the text. To produce one myself would defeat the purpose, since I would have to absorb the text first in order to extract its passions. There was a source, however – James Burgh's *The Art of Speaking* – which supplied its collection of speeches, monologues, and dialogues, with an emotional score. This 1761 treatise, devoted to 'the improvement of youth in the useful and ornamental accomplishment of speaking properly their mother-tongue',⁴³ seemed also adequate to my experiment for two main reasons. Firstly, it contains a glossary of '*passions, humours, sentiments, and intentions*',⁴⁴ wherein reasonably detailed descriptions of appropriate facial expressions are found. These fit into Burgh's larger conception of bodily expression, where 'especially the *face*, being furnished with a variety of muscles, *does more* in expressing the passions of the mind, than the *whole human frame* besides'.⁴⁵ As to the particular configurations characteristic of each passion, they seem remarkably aligned to their counterparts in painting, namely those by Le Brun. This continuity allowed me to complement Burgh's exercises with a richer body of facial representation and constitutes the second reason for having chosen *The Art of Speaking*. I selected a dialogue from Shakespeare's *Othello*, between Iago and the title character, and extracted the marginalia. I worked on this sequence of passions in several stages: first I selected a facial configuration for each passion and practiced going from one to the next rather quickly, with no transitions; then, I developed a facial score which I practiced without speaking the text, but following it in my head; finally, I integrated speech into this performance. Some of the outcomes of the experiment were intriguing. Starting the process with a set of 'living masks' and making it a priority to subdue all other expressive means to them created a type of performance in which the sway of the passions took centre stage. Adding to this, Burgh's high emotional pace, by frequent and stark contrasts, generated an astonishingly wide gamut of expression. From my point of view, and quite surprisingly, knowing the passions beforehand, mentally and corporeally, and being familiar with routes between them, created an 'experiencing' of my emotional states, during the dialogue, as areas of play and discovery in which agency could coexist with passivity. The following experiment picked up where this one stopped.

⁴¹ James Thomas KIRKMAN, *Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin* (London: LACKINGTON, ALLEN, and Co., 1799), pp. 362–3.

⁴² KIRKMAN, *ibid.*, p. 364. See also footnote 27.

⁴³ James BURGH, *The Art of Speaking* (London: LONGMAN, WAUGH, DILLY, and FIELD, 1761), p. 3.

⁴⁴ BURGH, *ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁵ BURGH, *ibid.*, p. 13.

PART II: THE EXPERIMENT WITH BURGH'S ANOTATED VERSION OF MILTON

The following is a description and discussion of my experiment on 'Eve's account of her troublesome dream', an excerpt from Book V of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, as annotated by James Burgh in his *The Art of Reading*.⁴⁶ The experiment took place between October and December 2021, and developed through three stages. During the first two, I was given only Burgh's marginalia to work with, and remained ignorant as to the text to which it belonged. In stage 1, I engaged intuitively with the emotional score supplied with the text in question, in order to build possible facial scores to it. In stage 2, my choices were informed by Burgh's own descriptions of the passions and by pictorial sources. In the third stage, I integrated my facial discoveries into Milton's text. Video documentation of this process is fundamental to the discussion that follows, and eleven video clips have been made available to accompany this part of the article.⁴⁷

STAGE 1

One of the shortcomings of my first experiment was pointed out to me during a meeting in which I presented my facial scores for the dialogue between Othello and Iago. Despite limiting myself to Burgh's marginalia, the starting point of my process was not a neutral one. I had selected the text seduced in part by my familiarity with the characters, and therefore my initial facial configurations were already influenced by them and their particular predicament. This frustrated one of the tenets in Macklin's method and, with it, the central aim of my investigation. For Macklin, the embodied knowledge of the passions should be moulded to the characterization found in the dramatic text, which means that the former should exist before, and independently from, the latter. If I was to familiarize myself with the passions called for in a part unencumbered by pre-conceived notions of it, I would have to start with a fresh suite of passions while being ignorant of its origin. I imagined then a preliminary step to my experiment, in which I would work with the emotional score *only*. I asked a colleague who was privy to my investigation to select one monologue out of *The Art of Speaking*,⁴⁸ extract from it the marginalia, and send it to me without any additional information. Only after sufficient experimentation on this material would I request the name of the monologue to which it belonged. The document I received contained the following sequence:

Joy and Love – Disagreeable Remembrance – Wheedling – (Pleasing Description) – Flattery – (Narration) – Apprehension – Wonder – Pleasure and Desire – Inquiry – Resolution – Fear – Joy – Inviting – Flattery – Tempting – (Wonder) – Joy

My colleague suggested that the elements between parentheses, being particularly dependent on the content of the monologue, be skipped during the initial stage – a suggestion which I followed.

I had now a list of discrete passions, abstracted from any given context, which I should embody through my face. The situation was new to me, and this preliminary phase in my experiment felt like uncharted territory, allowing me to see only one step ahead. I first set out to explore a variety of facial configurations for each passion and settle upon one which would express it most eloquently. This essentialist approach was warranted by Burgh himself when he mentioned that

⁴⁶ BURGH, *ibid.*, p. 174.

⁴⁷ My sincere thanks to Michal Bitan for helping with the production and editing of the video material accompanying this article. A list of links to the video clips can be found in the following webpage: <https://jedwentz.com/paixao-edps/>

⁴⁸ I limited the choice further according to two other parameters: it should concern only the epic or tragic genres, and it should offer as frequent and varied transitions as possible. I should also mention that there were about six examples from *The Art of Speaking* which I had already worked on. These I asked my colleague to avoid.

‘nature has given to every emotion of the mind its *proper* outward expression, in such manner, that what suits *one*, cannot, by any means, be accommodated to *another*’.⁴⁹ As I was assembling sources to aid my exploration, the idea occurred to me of starting to elaborate a suite of expressions even before consulting any document. I saw this possibility as advantageous on three levels. To begin with, I would be supplying this experiment with a reference point against which more informed attempts could be compared. Secondly, this being research through embodiment, I would be presenting my current set of biases and intuitions as itself an object for reflection. Finally, I could use this opportunity for artistic purposes, as a methodic way to compare my tacit knowledge of expression with that contained in the sources, thereby refreshing my understanding of the passions.

Not all of Burgh’s expressions lent themselves easily to facial representation. Four proved particularly challenging, namely Wheedling, Flattery, Inviting, and Tempting. I first attributed this difficulty to my own lack of experience in depicting them. I had not yet come across such a range of expression, and my limited array of options testified to it. Only after a few frustrated attempts did I begin understanding what made their representation so difficult. As mentioned before, Burgh annotated the margins not only with ‘*passions, humours, and sentiments*’, but also with ‘*intentions*’. It is perhaps to this last category that the four expressions mentioned above refer. More than a passion, intentions define a plot, a potential interaction between agents; and though some passions may lend themselves better to a particular intention, yet no single passion can exhaust it. It was perhaps because I was working exclusively through the medium of the face that this problem emerged so promptly. The face could, in one single instant, represent a passion with clarity, but only a series of actions developing through time could elucidate intentions such as wheedling or flattering. Viewed in this manner, intentions were, in fact, a kind of ‘scenario’. I decided to select those passions which I saw as plausibly occurring under each of the four scenarios, and then attempted to mix them into four facial expressions: for Wheedling, I chose Desire/Joy; for Flattery, Desire/Esteem/Joy; for Inviting, Love/Joy; and for Tempting, Desire/Joy/Wonder. This being done, I made the first attempt at the complete suite of Burgh’s expressions.⁵⁰

While I rehearsed the suite, connections between expressions began emerging. There was an easy flow, for example, from Apprehension to Pleasure and Desire, or between Inquiry and Resolution. My face jumped happily from one to the next, and my imagination found no impediment to start imagining the likely plots behind such schemas. But there were also question-marks peppering the score. In which scenario would Wheedling follow a Disagreeable Remembrance, or Resolution give rise to Fear and this, in turn, to Joy? Not only did these leave my imagination speechless, but also my face hesitated at the leap. I eventually managed to get my facial muscles to run quickly over these spots, but only by dulling my imagination in the process. This exercise proved insufficient for me to familiarize myself with these passions, and I would need to address the lack of plausibility I was finding in some of the passages. This problem could be tackled in the step I had planned next, which I intended as an investigation into the unfolding of each expression through time. I would string my chosen expressions together, studying different transitions between them. Since this was a process deeply bound to assessments of plausibility, I hoped to arrive at workable alternatives for the problematic spots as well.

I spent some time improvising on my suite of expressions, experimenting with different ways of arriving at each facial configuration, and of departing from it. This tinkering with transitions stimulated both my facial work and the imagination behind it. I would arouse in myself the idea of one who has arrived at a Disagreeable Remembrance coming from Joy and Love, and allow my

⁴⁹ BURGH, op. cit., p. 12.

⁵⁰ See Video I: *Suite I, Without Transitions*. <https://jedwentz.com/paixao-edps/>

face to grope its way toward Wheedling. As I repeated this procedure for each transition, I detected two simultaneous judgments on my part. The first issued from within: it was the opinion of the subject who is the target of the passions and who feels them first hand. ‘Would such a transition *feel* like this?’ was the question it tried to answer. The second issued from without: it was the opinion of an onlooker, an aesthete enthralled in someone else’s passions. It tried to answer the question: ‘Would such a transition *look* like this?’ Not only were they simultaneous, these two perspectives were also related to each other dynamically. When I deemed a given feeling as adequate, a surge of boldness drove my face to more varied and vivid expressions; and when the face painted an aesthetically appealing transition, paths opened to new feelings. This spiralling effect also worked the other way around, a deficient expression barring the path for feeling and vice-versa. Some passages were particularly prone to this downward spiral. One of them was the very beginning of the sequence, the onset of Joy and Love, which would prove to be a challenging expression throughout the whole experiment. I often had to make several attempts at it before both my feeling and face were on board. One of the many failed attempts⁵¹ will illustrate in practice the dynamic relation I am describing. I began with the feeling of one who returns to a beloved place. My face played along, reacting to the various sights captured by the wandering eye. At a certain point, my face sensed a good moment to make the turn into Disagreeable Remembrance and my aesthetic judgment approved. The eye stood still, however, failing to anticipate the transition, at which point feeling vanished, and the sequence aborted. The next brief attempt saw the face taking the lead, only to crash seconds later with an untimely stretching of the nostrils followed by a widening of the eyelids, which only confused a tentative feeling. The third effort managed to reconcile face and feeling, but failed at the intended expression, effectively dividing it into a first segment of Wonder mixed with Joy, and a second segment of Joy mixed with Contentment. Failed attempts, as can be imagined, were much more frequent than successful ones; and although not all of them offered as useful an insight as the one just mentioned, they were still the most fruitful part of the experiment. Through them, the raw materials – passion, expression, feeling – talked back, warning or advising, resisting or facilitating, and ultimately exposing cognitive biases and lack of skill.⁵²

My improvisations on the suite of passions, and particularly on those incongruous transitions mentioned before, made me wonder about the possible genre of the text and its attending mode of delivery: maybe some genre would fit Burgh’s sequence better, and explain some of its unexpected turns? I knew the text was meant to be delivered by one sole speaker, but I did not know the genre. I imagined it could be a sermon, an excerpt from the Iliad, or a soliloquy. Each called, in my mind, for a mode of delivery with specific characteristics. In the first, which I chose to call ‘oratorical’, the preacher addresses the audience directly, his eyes fixed on the spectators’.⁵³ In the second, for which I use the term ‘epic’, the rhapsode alternates between addressing the audience and impersonating the characters.⁵⁴ In the third mode, the dramatic, the actor

⁵¹ See Video II: *Three Attempts at Love & Joy*. <https://jedwentz.com/paixao-edps/>

⁵² David Esterly, in *The Lost Carving*, has spoken in similar terms of his own material – limewood – and his learning from it: ‘Breakages are powerful pedagogical devices. If you penetrate the bitter rind of these disasters, you can relish them for the instruction they provide. That sickening snap is a cry from the wood: Don’t do this! Do you think you can get away with it? You don’t understand me. The wood is teaching you about itself, configuring your mind and muscles to the tasks required of them. To carve is to be shaped by the wood even as you’re shaping it.’ David ESTERLY, *The Lost Carving: A Journey to the Heart of Making* (New York: VIKING, 2013), Chapter III. Many thanks to Mark Tatlow for drawing my attention to this book.

⁵³ I drew inspiration from Michel le Faucheur’s (1585–1657) precept in his *Traité de l’Action de l’Orateur*: ‘Quant à vos yeux, vous les devez toujours avoir sur vos Auditeurs’ [‘As for your eyes, you should always keep them on your listeners’] Sabine CHAOUCHÉ, *Sept traités sur le jeu du comédien et autres textes: de l’action oratoire à l’art dramatique, 1657–1750*, (Paris: H. CHAMPION, 2001), p. 125.

⁵⁴ This is a mode which I imagined as partaking of both the oratorical and the dramatic, in that it is both an address to the audience and an imitation of life, alternating between third-person and first-person narration.

continuously plays a part, as if unaware of the audience.⁵⁵ Although I had no idea about the specific events or circumstances being treated in the text, knowing how wide the range of literary genres was in *The Art of Speaking*, I supposed it would fall under one of these modes. As I delved into each, I observed differences in single expressions and, most importantly, in the nature of transitions between them. I decided to pursue the three delivery modes systematically. I imposed concrete limitations to my improvisation by imagining different settings: in the oratorical mode, I would direct my eyes solely to the camera lens, as a preacher would direct his into those of a believer; in the epic mode, I would share my gaze between the camera lens and different points in space, as the story teller who is part of the spectator's world while being possessed by another; and in the dramatic mode, I would avoid gazing into the camera lens altogether, as one living in a different time and place. From this exercise, I collected precious information, not only on the possible expressive score imagined by Burgh for his intended text, but also, more abstractly, on each single passion, as it was moulded under different constraints.

The oratorical mode presented a concrete challenge. Since the eye never strayed away from one single point, the causes behind each passion could not be indicated. I felt I was making an appeal via the passions alone, without justification, hoping for sympathy, not understanding. As a result, a pleading hue fell over some sections, a call for compassion which, in my imagination, should be motivated by modesty. The expressions became softer, and the transitions less vehement.⁵⁶ One of the most vulnerable points in the score – the transition from Disagreeable Remembrance to Wheedling – suffered especially under this setting. This transition is potentially implausible since it requires changes on a number of levels: on the temporal, one anticipates a future prospect after having focused on a past event; on the level of valence, one goes from an unpleasant to a pleasant state; and on the agency level, a passive attitude turns into an active one. I attempted to soften the contrast by extending the traits of Disagreeable Remembrance onto Wheedling, effectively mixing them both.⁵⁷ In my view, the result, though possibly more plausible, led Wheedling beyond its *genus*, effectively morphing it into what could be called Imploring or Supplicating. This experience, however unsatisfying for the purpose of arriving closer at Burgh's expression, was fruitful, in that it charted yet another small region in the geography of passion.

In my epic mode improvisations, I was freed from constantly gazing into the camera, and could, therefore, experiment with those types of transitions in which the eye takes the lead. At one point, I broke the score into five sections. In the first, to which belonged Joy and Love, and Disagreeable Remembrance, the narrator gazes upon a mythical hero, to whom great misfortunes would have befallen. In the second, encompassing Wheedling,⁵⁸ Flattery, and Apprehension, the narrator urges the spectators to open their hearts, complimenting their sensibility, and begins narrating disquieting events. For the section of Wonder, and Pleasure and Desire, I imagined the narrator to be describing the sudden appearance of an attractive object. The eyes return to the spectators in the fourth segment, which includes Inquiry and Resolution, to engage them through a series of questions, where the dangers of obtaining such an object are brought forth, success being reserved only for the bold. From that point onward, the narrator takes on the part of the hero, who, after overcoming Fear, manages to woo and possess the object of desire.⁵⁹ This device opened up a way to accommodate even the most mysterious transitions. Fear could now follow

⁵⁵ 'The countenance is always to be turned towards the speaker, and from the eyes through an escaping look no consciousness is to be gathered of any spectators being present, even in soliloquies, which are but thinking aloud; or *in side speaking*.' Paul HIFFERNAN, *Dramatic Genius* (London, 1770), p. 79.

⁵⁶ Video III: *Improvisation, Oratorical Mode*. <https://jedwentz.com/paixao-edps/>

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, at 0'25".

⁵⁸ In the beseeching variety arrived at in the oratorical mode.

⁵⁹ Video IV: *Improvisation, Epic Mode*. <https://jedwentz.com/paixao-edps/>

Resolution, since two different personas, each with a particular set of motivations, separated them. This solution raised, however, a new question: how does one mark transitions between personas using only the face? This was a problem I would end up tackling, in more detail, during my improvisations in the dramatic mode.

Once I imposed on my performance the absence of an (imaginary) audience, I put the story-telling mode aside for a while, and experimented with soliloquizing. Soon enough, however, and maybe due to the work I had done so far, a number of devices started creeping back into my improvisation. The character would remember a past interaction, and then replay parts of it, either its own actions or someone else's. At other points, the character would apostrophize, addressing absent persons or entities. These moments would allow for a wide range of possible transitions, not the least between different characters. I once again experimented with breaking the score into parts; only now, these belonged solely to characters, with no involvement from a narrator. Quite inevitably, this demanded making decisions about the relationship between the characters: their position – physical and emotional – relative to each other. In one of these combinations, for example, I broke the score into two characters, thus:

PRINCIPAL CHARACTER	SECONDARY CHARACTER
Joy and Love	
Disagreeable	
Remembrance	Wheedling
	Flattery
Apprehension	
Wonder	
Pleasure and Desire	
Inquiry	
Resolution	
Fear	Joy
	Inviting
	Flattery
	Tempting
Joy	

The secondary character would hover above, in a persuading stance, while the principal would struggle below, plunged in doubts. This hierarchy could be translated visually, if, for example, I would precede the two interventions of the secondary character with a downward gaze.⁶⁰ These indicative gestures, however, being found at the threshold between two characters, would have to be somehow distinct, and not to be confused with changes of gaze within the same part. One of the solutions I found to this problem consisted in a sudden dismantling of the facial expression

⁶⁰ Video V: *Improvisation, Dramatic Mode*. <https://jedwentz.com/paixao-edps/>

just before switching to the next character, after which the eye could again be directed and a fresh train of passions initiated.

At this point in the experiment, I once again grew curious about those expressions – Wheedling, Flattery, Inviting, and Tempting – which had at first been so mystifying to me. So far, I had chosen rather loving and benevolent passions with which to imbue these four intentions. I decided to stretch my imagination to encompass other possibilities. I used the same character division described above, and focused on the secondary character. Its immediate intention was still to spur the principal character to carry out a given action, but its motives were various: to cause pain or humiliation, to teach a lesson, to offer an innocent pleasure, to encourage in the face of adversity. In some trials, the resulting expression was significantly changed. For example, when the character wished to cause suffering, the eyes opened wide underneath straight eyebrows, denoting Desire, and then the upper lip rose, a trait characteristic of Hatred or Aversion, all the while keeping close to Wheedling and Flattery. When compared to a more benevolent variety, such as parental encouragement, the expressive range of such intentions could begin to be circumscribed.⁶¹

By the end of the first stage of my experiment, I had pushed my embodied imagination as far as I could. I had explored a range of essential facial configurations to match each of Burgh's expressions; I had analysed intentions and distilled mixtures of passions from them; and I had experimented with transitions and discovered modes of delivery in the process, in which I employed the indicative faculty of the gaze to guide my intuition as I subjected the emotional score to ever changing scenarios. It was time to confront my imagination with Burgh's own description of the expressions, as found in *The Art of Speaking*.

STAGE 2

Burgh's list of expressions and their description, detailed as it is, fails to include all those terms which are found in his marginalia. The author admits as much in his conclusion, but adds that in his list one finds only 'the *principal* humours, or passions, which commonly occur', being that 'the *others* are generally *referable* to *them*'. To deduce any particular expression from the principal ones he does not regard as difficult, since 'every reader's understanding will enable him to trace [it] out, with the help of the INDEX'.⁶² There were several concepts on my emotional score which had to be indirectly described, via the index, and yet others for which there was no suggestion in the whole book. Adding to this, there were considerable disparities between my expression of some principal passions and Burgh's. For all these reasons, I found it necessary to repeat some of the steps of Stage 1, starting with the elaboration of an updated suite of expressions.

Among those principal passions which needed greater refurbishing was Joy. Where my imagination had led me to express a moderate and sedate delight, Burgh's demanded a much more exalted state: 'the *eyes* are *opened* wide' and 'the countenance is smiling, not composedly, but with features *aggravated*'.⁶³ These traits I had to combine with the arched eyebrows and half-shut, languishing eyes of Love, a task rife with moments of frustration. There was also an intention – Resolution – which saw a slight, but important change. It did not appear in Burgh's essay, and the Index suggested only Firmness as a related expression, for which no description was provided. Nonetheless, firmness was mentioned in the description of Courage, and I chose to follow this lead. 'Courage, steady, and cool, *opens* the *countenance*, gives the whole form an *erect* and *graceful* air'. My earlier portrayal, though steady and erect, was much sterner, with lowered eyebrows, wide

⁶¹ Video VI: *Encouragement VS. Temptation*. <https://jedwentz.com/paixao-edps/>

⁶² BURGH, op. cit., p. 373.

⁶³ BURGH, *ibid.*, p. 15.

opened eyes, and pursed lips with corners slightly pulled down. I was also happy to arrive at a new incarnation of the facial configuration I described earlier on for Darius' daughter, this time as Pleasure and Desire. This would result from a mixture of moderate Joy, from which it would receive the smile, and anxious Desire, which would supply the wide opened eye and the troubled eyebrow (fig. 2). As for the quartet Wheedling-Flattery-Inviting-Tempting, they all shared of the expression of Love, one way or another. Wheedling and Tempting 'puts on the looks of moderate love [...] only carrying the *fawning* part to *excess*'.⁶⁴ Flattery is directly related to Fawning, as suggested by Burgh's index, and Inviting, like Giving and Soliciting, is 'accompanied with much the same looks and gestures as express love; but more moderate'.⁶⁵ This simplification, though helping me narrow the range of expression for these passages, brought about the opposite problem: how would I express each intention distinctly, since all were manifested as Love? I played around with the angle of my head, trying to cast different gazes upon the same object so as to give nuance to the expression on my face. At this point, perusing into pictorial representations of some of these intentions was helpful. A scene from which I took great inspiration is known generally as the Choice of Hercules, where Virtue and Vice, in the allegorical form of two women, appear to the hero, each attempting to sway his judgment. Virtue is traditionally placed at the same level or higher than Hercules, while Vice typically occupies a lower position, often reclining or sitting on the ground, as can be seen, for instance, in the compositions of Sebastiano Ricci (1659–1734), Paolo de' Matteis (1662–1728), or Pompeo Batoni (1708–1787). It follows that, while gazing at the hero, each does so in opposite directions: Virtue downward, in a frontal, authoritative stance; and Vice upward, in a languishing, tempting attitude, not at all dissimilar to Le Brun's depiction of *L'Amour Simple* (fig. 1). That the direction of the gaze seems to have been an important feature of these two expressions can be seen in De Laire's *Hercules kiest tussen Deugd en Ondeugd* [*Hercules Chooses between Virtue and Vice*] and, even more clearly, in Nicolas Poussin's *Le choix d'Hercule* [*The Choice of Hercules*], where, despite their relative heights, they still maintain their respective gaze. Poussin's depiction of Vice was especially pertinent for my experiment. He placed her higher than Hercules, but made sure her head would be so bowed that she would still need to look upwards. Incidentally, her eager expression also allured me, and I would make use of it often during the rest of the experiment. The last of Burgh's expressions which is worth mentioning is Disagreeable Remembrance, which, missing both in the list of principal passions and in the index, was untraceable. The closest description, in my view, was that of Remorse, which 'casts *down* the countenance, and *clouds* it with *anxiety*; hangs *down* the *head*; draws the *eyebrows down* upon the eyes', making 'the *teeth gnash* with anguish'.⁶⁶ Remorse referred both to a past event and to a painful one, but exacerbated by guilt, a motive I was not sure I would find in the monologue itself. I did find a reference to an identical passion in a later treatise, an adaptation of Johann Jakob Engel's *Ideen zu einer Mimik* by Henry Siddons. To one of the plates in Engel's book, which depicts Lear in an attitude of rejection, Siddons gave the title 'Painful recollection'.⁶⁷ Its expression consists in averting one's eyes with fear, turning away from an object and pushing it aside, even though that object is not exterior to the subject, but a fruit of the imagination. This seemed to complement well my model for this passion, and I made sure to always clarify the transition from Joy and Love to Disagreeable Remembrance by averting my eyes and face.

After this revision took place, I attempted to establish a new suite of expressions from which to resume my improvisations.⁶⁸ Some new facial configurations, such as Joy and Love,

⁶⁴ BURGH, *ibid.*, p. 22.

⁶⁵ BURGH, *ibid.*, p. 21.

⁶⁶ BURGH, *ibid.*, p. 17.

⁶⁷ Henry SIDDONS, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action* (London: Richard PHILLIPS, 1807), Plate 11.

⁶⁸ Video VII: Suite II, Without Transitions. <https://jedwentz.com/paixao-edps/>

Apprehension, or Joy, were difficult to execute, and even after intense training would often elude my grasp. What is more, the imagination bound to these expressions was incipient, which only added to the feeling of awkwardness accompanying the experiments. Improvisation helped my face grow comfortable, and, as it did, the imagination kept weaving its web around each expression, creating the threads for novel transitions. In this stage of the experiment, I concentrated my attention on the dramatic mode of delivery. This was motivated in part by Burgh's scathing criticism of actors who would direct their eyes at the audience, especially during a soliloquy or an aside-speech, 'for they ought not to seem so much as to think of an *audience*, or of any person's looking upon them, at *any* time'.⁶⁹ I developed one version involving only one character⁷⁰ and another version involving two.⁷¹ This allowed for alternative perspectives on the same transitions, as, for example, between Fear and Joy: in the first version, due to the vacant gaze at the end of Fear, the motivation for Joy reads as coming from within the character's mind; whereas in the second version, the expression of Fear remains even after the eye has been aimed at the secondary character, making the subsequent Joy the likely result of an exterior stimulus. Once I felt at ease with the new suite of expressions, and naturally with a great deal of excitement, I asked my colleague to reveal the text to which it belonged.

STAGE 3

On page 174 of *The Art of Reading*, I found 'Eve's account of her troublesome dream', an excerpt from Book V of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Although I did not know the text, there was something unsurprising at the revelation. I could see how such a monologue would welcome the expressive range I had been exploring for the past two months. All I had to do was entwine them, although this could be done in many different ways. I wanted to inform my very first readings by the embodied imagination I had created, and so I strove to sustain each facial configuration for the whole duration of the respective section, as I read it aloud. There was something uncanny about scanning a text in this way. Not all the lines lent themselves to the highest pitch of passion; but instead of acquainting myself with them in a state of tranquillity, working my way up towards expression, I was flying among the peaks, with room only to descend. I felt more at home in the most vehement moments than in the cooler ones, and I could begin mapping the poem, not so much according to the lines where Burgh's marginalia appeared, but according to those points in which each passion found its strongest manifestation.

During my first reading, I stumbled upon two very mundane problems. First, there were three sections for which I had not yet prepared an expression. These were kept between parentheses in the list I had initially received from my colleague, and they were: Pleasing Description, Narration, and Wonder. The first presented no great challenge, and it could be an expression of Pleasure flowing easily between Wheedling and Flattery. The second, being an action, had no particular passion associated to it. However, given that it preceded a section of Apprehension by the same character, I decided to attribute to it a softer gradation of that same expression. My second problem was, in fact, the remaining passion – Wonder – which did not appear in Burgh's marginalia. Due to a copying mistake, my colleague had failed to list three expressions, all belonging to the end of the monologue and unfolding between Tempting and Joy. These were: Fear, Rising Desire, and Romantic Imagination. I was familiar with the first two, but the last one was a riddle. There was no mention of it anywhere else in *The Art of Speaking*, and my intuition offered no hint. A quick look at Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* defined the

⁶⁹ BURGH, op. cit., p. 7.

⁷⁰ Video VIII: Improvisation, One Character. <https://jedwentz.com/paixao-edps/>

⁷¹ Video IX: Improvisation, Two Characters. <https://jedwentz.com/paixao-edps/>

adjective *romantick* as ‘wild’ and ‘fanciful’.⁷² After a few attempts, I settled upon an intense expression of Amazement and Admiration, the rapturous gaze combined with a gaping smile.

My facial improvisations, unlike before, had now a text in which to root themselves. I would sometimes run the text in my mind, grimacing in silence. This resembled the explorations I had done so far, but in a larger scale, plenty with opportunities to explore gradations of passion and imperceptible transitions. In this process, the gaze was once more fundamental, since each nuance wanted a justification in the eye. For example, I punctuated the first period of Disagreeable Remembrance with eight changes in direction of gaze, and experimented with a variety of passions with which to nuance the principal expression. In one of my favourite versions, this chain of nuances created a climax at the tipping point between the agreeable Love-Esteem-Wonder and the crushing Shame-Crying:

TEXT	DIRECTION OF GAZE	NUANCE OF PASSION
For I this night	Right-down	Grief
(<i>Such</i> night till <i>this</i> I never pass’d)	Left-down, averted	Fear
have <i>dream’d</i> – If <i>dream’d</i> –	Left-down, in vacancy	Horror
<i>not</i> as I <i>oft</i> am <i>wont</i> , of <i>thee</i> ;	Right-middle, on Adam	Love
<i>Works</i> of day <i>past</i> ;	Center-middle	Esteem
or <i>morrow’s</i> next <i>design</i> ;	Center-middle	Wonder
But of <i>offence</i> , and <i>trouble</i> , which my mind Knew	Right-down	Shame
<i>never</i> till this <i>irksome</i> night.	Right-down, averted	Crying

I worked on the whole text by sections in much the same way, spurring my imagination, whenever possible, by changes of gaze.⁷³

In tandem with the silent facial improvisations, I made some declaimed attempts, so as to test further the viability of some of my choices.⁷⁴ One aspect of my performance that was enhanced, quite spontaneously, by the addition of the voice was the expressive movement of the head. I had planned, for example, to emphasize the word ‘thysself’⁷⁵ with the ‘nod of consent’ suggested by Burgh to characterize Promising; but many other movements, even of the eyebrows, seemed to follow musically the turns of the voice. Accents and cadences, which I thought to have been the exclusive property of voice and gesture, were after all also visible in the countenance, a realization which only sharpened my conception of rhetorical delivery as one dynamic whole. On a more critical note, it became apparent to me, both while performing and while watching the recordings, how limited the expressive range of my voice was in comparison to that of my face. Although the embodied imagination I had worked to develop had some positive effects on my vocal

⁷² ‘romantick, adj.’ *A Dictionary of the English Language*, by Samuel JOHNSON. 1755.

https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/1755/romantick_adj (last accessed 05-02-2022)

⁷³ Video X: *Improvisation on ‘Eve’s Account of Her Troublesome Dream’, Muted Text*. <https://jedwentz.com/paixao-edps/>

⁷⁴ Video XI: *Improvisation on ‘Eve’s Account of Her Troublesome Dream’, Spoken Text*. <https://jedwentz.com/paixao-edps/>

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 5’23”.

performance, the sense of ease in moving through this suite of expressions was incomparably greater in my face.

The experiment, as I had meant it, had reached its end. Its goal had been to compose a facial score to a monologue, for which expanding the ‘mental and corporeal’ knowledge of the passions was considered a priority. There were still areas which would have deserved a fourth, a fifth, or even a sixth stage: I could have investigated further the influence of vocal and gestural expression on the face, which would have entailed the elaboration of a full score for the delivery of the text; I could have paid heed to both Macklin and Burgh, and explored how character further modifies each nuance of passion;⁷⁶ and, finally, I could have studied theatrical expression in its natural habitat, playing with lights, make-up, and live audiences. These are important experiments that should be carried out, but being tangential to the central topic of the present research, they will have to wait for a future opportunity.

NEW DIRECTIONS

The experiment analysed in this article, as mentioned before, is but one of the many iterations which make research into technical knowledge possible. Even as they focus on very specific objects and instances of practice, they can unsettle deeply rooted assumptions and throw light onto unforeseen ways of expressing and feeling.

To prepare a dramatic part based on its emotional score yielded much richer results than I had anticipated. Even with only a very humble knowledge of the necessary passions, embodied mainly in my face, I still managed to deduce a succession of possible actions that fit remarkably well the expressive demands of its original poem. What a Macklin-like actor, who knew ‘correctly, intimately, and enthusiastically’ the passions of a character, would have been able to achieve, one can only dream. The prospect, however dim, offers a potent alternative to the acting paradigm according to which ‘there is no correct emotion for a given scene’,⁷⁷ and would deserve its own avenue in artistic research.

Pursuing this knowledge of the passions, in turn, has made me acutely aware of my personal role in curating my emotional experiences. Embodying an expression repeatedly, with the intent of making it part of my emotional imagination, was a playful process where judgment and taste worked side by side with feeling. Adapting psychologist Lisa Feldman Barrett’s concept, I would describe my experience as that of a budding ‘sommelier of passion’,⁷⁸ learning to appreciate the slightest shades of emotion, even as I helped creating them. I observed relations of kinship in the expression and feeling of groups of passions, and this taxonomy, far from impeding earnest expressions, actually made many of them possible. It was not that I was discovering a natural, tacit, grammar of human emotion: I was imposing one on my own emotions, and melting them together into one vivid imagination. This insight is changing the way I see Le Brun’s and Burgh’s systematic approach to passions. Were they describing a world, or were they prescribing a world? Le Brun’s

⁷⁶ Burgh reminded readers that ‘the *action*, in expressing the various humours and passions [...] is to be suited to the *age, sex, condition*, and *circumstances* of the character’ (BURGH, op. cit., p. 27), and Macklin warned the actor that ‘he must suit his looks, tones, gestures, and manners to the character’ (KIRKMAN, op. cit., p. 364). One should be careful, however, not to fall into modern assumptions about ‘character’, which, in this context, one could better describe as ‘personation’, a process David Wiles traces back to rhetorical tradition and to the notion of theatrical mask (WILES, op. cit., p. 276).

⁷⁷ Melissa BRUDER, *A Practical Handbook for the Actor* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), p. 124. Bruder’s book was a recommended manual in my Conservatory years. While a useful book in forming young stage performers, its advice was particularly difficult to apply to seventeenth- to nineteenth-century vocal repertoire, be it oratorio, opera, or cantata. One of the reasons for this shortcoming might have been precisely its silence regarding emotional expression.

⁷⁸ In *How Emotions Are Made*, Barrett uses the expression ‘sommelier of emotion’ to describe individuals who exhibit high emotional granularity, i.e., who possess a vast number of emotion concepts. ‘If an emotion concept is a tool’, she adds, ‘then this person has a gigantic toolbox fit for a skilled craftsman’. BARRETT, op. cit., p.106.

expressive heads were likely intended as didactic models for young apprentices,⁷⁹ and Burgh's *The Art of Speaking*, as mentioned before, was no different. If they set out to investigate the passions, they did it only so that they could act upon and master them. The feeling of playfulness I experienced while tinkering with the passions and manipulating them through my face was similarly a sense of enablement. As I honed each and every one of them, I began relating to them as heartfelt artifacts, cherished instruments of a craft. This notion of the actor's passion as tool is one of the most intriguing hypotheses emerging from this investigation, and one which I hope can be expanded upon in the near future.

João Luís PAIXÃO
Universiteit van Amsterdam

⁷⁹ Melissa Percival has drawn attention to the pragmatism behind Le Brun's *Conférence*, and sees the enduring appeal of his expressive heads as owing more to simplified functionality than legibility. See PERCIVAL, op. cit., Chapter 2.



Fig. 1. Plate 37 from Antonio Morrocchesi, *Lezioni de declamazione e d'arte teatrale*. Collection Jed Wentz.

THE PLATES OF MORROCCHESI'S *LEZIONI DI DECLAMAZIONE E D'ARTE TEATRALE* (1832): AN INTRODUCTION AND ANALYSIS

*La tragedia [...] è il regno delle passioni, e noi vi andiamo per essere commossi.*¹

*Tre sono i mezzi che hanno gli uomini per esprimere le idee, e i loro sentimenti: parola, tuono di voce, e gesto*²

*[Il gesto] abbellisce quell'arte, a cui s'unisce per divenirne una parte principale, e darle così anima, forma, e vigore*³

INTRODUCTION⁴

Book illustrations have so great a capacity of drawing attention that they are often discussed independently of the text associated with them. This is also true of the 40 plates from the treatise *Lezioni di declamazione e d'arte teatrale* (1832). Based on specific attitudes and gestures, they illustrate a decisive portion of the Thespian arts, namely the interaction of '*parola, tuono di voce, e gesto*', but are mostly taken out of their original context in the reproductions.⁵ A comprehensive treatment is also hindered by the fact that the author of the book, the Tuscan actor Antonio Morrocchesi (1768–1838), places the illustrations in a block at the end of the text, and does not discuss them in detail, but only mentions them in passing (See Fig. 1). This article therefore endeavours to understand the illustrations and text in the context of their reciprocal influences and connections, while simultaneously introducing this important historical Italian source on the dramatic arts to an English language audience. Following an overview of Morrocchesi's biography and professional context, the formal aspects of the illustrations will be discussed. The actorial attitudes in the illustrations will be analysed in detail; the relationship between the image and its respective quotation from a play or libretto examined; and finally, its relationship to the concept of acting developed within the *Lezioni* will be examined. The extraordinary sequence for a monologue from Vittorio Alfieri's play *Oreste*, which 24 of the 40 plates illustrate, will be analysed in a separate section.⁶

¹ 'Tragedy is the kingdom of the passions, and we go there in order to be moved.' Antonio MORROCCHESI, *Lezioni di declamazione e d'arte teatrale* (Firenze: Tipografia all'insengna di Dante, 1832), p. 93. All translations are by Anne Smith if not stated otherwise.

² 'There are three means which men have to express their ideas and their sentiments: words, the tone of voice, and gesture'. MORROCCHESI, *ibid.*, p. 147.

³ '[Gesture] beautifies that art [i.e. the art of acting] which it joins, in this manner becoming one of its principal parts, and consequently giving it spirit, form and vigour.' MORROCCHESI, *ibid.*, p. 243.

⁴ This text came into being between August 2020 and July 2021, months in which research trips had to be cancelled and libraries were closed due to the covid-19 pandemic. I therefore had no access to the vast amount of Italian research literature on Morrocchesi and Italian theatre around 1800, which is not available in the libraries in Basel. Nevertheless, some sources and research contributions are available digitally, and Jed Wentz provided some high-quality digital reproductions of the illustrations from his own copy of Morrocchesi's *Lezioni*. As these are hardly known in the English-speaking world, this article is intended to be an introduction to an important Italian locus of the dramatic arts around 1800. I would like to thank Anne Smith, Laila C. Neuman, João Luís Paixão, Jed Wentz and the Dutch Historical Acting Collective for their stimulating suggestions.

⁵ 'word, tone of the voice, and gesture', MORROCCHESI, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

⁶ A PDF file of the complete plates from Morrocchesi's book – as well as the written and video materials related to a performance of this monologue by João Luís PAIXÃO – can be found here: <https://jedwentz.com/papiro-edps/> (last accessed 18-02-2022).

MORROCCHESI'S BIOGRAPHY AND THE CONTEXT OF HIS *LEZIONI*

Antonio Morrocchesi was born in 1768 in San Casciano Val di Pesa, not far from Florence, as the fourth of six children. His father Francesco was a well-to-do merchant.⁷ Antonio was thus not a *figlio d'arte*, was not a product of a dynasty of actors who formed the professional theatre companies (*compagnie di comici*) in Italy, performing as travelling troupes both in cities and countryside.⁸ To the contrary, he went to Florence to complete his education, to the Scolopi Congregation. There he was introduced, in accordance with the humanistically influenced Calasanzian curriculum, to the Classic Latin and Italian literature, had instruction in drawing as he showed an aptitude for it, and took part in the theatre productions of the school.⁹ Morrocchesi's beginnings as an actor took place under the protected and cultivated auspices of school colleges and academic associations.¹⁰ He had his public debut in 1791¹¹ in the Florentine theatre in Borgo Ognissanti,¹² with the premiere of an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in Italian: Morrocchesi was therefore the first Italian Amleto!

Thereafter Morrocchesi's career took off. He became a member of various professional acting troupes with which he performed in Tuscany and North Italy; only after his first success did he begin to found and direct his own theatre companies. He soon began to devote himself to the main roles in Vittorio Alfieri's (1749–1803) tragedies. In 1794 he finally had his breakthrough in Florence in the title role of Alfieri's *Saul*. It was the first time that a play of Alfieri was performed in a public theatre.¹³ Alfieri, who attended the fifth performance, was so enthusiastic about Morrocchesi's dramatic achievement that he smothered him with honours and praise.¹⁴ From that

⁷ Concerning Morrocchesi's biography, see Teresa MEGALE, 'Morrocchesi, Antonio', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 7 (2012) [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-morrocchesi_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-morrocchesi_(Dizionario-Biografico)) / (last accessed 13-11-2020) with its extensive bibliography. Morrocchesi's own unpublished memoirs, 'I vent'anni del mio comico pellegrinaggio', are certainly an important source, located in Florence, Biblioteca Marucelliana, shelf mark: Fondo Martelli, D 19, vol. 1–3. Cf. Stefano GERACI, 'Comici italiani: La "generazione alfieriana"', *Teatro e storia*, 4:2 (1989), 215–243, pp. 231–6; Stefano GERACI, 'Notizia su alcuni fatti taciuti nelle memorie di Antonio Morrocchesi', *Teatro e storia*, 16 (1994), 69–89, p. 70; Stefano GERACI, *Destini e retrobotteghe. Teatro italiano nel primo Ottocento* (Roma: BULZONI, 2010) (Biblioteca teatrale – Memorie di teatro 27), Chapter: 'I Vent'anni del mio comico pellegrinaggio', 115–186: p. 122ff.

⁸ Concerning professional actors and the organisation of the troupes of actors in Italy from about 1750–1830, see GERACI (1989), art. cit..

⁹ Since the opening of the first European free public Catholic school in Rome in 1597, the religious schools of the Scolopi or Calasanzianes (which are traced back to St. Giuseppe Calasanzio) have been focussed on the education of children, that is boys. The school of Florentine Institute of the Scolopi, which still exists today, was opened in 1630, see www.scuolepiefiorentine.com/la-nostra-storia/ (last accessed 27-11-2020). The curriculum was religiously based, but also integrated the liberal arts and sciences. Several important authors were educated in the Florentine Institute (Carlo Collodi, Giosué Carducci, Giovanni Pascoli), among them Giovanni Battista Niccolini (1782–1861), whose plays belonged to Morrocchesi's canon, cf. Mara NERBANO, 'Dopo Morrocchesi. L'insegnamento della declamazione e arte teatrale all'Accademia di Firenze', p. 3, paper at the Conference 'Storiografia e storia dello spettacolo: tradizioni e crisi', 15-16. July 2017, Napoli Università L'Orientale, retrieved from Academia.edu (last accessed 13-11-2020).

¹⁰ According to Stefano Geraci, the colleges and academies of affluent, educated amateur actors were the two 'herds' from which a new generation of actors emerged that overturned the traditional Italian system of professional troupes of actors, cf. Geraci (1989), art. cit., p. 222ff., p. 226: '*le due anime della cultura teatrale settecentesca, le compagnie di dilettanti e il teatro di collegio. Vestri e Morrocchesi sono entrambi studenti degli Scolopi, l'ala "modernista" della cultura ecclesiastica.*' ('the two souls of 18th-century culture, the companies of amateurs and the theatre of the college. Vestri and Morrocchesi were among the students of the Scolopi, the "modern" wing of the ecclesiastical culture.').

¹¹ Megale, op. cit., gives 1789 as the year for Morrocchesi's debut as Hamlet, Geraci however gives 1791 (GERACI [1994], art. cit., p. 69). I give 1791, as it is the date generally found in the literature.

¹² In the same year seven Florentine citizens created the Accademia dei Solleciti in order to found this theatre. Its repertoire consisted of popular spoofs and comedies – the experimental adaptation of Shakespeare of 1791 seems to have been an exception. Cf. <https://curiositasufirenze.wordpress.com/tag/teatro-borgo-ognissanti-accademia-dei-solleciti/> (last accessed 20-11-2020).

¹³ Before that time, Alfieri's plays were only performed in private halls by (aristocratic) dilettantes, cf. MEGALE, op. cit.; GERACI (1989), art. cit., p. 230.

¹⁴ The event is reported in various sources, and has the earmarks of a burgeoning legend. See, for example, GERACI (1989) art. cit., pp. 229–231.

moment on, Morrocchesi was seen as the actor *par excellence* for Alfieri's tragic roles, therewith establishing the standard for their declamation and embodied presentation on stage.¹⁵ As Morrocchesi then began almost exclusively to appear in productions of Alfieri's plays in the whole of Northern Italy, he came to dominate the approach to and reception of these dramas within the broader Italian audience of the public theatres.¹⁶ Until that time, Alfieri's plays had only been performed in exclusive aristocratic-academic circles by amateurs, including Alfieri himself.

The next turning point took place in 1811, again in Florence. Under the domination of Napoleon at that time, culture was being promoted in accordance with the French model and as a result a new professorial chair was established for declamation and acting and awarded to Morrocchesi at the Academy of the Arts – it must have been one of the first institutions for professional training for actors in Italy. In taking on the position, Morrocchesi left the public stage in order to dedicate himself to the training of budding actors, while writing several dramas, comedies and his memoirs on the side. Until his death in 1838, his goal of his teaching was to cultivate a new generation of actors who, by means of a solid general and specific education, were able to technically and intellectually meet the demands of the dramatic texts – mainly those of Alfieri, but not exclusively – at a commensurate level. This is the context for which and in which Morrocchesi published his *Lezioni di declamazione e d'arte teatrale* in 1832.¹⁷ This tome sums up his experiences as an actor, explains his concept of the professional dramatic, tragic art of acting and, as a didactic compendium, reflects his pedagogical approach.

Due to his biography Morrocchesi had a special status: as mentioned above, he did not come from a family of actors and his training did not take place, as was usual at the time, in a troupe of actors, but within the amateur context of schools and academies.¹⁸ Morrocchesi had a humanistic education in the liberal arts that actors did not normally receive. Because of this he was always a bit out of place among conventional actors. Given his middle-class upbringing, his decision to become a professional actor was unusual, as the social acceptance of this profession was low. Therefore – and in spite of the fact that Morrocchesi had access to high-ranking intellectual circles – a certain distance to the aristocracy remained. The last phase of his career – as a pedagogue – can be interpreted as an attempt to resolve these tensions by means of establishing an institutionalised professional training for dramatic tragic actresses and actors.¹⁹ Further it is important to mention that Morrocchesi was an advocate of *literary* spoken theatre – particularly of Alfieri's tragedies²⁰ – and not for the improvisatory and orally transmitted dramatic art of the

¹⁵ For a contemporary expression of appreciation of his dramatic skills, see Francesco RIGHETTI, *Teatro italiano* (Torino: PARAVIA, 1828), pp. 125–8.

¹⁶ Megale, op. cit., states this succinctly: 'Da quel momento, il nome di Morrocchesi è legato indissolubilmente alla possibilità di traduzione scenica degli impervi endecasillabi alfieriani, resi fruibili per i vasti pubblici grazie all'attore toscano e riscattati dall'ambiente accademico e dilettantesco.' ['From that moment, the name of Morrocchesi is indissolubly tied to the possibility of the dramatic translation of Alfieri's impenetrable hendecasyllabic lines, made useable for vast audiences thanks to the Tuscan actor and liberated from the academic and dilettante circles.'].

¹⁷ See also Morrocchesi's own remarks about this in the *Lezioni*, op. cit., pp. 7–10, 11ff.: about the lack of well-trained actors in the field of cultivated comedy and tragedy, and the ethical value of the actor's training for society.

¹⁸ Once again see Geraci (1989), art. cit., who analyses the sociological and cultural-historical context of this new category of professional actor; further, see Alessandro TINTERRI, 'The Italian "Grande Attore" and nineteenth-century acting', *Acting Archives*, Essays / Review Supplement 18, November 2012, 1–26, pp. 2–5, <https://actingarchives.it/essays/contenuti/98-the-italian-grande-attore-and-nineteenth-century-acting.html> (last accessed 20-12-2020).

¹⁹ At least in the plates Morrocchesi refers explicitly to women and men. Whether women were also allowed at the Florentine Accademia would have to be investigated by examining archival documents, but appears probable as it was an institution of the French government. Nerbano (2017), op. cit., p. 2, cites a regulation of 1847 according to which women and men were taught on alternating days.

²⁰ The examples in Morrocchesi's *Lezioni* are mainly quotations from Alfieri's dramas and he concludes the chapter '*Discorso della Tragedia*' with an eulogy of Alfieri in order to emphasize the eminent importance of this poet (pp. 95–6).

commedia dell'arte.²¹ By this means, Morrocchesi desired to raise the social and cultural status of the professional actor, and further:²² *‘I Comici per loro costituzione politica e morale, sono, o dovrebbero essere i modelli del ben vivere, e dello scelto pronunziare, i maestri della civiltà, della convenienza’*.²³

THE LEZIONI AND ITS PLATES

Morrocchesi's *Lezioni di declamazione e d'arte teatrale* are a compendium of his teaching, in which he *‘raccorre [...] tutto ciò, che concerne la buona recitazione in genere per utilità delli scolari’*.²⁴ The chapters concerned with practice, the *lezioni*, are built up progressively and are first devoted to the voice, ranging from articulation to pronunciation to the modulation and formation of the timbre. Morrocchesi, to be sure, often furnishes concrete examples, but it is only in the *lezione* on declamation (pp. 67–80) that he gives practical exercises.²⁵ He then presents a comprehensive consideration of questions concerning physical representation. His concept of the art of acting is rhetorically based and focused on the representation and stimulation of the passions (p. 93): starting from the question of how the passions may be transmitted, he then explains the application of facial expression, gesture, bearing/attitude, and movement.²⁶ Between the *lezioni* Morrocchesi has scattered historical-theoretical *discorsi*, surveys on the history of the genres and the characteristics of tragedy, comedy, rhetoric, lyric and epic poetry. These *discorsi* bear witness to the two-pronged nature of his thirst for literary and cultural education, as with these Morrocchesi displayed the breadth and depth of his education, as well as his expectation that those studying acting should also acquire it. In the concluding chapter on the art of acting, based on Horace's poetics, Morrocchesi summarized his views.

Forty plates follow at the end (all available at <https://jedwentz.com/papiro-edps/>). These are not listed in the index, nor do they illustrate any examples found in a lesson. Morrocchesi only briefly mentions this appendix at the end of his lesson on gesture:

manderò in luce egualmente alcune tavole esprimenti diverse figure con attitudini consentanee al soggetto; le quali se non ch'altro varranno a richiamarvi in mente, quando che sia, gli esercizi piacevoli della primiera giovinezza. [...] Elleno

²¹ When Morrocchesi refers to comedy in his *Lezioni*, he is not referring to the traditional, improvised *commedia dell'arte* in dialect or vernacular, but the antique Greek and Roman comedy and for modern times he only allowed the comedies of Jean-Baptiste Molière and Carlo Goldoni (see the chapter *‘Discorso sulla commedia’*, pp. 99–111). For Morrocchesi, tragedy had the highest status and therefore also the tragic art of acting; comedy and its dramatic representation are always denigrated somewhat in his treatise (for example, p. 257: *‘gesti della commedia [...] minuti e gretti [...] più facili d'assai ad appararsi, ad eseguirsi’* / ‘the gestures of comedy’ as being ‘small and stingy’ and ‘much easier to represent and to execute’).

²² Cf. also Céline FRIGAU MANNING, ‘La leçon tragique d’Antonio Morrocchesi (1768–1838)’, *Cahiers d’études italiennes* [En ligne], 19 | 2014. <http://journals.openedition.org/cei/2257>; DOI: 10.4000/cei.2257., pp. 216–7.

²³ ‘The comedians, by their political and moral constitution, are or should be the models of living well, and of the well-chosen pronunciation, the masters of civilization and convention.’ MORROCCHESI, op. cit., p. 359.

²⁴ ‘in which he gathered together [...] everything that concerns good recitation in general for the use of pupils.’ Morrocchesi, op. cit., p. 7, *Al lettore* and *ibid.*, p. 255. For a contextualisation of the *Lezioni* and Morrocchesi's concept of acting, cf. FRIGAU MANNING, art. cit.

²⁵ Morrocchesi maintains that he was the first to invent signs for intonation (pp. 69–70), but there had already been attempts made to realise the musical dimension of language and declamation in notation, cf. Ivano CAVALLINI, ‘Opera e declamazione teatrale in Italia nel diciottesimo secolo. Convergenze e problemi’, *The Italian Method of La Drammatica. Its Legacy and Reception*, ed. by Anna SICA, (Milano: Mimesis 2014) (Eterotopie 280), 81–108, p. 85 and there the footnotes.

²⁶ Morrocchesi understood the transmission of the affects in accordance with Antique rhetoric, and correspondingly cites Horace's maxim *‘si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi’* [‘if you want me to cry, you yourself must first experience grief’] several times, for example in the chapter *‘Lezione dell'anima, o sentimento’*, p. 210; and more extensively in the chapter *‘Lezione del muover degli affetti’*, pp. 159–169. In addition, it requires a *‘forte ed ardente sensibilità’* (‘strong and ardent sensibility’) (p. 95) or *‘intimo senso’* [‘intimate sense’] (p. 238) of the actor, which enables him to in an appropriate manner to imagine himself in a role and a dramatic situation. Cf. also FRIGAU MANNING, art. cit.

*sono [...] una collezione di gesti tragici generici e descrittivi. Dei primi siccome dalle tavole rilevansi, ne accennai alcuni dei meno triti, e dei secondi, messi in mostra i più suscettibili di disegno.*²⁷

What he writes thereafter clarifies why Morrocchesi does not make a more extensive use of illustrations, namely that due to the complexity of a sequence of movements, gestures do not lend themselves to be conveyed by a single image, perhaps not even caught in a drawing:

*ed in special modo i [gesti] così detti composti, o raddoppiati. Gli chiamo così perocché quasi sempre sono due, ed anche tre in uno: ed alcun altri, per la sola solissima complicata gita che fanno dell'aggrupparsi e nello svolgersi, gli chiamo egualmente.*²⁸

In spite of this, he then devotes a couple of lines of explanatory commentary to the plates for the monologue of Pilade, which is 'illustrated' in the second half of the plates – I will discuss them later. Morrocchesi further leaves it to the readers to understand and interpret the plates, as well as to make the connection between them and the statements and directions in the *Lezioni*.²⁹ He understood the plates as reminders of the practical exercises he conducted at the Accademia and thereby made it clear that practical training in the art of acting cannot be fully conveyed in fixed images. Perhaps in this manner Morrocchesi was trying to stimulate the intellectual and performative execution of the principles explained in his text, instead of encouraging mere imitation of a figure or a pose. This would correspond with his postulate that actors must find an individual way to embody the affective state of their role and of the dramatic situation.³⁰

What connection then do the plates have with the text of the *Lezioni* and why did Morrocchesi go to the effort of having the plates made? In order to answer these questions, we must look more closely at the characteristics of the plates.

²⁷ 'I will also publish some plates illustrating diverse figures with attitudes in keeping with the subject, which, if nothing else, will serve to remind you, whenever possible, of the pleasant exercises of your early youth. [...] By publishing this work, whatever it may be, I fulfil the aforementioned obligations, including the tables, figures and attitudes promised. It is true that there are only a small number of them, but it would be too much in every respect, if one wanted to assemble a complete collection of the generic and descriptive tragic gestures. Of the former, as shown by the plates, I pointed out some of the less trite, and of the latter, I showed the most suitable for drawing. Not all of them are like this, especially the so-called compounds or doubled ones. I refer them in this manner because there are almost always two, and even three in one: and I refer to them some others in the same way because of the very complicated path they take in gathering together and unfolding.' MORROCCHESI, op. cit., pp. 255–6. A complete translation by Anne Smith of the chapter 'Lesson on Gesture' as well as the 'Lesson on Bearing and Gait' is to be found in this volume.

²⁸ 'Not all of them [i.e. gestures] are like this [i.e. suitable for drawing], especially the so-called compounds or doubled ones. I refer them in this manner because there are almost always two, and even three in one: and I refer to some other [gestures] in the same way because of the very complicated path they take in gathering together and unfolding.' MORROCCHESI, *ibid.*, p. 256.

²⁹ In the chapter 'Lezione della scena muta', Morrocchesi discusses plays for which there are also plates, for example Alfieri's Rosmunda (pp. 232–3), Oreste (p. 233), or Monti's Aristodemo (p. 232), but he speaks of other scenes than those which are cited in the corresponding plates. And even in the drama Ottavia (p. 235), in which he discusses exactly the scene that appears in the plate (no. 13), Morrocchesi makes no cross reference between the text of the *Lezioni* and the plates.

³⁰ See in particular Morrocchesi's chapter '*Lezione dell'anima, o sentimento*' and the following relevant lezioni. Cf. also FRIGAU MANNING, art. cit., p. 218 and *passim*. Empathy and identification with the role were Morrocchesi's trademarks, in that in 1794 he even injured himself in the performance of Saul's suicide in the eponymous tragedy by Alfieri, see Megale, op. cit., contextualised in Geraci (1989), art. cit., pp. 229–231. In the chapter '*Lezione dell'anima, o sentimento*' (pp. 209–213) Morrocchesi discusses the topical Antique examples for empathy and gives an example from his own life: Once in the premiere, he put himself in a prince's role whose beloved dies by reliving on stage the pain he himself had experienced the previous day when his sister had died ('*Portai [...] con me sul palco scenico [...] il dolor vero di fratello con quello del finto vedovo sposo; fu tale e tanta ad ogn'uopo la mia commozione, che travolsi gl'animi degl'uditori*' / 'I bore with me on the stage the true sorrow of the brother together with that of the feigned widowed spouse; such was my emotion at all times, that I overwhelmed the hearts of the listeners', p. 212).

FORMAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PLATES

All the 40 plates are uniformly designed. They are lithographs that were not produced by the publishers of the book, the *Tipografia all'insegna di Dante*, but rather by the *Litografia Salucci*, a printer which specialised in the reproduction and creation of images (they were both renowned Florentine printing/publishing houses, as a glance at their other publications makes obvious).

Each plate shows a male or a female figure, only plate 10 shows a man and a woman. All are wearing theatre costumes which indicate good knowledge of the historical dress of the respective role, although the cut and body proportions are of the fashion of the 1820s–30s.³¹ All are standing in front of a white background, without props and without any indication of the dramatic context. In addition, the following indications are found on all of the plates: the number is found in the top right; bottom left the name of the graphic artist and bottom right the name of the printer *Litografia Salucci*. For nos. 1–16 the graphic artist is V. Marchettini and for nos. 17–40 it is Francesco Boggi (fl. 1825–1840).³² At the bottom in the middle there is always a quotation or statement which either identifies the figure or clarifies the dramatic situation.³³ The quotations are faithfully cited, i.e. the structure of the blank verse is made clear by means of dots indicating either an ellipsis or line breaks. Interestingly, Morrocchesi's quotations stem from a relatively old repertoire, since Alfieri's tragedies (nos. 3–4, 6, 12–13, 17–40), the play by Vincenzo Monti (no. 10), and Ferdinando Moretti's libretto for the opera *Ademira* (no. 1)³⁴ are from the 1780s, whereas the works by Pietro Metastasio (nos. 11, 14) are from 1724 and 1734 respectively. Even though some of the works concerned are opera libretti, they were nonetheless regularly performed in Italy as spoken works.³⁵ Morrocchesi's selection was for the standard repertoire, which he himself had helped establish as an actor, or in the case of Metastasio, works which were numbered among the pillars of Italian theatre history.³⁶ Commensurate with the tragic nature of these plays, the figures and characters are not of the contemporary bourgeoisie, but are queens, emperors, princesses, military leaders and the like from Greek and Roman Antiquity (figures from the *Oresteia*, and the *Aeneid*; Aristodemos of Messina; the emperors Nero and Titus), as well as from the sixteenth century (the Medici in *Don Garzia*; the Spanish royal house in *Filippo*). In short, Morrocchesi's plates do not represent a progressive contemporary repertoire, but rather the canon of an academic, educated elite.

³¹ Although it is now taken for granted that at the beginning of the 19th century historical accuracy in costumes was the norm, for Morrocchesi this seems to be an advance that he had had to fight for at the beginning of his career in traditional acting companies: As he describes in his memoirs, in 1791 he even took the volumes of Bernard de Montaucon's *L'antiquité expliquée en figures* (Paris 1722) with him. Morrocchesi wanted namely to use the illustrations in them of the Greek and Roman dress as models for historically accurate costumes for the performances of the *compagnia*, but the *capocomico* refused to make use of his suggestions. Only after his success allowed him a greater degree of authority, was Morrocchesi able to have a say in the choice of roles and costumes. Cf. GERACI (1989), art. cit., pp. 233–5; GERACI (2010), op. cit., pp. 122–3.

³² They made the preparatory drawings, as is indicated by the 'del' which stands for *delineavit* (delineated or drawn). Neither belonged to the highest ranks of renowned Florentine graphic artists. Francesco Boggi also worked for other printers than Salucci. They could have been artists associated with the *Accademia di Belle Arti*, of which Morrocchesi was also a member.

³³ Plates 17–40 illustrate Pilade's monologue from Alfieri's *Oreste*, IV, 2. For Plates 1–16 the mixture is well-balanced, with 8 plates (nos. 3–4, 6, 10–14) quoting from a play, and 8 plates (nos. 1–2, 5, 7–9, 15–16) having either a generic statement or an unidentified text.

³⁴ I would like to thank Anne Smith for the identification of the quotation of the first plate.

³⁵ GERACI (1989), art. cit., pp. 220–235, mentions how the actor Antonio Colomberti, born in 1806, had to learn the same repertoire of the previous generation when he began his career, among them also the main roles in Metastasio's *Artaserse* and *Alessandro nell'Indie*. Giovanni Battista MANCINI (1777), pp. 234–5, describes in his vocal treatise how Gaetano Casali's acting troupe successfully performed Metastasio's dramas without music and without arias, even receiving Metastasio's approval for this.

³⁶ Morrocchesi also recommended that one read the correspondence of Metastasio because it is written in a '*stile coltissimo, e nel tempo stesso semplice e naturale, senza la menoma affettazione, egualmente che lepide, ed oltremodo erudite ed istruttive*' ['cultivated style, and at the same time simple and natural, without the least affectation, equally witty, as extremely erudite and instructive'], MORROCCHESI, op. cit., '*Lezione dell'articolazione*', pp. 48–9.

It is to be noted that such printed illustrations of a dramatic scene with a figure and accompanying quotation were no novelty in 1830, particularly not in French and English-speaking countries.³⁷ In Italy, however, they were uncommon and were not used for personal publicity of the actors. Instead, illustrations and vignettes garnished the complete editions of the authors of plays, such as Metastasio's Paris edition of 1780–1782 or the individual editions of Alfieri's work published by the Florentine printer Leonardo Ciardetti in 1821.³⁸ To date I have found the greatest similarity to the figures of the star French actor François-Joseph Talma (1763–1826), whom Morrocchesi must at least have known due to the large number of prints of him.³⁹

In conclusion of this overview, it can be said that the plates clarify the cultural horizon of the *Lezioni*, with its focus on the plays of Alfieri and the exclusion of other sorts of theatrical forms and traditions.

Let us now examine the attitudes and their relationship to their associated text or quotation, first for plates 1–16, which Morrocchesi describes as '*gesti tragici generici*' ('generic tragic gestures') and then for plates 17–40 with the '*gesti tragici descrittivi*' ('descriptive tragic gestures').

It should be mentioned in advance that Morrocchesi understood the concept of *gesto* ('gesture') as applying to the entire body; it was always the complete expression of a feeling or emotion and a main element of the actor's art:

*Il gesto [...] non è se non se il movimento esteriore del corpo e del volto; una delle prime espressioni del sentimento, date all'uomo dalla natura. [...] è indispensabile di vederlo sempre come espressione; [...] [il gesto] abbellisce quell'arte, a cui s'unisce per divenirne una parte principale, e darle così anima, forma, e vigore.*⁴⁰

PLATES 1–16: GESTI TRAGICI GENERICI

The liveliness of their eyes together with their gesture, bearing, and costume make the figures appear as if they were acting and not merely posing: they are never looking at the viewer but rather at some (undepicted) person or object which absorbs their attention. Their eyes and their eyebrows are the most mobile and expressive parts of their faces, their mouth usually open as if speaking, the lower half of their faces never distorted.

All the figures, with exception of the kneeling no. 12, exhibit a slight torsion through the legs, torso and head, i.e. each of the named body parts has its own orientation, whose strength is proportional to the situation and/or affect. All have their weight over one foot, the other lightly

³⁷ Such illustrations were a constant component of theatre iconography and used strategically as publicity and for cultivating the image of actresses and actors. Cf. Shearer WEST, *The image of the actor verbal and visual representation in the age of Garrick and Kemble* (London: Pinter 1991); Renzo GUARDENTI, 'Da Talma a Morrocchesi: modelli attorici e iconografici tra Sette e Ottocento', *Alfieri, lo spettacolo e le arti*, ed. by Arianna FRATTALI (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2015), 77–103, pp. 83ff., particularly p. 89 with the reference to Wilhelm Henschel's documentary series from 1811 of the German actor August Wilhelm Iffland, which formally come closest to the Morrocchesi plates (even if it is unlikely that he knew them): *Ifflands mimische Darstellungen für Schauspieler und Zeichner während der Vorstellungen gezeichnet zu Berlin in den Jahren 1808–1811*, Berlin, 1811; Laura MOECKLI, 'Nobles dans leurs attitudes, naturels dans leurs gestes. Singers as Actors on the Paris Grand Opéra Stage', *Sänger als Schauspieler. Zur Opernpraxis des 19. Jahrhunderts in Text, Bild und Musik*, ed. by Anette SCHAFFER et al. (Schliengen: Argus, 2014), 11–40, p. 17, fn. 15: concerning the Paris 'Album des théâtres' (Available online: https://www.hkb-interpretation.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Publikationen/Bd.5/HKB5_11-40_Moeckli.pdf).

³⁸ For an assessment of the Italian iconography of actors, see GUARDENTI, art. cit., pp. 94–7; the work editions with illustrations: *Opere del signor abate Pietro Metastasio*, 10 vols. (Paris: Herissant, 1780–1782); Vittorio ALFIERI: *Don Garzia*, with a plate by Carlo Lasinio after Carlo Falcini (Florence: Leonardo CIARDETTI, 1821), dispensa n. 15.

³⁹ GERACI (1989), art. cit., p. 235. For the prints of A. Godefroy: M.r Talma, Rôle de Titus (dans Brutus): <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6940896m> (last accessed 4-10-2021).

⁴⁰ 'Gesture [...] is the exterior movement of the body and the face, one of the first expressions of feelings given to man by nature. [...] it is indispensable to see it always as expression. [Gesture] beautifies that art with which it joins, in this manner becoming one of its principal parts, and consequently giving it spirit, form and vigour.' MORROCCHESI, op. cit., p. 243.

touching the ground, whereby the toes of the feet are always turned out and are at an angle of about 60°–80° to one another. The foot with no weight upon it always seems to have only the tip of the toes on the ground (with the exception of nos. 4, 5, 9, and 15, where the entire foot is on the ground). As is known already from the ground-breaking research of Dene Barnett, and furthered by recent investigations of Anne Smith, this mode of standing, asymmetrical and yet balanced, was not only *de rigueur* for acting, but also corresponded to contemporary beliefs concerning the act of standing well.⁴¹ The upper body is upright, almost stiff, the shoulders and chest appear to be fixed, while the arms and head have many possibilities of movement. On the whole the bearing of Morrocchesi's figures displays a certain expressivity and vigour, but is never extreme, but rather always maintains a sense of nobility. It is questionable whether the Classical *contrapposto*, based on the Canon of Polykleitos, in which the proper proportions of the parts of the body to one another were established, served as a model for the figures.⁴² Although the legs present contrasting lines, the stiff upper body and the level shoulders deviate from it (the shoulder above the leg supporting the figure should always be lower than the one over the free leg, as seen in the figures in plates 13 and 16). Personally, I see this deviation as an indication of the print-maker Marchettini's inability of correctly representing the anatomy of the human body – one only has to look at the shoulders, hips and knees, particularly of the male figures. A positive explanation of this deviation from the Classical Canon for sculpture would be that the figures should appear more like real contemporary actresses and actors, and not merely as imitations of a painting or a sculpture. This would place – just as Morrocchesi intended – the achievement of actual actors and the art of acting in the limelight.

Let us now examine the relationship between the figures and the text or quotation. All the figures comport themselves in a manner that is illustrative of the meaning of the quotation. There are attitudes which are connected with an action/plot: begging and pleading (nos. 1, 8, 12), an order or resolution (nos. 5, 13), the order to flee or go (nos. 6, 11).

The poses in plates 5, 13–15 are very conventional, having the *contrapposto* in combination with gestures, such as an arm supported on the hip, the indicating or pointing hands, and the facial expressions together with the antique dress and the attributes emblematic of rank (laurel crown and floor-length cloak of an emperor; the helmet and sword of a military commander). There are numerous examples of such attitudes in the visual arts and in theatre illustrations.⁴³ These attitudes give the cited statements energetic vehemence; they are representative of the authority of rulers and their demands, indicated by such key words as '*vendetta*' ['vengeance'] and '*pretendi*' ['claim', 'request']. Characteristic for this is that the attitude in *contrapposto* with the supported arm appears again in no. 40, which shows King Egisto from Alfieri's *Oreste*: here it is the sole indication of his royal status, as the figure does not display any other attribute of a ruler. Evidence for the

⁴¹ Cf. Dene BARNETT, 'The Performance Practice of Acting: The Eighteenth Century, Part V: Posture and Attitudes', *Theater Research International* 6/1 (1980), 1-32 and Anne SMITH, 'Standing with Ease and Grace: or the Difficulty of Reading Historical Acting Treatises Objectively': https://jedwentz.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Smith_Standing-with-Ease-1.pdf (last accessed 18-11-2021). For example, Gilbert Austin describes precisely how the feet should be placed: 'when the feet are separated about their own length or more, the left touches only near the great toe; the knee is bent, and the inside of the leg is presented to view'. Gilbert AUSTIN, *Chironomia, or a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery* (London: T. CADELL and W. DAVIES, 1806), pp. 298–9.

⁴² See SMITH, art. cit., especially p. 23ff.

⁴³ Some Florentine examples are: David (bronze sculpture by Donatello, 1440, Museo del Bargello); Pietà (painting by Andrea del Sarto, after 1523, Uffizi, Inv. 1912, no. 58); Angelica and Medoro (painting by Orazio Fidani, seventeenth century, Uffizi: Inv. 1890, n. 3559); Portrait of Mattias de' Medici (Justus Suttermanns, 1632, Palazzo Pitti, inv. Poggio a Caiano, no. 144). From Jean-Charles LEVACHER DE CHARNOIS, *Recherches sur les costumes et sur les théâtres de toutes les nations: tant anciennes que modernes*. Tome 2, 1802, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1070564r/f7.item> (last accessed 10-11-2021): Néron (p. 15), Burrhus (p. 28), Titus (p. 66), Achille en habit militaire (p. 166). Or earlier: Illustration for Metastasio's *Antigono*, in the edition of his complete works by Herissant (1780), op. cit.

conventionality of these gestures and poses may be drawn from the acting treatise of Andrea Perrucci *Dell'arte rappresentativa, premeditata ed all'improvviso* (1699), whose instructions may be easily seen as corresponding to nos. 5, 8, 12–16:

*I Gesti con tutte due le mani si fanno, ò quando s'inalzano al Cielo per adorarlo, ò quando s'abbassano per supplicare; quando si gestisce nel mezzo si dimostra, e quando si distendono s'invoca. [...] Le tre dita contratte verso il pollice disteso l'indice vagliono a ripredere, e giudicare; l'indice, riguardando la mano l'omero un poco inchinato afferma, volto verso la Terra dritto costringe.*⁴⁴

The motif of the clenched fist supports the expressivity of the verbal statement, a threat (*'Morrete anime ree!'* / 'Evil souls, you will die!') in no. 2 and a (com-)plaint (*'Inique Stelle'* / 'Unjust heavens!') in no. 7. The combination of the clenched fists in combination with wide-spread legs or a lunge in these figures is particularly expressive; the comparison with other figures of Morrocchesi (such as nos. 3, 6, 10, 12, 20–21, 23–24, 33 36–37) as well as with depictions of Iffland as Wilhelm Tell or in paintings such as Jacques-Louis David's *The Oath of the Horatii*, show that such an extreme position of the legs serves as an indicator for high dramatic tension and/or heightened emotionality.⁴⁵

The restrained gesturing of no. 4 is more subtle, as it indicates an awareness that accompanies the transition from hesitation and lack of clarity to certainty (*'no, non m'inganno'* / 'No, I am not deceived').

Three plates depict an emotional state, horror as a reaction to a terrifying sight or to ghostly vision: the gestures are always extreme (fingers, arms and legs wide-spread and taut), the paralysing effect is displayed by contrasting a withdrawing or turning away of the upper body while the legs remain planted in an opposing direction. Plate no. 9 proffers a rather flat illustration of the words *'Orribil vista!'* ['What a horrible sight!'], whereas nos. 3 and 10 show the emotional state of the figure(s) in a more complex manner. The facial expression with the wide-open eyes, pulled-together eyebrows, and the open mouth, the twisting of the body, the tense posture, and the varying disposition of the limbs; the contrast between the rigidity, pointing gesture, and gestures of aversion to the sight make the conflicting emotions of the figure manifest – disbelief, thoughts of flight, and panic. In plate no. 3, the figure is identified as Clitennestra from Alfieri's *Oreste* (1783), Act I, scene 2: in a monologue Clitennestra tells her daughter Elettra how the ghost of her husband Agamennone, whom she murdered together with her lover Egisto, follows her wherever she goes. In plate no. 10, which illustrates the second scene of the fourth act of Vincenzo Monti's *Aristodemo* (1784), the reaction to seeing a ghost is divided between two figures: Aristodemo sees the ghost of his daughter Dirce, whom he – greedy for power – had murdered, and points to her in horror, whereas Cesira, standing before him, does not see the ghost, yet falls into a panic at Aristodemo's words and wants to flee. The contrasting disposition of the axes of her body evoke a strong sense

⁴⁴ 'Gestures using both hands are made when raising them to heaven in adoration or lowering them in supplication; when one holds the hands half-raised, one is making a point; if they are outstretched, it is an invocation. [...] The three fingers drawn toward the thumb and with the outstretched forefinger serve to reprimand and pass judgement. The forefinger, when slightly bowed and the hand is turned to the shoulder, declares/affirms, when turned straight down to the ground, commands.' Andrea PERRUCCI, *Dell'arte rappresentativa, premeditata ed all'improvviso* (Napoli: Michele Luigi MUTIO, 1699), pp. 119–120, <http://digitale.bnonline.it/index.php?it/186/andrea-perrucci-dellarte-rappresentativa> (last accessed 14-08-2021); English translation from Perrucci/Cotticelli/Heck (1699/2007), pp. 60–1. (With slight corrections by the author and by Anne SMITH).

⁴⁵ HENSCHER 1811, Iffland as Wilhelm Tell, pl. 2 und 4:

https://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb10522555_00009.html; Jacques Louis DAVID: *The Oath of the Horatii*, 1784 (Paris, Louvre)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:David-Oath_of_the_Horatii-1784.jpg#/media/File:David-Oath_of_the_Horatii-1784.jpg; or Edmund Kean as Hamlet, 1814?, by G. CRUIKSHANK: <https://digital.library.illinois.edu/items/af8dac50-4e7d-0134-1db1-0050569601ca-5>, for Kean's (all last accessed 10-10-2021). GUARDENTI, art. cit., pp. 92ff.; various depictions of David Garrick as a mad King Lear.

of energy and tension.⁴⁶ It is characteristic that the plates with the most complex attitudes were chosen for figures that are murderers, and thus have guilt feelings and by seeing the ghosts come close to madness. The extremity of the emotional state and the terrifying dramatic situation suit such intense, almost exaggerated, pantomimic expression. Morrocchesi employs the same gestures and attitudes in nos. 33 and 34, which illustrate the words *spavento* [fear] and *orrore* [horror] respectively from Pilade's monologue. There is, however, a distinction between the horror of no. 34, which receives a similar treatment to that in no. 3, where the figure freezes in fear, and the embodiment of *spavento*/fear/dread in no. 33, which is to be sure somewhat contradictory, but clearly joining the desire to fend off the perceived danger with that of fleeing from it.

The survey of the figures with a quotation from a drama (nos. 1, 3–4, 6, 10–15) makes one important aspect of the plates evident: the contrast between the conventional attitude (the only exceptions being nos. 3 & 4) and the complexity of the dramatic situation. The scene is usually one in which the respective character is in a dilemma or must hide his true feelings or is in the course of doing an amoral deed and hurting someone in the process. Plate no. 6 is the only one, in my opinion, in which the dilemma may be seen in the figure: it depicts the young Queen Isabella who loves Prince Carlo, but must hide her feelings because she is married to Carlo's father.⁴⁷ Her dilemma may be seen in the contrast of her arms and legs turning to the left, while her head is looking back to the right with a look of longing, most likely focused on Carlo.

The discrepancy between the figure and the dramatic situation is particularly obvious in plates nos. 11–13 which depict base characters. Plate no. 11 quotes from Pietro Metastasio's *Didone abbandonata*, III,4: '*Amici andiamo; / Non soffre indugio il mio furor*' ['Friends, we are going; / My fury does not allow delay']. The Moorish King Iarba is speaking, whose life Aeneas has just saved, and yet he still wants heinous revenge and orders the death of the collaborator Osmida. Aeneas is the virtuous hero who keeps his emotions under control and places higher values above his individual needs, whereas Iarba is behaving egotistically and mendaciously. But the figure in the oriental costume and the outstretched arm only illustrates the '*andiamo*' ['let's go']. Nothing is to be seen of the urgency of this command (*'non soffre indugio'* / does not allow delay) or the '*furor*' ['fury'] of Iarba, and certainly nothing of the hypocrisy of this character.⁴⁸ The same is true for the other base characters: Amalchilde (no. 12) declares his love to the woman whose father he has murdered;⁴⁹ Nerone (no. 13) wants to kill his wife Ottavia, so that he can marry his lover Poppea.⁵⁰ Their banal poses do not communicate anything of the drastic nature of their respective dramatic situation. The figure in no. 14 demonstrates in a representative manner that Morrocchesi's *gesti generici* are not bound to the specific theatrical iconography of the characters and the scenes. The quotation

⁴⁶ This plate is the sole image in which two figures appear, and probably it is inspired by the Antique sculpture of Laocoön and his Sons in the Vatican, which until 1905 was known in an incorrect reconstruction with the outstretched arms of the father and son through innumerable reproductions. In particular, the figure of the dying Laocoön was seen as the epitome of pathos. Marchettini (or Morrocchesi) appears to have adopted the bodily deportment of Laocoön, as well as that of the son to his right, shifting the latter in front of the former.

⁴⁷ Vittorio ALFIERI: *Filippo*, I, 1, Isabella: '*Carlo? Ah! si fugga*' ['Carlo? Ah! I must flee'].

⁴⁸ Why did Morrocchesi devote a plate to this oriental, exotic (minor) character? One possible explanation is that Morrocchesi could thus broaden the spectrum of the characters and costumes in the illustrations, which was an important issue for him, particularly in regard to historically and geographically correct dress, see fn. 31. On the other hand, the association of the 'oriental' and despicability caters to offensive clichés and prejudices; cf. literature on xenophobia and the Western white hegemonic of the 'Orient': Edward W. SAID, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978); as an example of more recent studies of the subject in relation to opera: Oak Joo YAP, 'The Representation of Oriental Others in Haydn's *L'incontro improvviso*', *Manusya: Journal of Humanities*, 22:2 (2019), 176–196. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/26659077-02202004> (last accessed 25-6-2021).

⁴⁹ Vittorio ALFIERI: *Rosmunda*, III, 1, Amalchilde: '*Io, no, non sorgo / Da' piedi tuoi se pria*' ['No, I will not rise / from your feet before you'].

⁵⁰ Vittorio ALFIERI: *Ottavia*, III, 3, Nerone: '*Vendetta avronne ad ogni costo*' ['Revenge will take place, at any cost'].

in plate no. 14 comes from the monologue in Act 3, Scene 7 of Metastasio's *Clemenza di Tito*, a highpoint of the drama: Tito has been betrayed by his friend Sesto and wants to punish him. He signs the death sentence for Sesto, but in the last moment he changes his mind and tears the sentence into pieces: clemency has won over vengeance. Illustrations of the previous scene – Act 3, Scene 6 – in the editions of this libretto (Paris, 1780 and London, 1767)⁵¹ make the clemency of Tito obvious by contrasting him to the crushed Sesto. But Morrocchesi's figure shows hardly any of Tito's strongly divergent feelings in Scene 7; moreover, the profile and the arm gestures seem to indicate a dialogue, whereas he is alone onstage. Once again, the figure seems to generally depict the appropriate attitude for an emperor, but neither the dramatic situation nor his emotional state.

The characteristics of the generic tragic attitudes, nos. 1–16 can be summed up as follows: they are basic examples for budding actresses and actors. The facial expressions, gestures and physical bearing are clear and are straightforward to read, their universality makes them appear stereotypical. Morrocchesi does, in fact, call upon a conventional repertoire of theatrical, eloquent gestures, as found in the relevant treatises and in the graphic arts, which he assumed were known.⁵² The figures of plates 1–16, however, show neither the finesse and complexity of artistic depictions nor are they as striking as the figures in illustrations such as those, for example, in the vignettes found in editions of Alfieri's complete works.⁵³ By forgoing props and decor, by being restricted to the figure and a short quotation, Morrocchesi's plates direct the focus to the 'embodiment' of the role by the actress or actor.

One needs also to keep in mind that the clarity of the attitudes proposed by Morrocchesi is implicitly aligned with Alfieri's language, which in itself is a challenge to understand. The art in Alfieri's hendecasyllabic lines is so extreme as to be almost artificial, the vocabulary eclectic and literary, and the syntax far from the normal spoken language. For this reason, it took them a long time to break down the resistance of the public theatres, even in Tuscany, the cradle of the Italian language. One first had to have actors that grasped these roles intellectually, who understood the text and could declaim it compellingly, so that the audience would have a chance of comprehending the spoken word.⁵⁴ Morrocchesi correlates the expressive but complex dramatic language with an equally expressive, but conventionalised *eloquentia corporis*. On the one hand, the audience was accustomed to it and it was therefore immediately comprehensible, which in turn aided in the comprehension of the entire performance. On the other hand, these attitudes communicate a basic comportment: tragic characters are graced by countenance and dignity, they never depart from a moderate ideal. This is surely how Morrocchesi's remark that his figures showed '*attitudini consentanee al soggetto*' ['attitudes in keeping with the subject']⁵⁵ must be understood, as they depicted characters in exemplary tragic dramaturgies, such as noble heroines and heroes, princesses and princes from long past times. And the gestures of these characters followed a traditional social hierarchy, which is in turn reflected in the text of the play: '*il gesto d'una perfetta*

⁵¹ *Opere del signor abate Pietro Metastasio*, vol. 3 (Paris: HERISSANT, 1780), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Metastasio_-_La_clemenza_di_Tito_-_Herissant_Vol.03_-_Paris_1780.png (last accessed 8-10-2021); *The Works of Metastasio, translated from the Italian by John Hoole*, vol. 2 (London: T. DAVIES, 1767), B2, https://de.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Metastasio_-_Titus_-_Hoole_Vol.2_-_London_1767.png (last accessed 8-10-2021).

⁵² In the chapter '*Lezione di fisionomia*', for example, he refers to Charles Le Brun and Johann Caspar Lavater, among others.

⁵³ Cf. the complete works in one volume of 1835,

<https://books.google.ch/books?id=lMaG-JKoLT8C&hl=de&pg=PP7#v=onepage&q&f=false> (last accessed 15-01-2021), Plate 1 on p. 2 (= scan 42), Plate 2 on p. 197 (= scan 240).

⁵⁴ See Vittorio ALFIERI, 'Parere sull'arte comica in Italia' (1785), *Tragedie di Vittorio Alfieri da Asti. Seconda edizione, riveduta dall'autore, e accresciuta* (Paris: DIDOT, 1788) vol. 1, pp. 239–245; MORROCCHESI, op. cit., pp. 23–5 and 55–64 (with focus on correct and effective pronunciation); GERACI (1989), art. cit., 222–7.

⁵⁵ MORROCCHESI, op. cit., p. 255.

*analogia corrisponder dovrà al carattere, che sosterremo; avendo costantemente presente, l'età, il grado, il luogo, le circostanze assegnateci dal poeta.*⁵⁶

Suitability, moderation (*gesti* should be *consentanei* [appropriate], *parchi* [sparing], and *moderati* [moderate], see *Lezione dei gesti*, pp. 243, 255), and idealization are in any case central for the body language/facial expression/gesture/attitudes of tragic characters, as Morrocchesi wants to distinguish them completely from those of comedy or *commedia dell'arte*. Whereas for the latter contemporary everyday life and normal people serve as their model, transformed into caricature of themselves by means of lively and intense physical action, tragic actors should always cultivate noble restraint:

*la tragedia diversifica notabilmente dalla commedia, mentre l'una è composizione sublime, nella quale i poeti sotto abiti conformi, e persone pertinenti al soggetto mostrano le sventure dei re, o d'altri eroi da questi poco discosti; e che l'altra è una composizione familiare nella quale gli scrittori sotto diversi abiti e persone esprimono gli accidenti comuni dell'umana vita, virtù, vizj e condizioni d'ogni stato; così gli attori non tanto nel recitarle, ed atteggiarle, quanto nell'accompagnarle, debbono molto diversamente contenersi.*⁵⁷

The general carriage and attitude of the figures corresponds to Morrocchesi's instructions in the relevant chapters. In the *Lezione di compostezza e passo* (p. 299ff.), Morrocchesi adhered to the traditional relationship between posture and morality: 'la compostezza: quella vaghezza cioè di portamento e azione della persona, che distingue chiaramente la buona o cattiva educazione in ogni individuo della società'.⁵⁸ Actors should show by their bearing that they comport themselves in accordance with the moral values of their society, in particular because they are playing the parts of princes, queens, and noble heroines and heroes in tragedies. In this connection he lists the foremost aesthetic indications for this bearing: *grazia, leggiadria, vaghezza, nobiltà* [grace, lightness, beauty, nobility]. But actors should not primarily learn the desired *compostezza* and the ideal *portamento* from dance and fencing masters, nor use paintings or sculptures as models to imitate (pp. 300–1, 304), as the former only leads to an affected bearing and the latter should only be a source of inspiration. The carriage and gait should be adapted to each role and dramatic situation: '[La compostezza e il] passeggio pure dee essere modellato sull'immagine del vero, e tratto a quel punto di perfezione che lo rende or modesto, or brillante, or bizzarro, ora grave, ora veloce intelligentemente a norma delle circostanze'.⁵⁹ In a nutshell:

*dee la persona del recitante esser ben diritta sul tronco, cedere naturalmente alle inflessioni dei fianchi, rivolgersi con docilità, e muoversi con moderazione [...] [I recitanti dovrebbero ricevere] dalla natura una forma versatile, che sappia svilupparsi, giusta le impressioni del proprio cuore.*⁶⁰

⁵⁶ 'the gesture must correspond in perfect analogy to the character which we are playing; [we must] constantly keep the age, rank, place, and circumstances assigned to us by the poet in mind.' MORROCCHESI, *ibid.*, p. 245.

⁵⁷ 'Tragedy differs considerably from comedy, whereas the one is a sublime composition, in which poets, attired appropriately and persons pertinent to the subject, show the misfortunes of kings, or of other heroes not far removed from them; and the other is a familiar composition in which writers, in diverse garb and with various people, express the common occurrences of human life, the virtues, vices and conditions of every state; thus the actors, do not so much perform and act them, but accompany them, they must comport themselves very differently.' MORROCCHESI, *ibid.*, p. 238.

⁵⁸ 'poise: that is, that beauty of bearing and action of a person, which clearly distinguishes good or bad upbringing in every individual of society.' MORROCCHESI, *ibid.*, p. 299.

⁵⁹ '[The carriage and the] gait must also be modelled on the image of the real [gait], and taken to that point of perfection that makes it now modest, now brilliant, now bizarre, now serious, now fast in an intelligent manner in accordance with the circumstances.' MORROCCHESI, *ibid.*, p. 304.

⁶⁰ 'the person of the speaker must be erect in the torso, yield naturally to the bending of their sides, turn with ease, and move with moderation [...] [and the speakers should be] endowed by nature with a supple shape, which knows how to form itself in keeping with the impressions of their own hearts.' MORROCCHESI, *ibid.*, p. 306.

Comparing these criteria with the plates 1–16 corroborates, in particular, the aspects of *moderazione* (moderation) and a dignified, erect bearing. Conversely, one can derive general norms from the plates (although cautiously, as the level of the artist's ability to depict anatomy is, as mentioned above, less than stellar): strong twists and contrasts between body parts are to be avoided, unless an extraordinary emotional situation calls for them; the general carriage, the axes of the body, and contours run in straight lines and angles, not in the elegantly decorative serpentine and curved poses. One could say that clarity, simplicity, and straightness are their hallmarks.

The same is true for the facial expression, gesture, and in principle for acting on stage: *'del gesto se ne dee far uso con parsimonia'*.⁶¹ The gestures of tragedy should exhibit *'gravità, maestà, severità'* according to Morrocchesi, and gestures in tragedy must be *'pochi ma veri, grandiosi ma non caricati, forti ma non energumeni, modellati ma senza affettazione'*.⁶²

In my opinion, Morrocchesi's plates demonstrate these very principles. The 'restrained' repertoire of gestures in plates 1–16 should, however, not give the impression that Morrocchesi's own understanding and use of attitudes, gesture and facial expression was 'restrained'. *Gesto* – understood in the complete sense mentioned above – is, together with the text and *tuono*, or modulation of the voice, the third constitutive element of the art of acting. And because this physical *actio* lends the drama *'anima, forma, e vigore'*, it is crucial, in particular as a gesture may express much more than words, as Morrocchesi has emphasized frequently.⁶³ But as the vitality of a performance is too complex to be caught in a few plates, the more differentiated explanations were only captured in words, distributed among the relevant chapters or *lezioni*.⁶⁴ The essential points concerning the gestures are collected together in his chapter *'Lezione dei gesti'*, which are necessary not only for understanding but also for practically executing the *gesti tragici generici* in the plates.⁶⁵ For Morrocchesi the connection between the passions, affects, thoughts, and attitudes or *gesti* was intrinsic, immediate, and always specific:

il gesto che la sensibilità rende agile, parte sempre nel momento stesso in cui l'anima prova il sentimento.

*Non avvi passione, né movimento di passione, né parte alcuna di questa, che non abbia il suo gesto particolare, poiché azioni e passioni sono quasi sempre mescolate insieme, e congiunte in tutto quello che dagli uomini viene operato.*⁶⁶

Morrocchesi demands, in addition, that every actress or actor act in the manner natural to them (pp. 248, 250–2), that they should also cultivate a particular, individual body language, for which they should train their inner capacity to understand and absorb a role (*'sensazione intima'*⁶⁷) by observation. The plates are only a first point of departure with the generic tragic attitudes which all actors must expand and continually practice:

⁶¹ 'gestures should be used with parsimony.' MORROCCHESI, *ibid.*, p. 246.

⁶² 'weighty, majestic, and severe' and later 'few but true, grandiose but not charged, strong but not forceful, modelled but without affectation'. MORROCCHESI, *ibid.*, p. 249.

⁶³ See MORROCCHESI, *ibid.*, p. 43.

⁶⁴ Here he follows a different path than the treatise often referred to in this connection, Johann Jakob Engel's *Ideen zur Mimik*, 1785, which was available in an Italian translation from 1820 (Engel/Rasori) which must have been known to Morrocchesi: Engel discusses many detailed questions and provides extensive commentaries for the depicted figures. See FRIGAU MANNING, *art. cit.*, pp. 222–3.

⁶⁵ A transcription of Morrocchesi's entire chapter *'Lezione dei gesti'* with an English translation by Anne Smith is found in this volume.

⁶⁶ 'the gesture, which sentience makes agile, always sets off at the very moment when the soul feels the sentiment', MORROCCHESI, *op. cit.*, p. 247; 'There is no passion, nor movement of a passion, nor part of a passion that does not have its own particular gesture, because actions and passions are almost always mixed together and united in everything that is done by men', MORROCCHESI, *ibid.*, p. 250.

⁶⁷ See the chapters *'Lezione della scena muta'*, *ibid.*, p. 238; *'Lezione del muover gli affetti'*, p. 159ff; *'Lezione dell'anima o sentimento'*, p. 203ff, *'Lezione della fisionomia'*, p. 215ff.

*vò con ordine progressivo ripetervi la nomenclatura de' gesti da apprendersi. Ve ne sono degl'indicativi, degli affermativi, dei negativi, degli osservativi, dei descrittivi, degl'imitativi, degl'individuali, e degli affettivi in numero esteso: in oltre ne abbiamo dei composti, e dei così detti di sorpresa ec: conosciute che avrete egualmente le forme e l'indole de' medesimi, dipenderà da voi con accurato esercizio il farli vostri interamente.*⁶⁸

PLATE 17–40: DESCRIPTIVE TRAGIC GESTURES OR ATTITUDES

More than half of the plates illustrate a monologue from Scene 2, Act 4 of Alfieri's *Oreste* (1783). Nos. 17–38 show Pilade who, pretending to be an eye-witness, describes the alleged death of Oreste in a chariot race; nos. 39–40 display the reactions of Oreste's mother Clitennestra and King Egisto, who at first believe the made-up story.

In the chapter 'Lesson on Gesture', Morrocchesi chose a monologue which he characterizes as being extremely succinct, pertinent, and passionate to explain the descriptive gestures. He mentions that he had himself performed this monologue many times. Morrocchesi speaks of the attitudes as 'ornamentation' of Pilade's tale, thus addressing them as part of the rhetorical *actio*, where ornaments are used to heighten the performance. But the reader must recognize that it was Morrocchesi himself who conceived the attitudes that are illustrated in the plates:

*Adorna la concisissima e caldissima narrazione di Pilade delle attitudini, che di contro esprimono le figure per quanto è possibile, fu fatta (siami lecito il dirlo) replicare a me stesso, siccome un pezzo applauditissimo di scelta musica, sulle scene illustri di Ferrara, di Siena, di Firenze, di Pavia, di Torino, di Bologna.*⁶⁹

Morrocchesi thus first sets the stage, so to speak, for Pilade's monologue, as well as for the attitudes, in that he praises Alfieri's text and the success of his performance with the superlatives 'concisissima e caldissima', and 'applauditissimo', while also emphasizing the imaginative quality of his conception. Only then does he make the following commentary concerning the attitudes of plate 17–38:

*È vero che il molto gesto [...] stabilisce un difetto in ogni dicitore, ma trattandosi di una narrativa, si può deviar dai precetti, nei seguenti due soli casi però; o che il fatto da narrarsi sia molto clamoroso, succeduto di recente e sotto gli occhi del personaggio narrante, o che il personaggio sia apportator di menzogne siccome lo è Pilade a fronte d'Egisto. È omai provato che [...] si affatica ed agita chi di spacciare il falso ha disegno; quindi un cuore mendace racconta con grande entusiasmo la menzogna che immagina nell'istante, siccome quella da molto e molto tempo ordita. Il vero che non ha grand'uopo di abbellimenti per farsi strada, e che traspira anche dal più rozzo contegno, scema tanto d'interesse per chi deve raccontarlo, quanto più si allontana dal punto da cui ebbe origine.*⁷⁰

Morrocchesi admits that his interpretation has many gestures, saying the case of Pilade was exceptional, one where they were allowed because Pilade is telling a tall tale and liars are known

⁶⁸ 'I shall tell you the nomenclature of gestures to be learned in a progressive order. There are a large number of indicative, affirmative, negative, observational, descriptive, imitative, individual, and affective gestures; there are also compound gestures, and the so-called surprising ones, etc. Once you know the forms and the nature of the same equally well, it is up to you to make them entirely your own with careful practice.' MORROCCHESI, *ibid.*, p. 254.

⁶⁹ 'Pilade's concise and very warm narration is adorned with attitudes, which in turn the figures [i.e. the plates] express as much as possible, it was made (if I may be allowed to say so) to be performed by myself, like a highly applauded piece of choice music, on the illustrious stages of Ferrara, Siena, Florence, Pavia, Turin and Bologna', MORROCCHESI, *ibid.*, p. 256.

⁷⁰ 'It is true that a large amount of gesture, even if adapted and graceful, constitutes a defect in every speaker; but since we are dealing with a narrative, we can deviate from the precepts, but only in the following two cases: either when the fact to be narrated is very sensational, and happened recently before the eyes of the narrator; or when the character is a bearer of lies, as Pilade is before Egisto. It has now been proved that he who plans to peddle falsehoods works harder and is more agitated than the truthful speaker; therefore, a mendacious heart tells a lie with great enthusiasm which it conjures up at that moment, although it was conceived a long ago. Truth, which has no great need of embellishment to make its way, and which is apparent even on the coarsest countenance, loses much interest for the person who has to tell it, the farther it departs from the point from which it originated.' MORROCCHESI, *ibid.*, pp. 256–7.

for exhibiting great enthusiasm in selling their packs of lies as true stories.⁷¹ From Morrocchesi's comments one has to conclude that the gestures for Pilade's monologue have been consciously exaggerated, both in number and quality because the actor wanted to portray a liar believably. The figures in his plates may thus have been conceived with a dual intent: they were not merely illustrating the physical representation required by the story being told Orestes' mother and king Egisto, but also the lying nature of the character that the actor is playing. In order to make his intention and interpretation of the monologue clear, Morrocchesi has included the reactions of Pilades' listeners in individual plates (nos. 39–40), with quotations which bear witness to the successful effect of the farce.

Critics have characterized the sequence of plates as being grotesque or a dance choreography.⁷² Renzo Guardenti suggested that the figures could be considered a selection from which one could choose a select number. He maintained that Morrocchesi's figures did not have the function of depicting the entire sequence of movement of the monologue, but rather '*di proporre agli aspiranti attori una gamma di gesti possibili, alla quale attingere scegliendo singole attitudini con cui contrappuntare determinati passi della resis alferiana*'.⁷³ I wish, however, to see Morrocchesi's sequence as 'staging' of this monologue, complete in itself, and to analyse it accordingly.

VITTORIO ALFIERI, ORESTE, IV, 2

The bold numbers refer to the no. of the plate with the respective text/quote.

PILADE

Feroce troppo (17), impaziente (18), incauto (19),
or della voce minacciosa incalza (20),
or del flagel, che sanguinoso ei ruota (21),
sí forte batte i destrier suoi mal domi (22),
ch'oltre la meta volano; piú ardenti (23),
quanto veloci piú (24). Già sordi al freno (25),
già sordi al grido, ch'ora invan gli acqueta (26);

foco spiran le nari (27); all'aura i crini

svolazzan irti (28); e in denso nembo avvolti
d'agonal polve, quanto è vasto il circo (29)
corron (30) ricorron (31) come folgor ratti (32).
Spavento (33), orrore (34), alto scompiglio, e morte
per tutto arreca in torti giri il carro (35):
finché percosso con orribil urto

PILADE

Too fierce (17), impatient (18), reckless (19),
now with a threatening voice he urges (20),
now with the whip, which he bloody whirls (21),
so fiercely beats his ill-controlled steeds (22),
that they fly beyond the goal; the more ardently (23),
the more swiftly (24). Already deaf to the rein (25),
Already deaf to the cry, which vainly tries to soothe
them (26);
Their noses are breathing fire (27); in the breeze their
manes,
standing on end, flutter (28); and hidden in a dense
cloud of excruciating dust, as vast as the circus (29),
they run (30) and run (31), like swift thunderbolts (32).
Fear (33), horror (34), great havoc, and death
the chariot in all its twisted turns brings (35):
Till knocked by the horrid impact

⁷¹ It is interesting to see that just for such roles Morrocchesi appears to have departed from his own basic principles for tragic acting, as may be seen from a tribute expressed by an actor colleague: '*il suo portamento, il suo gesto erano nobili, e dignitosi, né perdevano della loro dignità, e della loro nobiltà, che quando voleva dipingere gli oggetti fisici con gesti di contraffazione. La sua dizione ora lenta, ora precipitata, non era sempre quadrante colla qualità dei pensieri che doveva esprimere, quasi sempre sublime nella pittura di vive immagini, e nell'entusiasmo si trasportava talvolta al di là di quel confine stabilito fra la sublimità, e la stravaganza.*' [his carriage, his gestures were noble and dignified, nor did they lose their dignity, and their nobility, except when he wanted to paint physical objects with spurious gestures. His diction, now slow, now rushed, did not always square with the quality of the thoughts he had to express, [he was] almost always sublime in the painting of vivid images and in his enthusiasm, he sometimes transported himself beyond the boundary between sublimity, and extravagance.]. Francesco RIGHETTI, *Teatro italiano* (Torino: PARAVIA, 1828), vol. 2, pp. 125–8, cited from GUARDENTI, art. cit., p. 98.

⁷² GUARDENTI, *ibid.*, p. 100, writes that the attempt to reconstruct the sequence would lead to '*risultati comicamente disastrosi*' ('comically disastrous results'). One of the reasons for the criticism is that the sequence of image and text is not coordinated with the metric scansion of the text (GUARDENTI, *ibid.*) – in my opinion, this need not necessarily be the case. Guardenti also cites a crushing critique by Ferdinando Taviani, who characterised the sequence of images as being almost a dance choreography and considered them to be inappropriate for reconstructing the acting practice of ca. 1800 (GUARDENTI, *ibid.*, p. 101).

⁷³ 'to suggest a range of possible gestures to the budding actors on which they could draw, choosing individual attitudes with which they could make a counterpoint to specific passages of Alfieri's [i.e. Pilade's] narration.' GUARDENTI, *ibid.*, p. 103.

a marmorea colonna il fervid'asse (36),
riverso (37) Oreste cade (38)

of the burning axis on the marble column (36),
toppling backwards (37), Orestes falls (38)

CLITENNESTRA Ah! non piú; taci:
una madre ti ascolta (39).

CLITENNESTRA Ah! no more; be silent:
It is a mother who is listening to you (39).

EGISTO
Il tuo narrar, certo, ha di ver sembianza (40);

EGISTO
Your story, to be sure, has the semblance of truth (40);

Formally plates 17–40 are indistinguishable from the others, and stylistically only in so far that the artist F. Boggi is subtler and more correct anatomically in his drawing.⁷⁴ The physiognomy of the actor is always slightly varied, perhaps so that any young man could identify himself with the stylish cut of his hair and beard. As one can see from the passage above, in which the numbers of the plates have been inserted, the monologue is illustrated irregularly, sometimes word for word, sometimes with only one figure for two lines. On the whole it is a dense, fast sequence of movements.⁷⁵

An obvious characteristic of this sequence is its vigour: in every plate the general orientation of the body changes, thus also causing a shift of weight to the opposite leg,⁷⁶ or there is a dramatic intensification of the pose, in which the figure, for example, bends his knees further. The same is true for the arms: they change direction in almost every image, from left to right, from up above to down below, in front of the body, away from the body, sometimes parallel, but usually in opposition to one another. Also the head and shoulders in the sequence clearly seem more mobile and varied than in plates 1–16.

The vitality is paired with a high level of tension and expressivity, characterized by the constant change of direction of the arms and the straightening or spreading of the legs, arms, and fingers. One is left with the impression of an energetic, almost exaggeratedly expressive sequence of movements.

The bearing of the head and the direction of the gaze change in every plate. When Pilade speaks of the racing chariot, the eyes of Morrocchesi's actor are focused on the ground, as if he is imagining the race on the ground. When the figure changes his focus, this is consistent with Alfieri's text, for Pilade describes first Oreste's feelings and actions, then he switches to the frightened horses, then, from a more distanced perspective, to the progress of the chariot race and the reaction of the participants and the audience, until finally, he zooms in on the fallen Oreste. In this way, the actor must switch between the roles of Pilade and Oreste, between that of the narrator and the impersonator. The change in perspective, for example, which takes place at the end of the first sentence (line 2–first half of line 6) and the beginning of the second, is challenging; for the text first describes what Oreste does with the horses, whereas in the second sentence their reaction is depicted. Based on the figures, the actor must first enact what Oreste does (nos. 25–26), then depict the appearance of the horses (nos. 27–28), and finally, as a messenger, describe how the horses wildly race around the track of the circus (nos. 28–32).

⁷⁴ No. 23 is the only figure, in which the cloak hangs over the right shoulder instead of over the left, and therefore it is to be assumed that it has been printed as a mirror image of the original. I thank João Luís Paixão passing on this observation to me.

⁷⁵ The representation of movement progressions by means of sequences of images began with printmaking in the sixteenth century in connection with ballet choreographies, military and martial arts treatises, and representations of battles (Martina PAPIRO, *Choreographie der Herrschaft. Stefano della Bellas Radierungen zu den Reiterfesten am Florentiner Hof 1637–1661* [Paderborn: Wilhelm FINK 2016], Chapter 3.3). In particular, illustrated treatises on the arts of fencing and dancing could have served Morrocchesi as a model. It appears that Morrocchesi had not read Gilbert Austin's *Chironomia* (1806).

⁷⁶ As before, in plates 1–16, the toes point outwards and the legs are almost always offset (the figures never stand with their legs parallel to one another). The free leg appears both with only the tip as well as with the whole foot touching the ground. The former variant gives the figure an impression of increased vigour and liveliness.

As is suitable for a tale about the deadly outcome of a chariot race, most of the attitudes are descriptive or illustrative: nos. 20–21, for example, illustrate how Oreste urges his horses on; nos. 25–26 how he attempts in vain to rein them in and calm them; no. 28 how the horses manes flutter wildly; or n. 37, how Oreste flipped over after the crash of the chariot. Some of them, such as nos. 33–34 conventionally depict the corresponding emotions, such as ‘*spavento*’ [‘fear’] or ‘*orrore*’ [‘horror’]. Unconventional, however, are those attitudes in which a feature or bearing is characterised, such as nos. 17–20 ‘*Feroce troppo, impaziente, incauto*’ [‘Too fierce, impatient, incautious’]. The actor is forced to find an individual interpretation here, as the attitude taken needs to depict the corresponding adjective: whereas in no. 17 the static pose with its clenched fists, extremely taut body (see the tendons at the wrists) and facial expression is relatively easy to read as an expression of *ferocità*, this is not the case – at least for me – with the attitudes in nos. 18–19. These are not meaningful in and of themselves, but rather must express impatience and lack of caution by the manner of their performance and vigour. This proffers an astonishingly broad scope for making the attitude suggested by Morrocchesi one’s own, as he demands in his chapter ‘*Lezione dei gesti*’.⁷⁷

The scope is even greater for the attitudes that are associated with a longer passage, particularly those that have various types of content or perspectives, such as nos. 23, 29, 35 and 36: here one must decide when and on what word and with what sort of intensity the gesture must be executed, which naturally has consequences for the interpretation of the text, declamation and timing.

Morrocchesi’s dramaturgy is made legible through the timing, or rhythmisation of the sequence of movements. In the beginning the emphasis is on the characterization of Oreste as an impetuous hothead, for if each word of the first line is given its own character by means of an individual attitude, time is needed for their performance. From the second line on, when the actual narration begins, the actor’s *actio* gains speed, as the content of a whole line is taken up by one attitude per description or action. At the beginning of the final third sentence, Morrocchesi intensifies and slows down the activity, by setting one attitude to one word. See lines 12 and 13, associated with the plates nos. 33–34 and 35:

12	Spavento (33), orrore (34), alto scompiglio, e morte	Fear (33), horror (34), great havoc, and death
13	per tutto arrega in torti giri il carro (35):	the chariot in all its twisted turns brings (35):
14	finché percosso con orribil urto	Till knocked by the horrid impact
15	a marmorea colonna il fervid’asse (36),	of the burning axis on the marble column (36),
16	riverso (37), Oreste cade (38)	toppling backwards (37), Oreste falls (38)

Let’s first look at the text of lines 12 and 13: With four nouns – fear, horror, havoc, and death – Alfieri forecasts the disastrous outcome of the race. The next line (the syntactical continuation of the sentence, connected by an enjambement) defines the action and its spatial context by describing the breakneck course of the chariot. Thus, Alfieri first creates an intensification, which reaches its climax in four steps at the word ‘*morte*’ at the end of line 12, while in the next line the tension is lower, more stable, and subsides into a pause after the subject of the sentence, ‘*carro*’, is enunciated. Morrocchesi’s *actio* is a direct response to Alfieri’s sentence in lines 12 and 13. Like at the beginning of the monologue, having one attitude per word requires that the actor take time to embody ‘*spavento*’ [‘fear’, no. 33] and ‘*orrore*’ [‘horror’, no. 34] which represent the effects of Oreste’s

⁷⁷ My experimentation: expressing ‘*impaziente*’ by means of light and impatient shaking of the hand in the bearing desired by Morrocchesi; expressing ‘*incauto*’ by allowing the left hand to shoot up to the position suggested by Morrocchesi – that is how I would express ‘I don’t care!’ with gestures. For both attitudes I would personally activate the face more, for example with a somewhat scornful drawing down of the corner of the mouth for ‘*incauto*’, whereas the facial expression in Morrocchesi’s figures is neutral and relaxed.

bolting horses on the other participants of the race. Thus, Morrocchesi mirrors the slowing down and the incremental intensification towards a climax. But Alfieri's line 12, with its four nouns, has not been given a corresponding number of attitudes in Morrocchesi's movement sequence. Instead, there is only a single emphatic physical gesture for the passage between '*alto compiglio [...] carro*' which, in my opinion, should fall on the climax '*morte*', so that the gestures do not slow down the pace as in the first line, but rather emphasize the essential word '*morte*', while the narration continues with the recitation of the text (line 13, '*per tutto arrega in torti giri il carro*' could have been easily accompanied by descriptive gestures, but Morrocchesi forwent them). This suspension of the physical *actio* is placed rhetorically, as an effective preparation for the final culmination. Thus, Morrocchesi also has given only one physical gesture for lines 14 and 15 (no. 36). In my opinion this gesture should fall with the fully coordinated energy of the arm movement and shift of weight on the second, accented syllable of '*pervosso*' (or on '*urto*' at the end of the line), as what is essential here is the representation of the horrifying crash. Finally, for the last three words of the monologue, Morrocchesi has again created a dramatic intensification with an ultimate *crescendo* and *diminuendo*: from legs spread wide apart with arms and face directed to the ground in no. 36 to the throwing back of his arms and head in no. 37 for '*riverso*' (and so far back, if the figure is followed literally, that there is the risk of losing balance and falling backwards), to the final '*Oreste cade*' (no. 38), in which his arms and head once again point to the ground and the legs, for the first time, are straight and close to one another, and the tension dissipates.

Last but not least, particularly in relation to the practical realisation of the entire sequence of the plates, there remains the question of the coordination of the eyes, head, hands, arms, legs, and centre of gravity, as well as how one makes the transition from one attitude to the next. An observation of Laila Cathleen Neuman appears important to me in this connection: transitions which take place with all of the body parts at once give rise to stiffer, more 'robot-like' performances. If, however, the movement of the eyes, head, hands and centre of gravity follow one upon another according to the imagination of the actor, a natural flow ensues, which in turn makes the creation of an effective concatenation of the sequence possible.

Laila Neuman's observation was made in the context of the DHAC in its work on Morrocchesi's sequence of plates. Here I wish in particular to express my gratitude to João Luís Paixão for making videos of several versions of the monologue, as well as for writing down his methodological approach and his criteria of interpretation.⁷⁸ Surprisingly, in João's videos the great number of changes in orientation and centre of gravity do not appear hectic; to the contrary, he was able to integrate them naturally and appropriately into his movements (See fig. 2).

Morrocchesi made a finely honed miniature out of Pilade's tale, in that he was very exacting in his approach to Alfieri's lines: each word, almost every occurrence which can be depicted through embodied *actio*, is shown. This forces the actor to engage his entire body and to correspondingly adapt the modulation of his voice and the declamation of the text. The body, gestures and facial expressions take up so much space that they determine the conceptual and vocal interpretation of the text. But there is still scope for deciding where the declamation should be accelerated or slowed down, in order to intensify the effect of the embodied *actio*. As João Luís Paixão remarked, such considerations lead to reflections on the musicality of the text and of the performance, and thus to a very high level of artistry. Only someone who really fully allows him- or herself to undergo the process of realising Morrocchesi's sequence of plates will reach this level. Simply rejecting it as grotesque, as the abovementioned critics have done, blocks the possibility of

⁷⁸ To be found here: <https://jedwentz.com/papiro-edps/> (last accessed 18-02-2022).

learning more about Morrocchesi's concept of acting, and thus also about an important aspect of the theatrical arts in Italy around 1800.



Fig. 2. Screenshot from one of the videos João Luís Paixão has made for this article.

EVALUATION

In his *Lezioni*, Morrocchesi systematically expounds upon his views concerning the principles of the art of acting. His conception of it is traditional and based upon the depiction and communication of strong passions; for this, actors needed not only to train their voice in regard to articulation and elocution, but also their intellect, imagination, and empathy. It is in this that an essential aspect of Morrocchesi's approach lies, for it is characteristic for him that he lays less emphasis on a training through imitation, whether of other actors, or models from the visual arts, but far more on observation, reflection, and the individual process of learning. He therefore explains the principles, processes, and mechanisms lying behind the origin of the affects and passions, how one learns about and communicates them; he describes how they are connected to the text, the voice, the facial expressions, the body and its movement/*actio* and thus does not lose himself in the details of specific gestures. The goal of his method was the training of independent actors, who would be able to develop, within the context of the conventions and concepts of the time, an individualised and natural mode of acting for dramatic (tragic) characters. It is thus very much in line with this that the supplementary plates either depict 'only' generic attitudes for tragic acting (nos. 1–16), or with plates 17–40, a sequence of movements for a minor character's tale, rather than for a crucial dramatic monologue. Such general or secondary examples are open enough for individual interpretation, and simple enough for the artist to illustrate suitably.

Thus, in order to grasp Morrocchesi's concept of dramatic *actio*, one must primarily read the *Lezioni*. What does one learn from studying the plates? Or, to come back to the initial question, why did Morrocchesi go to the effort of having the plates made?

The chapter '*Lezione dei gesti*', with which all of the plates are associated, contains only principles, but no concrete examples for attitudes, no descriptions or information about how they are to be realized in practice. That is why the plates are there: they show immediately and clearly the attitudes and the countenance that a queen, an emperor, a general, or a princess would in principle assume, as well as what visual aesthetic should be followed. (And the gestures are consequently so traditional that they almost appear banal.) By the fact that they almost all depict characters from an existing play in a specific scene, Morrocchesi also imparts the repertory for which he had conceived his treatise on the art of acting – mainly the plays of Vittorio Alfieri – thereby defining the standard for their visualisation and staging. With the plates for the Pilade's tale from Alfieri's *Oreste*, Morrocchesi expanded the spectrum of the gestures and attitudes: he created extreme, expressive, and original gestures for Pilade which would have been inappropriate for one of abovementioned noble characters. Here it was deemed fitting to leave propriety, moderation, and universality to the side and create a performance demonstrating his individual ingenuity. The intent of these plates is even more clearly and easily perceived than what any written description of this sequence of movements could have communicated. For it is only through this sequence that one gains insight into the manner in which Morrocchesi – starting from a specific self-contained dramatic situation and from an empathic interpretation of the syntactic and semantic structure of the text – conceived his own personal embodied mode of acting.

Martina PAPIRO
 Schola Cantorum Basiliensis
 University of Applied Sciences and Arts
 Northwestern Switzerland)
 (translation: Anne SMITH)

A TRANSLATION OF THE '*LEZIONE DEI GESTI*' AND THE '*LEZIONE
DI COMPOSTEZZA E PASSO*' FROM ANTONIO MORROCCHESI'S
LEZIONI DI DECLAMAZIONE E D'ARTE TEATRALE (FLORENCE:
TIPOGRAFIA ALLA INSEGNA DI DANTE, 1832)¹

LEZIONE DEI GESTI

Il gesto a ben definirlo non è se non se il movimento esteriore del corpo e del volto; una delle prime espressioni del sentimento, date all'uomo dalla natura. L'uomo ha sentito da che ha respirato; e i suoni della voce, i movimenti diversi del volto e del corpo, sono state le espressioni da che ha cominciato ad aver senso; essi furono la lingua primitiva dell'universo fino dai suoi primordj, e la sono ancora di tutti gli uomini nella loro infanzia. Per parlare del gesto in una maniera utile alle arti è necessario considerarlo nei suoi punti di vista differente; ma in qualunque maniera si riguardi, è indispensabile di vederlo sempre come espressione; questa è la sua funzione primitiva, ed è per quest'attributo stabilito dalle leggi della natura, ch'egli abbellisce quell'arte, a cui s'unisce per divenirne una parte principale, e darle così anima, forma, e vigore. Fra [p. 244] le cagioni per le quali il gesto si anima, alcune se ne trovano, che sono poco, altre assai, ed altre assaissimo nobili non meno che giovevoli. Quindi bisogna per quanto si può scansare affatto le prime, esser parchi per le seconde, e per le terze moderati. Imperocchè ancora gli oggetti, che il vero bello ne stabiliscono, reiteratamente veduti, ci stancano. Dalla cognizione delle ridette ragioni dipende il saper ben giudicare della maggiore, o minore utilità, che da siffatti oggetti si ritrae; e convien dire che di questi mezzi, i quali tutti conducono ad

LESSON ON GESTURES

Gesture, to define it well, is nothing if not the exterior movement of the body and the face, one of the first expressions of feeling given to man by nature. Man has felt from the moment he began to breathe; and the sounds of his voice, the various movements of his face and body were his expressions from the moment he began to feel; they were the primitive language of the universe from the very beginning, and still are for all men in their infancy. In order to speak of gesture in a manner which is useful to the arts, it is necessary to consider it in its various aspects; but in whatever manner one regards it, it is indispensable to see it always as expression. This is its primitive function, and it is because of this attribute, established by the laws of nature, that it beautifies that art with which it joins, in this manner becoming one of its principal parts, and consequently giving it spirit, form and vigour. Among [p. 244] the reasons for which gesture comes alive, some are found which are only somewhat noble, others more so, and [still] others very much so, and no less beneficial. Therefore one should as far as possible avoid the first entirely, be sparing with the second, and moderate with the third. However, even the objects in which true beauty is found, seen repeatedly, grow tiresome. From the knowledge of these reasons comes the ability to judge the greater or lesser utility that can be derived from such objects;

¹ Here I would like to thank Martina Papiro for her careful scrutiny of my translation, which was much improved by her efforts. Further, it is to be noted that the decision was made to retain the original spelling of the words *chè* (also when it appears as an affix of a longer word) and *nè* in the Italian text, although today both of these words have an acute accent.

un medesimo fine, quello è più utile ed eccellente, che al fine stesso più facilmente, e sicuramente ci guida.

Il gesto è, e sarà sempre il linguaggio di tutte le nazioni, s'intende in ogni clima, e la natura, tolte alcune modificazioni, fu e sarà sempre la medesima; per altro fa d'uopo osservare, che tra le molte nazioni che l'immensa umana famiglia compongono, ve ne sono alcune, che per l'uso costante che fanno di essi, si distinguono dalle altre notabilmente. Occupandoci di quelle che ben si conoscono, inglese, tedesca, spagnuola, francese e italiana, vediamo a primo aspetto su quante ragioni è basata questa asserzione. Imperciocchè lo spagnuolo a muoversi è lento e grave; l'inglese e tedesco parco e duro; il francese spiritoso e gajo e l'italiano [p. 245] spiritoso egualmente e gajo di troppo: chè se vuolsi poi riguardare entro i confini della nostra penisola, incontreremo ben di sovente dei popoli, che sebbene italiani, differiscono non poco da noi, che dell'Italia il centro occupiamo. I Siciliani per esempio sono talmente gesticolatori anche nelle più familiari conversazioni da far girar la testa a chi la pena dar si volesse d'esaminarli. È forza pertanto ripetere nelle espressioni un maggiore o minore movimento dell'individuo in ogni popolazione, dall'influsso del clima sotto il quale dimora. Ciò premesso si potrà francamente sostenere, che l'educazione del gesto va modellata sull'indole natia, intendendo per altro di usare d'un'illimitata accuratezza sulla scelta del modello medesimo, affinchè non sia di quelli, che di qua resti, o che al di là del punto trapassi. Una tal massima stabilir non si dee, che parzialmente; poichè in genere, il gesto d'una perfetta analogia corrisponder dovrà al carattere, cheosterremo; avendo costantemente presente, l'età, il grado, il luogo, le circostanze assegnateci dal poeta. Non vi è fra tutti gl'uomini i più flemmatici quell'uno il quale non accompagni le sue parole con delle azioni, o gesti, ch'altri li chiami, ogni qual volta gli stia a cuore, e gli preme alcuna cosa. Sarebbe in vero fuori del naturale in un pubblico

and it must be said that of these means, which all lead to the same end, the one that is most useful and excellent, is that which leads to the same end most easily and surely.

Gesture is, and always will be, the language of all nations. It is understood in all climes, and its nature, apart from a few modifications, was and always will be the same. On the other hand, it is necessary to observe, that among the many nations which make up the immense human family, there are some which, due to the constant use they make of them, differ considerably from the others. Let us speak of those which are well known, English, German, Spanish, French and Italian; we see at first glance upon how many reasons this assertion is based. For the Spaniard is slow and solemn in his movements; the Englishman and German are slow and stiff; the French are witty and gay, and the Italian [p. 245] is equally witty and too gay. If we then wish to look within the confines of our peninsula, we will often encounter people who, although Italian, differ noticeably from us, who live in the centre of Italy. The Sicilians, for instance, are such gesticulators, even in the most intimate conversations, as to make the heads spin of those who take the trouble to examine them. It is therefore necessary to reproduce in the expressions the greater or lesser movement of the individual in each population, resulting from the influence of the clime in which he lives. Assuming this, it may be frankly argued that the training of gesture is to be modelled upon the character of the nation, aiming, on the other hand, to use unlimited accuracy in the choice of the model itself, so that it is not one of those which remains on this side of the mark or which shoots out beyond it. Such a maxim should not be laid down more than partially; for, in general, the gesture must correspond in perfect analogy to the character which we are playing; [we must] constantly keep the age, rank, place, and circumstances assigned to us by the poet in mind. Among all the most phlegmatic of men, there is not one who does not accompany his words with actions or gestures, as others call

parlatore se quasi [p. 246] statua immobile si rimanesse in faccia all'udienza, come non meno lo sarebbe se di troppo colle mani arzigogolando, avesse presunzione d'esprimersi più col gesto, che con le parole. Non negherò che in certi casi, ed in special modo nella tragedia, la vivezza dei gesti non contribuisca moltissimo a rendere intelligibili i sentimenti più complicati ed astrusi; convengo altronde che le passioni del terrore, dello spavento, del furore, della disperazione si esprimono assai più col gesto, che con le parole, mercecchè il gesto è molto più pronto della parola medesima. Infatti bisognano dei momenti alla parola per formarsi e per colpire gli orecchi; ove il gesto che la sensibilità rende agile, parte sempre nel momento stesso in cui l'anima prova il sentimento. Fa d'uopo osservare però scrupolosamente di far cadere i gesti in acconcio, senza di che sparisce la magia, e l'illusione insieme con molta facilità: esse per la loro estrema delicatezza sono paragonabili alla fragilità del vetro, e della canna palustre; questa s'inchina ad ogni leggiero soffio di vento, quello si appanna ad ogni respiro. Generalmente parlando tanto in tragedia, che in commedia, del gesto se ne dee far uso con parsimonia. Il modello in proposito per la commedia lo abbiamo tutto giorno davanti agli occhi. Ogni individuo della società può servirci a forma delle [p. 247] opportune circostanze. Il villano, ed il signore; il dotto, e l'ignorante; il goffo, e l'astuto; lo screanzato, ed il civile; il lieto, e l'afflitto; il petulante, ed il saggio; tutti in una parola, nei caffè, sulle piazze, nei campi, e nelle domestiche pareti, ovunque recitano (e ciascheduno in carattere) la commedia. Gli sguardi insomma, i gesti, i movimenti delle persone d'ogni età, d'ogni sesso, d'ogni condizione, sono per la commedia i veri, e sicuri modelli. Si dee avere inoltre sempre presente la massima, che la semplice natura talvolta è troppo languida, siccome alcun'altra troppo vigorosa; cosicchè per equilibrarla, e renderla in proporzione, sarà necessario all'occorrenza il togliere a questa, e donare a quella. Alcuni movimenti sono comuni a tutti

them, whenever there is something dear to his heart or that concerns him greatly. It would in truth be unnatural in a public speaker if he were to remain [p. 246] an almost motionless statue in front of an audience, just as it would be no less so if he, through gesticulating too much with his hands, were to have the presumption of expressing himself more by gesture than by words. I will not deny that in certain cases, and especially in tragedy, the vividness of the gestures does not contribute greatly to making the most complicated and abstruse sentiments intelligible; I agree, moreover, that the passions of terror, fright, fury, and despair are expressed much more by gesture than by words, since the gesture is much more immediate than the word itself. Indeed, it takes time for the word to form itself and to strike the ears; whereas the gesture, which sentience makes agile, always sets off at the very moment when the soul feels the sentiment. It is necessary, however, to observe scrupulously that the gestures are formed in a suitable manner, without which the magic and the illusion disappear together with great ease: they are comparable in their extreme delicacy to the fragility of glass and of the marsh reed; the latter bows down at any slight gust of wind, the former becomes dull with every breath. Generally speaking, in both tragedy and comedy gestures should be used with parsimony. We have the model for comedy in front of our eyes all day long. Every individual in society can serve us when the [p. 247] circumstances are opportune. The peasant and the gentleman; the learned and the ignorant; the clumsy and the cunning; the uncouth and the civilized; the happy and the afflicted; the petulant and the wise; in a word, everybody in the cafés, in the squares, in the fields, and within the home, wherever they are playing (and with everyone in character) in the comedy [of life]. In short, the looks, gestures and movements of people of all ages, sexes and conditions are the true and certain models for comedy. Moreover, one must always bear in mind the maxim that mere nature is sometimes too languid, just as at other times it is too

gli uomini, alcuni altri sono particolari a ciascheduno individuo. Intorno ai primi l'uomo di qualunque età, e condizione ne ha l'intelligenza; e circa ai secondi, ogni uomo particolare ha il suo gesto tanto personale quanto la sua stessa esistenza. Ed invero noi abbiamo ciascuno i nostri gesti come abbiamo il nostro esterno, ed i nostri delineamenti, e tanto diversi gli abbiamo dagli altri, quanto da loro noi medesimi diversifichiamo. Quindi per quel carattere di proprietà che fa che Tizio non sia Sempronio e che questi non sia l'altro, il linguaggio gestuale [p. 248] di Tizio non è per niente quello di Sempronio, e viceversa. Ogni pubblico dicitore ha dunque il suo gesto, che è in lui, ed è per lui solo. Questa proprietà d'esprimersi, gli fa parlare in una sua particolar maniera il linguaggio di tutto il mondo, riducendolo a potere esprimersi con una specie di novità, servendosi di parole, che non hanno in se novità alcuna. È questa quella bellezza di novità che talvolta ci lega piuttosto ad uno, che ad un'altro attore. Si diano a recitare le medesime cose a due diversi soggetti: l'uno ci diverte, l'altro ci annoja. E ciò d'onde nasce, se non perchè l'uno aggiunge al linguaggio delle parole un linguaggio gestuale chiaro, preciso, ingenuo; e l'altro non ha che gesti incerti o falsi, o d'un senso debole e fiacco?

L'attore però dee usare quelle maniere, che gli sono più naturali; non dee assolutamente studiare di formarsi in pubblico un congegno di gesti, e di moti, comunque bello ed aggradevole parer gli possa, il quale non corrisponda alla maniera che naturalmente usa in privato: ed ecco il mezzo di cui valer si dee l'attore, onde fuggire quella foggia manierata di gestire, che affettazione si appella. Si trovano molte qualità di gesti; vi sono di quelli che rappresentano con l'imitazione, e perciò appellati imitativi; altri accennano un luogo, una cosa, una persona, e sono indicativi; alcuni poi per-[p. 249] ché

vigorous; so that to bring it into balance, into proportion, it will be necessary at times to take from this and give to that. Some movements are common to all men; some others are particular to each individual. In regard to the former, a man of any age and condition understands them; and in regard to the latter, each individual man has a [manner] of gesture as personal as his very existence. And indeed, all of us have our own gestures as we have our own appearance and our own features, and ours are as different from others as we ourselves are from them. Therefore, because of that idiosyncrasy which makes Tizio not Sempronio and the latter not the other, the gestural language [p. 248] of Tizio is not at all that of Sempronio, and vice versa. Every public speaker therefore has his own gestures, which are in him, and are his alone. This idiosyncrasy in expressing himself makes him speak the language of the whole world in his own particular way, leading him to be able to express himself in a novel manner, while using words which have no novelty in themselves. This is that beauty of novelty that sometimes binds us more to one actor than to another. If the same things were given to be recited to two different people: one would amuse us, the other bore us. And where does this come from, if not from the fact that one adds to the language of words a clear, precise, candid gestural language; and the other only uses uncertain or false gestures, or ones of a weak and feeble meaning?

The actor, however, must use those manners that are most natural to him; he must not at all try to form a set of gestures and movements for himself in public, however beautiful and pleasant they may appear to him, which does not correspond to the manner he naturally uses in private: this is the means which the actor must use in order to avoid that mannered fashion of gesturing, which is called affectation. There are many qualities of gestures; there are those that portray through imitation, and are therefore called imitative; others refer to a place, a thing, a person, and are indicative;

dipingono gli affetti dell'animo, e ne portano l'impressione in coloro che gli vedono, chiamar si potrebbero affettivi. I gesti della prima qualità assegnata, cioè gli imitativi, si praticano più spesso nelle commedie, che nelle tragedie; tra la forma dei gesti dell'una a quella dell'altra, correr vi dee l'istessa differenza che stà immediatamente tra la prosa, ed il verso. Colà per lo più tutto è brio, scioltezza, amenità, qui all'opposto tutto è gravità, maestà, severità; in quella, uomini comuni agiscono, in questa, interloquiscono Re, guerrieri, sommi sacerdoti, in una parola gli eroi. Se Eschilo, e gli altri tragici poeti greci per far loro suonar sulle labbra un linguaggio corrispondente e conforme lo derivarono dall'Epica, dovremo noi nel configurarli valersi di gesti comuni? Al contrario: pochi ma veri, grandiosi ma non caricati, forti ma non energumeni, modellati ma senza affettazione dovranno nella tragedia esser i gesti siccome meglio dimostreremo in seguito.

Gl'indicativi non fanno altro, che dipingere il pensiero, e mostrar l'oggetto sopra cui si vuole che gli uditori rivolgano la loro attenzione. I gesti affettivi poi sono la pittura dell'anima; servono la natura allorquando vuole sviluppare se stessa, e si abbandonano totalmente alle impressioni, che da quella ricevono. Tali gesti sono appunto l'anima del [p. 250] discorso, e contengono tutte le attitudini del corpo, siccome ancora tutti i suoi movimenti.

Non avvi passione, nè movimento di passione, nè parte alcuna di questa, che non abbia il suo gesto particolare, poichè azioni e passioni sono quasi sempre mescolate insieme, e congiunte in tutto quello che dagli uomini viene operato: dissi quasi sempre, imperocchè trattandosi d'un argomento logico, il gesto sarebbe per se stesso ridicolo, essendo inutile alla cosa di cui si parla. Le azioni si manifestano vicendevolmente colle passioni, e debbono ritrovarsi sempre insieme. Allorchè un artefice rappresenta un'azione, questa dee esser animata da qualche passione, e quando rappresenta passioni, sostenute esser

some then, because [p. 249] they depict the affects of the soul, and convey this impression to those who see them, could be called affective. Gestures of the first quality mentioned, that is to say, imitative gestures, are more often practised in comedies than in tragedies; between the form of the gestures of the one and the other, there must be the same difference that immediately arises between prose and verse. In the former, everything is lively, carefree and amusing; in the latter, on the contrary, everything is solemn, majestic and severe; in the former [prose], ordinary men act; in the latter [verse], kings, warriors, high priests – in a word, heroes – speak. If Aeschylus and the other Greek tragic poets in order to let a language sound on their lips that was suitable and appropriate, took it from the Epic; should we [then], in portraying them, use common gestures? To the contrary: the gestures in tragedy must be few but true, grandiose but not charged, strong but not forceful, modelled but without affectation, as we shall demonstrate later.

The indicative [gestures] do no more than paint the thought and point out the object to which they desire the hearers to direct their attention. Affective gestures, however, are the painting of the soul; they serve nature when it wishes to expand itself, and they abandon themselves entirely to the impressions they receive from it. These gestures are precisely the soul of [p. 250] the discourse, and include all of the attitudes of the body, as well as all its movements.

There is no passion, nor movement of a passion, nor part of a passion that does not have its own particular gesture, because actions and passions are almost always mixed together and united in everything that is done by men; I said almost always, because since we are dealing with a logical argument, the gesture would be ridiculous on its own, being useless to the thing spoken of. The actions manifest themselves together with the passions, and must always be found together. When an artist depicts an action, it must be animated by some passion, and when he depicts passions, they must be

debbono dall'azione; ma poichè le arti riguardo al mezzo usato da esse per esprimere, possono essere idonee piuttosto ad una, che ad altra parte di natura, ne viene per conseguenza, che quella parte, la quale in esse dee signoreggiare, è quella che ha maggior relazione col modo di esprimere. Non avvi uomo alcuno che per esprimere il movimento della passione, non abbia i proprj suoi gesti, che individuali appellar si possono, e quel che dovrebbe intimorire coloro che parlano in pubblico, non avvi uditore che non sia capace di ricevere tale impressione, e di riconoscerne, e sentirne l'aggiustatezza: tra l'uditore, e il re- [p. 251] citante avvi una simpatia, ed una natural proporzione, che fa sì, che l'uno colga vivamente ed esattamente tutto quello che espresso viene dall'esterno dell'altro, e questa massima imprimerla dovrà nella sua mente l'artista drammatico, onde poter giunger a formare una bella azione; e bella potrà chiamarsi allor quando dipingerà al vivo il dolore, la tenerezza, la superbia, lo sdegno, l'anima insomma ... sì, l'anima sorgente inesauribile d'ogni gesto affettivo: avvertir per tanto fa d'uopo, che non vi ha una sola figura di pensiero, a cui non corrisponda una analoga attitudine, o di corpo, o di fisionomia. Talvolta un'occhiata dice molto più presto, e meglio di qualunque discorso; e tal'altra, un'atto solo, il portamento ci convince, e ci spiega in un momento mille cose che sviluppiamo da noi medesimi con piacere; e se con mente indagatrice esaminar vorremo certe scene graziose, le quali, se altro non avessero che le parole sarebbero appena un'abbozzo sgrossato, ricever le vedremo tutto il merito dall'arte, e dal genio dell'attore. Fa d'uopo però, dice un dotto francese, per pingere su questa tela animata e variante, d'un sentimento giusto, d'un tatto fine, delicato e pronto; ed il talento solo può dipingere, perchè egli solo può esprimere. Questa gran qualità in un attore che la possenga, determina, polisce, e [p. 252] perfeziona tutte le parti, senza che l'arte sembri di mescolarvisi; le braccia, i piedi, il corpo si trovano da se stessi nei loro rispettivi posti, nei movimenti, ove

sustained by the action; but since the arts, in regard to the means used by them for expression, may be more suited to one part of nature than to another, it follows that the part which must prevail in them is that which has the greatest relation to the mode of expression. There is no man who, in order to express the movement of passion, does not have his own gestures which can be called individual and there is no hearer, who should intimidate those who speak in public, who is not capable of receiving this impression, and of recognising and feeling its appropriateness. Between the hearer and the speaker [p. 251] there is a sympathy and a natural relationship that makes one grasp vividly and precisely everything that is expressed by the other's exterior. The dramatic artist must imprint this maxim in his mind in order to be able to create a beautiful action; and it can only be called beautiful when he depicts pain, tenderness, pride, and disdain in a lifelike manner, in short, the soul ... yes, the soul is the inexhaustible source of every affective gesture: it is therefore necessary to point out that there is not a single figure of thought which is not matched by an analogical attitude of the body or the physiognomy. Sometimes a glance says something much more quickly and better than any speech; and sometimes, a single act or [an actor's] carriage convinces us, and explains to us in a moment a thousand things that we ourselves then expand upon with pleasure; and if with an enquiring mind we wish to examine certain graceful scenes, which, if they had nothing but words would be but a rough sketch, we shall see that they all receive the benefit of the actor's art and genius. A learned Frenchman, however, says that in order to paint on this animated and changing canvas, it is necessary to have a true sentiment and a fine, delicate and ready touch; and talent alone can paint, because it alone can express it. This great quality in an actor who possesses it, determines, polishes, and [p. 252] perfects all the parts, seemingly without the interference of art; the arms, the feet, the body finding themselves on their own in their

debbono essere. Tutto segue l'ordine, che la facilità dell'istinto aiuta e sostiene. Appresso i greci ritrovavansi due sorte di movimenti; l'uno dolce, qual è quello d'una vita pacifica, operosa, ma senza turbamento; l'altro vivo e impetuoso, qual è quello cagionato da una forte passione, che dal medesimo vocabolo greco, patetico vien nominato.

Questi due movimenti debbono regnare più che altrove nella tribuna, a tempo e a luogo: quell'unica maniera di contenersi, che hanno alcuni dicitori, maniera fondata sopra un'abito preso senza riflessione da qualche cattivo modello, (celebre forse in altra buona qualità) è sicuramente un vizio ributtante e noioso: da questa causa, siccome dal non avere fin da principio imparati i gesti e la buona declamazione dietro sicure scorte ed insegnamenti, ne provengono dei pessimi effetti, quali sono quelli di scoccare colle medesime insignificanti attitudini, e col medesimo suono del frullone l'esordio, e la divisione, la narrazione, e le prove, formando così una ruota sconcertata, che nulla può arrestare; e se cangiasi a caso movimento, si fa tanto sgarbatamente da cert'uni talvolta,² da manifestare un cattivissimo gusto: chi non ha altro fine che quello di scaricar la memoria d'un peso importuno, versa con lieve interruzione tutto ciò che arriva, senza pensare, che le passioni che muover si vogliono in altri, debbono esser in prima rappresentate; queste simili al calore, sono d'una natura tanto sottile e leggiera, che l'impressione del menomo soffio ne cambia il movimento, e la direzione.

Fa mestieri ad ogni dicitor pubblico d'evitare i così detti gesti falsi, cioè quelli che non si accordano con l'espressioni della voce; i fiacchi, che esprimono debolmente; i caricati, che sono più forti del sentimento; quelli che si contradicono, esprimendo al contrario degli occhi e della testa. È grave difetto ancora quello

respective places, in the movements, where they need to be. Everything follows in order, helped and supported by the facility of instinct. Among the Greeks there were two kinds of movements: one gentle, which is that of a peaceful, industrious, but untroubled life; the other, lively and impetuous, which is that caused by a strong passion, which is named by the same Greek word, pathetic [i.e., impassioned].

These two movements must reign more than anywhere else on the tribune, at the right time and place: that singular manner which some speakers have, and which is based on a habit adopted without reflection from some bad model, (famous perhaps for some other good quality) is surely a repulsive and tiresome vice. For this reason, as well as from not having learned the gestures and good declamation from the beginning from reliable guides and instruction, very bad effects accrue, such as those of striking the same insignificant attitudes, and with the same sound of the millstone [declaiming] the exordium and the partition, the narration, and the proofs, thus forming a unbalanced wheel, which nothing can stop; and if it is changed by a random movement, it is sometimes done so rudely by certain people³ [p. 253] as to manifest a very bad taste: those who have no other aim than that of freeing their memory from a heavy burden, pour out with scarcely an interruption everything that comes, without realising that the passions that they wish to move in others, must be first portrayed; these, similar to heat, are of such a subtle and light nature, that the impression of the slightest puff of air changes their movement and direction.

It is necessary for every public speaker to avoid the so-called false gestures, that is, those that do not agree with the expressions of the voice; the feeble ones, which express [the passions] weakly; the charged ones, which are stronger than the sentiment; those that contradict one another, with an expression the opposite of

² Qui s'intende parlare di quelli oratori, che al maggiore, e non al miglior numero appartengono.

³ Here we intend to speak of those orators who are in the majority, but not among the best.

d'alcuni dicitori, i di cui gesti sono sempre d'una medesima configurazione, estensione, e cadenza, giacchè si può cambiare il gesto, quantunque si dicano le stesse cose, e non si mutino le parole.

Sia infine il gesto non voluttuoso come quello dei Sibariti; non abbia un'affettata precisione, siccome quello d'un lezioso; non sia nè rustico nè precipitoso, simile a quello d'un fanatico o d'un villano; si faccia consistere, al dire del [p. 254] Castiglione, in certi movimenti di tutto il corpo non affettati nè violenti, ma temperati con volto assestato, e con un muover d'occhi, che dia grazia; ed in fine vada d'accordo con l'espressioni della voce, ed avrà così tutte quelle qualità, che caratterizzar lo potranno per un perfetto gesto.

Sviluppato l'argomento, che i movimenti della persona riguarda per ogni maniera di recitazione, dovrei ora favellare particolarmente siccome testè promisi delle tragiche attitudini; il perchè, di rado o non mai trovasi un buon dramma serio, che alcune situazioni non offra, al lenocinio del gesto favorevolissime: ma siccome il solo parlarne di questa essenzial parte dell'arte rappresentativa non produrrebbe un sufficiente ajuto al vostro sviluppo o giovani ben nati, prefiggo d'esercitarvi anche in essa con l'atto pratico; ed affinchè subito incominciate a risentire gli effetti di mie promesse, vò con ordine progressivo ripetervi la nomenclatura de' gesti da apprendersi. Ve ne sono degl'indicativi, degli affermativi, dei negativi, degli osservativi, dei descrittivi, degl'imitativi, degl'individuali, e

that of the eyes and the head. Another serious defect is that of some speakers, whose gestures always have the same configuration, extension, and cadence, since the gesture can be changed, even though the same things are said, and the words are not changed.

Finally, the gesture should not be as voluptuous as that of the Sybarites; it should not have an affected precision, like that of a finicky person; it should not be rustic or hasty, like that of a fanatic or a peasant; it should consist, according to [p. 254] Castiglione, of certain movements of the whole body, neither affected nor violent, but tempered with a settled face, and with movement of the eyes which conveys grace; and, finally, it should be in harmony with the expression of the voice, and so it will thus have all those qualities which are necessary to characterise it as a perfect gesture.⁴

Having elaborated on the subject of a person's movements in respect to every manner of recitation, I must now, as I have just promised, speak in detail of tragic attitudes. The reason for this is that there is seldom, if ever, a good serious drama that does not offer some situations very favourable to the power of gesture. But since the mere mention of this essential part of the art of acting would not be of sufficient help to your development, O young and well-born youths, I propose to train you in it also through practice; and so that you may immediately begin to feel the effects of my promises, I shall tell you the nomenclature of gestures to be learned in a progressive order. There are a large number of indicative, affirmative, negative, observational, descriptive, imitative, individual, and affective

⁴ Translator's note: 'E questo così dico dello scrivere, come del parlare; al qual però si richiedono alcune cose che non son necessarie nello scrivere: come la voce bona, non troppo sottile o molle come di femina, nè ancor tanto austera ed orrida che abbia del rustico, ma sonora, chiara, soave e ben composta, con la pronunzia espedita e coi modi e gesti convenienti; li quali, al parer mio, consistono in certi movimenti di tutto 'l corpo, non affettati nè violenti, ma temperati con un volto accomodato e con un mover d'occhi che dia grazia e s'accordi con le parole, e più che si po significhi ancor coi gesti la intenzione ed affetto di colui che parla.' Baldesar CASTIGLIONE, *Il libro del Cortegiano*, ed. Giulio Preti, Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1965, Libro Primo, XXXIII. ['And I say this as well of writing as of speaking; except that in speaking some things are required that are not needed in writing: such as a good voice, not too thin or soft as a woman's, nor yet so stern and rough as to have a boorish quality, but sonorous, clear, gentle, and well constituted, with distinct enunciation and with fitting manner and gestures. The latter, in my opinion, consist in certain movements of the entire body, not affected or violent, but tempered by a seemly expression of the face and a movement of the eyes such as to give grace and be consonant with the words, together with such gestures as shall signify as well as possible the intention and the feeling of the orator.' Baldesar CASTIGLIONE, *The Book of the Courtier*, translated by Charles S. Singleton (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1959), pp. 54–5].

degli affettivi in numero esteso: in oltre ne abbiamo dei composti, e dei così detti di sorpresa ec: conosciute che avrete egualmente le forme e l'indole de' medesimi, dipenderà da voi con accurato esercizio il farli vostri interamente. 'L'arte che tutto fa, nulla si scuopre' e [p. 255] col pressochè divino concetto del gran Torquato, darei termine a questa, omai troppo lunga cicalata, se non avessi in animo di palesarvi, che quando la pubblicherò con l'altre, manderò in luce egualmente alcune tavole esprimenti diverse figure con attitudini consentanee al soggetto; le quali se non ch'altro varranno a richiamarvi in mente, quando che sia, gli esercizi piacevoli della primiera vostra giovinezza.

gestures; there are also compound gestures, and the so-called surprising ones, etc. Once you know the forms and the nature of the same equally well, it is up to you to make them entirely your own with careful practice. 'The art that does everything, is nowhere revealed' is [p. 255] the almost divine concept of the great Torquato⁵ with which I would bring this by now too long chatter, to a close, if I did not have the intention of telling you, that when I publish it with the others, I will also publish some plates illustrating diverse figures with attitudes in keeping with the subject, which, if nothing else, will serve to remind you, whenever possible, of the pleasant exercises of your early youth.

È omai scorso il tempo nel quale in privato restarsi poterono le mie lezioni. Si contentarono elle di comparire al solo bisogno nell'angusto recinto della scuola per anni ventuno. Ma il tempo vola, l'età dell'umiliazione a gran foga s'innoltra, e compiere io deggio, anzichè le facoltà mie intellettuali svaniscano, i doveri che assunsi nell'accettare la cattedra di declamazione, e d'arte teatrale. Col publicar quest'opera, qualunque ella sia, adempio a gli obblighi ridetti, mentre ella è corredata delle tavole, delle figure, e delle attitudini promesse. Elleno sono in picciol numero è vero, ma troppo ci vorrebbe per ogni rispetto, se ragunar si volesse una completa collezione di gesti tragici generici, e [p. 256] descrittivi. Dei primi siccome dalle tavole rilevasi, ne accennai alcuno dei meno triti, e dei secondi, messi in mostra i più suscettibili di disegno. Tutti non sono tali, ed in special modo i così detti composti, o raddoppiati. Gli chiamo in tal guisa perocchè quasi sempre sono due, ed anche tre in uno: ed alcun altri, per la sola solissima complicata gita che fanno nell'aggrupparsi e nello svolgersi, gli chiamo egualmente.

The time when my lessons can remain private has now passed. They contented themselves with appearing as necessary in the narrow confines of the school for twenty-one years. But time flies, the age of humiliation is advancing at great speed, and before my intellectual faculties fade, I must fulfil the duties I assumed in accepting the chair of declamation and theatrical art. By publishing this work, whatever it may be, I fulfil the aforementioned obligations, including the tables, figures and attitudes promised. It is true that there are only a small number of them, but it would be too much in every respect, if one wanted to assemble a complete collection of the generic and [p. 256] descriptive tragic gestures. Of the former, as shown by the plates, I pointed out some of the less trite, and of the latter, I showed the most suitable for drawing. Not all of them are like this, especially the so-called compounds or doubled ones. I refer them in this manner because there are almost always two, and even three in one: and I refer to some others in the same way because of the very complicated path they take in gathering together and unfolding.

⁵ Translator's note: Torquato TASSO, *Jerusalem Delivered*, translated by Ralph NASH (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), Canto 16, stanza 9, p. 341.

Adorna la concisissima e caldissima narrazione di Pilade delle attitudini, che di contro esprimono le figure per quanto è possibile, fu fatta (siam lecito il dirlo) replicare a me stesso, siccome un pezzo applauditissimo di scelta musica, sulle scene illustri di Ferrara, di Siena, di Firenze, di Pavia, di Torino, di Bologna. – È vero che il molto gesto anche aggiustato e leggiadro, stabilisce un difetto in ogni dicitore, ma trattandosi di una narrativa, si può deviar dai precetti, nei seguenti due soli casi però; o che il fatto da narrarsi sia molto clamoroso, succeduto di recente e sotto gli occhi del personaggio narrante, o che il personaggio sia apportatore di menzogne siccome lo è Pilade a fronte d'Egisto. È omai provato che più del parlatore veridico, si affatica ed agita chi di spacciare il falso ha disegno; quindi un cuore mendace racconta con grande entusiasmo la menzogna che immagina nell'istante, siccome [p. 257] quella da molto e molto tempo ordita. Il vero che non ha grand'uopo di abbellimenti per farsi strada, e che traspira anche dal più rozzo contegno, scema tanto d'interesse per chi deve raccontarlo, quanto più si allontana dal punto da cui ebbe origine: infatti, se nel suo nascere (e ne sia qualunque la cagione) ci colpisce con venti gradi di forza, alcuni giorni dopo lo fa con assai manco, e così va di mano in mano diminuendo, fino quasi all'indifferenza. L'istessa degradazione verte per l'artista drammatico in un caso conforme. Taccio sui gesti della commedia, da poichè essendo essi così minuti e gretti, converrebbe, per farlo con utilità degli alunni, ingolfarsi in una diceria lunghissima che annojerebbe il lettore. Questa essenziale e nobilissima parte dell'italica Talia, più assai coll'atto pratico che con qualunque altro mezzo si comunica, abbenchè l'indole dei gesti comici, sia presso a poco conforme a quella dei tragici: differiscono molto nella dimensione della gita, nella gravità, nella vibrazione, e sono più facili d'assai ad appararsi, ad eseguirsi.

Pilade's concise and very warm narration is adorned with attitudes against which the figures [i.e. the plates] express as much as possible. It was made (if I may be allowed to say so) to be performed by myself, like a highly applauded piece of choice music, on the illustrious stages of Ferrara, Siena, Florence, Pavia, Turin and Bologna. – It is true that a lot of gesture, even if adapted and graceful, constitutes a defect in every speaker; but since we are dealing with a narrative, we can deviate from the precepts, but only in the following two cases: either when the fact to be narrated is very sensational, and happened recently before the eyes of the narrator; or when the character is a bearer of lies, as Pilade is before Egisto. It has now been proved that he who plans to peddle falsehoods works harder and is more agitated than the truthful speaker; therefore a mendacious heart tells a lie with great enthusiasm which it conjures up at that moment, although [p. 257] it was conceived of long ago. Truth, which has no great need of embellishment to make its way, and which is apparent even on the coarsest countenance, loses much interest for the person who has to tell it, the farther it departs from the point from which it originated; in fact, if it strikes us with twenty degrees of force at its inception (for whatever the cause), a few days later it strikes us with much less, and so it gradually diminishes, until it is almost insignificant. The same degradation pertains to the dramatic artist in a similar situation. I do not mention the gestures of comedy, since they are so trivial and crude, it would be necessary, in order to be useful to the pupils, to get bogged down in very long descriptions that would bore the reader. This essential and most noble part of the Italian Talia is communicated more by a practice than by any other means, even though the nature of comic gestures conforms little to that of tragic ones: they differ greatly in the dimension of their trajectory, in their gravity, in their vibration, and are much easier to be seen than to perform.

Ho toccato il meglio che potetti anche di questo pelago procelloso il lido bramato; fo alto e respiro finalmente.

I have reached the longed-for shore of this prolific sea as best I could; I stop here and breathe at last.

LEZIONE
COMPOSTEZZA E PASSO

Nella prolusione del mio inalzamento a questa cattedra ho detto, che la prima cosa, la quale in un attore disgusta o ricrea l'occhio degli spettatori, è la figura; essa però rendesi interessante da una prerogativa principale che forma parte nel tutto della recitazione, e questa è la compostezza: quella vaghezza cioè di portamento e azione della persona, che distingue chiaramente la buona o cattiva educazione in ogni individuo della società.

L'azione, come s'esprime il Sig. Kogarth [recte: Hogarth] nell'analisi della bellezza, è una specie di linguaggio che forse una volta o l'altra si potrà arrivare ad insegnarlo con una specie di regole grammaticali, ma che adesso si acquista solamente colla pratica, coll'imitazione, e con certi dati generici insegnamenti. Non vi è alcuno, dic'egli, che non desideri essere in sua facoltà di divenire gentile e grazioso nel portamento se a ciò giungere potesse con poca [p. 300] fatica, e in poco tempo. I metodi soliti a cui si ricorre per questo proposito fra le persone ben educate, occupano una considerevole parte del loro tempo: anzi, anche quelli del primo rango non posson ricorrere in siffatte materie che ai maestri di ballo, e di spada: il ballo e la scherma, sono senza dubbio doti proprie e necessarie; ciò a malgrado, elle sono imperfette per ottenere un grazioso portamento, perchè, quantunque i muscoli del corpo possano acquistare una certa pieghevolezza dalli esercizi della scherma, e i membri dalli eleganti movimenti del ballo acquistare una facilità a muoversi con buon garbo, tuttavolta per non conoscere il significato d'ogni grazia e da che cosa dipenda, ne seguono spesso le affettazioni, e le male applicazioni.

LESSON
POISE AND GAIT

In the speech for my election to this chair, I said that the first thing in an actor which disgusts or gives pleasure to the eyes of the spectators, is his figure; it, however, is rendered interesting by one principal attribute that shapes part of the whole of acting, and this is poise: that is, that beauty of bearing and action of a person, which clearly distinguishes good or bad upbringing in every individual of society.

Action, as Mr. Kogarth [recte: Hogarth] expresses it in his analysis of beauty, is a sort of language which perhaps at one time or another may come to be taught by some kind of grammatical rules, but which now is only acquired by practice, imitation, and certain general teachings.⁶ There is no one, he says, who does not wish it were within his power to become gentle and graceful in his carriage if he could do so with little [p. 300] effort and in a short time.⁷ The usual methods employed for this purpose among well-educated people occupy a considerable portion of their time; indeed, even those of the first rank have no other recourse in such matters other than masters of dance and fencing: dancing and fencing are undoubtedly necessary and proper skills; but unfortunately, they are unsuitable for acquiring a graceful carriage, for although the muscles of the body can acquire a certain suppleness from the exercises of fencing, and the limbs can acquire an ease in moving with great delicacy from the elegant movements of dance, they are often followed by affectations and misapplication, for lack of knowledge of the meaning of each grace and upon what it depends.

⁶ Translator's note: 'Action is a sort of language which perhaps one time or other, may come to be taught by a kind of grammar-rules; but, at present, is only got by rote and imitation: and contrary to most other copyings or imitations, people of rank and fortune generally excel their originals, the dancing-masters, in easy behaviour and unaffected grace; as a sense of superiority makes them act without constraint; especially when their persons are well turned. If so, what can be more conducive to that freedom and necessary courage which make acquired grace seem easy and natural, than the being able to demonstrate when we are actually just and proper in the least movement we perform; whereas, for want of such certainty in the mind, if one of the most finished gentlemen at court was to appear as an actor on the public stage, he would find himself at a loss how to move properly, and be stiff, narrow, and awkward in representing even his own character: the uncertainty of being right would naturally give him some of that restraint which the uneducated common people generally have when they appear before their betters.' William HOGARTH, *The Analysis of Beauty* (London: J. REEVES, 1753), pp. 139–140.

⁷ Translator's note: 'There is no one but would wish to have it in his power to be genteel and graceful in the carriage of his person, could it be attained with little trouble and expence of time.' HOGARTH, *ibid.*, p. 138.

La bella compostezza frattanto incomincia dai piedi e dalle gambe, essendo questi e quelle le basi del corpo; se di esse, siccome conviene indispensabilmente, ne sarà fatto buon uso, acquisterà subito il rimanente della persona, una grata leggiadria. Quindi a grado che si anderà educando il torso, alla leggiadria unirassi la nobiltà; in ultim'analisi, allorquando avremo a dovere ben modellati i movimenti del corpo e delle braccia, alla leggiadria ed alla nobiltà, si accoppierà parimenti l'anima.

Si volga l'occhio a qualche pittura, o scultura, che abbia un grazioso atteggiamento; ancorchè si trovi nelle parti che la compongono un po' di rozzezza e sproporzione, ci darà sicuramente piacere, a preferenza d'un'altra male atteggiata, e non animata, sebbene di forme migliori.

Le nozioni che dare si possono intorno al portamento della persona, sono molto conformi alla così detta anima di vigore, la quale, se bene vel ricordate, esige dal recitante, una costante sostenutezza di pronunzia, affinchè le parole non gli cadano come sul bavaglio dagli angoli della bocca, nell'istessa guisa che suole accadere nei piccoli fanciulli del latte o del giulebbe: come che nerbo del discorso si addimanda l'accennato precetto, nerbo della compostezza questo si può egualmente chiamare; ed affinchè la testa non s'inchini sul petto, il petto sul corpo, il corpo sui femori, e che senza nessuno accorgimento incurvando le spalle a poco a poco, giungiate a formare della vostra figura l'immagine del liuto, siccome innanzi tempo accader suole a quasi tutte le persone volgari, vi stia a cuore la raccomandata compostezza: facendo alla medesima assuefazione sull'alba della vostra esistenza, vi assoderete in essa talmente, da poterne far pompa anche sul tramonto della medesima. Sono pochi anni che le madri, e le nutrici cingevano [p. 302] a quest'oggetto i fanciulli, e le fanciulle in special modo d'un cilizio busto chiamato, facendoglielo portare forzatamente fino all'età dello sviluppo. y usi ridicoli e barbari, che il diverso effetto il più delle volte producano, di storpiare le creature. Sebbene un giovinetto in forza dell'incuranza insita compagna della primiera età crescesse un po' curvo, tostochè sottomentra la riflessione, emenda da per se stesso il difetto, se a quella vada unita una dose d'ambizione che lo sproni. Di così fatti esempi noi ne vediamo tutto giorno. Che se un inconsiderato garzone, dal solo desiderio spronato di piacere alla sua Nice sa comporsi e correggersi, che non dovrete far voi in proposito, stimolati dal forte pungolo della

Beautiful deportment, meanwhile, begins with the feet and legs, together forming the foundations of the body; if good use is made of these, which is indispensable, the rest of the person will immediately acquire a graceful comeliness. Therefore, to the degree that the torso has been trained, nobility will be joined to gracefulness; in the last analysis, when we have properly shaped the movements of the body and arms, gracefulness and nobility will likewise be joined to the soul.

Let us turn our eyes to some painting or sculpture [p. 301] that has a graceful attitude; even if we find some roughness and disproportion in the parts that compose it, it will certainly give us pleasure, in preference to another that is poorly shaped and unanimated, although better in form.

The concepts that can be given about the carriage of the person, are very much in accordance with the so-called soul of vitality, which, if you remember well, demands that the actor constantly support his speech, so that the words do not fall from the corners of his mouth as if onto a bib, in the same way as often happens with little children [drinking] milk or syrups. Just as the abovementioned precept is called the backbone of discourse, one can equally call it the backbone of poise; and so that your head does not fall towards your chest, nor your chest towards your body, nor your body towards your thighs, so that without any awareness your shoulders curve little by little, so they come to form the image of a lute with your figure, as is usual for almost all vulgar persons in the first place, keep the recommended poise in your mind [heart]. By making it a regular habit at the dawn of your existence, you will assume it so completely, that you will also be able to make show of it at the decline of the same. In recent years mothers and nurses have girded their children to this end in a special kind of belt called a corset, forcing them to wear it until they have developed. [These are] follies, ridiculous and barbaric uses, which most often produce the opposite effect of crippling the creatures. Even if a young man, by dint of the inherent carelessness of his early years, were to grow up a little hunched over, as soon as reflection prevails, he makes up for the defect by himself, if it is accompanied by a dose of ambition which spurs him on. We see examples of this all the time. If an inconsiderate young man, driven only by the desire to please his Nice, knows how to comport and correct himself, what would you

gloria, e dalla oltremodo lusinghiera speranza di piacere un giorno a delle intiere popolazioni? Chi è destinato a parlare in pubblico, dee per quanto può, studiarsi di conservare la maggior possibile dignità in tutte le attitudini del suo corpo; imperocchè ella sarebbe pure una cosa mostruosa quel vedere un oratore, e più d'ogn'altro un attore tragico accompagnar le proprie espressioni, non solo coi movimenti dei capo e delle braccia a norma dei precetti, ma con la vita ancora, ed invece di mantenere una positura diritta, ben consolidata sui piedi, (essendo certamente quella di cui si dee far uso) [p. 303] andar divincolando, e contorcendosi come un serpente calpestato. La principal regola in quanto al contegno si è, che dee corrispondere alla natura del discorso, e ove non s'abbia ad esprimere una particolar commozione, un contegno virile è sempre il migliore. Nel caso però della detta commozione, o per dir meglio nell'ardente calore d'uno straordinario e grande affetto in genere, potremo, e dovremo escir dai confini prescritti, ed a forma della passione che ci domina, abbandonarsi all'entusiasmo, al delirio. Si fatto abbandono però non dee, siccome un gonfio torrente soverchiante gli argini, correr dovunque senza direzione e consiglio: al contrario; si gonfi pure, imperversi e minacci inondazione, estermio, purchè il letto non abbandoni, che nel caso nostro è la ragione, guida sicura d'ogni operazione umana; siffatta guida, non v'ha dubbio, forzandoci ad usare un temperamento che la tempesta mitighi, non ci permetterà mai di fare dei moti sconci in qualsivoglia circostanza. Sembrerà forse inconseguente la suespressa metafora, al riflesso, che un entusiasta, o un delirante non può usare della ragione, e che un attore, assorto quasi nella passione che dimostrar vuole, non può regolarsi, e pensare nel bollor della medesima alle positure del corpo; convengo io pure che un attore allorchè in azione si trova, non dee [p. 304] d'altro occuparsi che dell'azione stessa, e che quanto è più capace, tanto più saprà investirsi del carattere assunto; ma dico altresì che allorquando egli avrà precedentemente assuefatto il proprio individuo a disegnarsi bene, non potrà neppur volendo disegnarsi male, non che in un delirio teatrale (il quale perquanto venga spinto alla verità, lascia pur sempre a chi lo configura la cognizione di se stesso) ma ancora in un delirio legittimo e forte.

[i.e. the student actors] not do in this regard, stimulated by the strong incentive of glory and by the extremely flattering hope of one day pleasing the entire population? He who is destined to speak in public must, as far as he can, endeavour to preserve the greatest dignity possible in all the attitudes of his body; for it would be a so monstrous thing to see an orator, and worst of all, a tragic actor, accompany his own expressions not only with the movements of his head and arms in accordance with the precepts, but also with his waist, and instead of maintaining a straight posture, firmly standing on his feet, (which is certainly the posture one must use) [p. 303] twisting around, and writhing like a squashed snake. The main rule with regard to demeanour is that it must correspond to the nature of the discourse, and where there is no particular emotion to be expressed, a masculine demeanour is always the best. In the case, however, of the aforesaid emotion, or rather in the ardent heat of an extraordinary and great affect in general, we can and must go beyond the prescribed boundaries, and abandon ourselves to the form of the passion that dominates us, to the enthusiasm, to the delirium. Such abandonment, however, must not, like a swollen torrent overflowing its banks, run everywhere without direction and guidance: to the contrary, let it swell, rage and threaten floods and destruction, as long as it does not abandon the bed, which in our case is reason, the sure guide of every human operation; such a guide, there is no doubt, by forcing us to use a temperament which mitigates the storm, will never allow us to make disorderly movements under any circumstances. The above metaphor may perhaps seem inconsistent with the reflection that an enthusiast or a delirious person cannot use reason, and that an actor, seemingly beset by the passion that he wants to manifest, cannot regulate himself, and think in the heat of it about the postures of the body; I also agree that an actor, when in action, must not [p. 304] concern himself with anything other than the action itself, and that the more capable he is, the more he will know how to invest himself in the assumed character; but I also say that when he has previously accustomed himself to deport his own person well, he cannot, even if he wants to, deport himself badly, not in a theatrical delirium (which, however strongly it may be pushed to the point of truth, still leaves the person who configures it with the knowledge of himself) nor even in a true and strong delirium.

Il passeggio pure dee essere modellato sull'immagine del vero, e tratto a quel punto di perfezione che lo rende or modesto, or brillante, or bizzarro, ora grave, ora veloce intelligentemente a norma delle circostanze. Esso generalmente parlando si può educare coll'aiuto del ballo in breve tempo; con ciò dir non s'intende, che il camminar dei ballerini professi, sia il modello da seguirsi, come di sopra abbiamo chiaramente spiegato: al contrario; egli per le comiche scene riescirebbe troppo caricato, e per le tragiche, non abbastanza nobile. Ciò a malgrado un poco d'esercizio di ballo non è da rigettarsi, poichè suole molto contribuire a render molleggianti sulle ginocchia le gambe, a compor la persona, a muover graziosamente la testa e le braccia, la moderazione delle quali assai difficoltosa riesce, in special modo ai giovani, che, o le lasciano pen- [p. 305] dere sgraziatamente, o le muovono con furore; e qui cade in acconcio il riflettere con Quintiliano, che l'azione è mozza senza un retto uso delle braccia e delle mani,⁸ poichè se le altre parti del corpo aiutano il discorso, queste parlano; con esse in fatti si chiede, si promette, si ricusa, si minaccia, s'interroga, si nega, si afferma, e si fanno tante altre operazioni, che la scuola dell'uso chiaramente ci dimostra. Riguardo poi al passo, si può benissimo ottenere l'intento nostro, ancora senza l'aiuto del ballo: pazienza dalla parte del precettore, e volontà dal canto degli apprendisti, suppliranno a tutto e di tutto si avrà sicuramente il fine desiderato: avute che essi abbiano le prime nozioni, potranno da loro stessi erudirsi al bel passeggio, il quale perchè veramente tale comparisca, conviene che sia facile, sciolto, e leggiadro, e quel che è più, senza affettazione. Essi [p. 306] andando per i loro affari, durante la giornata, sempre che un poco di pensiero aver vogliano a quanto si tratta, si assuefaranno alla compostezza ed al passo senza accorgersene; avvertendo però di non dimenticarsi un istante nei primordj del raccomandato esercizio, che la

The gait must also be modelled on the image of the real [gait], and taken to that point of perfection that makes it now modest, now brilliant, now bizarre, now serious, now fast in an intelligent manner in accordance with the circumstances. Generally speaking, it can be trained with the help of dancing in a short space of time; this is not to say that the walk of the professional dancers is the model to be followed, as we have clearly explained above: to the contrary, it would be too elaborate for the comic scenes and not noble enough for the tragic ones. Nevertheless, a little practise in dancing is not to be rejected, since it can contribute greatly to making the legs flexible in the knees; to composing the person; and to moving the head and arms gracefully, the moderation of which is extremely difficult, especially for young people, who either let them hang [p. 305] awkwardly or move them with fury. And here it is appropriate to reflect with Quintilian that acting is impeded without a correct use of the arms and hands,⁹ because if the other parts of the body help the discourse, they speak; in fact, with them one asks, promises, refuses, threatens, questions, denies, affirms, and does many other things, as the school of use clearly shows us. As for the gait, our aim can be achieved excellently without the help of dancing. Patience on the part of the tutor, and willingness on the part of the apprentices, will supply everything and the desired end will certainly be achieved in everything: once they have the first concepts, they will be able to learn to walk beautifully by themselves, which must, for it to truly appear to be such, be easy, free, and graceful, and most importantly, without affectation. If they [p. 306], while going about their business during the day, always are willing to place a little attention on what is involved, they will become accustomed to poise and gait without noticing it; it must be warned, however, to not forget for an instant at the beginning of the

⁸ I greci, indi i Latini ebber parimenti il gesto del computo o chironomia o arte di favellar con le mani e con le dita. Di esso egualmente il dottissimo Quintiliano, e altri sommi uomini, ne trattano, e c'istruiscono che più che in altro, le suddette nazioni se ne servivano nei mimici esercizi. Dovea siffatto linguaggio a mio credere essere presso a poco siccome quello di cui il pietoso e grande rigeneratore de sordi e muti di nascita Signor Abate delle Pé si valse per dare, dirò così, vita ed anima razionale, a quelli sventurati. Di cotal parte dell'arte rappresentativa in genere, non potendo esser ella utile al nostro scopo, non se ne farà ulteriore menzione.

⁹ The Greeks, and later the Latins, also had the gesture of counting, or chironomy, or the art of speaking with the hands and the fingers. The most learned Quintilian and other great men also discuss it, and instruct us that, more than in any other, the above-mentioned nations used it in their mime exercises. In my opinion, this language must have been similar to that used by the pious and great rehabilitator of the congenitally deaf and dumb, Mr. Abate delle Pé, to give life, as it were, and a rational soul to those unfortunate people. This part of the art of acting in general, since it cannot be useful for our purpose, will not receive further mention.

caricatura è un vizio turpe, ed è da abborrersi più della stessa sgangherataggine.

In generale poi, riguardo all'intero individuo; dee la persona del recitante esser ben diritta sul tronco, cedere naturalmente alle inflessioni dei fianchi, rivolgersi con docilità, e muoversi con moderazione acciò non gli si attribuisca l'inquietezza di Cleone Ateniese, il quale malgrado tutto questo, lasciò agli oratori l'esempio del passeggio fino allora non usitato; o non gli si debba dire quello che Flaminio Virginio disse ad un pubblico dicitore che avea di soverchio passeggiato nel recitare 'Quanti stadj avesse egli declamato?'

Tutte le regole però inutili saranno per coloro che sortito non han dalla natura una forma versatile, che sappia svilupparsi, giusta le impressioni del proprio cuore, e a tal proposito termino la lezione con una sentenza d'un dotto vivente scrittore il quale dice 'Chi si mostrò pesante fin dalla fanciullezza, seguiti Cerere, e non mai Tersicore.'

recommended training, that caricature is a vile vice, and is to be abhorred more than uncouthness itself.

In general then, in respect to the entire individual, the person of the speaker must be erect in the torso, yield naturally to the bending of his sides, turn with ease, and move with moderation, so that he may not have the restlessness attributed to Cleon of Athens, who in spite of all this, left a hitherto unused example of walking to the orators; or should one not tell him what Flaminius Virginius said to a public speaker who had walked too much in reciting: 'How many stadia had he declaimed?'

All rules, however, will be useless to those who have not been endowed by nature with a supple shape, which knows how to form itself in keeping with the impressions of their own hearts. And in this connection, I shall end my lesson with a sentence of a learned, living author, who says: 'May he who showed himself to be heavy as a child follow Ceres, and never Terpsichore.'

Translated by ANNE SMITH (emerita of the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis at the University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland)

‘AND THE WING’D *MUSCLES*, INTO MEANINGS FLY’: PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH INTO HISTORICAL ACTING THROUGH THE WRITINGS OF AARON HILL

Teach *passion*’s pangs—teach *how* distresses *shake*;
How hearts, that *feel*, bid hearts, that *listen*, AKE.
How *action* paints the *soul*, upon the *eye*,
And the wing’d *muscles*, into meanings fly.¹

INTRODUCTION

The English writer and entrepreneur Aaron Hill (1685–1750) was passionate about many things, but none more than the theatre. Throughout his adult life he turned his hand to managing theatres, criticising performers, writing plays, and coaching actors. Oddly, he seems never to have trod the boards himself, at least not as a professional. This, however, did not stop him from proclaiming, repeatedly, and from many a literary pulpit, that he possessed the key to success for actors, and that he could teach, through his system, a natural manner of acting that would engage audiences, facilitate the moral improvement of society and restore tragedy to its rightful place in the hearts of the public – a deservedly exalted place from which, he felt, low entertainments like opera and pantomime had driven it.

It is well-known that Hill proposed his technique for generating affect in the stage-player’s body in the 1730s, in his bi-weekly publication entitled *The Prompter*. However, he had articulated the key ideas of the system much earlier: a proto-version of the method can be found in the preface to his second tragedy, *The Fatal Vision: Or, the Fall of Siam* (1716). From this point onwards, with great consistency, Hill proposed the imagination as the fountainhead of good acting, and that a strong conception of actually *being* the character one portrayed, in the exact emotional situation the scene required, would naturally result in the voice and body harmonizing with the imagined theatrical affect. This is often referred to today as acting ‘from inside out’. However, by the 1740s, Hill had begun to suggest that if the player’s imagination needed help in the heat of the moment on stage, he could engage the body in specific ways in order to ‘kick start’ the imaginative process (such a method, emphasizing externals rather than imagination, is now known as acting ‘from outside in’).

Hill asserted that – following his system and aided initially and briefly by a mirror – an actor could in a very short space of time learn how to use somatic awareness to stimulate inner feelings. His system relied on the close interconnection of imagination, affect and muscular activity in the closed-system labyrinth of the actor’s body – which Hill called ‘the mazy Round’. The actor could start either from the mind *or* the body, which made acting easy, pleasant and natural:

¹ Aaron HILL, ‘Prologue, for Mr. William Giffard, on his Benefit Night’, *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill, Esq.*, Vol. III (London: 1753), p. 113.

*See Art's short Path!—'tis easy to be found,
Winding, delightfull, thro' the mazy Round!*²

Although Hill never lost sight of the imagination as the wellspring of good acting, be believed that his somatic method enabled actors to get back on track quickly, if their imaginations failed them.

This article is divided into two parts: the first deals with the development of Hill's system 1716–1753, as it reveals itself through his many writings (reviews, letters, essays, poems); the second part documents my personal experimentation with the 'applications' in 'An Essay on the Art of Acting' (1753) as a form of research through performance. I argue in Part I that Hill's basic conception of his system changed over time: as he grew older his emphasis on the physical shifted from the voice to the eyes and countenance, and finally came to include the joints and muscles.³ The experiments described in Part II are illustrated by video material.⁴

PART I: THE DEVELOPMENT OF HILL'S ACTING METHOD

THE PRIMACY OF THE VOICE (1716–1733)

BARTON BOOTH

Before examining his ideas on acting, it will be useful to consider Hill's contact, from an early age, with one of the most famous tragic players of the early eighteenth century, one who arguably had a lasting influence on Hill's thought: Barton Booth (1681–1733). The two must have met as schoolfellows when Hill arrived at Westminster School ca. 1696. This initial acquaintance was not of long duration, for both boys left ca. 1698, Booth for the Dublin stage, and Hill for Constantinople. Before departing, however, Hill must have had opportunities to experience his fellow's nascent acting skills. As Benjamin Victor (d. 1778) tells us, Booth's thespian talent was already apparent at Westminster School:

he had then a very great Affection for Poetry, and delighted in repeating Parts of Plays and Poems; in all which he discover'd a very promising Genius for the Stage.⁵

Booth's ability to express the passions naturally with his face is explicitly mentioned in the following lines from a prologue spoken at Westminster School:

*Your Antique Actors, as we read,
No more than Anticks were indeed:
With wide-mouth'd Masks their Babes to fright,
They kept the Countenance from Sight.
Now Faces on the Stage are shown;
Nor speak they with their Tongues alone,
But in each Look a Force there lies,
That speaks the Passion to the Eyes.
Say then, which best deserves our Praise,*

² Aaron HILL, *The Art of Acting* (London: J. Osborn, 1746), p. 11.

³ In order to distinguish between the first publication of Hill's essay in *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill, Esq.*, Vol. IV (London: 1753) and later, stand-alone editions, I will refer to the former thus: 'An Essay on the Art of Acting' (1753). The titles of later editions will appear in italics. None of these should be confused with the poem, published in 1746, entitled *The Art of Acting*.

⁴ Video materials can be found here: <https://jedwentz.com/wentz-edps/> (last accessed 26-02-2022).

⁵ [Benjamin VICTOR], *Memoirs of the Life of Barton Booth* (London: John Watts, 1733), p. 4.

The Vizard, or the Human Face?
Old Roscius to our BOOTH must bow,
'Twas then but Art, 'tis Nature now.⁶

This early talent for facial expression grew, in the course of Booth's career, to form part of 'a most accurate Knowledge of the various Passions, and the proper Peculiarities by which they express themselves'.⁷ Victor sums up the fully-formed actor as follows:

it is not enough to say, he was Graceful, acted Justly, and spoke with the greatest Harmony and Propriety; for those Qualities were peculiarly his own: But his manner of exciting all the noble and tender Passions gave such complete Delight as cannot be reach'd by Imagination, nor describ'd by Language.⁸

Aaron Hill knew the mature Booth's passionate style very well: Booth was acting in Thomas Betterton's company at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields when Hill returned to London from the Middle East in 1703. It seems inconceivable that Hill would not have gone to see his old schoolfellow on the stage. What is certain is that the two men worked together in Drury Lane during the 1709–1710 season: Hill became the manager there, while Booth was the leading tragedian. In spite of the fact that Booth was a member of the group of actors who violently attacked him in June of 1710, during an over-heated dispute concerning matters of management, Hill always highly praised Booth as an actor: and it is in such warm colours that we find him painted in Hill's 1716 preface to *The Fatal Vision*.

THE DEDICATION TO *THE FATAL VISION* (1716)

In the dedication to his tragedy *The Fatal Vision: Or, the Fall of Siam*, Hill emphasises the links between an acting style that marked the passions and tragedy as a genre capable of improving the morals of its audience. For Hill, the goal of all dramatic poetry was instruction, rather than mere entertainment. Moral lessons could only be transmitted if the players profoundly moved the audience. Hill maintained this stance throughout his life. Therefore, it is worth looking more closely at the early expression of this standpoint that is afforded by the *The Fatal Vision*'s dedication.

Hill argues that tragedy's power to instruct is thwarted when the passions are mismanaged by injudicious, unnatural actors. Monotonous, bombastic declamation could not, according to Hill, replace the variety of voice which naturally expressed the passions. He notes of the audience that:

being never moved by the affected, vicious, and unnatural Tone of Voice, so common, on our Stages; They sink insensibly, from that Attention, into which judicious actors forcibly attract us; And, by that Means lose the Thread of the Design: and, consequently, all the Relish of the Entertainment.⁹

An unmoved audience would neither be able to sustain their attention, nor to absorb the instruction intended by the playwright. Thus, acting, and most specifically the players' emotional manner of declamation – one that could 'sensibly alarm the soul' and shake an audience to its core – was essential to the success of tragic theatre as a means of moral improvement. Alas, according to Hill, the actors' 'horrible, Theatric' declamation rarely managed to capture the audience's attention:

⁶ [VICTOR], *ibid.*, p. 5.

⁷ [VICTOR], *ibid.*, p. 28.

⁸ [Victor], *ibid.*, p. 30.

⁹ Aaron HILL, *The Fatal Vision: Or, The Fall of Siam. A Tragedy*, (London: Edw. Nutt, 1716), p. vi.

I need not tell you, that, without Attention, 'tis impossible for any Play to strike. Now, where it does not strike, 'tis as impossible to please: and, if it does not please, it never can instruct. So, here, we find the very End of all Dramatic Poetry destroyed, by that one fundamental Evil of a Player's Ignorance. I might, more justly, call it Obstinacy. They cannot, if they think at all, but know what is Natural, from what is Monstrous: But they are so accusom'd to a horrible, Theatric, way of speaking, that, except in Mr. Booth, who is, indeed, a just and excellent Tragedian, you shall never hear so much as an Endeavor, at those thrilling Breaks, and Changes of the Voice; the only possible Expression of our Passions, in their Variations and Degrees, and, which so sensibly alarm the Soul, and challenge the Attention of an Audience.¹⁰

Booth is here singled out for his 'just' use of the voice in expressing the passions. The resulting emotional thrill the audience experienced, kindled their attention and facilitated moral improvement, by alarming their souls. To Hill, it was not enough for an actor to energetically declaim his lines, but rather the player must attain a discriminating variety in the voice *naturally*, by acting 'from inside out':

If Grief, which claims a low, and broken Voice, is utter'd in the Thunder of a Rant, what Mark has Rage to be distinguish'd by? Our Actors should industriously forget themselves, and the Spectators; and put on the Nature, with the Dress, of every Character they represent. They should not act, but really be, the happy, or the wretched, which we are to think 'em.¹¹

In 1733 (after Booth's death and before the advent of Hill's theatrical paper *The Prompter* in 1734) Benjamin Victor asked Hill to write down his 'sentiments, concerning what was chiefly remarkable in Mr. Booth, as an actor'.¹² This eulogy was drawn up by Hill more than fifteen years after he wrote the dedication to *The Fatal Vision*. However, Hill's admiration for Booth is still vibrant. He claimed of the actor that: 'he was the NEWTON of the Theatre; [...] Mr. Booth, as well as Sir Isaac discover'd new worlds, and demonstrated them'¹³ Hill describes Booth's technique as one of harmony between thought, feeling, voice and attitude:

[Booth] had a talent at discovering the *passions*, where they lay *hid*, in some celebrated parts; having been buried under a prescription of *rantings* and *monotony*, by the practice of other actors: When he had *discover'd*, he soon grew able to *express* 'em. And his secret, by which he attain'd this great lesson of the Theatre, was an association, or adaption of his *look* to his *voice*; by which artful imitation of *nature*, the variations, in the sound of his words, gave propriety to every change in his countenance. So that, among *Players*, in whom it is common to hear *pity* pronounc'd with a *frown* upon the forehead, *sorrow* express'd, by a *grin* upon the eye, and *anger* thunder'd out, with a look of unnatural *serenity*, it was Mr. Booth's peculiar felicity, to be *heard*, and *seen* the same; whether as the *pleas'd*, the *griev'd*, the *pitying*, the *reproachful* or the *angry*: one would almost be tempted, to borrow the aid of a very bold figure, and to express this excellence the more significantly, beg permission to affirm, that the *blind* might have *seen* him, in his *voice*, and the *deaf* have *heard* him, in his *visage*.¹⁴

Booth discovered passions in his lines which other contemporary actors had not noticed. Though Hill does not say so explicitly, it seems that this discovery of greater affective potential through the identification of numerous passions guided Booth's acting from 'inside out', by giving him more emotional 'marks' to hit in succession. To do so, he used his imagination to stimulate expression in his body, particularly in his 'look'. While it is clear that Booth already had extraordinarily expressive facial features at school in Westminster, Hill here describes them – apparently quite remarkably for the time – as being subservient to the *voice*. By adapting 'his *look*

¹⁰ HILL, *ibid.*

¹¹ HILL, *ibid.*, pp. vi–vii.

¹² See HILL (1753), *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 115.

¹³ HILL, *ibid.*, p. 118.

¹⁴ HILL, *ibid.*, pp. 117–8.

to his *voice*, the actor achieved a variety of countenance in complete harmony with the intended passion.¹⁵ Hill goes on to describe how this affective sequence progressed further into the actor's trunk and limbs, resulting in the appropriate gestures and, probably, attitudes: the imagination, having first worked on the voice and countenance, was in turn itself influenced by them. The re-stimulated imagination could then cause further changes throughout the player's entire body:

His *gesture*, or, as it is commonly call'd, his *action*, was but the result, and necessary consequence of this dominion over his *voice*, and *countenance*; for having, by concurrence of two such causes impress'd his imagination, with the stamp, and spirit, of a passion, his nerves obey'd the impulse by a kind of natural dependency, and relax'd, or brac'd successively, into all that fine expressiveness, with which he painted what he spoke, without restraint, or affectation.¹⁶

Interestingly, Hill here also attributes to voice and face the power of stimulating the actor's imagination. Clearly, even at this early date, both acting 'from outside in' and 'from inside out' were part and parcel of Hill's conception of the actor's art. His conception of the actor's body as a closed circuit – mind works on body, and body in turn works on mind – was already in place, if not yet as clearly articulated as it would be in his later didactic works *The Art of Acting* (1746) and 'An Essay on the Art of Acting' (1753).

BE, WHAT YOU SEEM: HILL'S THEATRICAL AMBITIONS, 1721–1736

HILL AS ACTING COACH

Hill's management of Drury-Lane came to an end in June of 1710. In November of that year he became the manager, for less than one season, at the new Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket. There he produced operas, the most important and successful of which was *Rinaldo* – for which he devised the scenario – set to music by George Frederick Handel (1685-1759). Hill then temporarily stepped away from theatrical endeavours and occupied his 'Fertile Brain' and 'teeming Mind'¹⁷ with other matters, notably a commercial scheme involving the extraction of oil from beechnuts. His next significant theatrical undertaking, apart from the moderately successful production (seven performances) of *The Fatal Vision* in 1716, was his unsuccessful attempt, in 1721, to set up an acting company in the newly-built Little Theatre in the Haymarket. Two more of his plays were produced in the 1720s: *The Fatal Extravagance* (which is today generally considered to be the best of his tragedies) was a success in 1721, while in 1723 *King Henry V* (a Shakespeare adaption) was not.

The 1730s saw Hill intensely, perhaps even obsessively involved in the London theatre scene as a playwright, critic, acting coach, would-be manager and reformer. After the failure of his tragedy *Athelwold* in 1731, he turned his attention to the training and coaching of stage players. Various letters written in 1733 to actors working at Drury Lane show Hill helping them to prepare their roles (by means of marked-up part books), and coaching their performances. Thus, on November 16th, 1733 he wrote to Elizabeth Hollyday (fl. 1723–1755) of her appearance in Rowe's *Tamerlane*:

When I saw you, in *Selima*, there was nothing to be wished, more *lovely*. But I long'd for something more *miserable*. [...] you filled our *eye* with your *sweetness*, where our hearts should have been *shook*, for your

¹⁵ Interestingly, Hill wrote to fellow-playwright Mallet many years later, in 1731: 'Let a man, for example, fix his eyes in an angry, or a sorrowful *look*, and then pronounce the softest, or the kindest speech of *love*, *joy*, or *friendship*, —— he will find, that, 'till his *look* is as kind as his *meaning*, his voice will sound nothing but *discord* and *barshness*.' Hill (1753), op. cit., Vol. I, p. 47.

¹⁶ HILL (1753), op. cit., Vol. II, p. 118.

¹⁷ Anonymous, 'An Ode. Inscrib'd to Aaron Hill Esq.', *The British Apollo*, Vol. III, Numb. 3, April 3rd, 1710, n.p.

sufferings: And, particularly, in that scene, where you pleaded with *Bajazet* for life, tho' your *action* was beautifully *just*, it was not *strong* enough, nor so *wild* and *distracted*, as it ought to have been. Let me beg you to remember it, to-night, and throw yourself, with an unreserved boldness and freedom, into the liveliest attitudes of *distress*; fully assured, that a form, so finished as *yours*, can have nothing to fear, from too spirited an excess of action; since the more *lights* it is shown in, the more *charms* it discovers.¹⁸

So too, on October 19th, 1733, Hill sent a letter to actor James Marshall (d. 1773?), analysing his performance in Dryden's *The Spanish Friar* and including a hastily marked-up part for the character of Torrismond. Hill's haste was caused by the fact that Marshall was due to perform the role again that very evening. In his annotations, Hill proposed specific passions for the actor to embody:

I take the *knowledge of the passions* to be the only thing necessary, to make a *finished actor*, where the *voice*, and the *figure*, have such advantages, as you are possessed of; and I have pointed them out as distinctly, as I had room to do it, in the marginal blanks of the Play, which I, herewith, send you; to which I have added (besides lines under the emphatical words) little strokes, in this manner, **I** in the places, where pausing is proper: First, for the sake of the sense; and next, for a *saving* to the *voice*, which will always, by that help, be able to maintain its strength, and escape those unpleasing *cracks*, which are, else, so frequent, and unavoidable.¹⁹

Although he felt that Marshall needed his help to identify passions and manage the voice, Hill felt that the concomitant gestures, being the natural consequence of a proper conception of affect, would then flow unaided from the embodied state:

As to *action*, its excess, either way, is, I think, equally faulty; but of this, I am sure, that the changes of the passions being once found and felt, the proper movements of the body must be the necessary consequence.²⁰

Marshall seems to have put Hill's remarks to immediate good use, for the latter was satisfied with the evening's performance. In a letter to Marshall dated October 24th, 1733 he noted 'you pleased me extremely, in Torrismond' and offered to annotate two more roles for the actor: the '*Earl of Essex*' and Hamlet.²¹

The energy Hill invested in actors during this period reflected his anxiety concerning the artistic and moral state of London's theatres: he was outraged that operas, pantomimes and light entertainments had overrun the stage. His convictions motivated him to try to become a theatre manager once again. In 1733 he unsuccessfully attempted to buy his way back into Drury Lane.²² Thereafter, more than once, he schemed to set up a theatre dedicated to the training of tragic actors. He believed that this would create a new generation of superior actors whose technique would be suited to the genre. Moreover, the scheme's avowed didactic intent would allow the actors to perform, under Hill's direct supervision, outside the official jurisdiction of the patent theatres. Hill's last attempt to found a '*Tragic Academy*' came in 1735. As Thomas Davies (c. 1712–1785) noted in his *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.*:

Mr. Hill's repeated attempts, to reform the action of the players, not having answered his intention, about the year 1735 he indulged his fancy, which, indeed, was warm and enthusiastic, with a new

¹⁸ HILL (1753), op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 183–4.

¹⁹ HILL, *ibid.*, pp. 153–4.

²⁰ HILL, *ibid.*, p. 154.

²¹ HILL, *ibid.*, pp. 155–6.

²² See: Christine GERARD, *Aaron Hill: The Muses' Projector, 1685-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 149.

scheme, which was to form a race of actors who should by far exceed all that went before them. To this end he proposed the founding of a tragic academy.²³

Davies then cites a letter by Hill, describing his plan to create a:

Tragic Academy, for extending and regulating theatrical diversions, and for instructing and educating actors in the practice of *dramatic* passion[s], and a power to *express* them strongly, the success of which laudable purpose might establish the *reputation of the stage*, by appropriating its influence to the service of wisdom and virtue.²⁴

Davies informs us, however, that the project ‘died in its birth; the prince of Wales refused to lend the influence of his name to it, and the projector made no further progress in it’.²⁵

HILL AS JOURNALIST: *THE PROMPTER*

But the indefatigable Hill was in this period not only busy pursuing his dream of an acting school: in 1734 he, together with playwright William Popple (1700/07–1764), founded a bi-weekly paper entitled *The Prompter*, which dealt extensively, though not exclusively, with theatrical subjects. As Christine Gerard put it: ‘During the course of 1734 Hill must have concluded that the best way to disseminate his views was by starting his own theatrical journal.’²⁶ The first issue appeared on November 12th. He chose the pen-name ‘*Sir Lionel Broomstick, Knight, Prompter of Great Britain*’, to designate his own contributions.²⁷ The second number of the periodical contained a menacing explanation for this choice of name, assuring readers that Broomstick intended to clean up the theatres, particularly the managers:

I shall, in such Cases, shew no Regard to Distinction of Persons, but sweep the Front, and Side, BOXES, with as little Ceremony, and Respect, as is shewn, before the Curtain, by *Broomsticks* of inferior Degree, to obtruding Apples, and Orange Peels. [...] I would not advise the Managers of any of the *Theatres* about Town, to be too *secure*, [...] I, therefore, give them this early Notice, that They may take Care to be *cleaner*, and more *decent*, than They have been, for some Time past; or I shall spring out upon them, where they least expect me, and cover them, with the Contempt of the Publick, and the *Dust*, which Themselves have been gathering.²⁸

Players were warned that Broomstick was resolved to sweep among them too, lamenting that there the ‘Rubbish lies so thick, I must either be choak’d, or work in a Muffler.’²⁹

He soon made good on these threats, antagonizing the players with biting criticisms of their work. Indeed, the very next number of *The Prompter* contained criticism of the well-known actors James Quin (1693–1766) and Colley Cibber (1671–1757): ‘Mr. *Quin* must be confess’d to be, *sometimes, wrong*, in his *Tragick* Characters; Mr. *Cibber*, to be, *always so*’. Hill compared Cibber’s *actio* to the ‘distorted *Heavings* of an *unjointed Caterpillar*’ and attributed to his facial expression ‘a contracted Kind of *passive*, yet *protruded*, Sharpness, like a Pig, half roasted’.³⁰ The attacks on thespians went on with some regularity. In 1735, an actor whom Hill mockingly called *Mr. ALL-WEIGHT* was chastised for his passionless and therefore monotonously smooth delivery:

²³ Thomas DAVIES, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.*, A New Edition, Vol. I (London: for the Author, 1780), p. 143.

²⁴ DAVIES, *ibid.*, pp. 144–5.

²⁵ DAVIES, *ibid.*, p. 145.

²⁶ GERRARD, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

²⁷ Initially, he was just called ‘Broomstick’. He received his grander nomenclature later on; see, for instance: Aaron HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. XLVIII, Friday, April 25th, 1735.

²⁸ HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. II, Friday, November 15th, 1734.

²⁹ HILL, *ibid.*

³⁰ HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. III, Tuesday, November 19th, 1734.

To *pause*, where No Pauses are necessary, is the Way to destroy their Effect, where the *Sense* stands in need of their Assistance. And, tho' *Dignity* is finely maintain'd, by the Weight of *majestic Composure*, yet are there Scenes, in your *Parts*, where the *Voice* shou'd be sharp and impatient, the *Look*, disorder'd, and agoniz'd, the *Action*, precipitate and turbulent—for the Sake of *such Difference*, as we see, in some *smooth Canal*, where the *Stream* is scarce visible, compar'd with the *other End* of the same Canal, rushing rapidly down a *Cascade*, and breaking into Beauties, which owe their *Attraction* to their *Violence*.³¹

Apparently, not all the actors appreciated the attentions paid to them by *The Prompter*. Davies tells us that Quin, angered by the criticisms, came to blows with Hill in public.³² The theatre managers, too, must have resented the sting of Broomstick's prose: on June 20th, 1735, *The Prompter* (Numb. LXIV) launched a scathing attack on both players and managers. Blaming the actors first, Hill refers Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*, which had been performed at Drury Lane on June 9th with William Milward (1702–1742) and Mrs Thurmond (d. 1762) in the roles of Jaffeir and Belvidera:

I have seen *Belvidera* DESERVE all her *Misery*, and *absolving* the Insensibility of the Audience, by *whining* them out of their *Power* to *pity* her: while *Jaffeir*, too amorous, and humble, to *outswell* the Low Pitch of *his* Lady, has sunk, *lovingly*, *like* her, and forgot all those *Violences*, those *Starts*, and those *Frenzies*, which, in *writing* the Character, must have *shaken* the Poet's Heart, like a *Whirlwind*: but, in *acting* it, are so kind to *fall flat enough* to *fit* their *Speaker*, and forgo all Pretensions to *discompose*, or *disorder*, an Audience.³³

Ultimately, however, the broomstick was pointed at the 'Unpoetic Managers, at the Head of a Theatre'. Hill, himself a would-be manager, let his readers know that the actors needed help in recognizing, in their lines, the potential for expressing the passions:

It were impossible such Errors shou'd be so commonly committed as they *are*, were the Players either qualified, Themselves, to *know* and *distinguish*, the different *Passions*, in their *Parts*, or had They Directors, of Capacity to *help* them in the Discovery.

FOR Want of this Skill, They can receive but little Benefit from being *told*, that Every Passion has it's [sic] *peculiar*, and *appropriated* LOOK; and Every *Look*, its adapted, and particular GESTURE. That the *Heart* having communicated it's [sic] *Sensation* to the *Eye*, Every *Muscle*, and *Nerve*, catches Impulse, in a Moment, and concurs, to *declare* the Impression.³⁴

PRESENTING THE SYSTEM: 'THE ACTOR'S EPITOME' (1735)

Hill, thereafter, attempted to present his system more generally to the readers of *The Prompter*. On December 9th, 1735, Broomstick recommended that tragic actors '*lay up*, in their *Memories*, an auxiliary Copy of Verses' entitled 'The Actor's Epitome'.³⁵ The text of this didactic poem, published in the same issue, advises the actor to prepare his body by cultivating a state neither rigid nor slack, but rather at once free of muscle tension and highly alert ('Pointedly *Earnest*'). Hill here works 'from outside in', but in an unconventional manner. Rather than imposing stereotypical signifiers of affect directly onto the body, he advises the actor to prepare the body to receive impulses from the imagination:

³¹ HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. XCII, Friday, September 26th, 1735.

³² See: DAVIES, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 138.

³³ HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. LXIV, Friday, June 20th, 1735.

³⁴ HILL, *ibid*.

³⁵ HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. CXIII, Tuesday, December 9th, 1735.

*On the rais'd Neck, oft mov'd, but ever strait,
Turn your unbending Head, with easy State.
Shun rambling Looks.—Fix your Attention, high;
Pointedly Earnest; meeting Eye, with Eye.*³⁶

Hill believed that this configuration of a straight but limber neck and a raised and active eye created a distinct mode of expressive potential (facilitating the addition of ‘*nature* to your *meanings*’) and had technical and artistic consequences throughout the body, as can be seen in his advice to an actor in 1733:

I would wish to see you assume that gracefulness, weight, and easiness, which must follow, from your keeping a more raised eye; and erect, yet easy, neck; — It will add *nature* to your *meanings*, and *majesty* to your *words*, and your *actions*; whereas the contrary practice gives the appearance of *levity*; loses the noble openness of the *breast*, and contributes to scatter and confound the *voice*; much of which it throws *inward*, from the audience.³⁷

Indeed, reverse confirmation can be found in ‘*The PLAYER’S Epitome*’ – a satire on poor acting published in *The Prompter* in 1736 – which inverts the precepts of ‘*The Actor’s Epitome*’. It purported to represent the ‘SYSTEM’ used by bad actors: ‘POKE a slunk Neck; and, with your Chin, ELATE’.³⁸ The specific physical starting point for good acting of a long, loose neck, low chin and raised eyes has strongly influenced the practical research into Hill’s system which is described in the second part of this article.³⁹

In ‘*The Actor’s Epitome*’, Hill further invited the actor’s entire body to participate in this easy state of being, stressing an experience of passive somatic awareness:

Spread, *be your opening* Breast; *oft chang’d, your* Face:
Step, *with a slow SEVERITY of* Grace.
Pausingly WARM, (*Significantly*) rise;
*And Affectation’s empty SWELL despise.*⁴⁰

Hill here remarked favourably on a continuous ‘opening’ of the breast and the constant play of facial muscles. Stage deportment is to be neat and graceful (‘*SEVERITY of Grace*’). From within this body at ease, the actor can then allow the kinaesthetic experience of the affect to dictate meaningful pauses in the declamation, giving a naturalness to the expression of the text, and avoiding ‘*Affectation’s empty SWELL*’. Hill’s explication of what he means by ‘Pausingly WARM’ is as follows:

TO *pause*, as some Actors do, at the End of Each Word or two, is to speak, like the Minute Hand of a Clock, that measures TIME, not MEANING.—All the *Pauses*, in Utterance, shou’d, like the *Pointings*, in Reading, serve to *mark out the Sense*, and give Harmony and Force, to the *Cadence*: and, to do This effectually, the Pause, in the SOUND, must be accompanied with *no* Pause in the ACTION: but fill’d out, by such agitated Perturbation, in the *Look*, and the *Gesture*, as may (instead of *interrupting* the Course

³⁶ HILL, *ibid.* For an affirmation of the importance to Hill of this relationship between neck and eye see Hill (1753), *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 157–8.

³⁷ HILL (1753), *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 214.

³⁸ HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. CXXIX, Tuesday, February 3rd, 1736.

³⁹ For the relationship between the work of F. M. Alexander and historical acting see, in this volume: Anne SMITH, ‘Reflections on Historical Acting and the Alexander Technique’. See, also, Anne SMITH, ‘Standing with Ease and Grace: On the Difficulties of Reading Historical Acting Treatises Objectively’, https://jedwentz.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Smith_Standing-with-Ease-1.pdf (last accessed 25-02-2022).

⁴⁰ HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. CXIII, Tuesday, December 9th, 1735.

of the Passion) seem but the *Struggling*, of its inward *Emotion*; *preparing* for the *Utterance* of What arises to the *Conception*. It is with a View to this expressive *Discontinuance* of Speaking, that the Author makes use of the Word WARM, after *pausingly* [...].⁴¹

In the final octet of the poem, Hill details just how the imagination acts upon the body:

Be, *what you seem*.—*Each pictur'd Passion weigh*;
Fill, *first, your Thoughts, with All, your Words must say*.
Strong, *yet distinguish'd, let Expression paint*:
Not straining mad, nor negligently faint.
On rising Spirits, let your Voice take Wing:
And Nerves, elastic, into Passion, spring.
Let ev'ry Joint keep TIME; each Sinew bend:
And the Shot SOUL, in every Start, ASCEND.⁴²

Here thought becomes primary, and the acting mode switches from 'outside in' to 'inside out'. Nerves, joints and sinews respond to the impressions of the imagination. The actor's body now allows the properly conceived passion to register with a natural intensity, neither overwrought nor lax. Hill chooses the passive mood: '*let Expression paint*', '*let your Voice take Wing*', '*Let ev'ry Joint keep TIME*', etc. His system invites the actor to *allow* passion to manifest itself in the prepared body by means of a heightened somatic ease and awareness, rather than encouraging him to force passion's signifiers onto the body from outside.

THE PROMPTER'S 'REGULAR SYSTEM OF ACTING' (1735)

Later that month, on December 26th, *The Prompter* resumed its didactic mode, publishing a detailed explanation in prose of how Hill's 'regular SYSTEM of ACTING' physically functioned. Hill again promoted a close relationship between the actor's imagination and his body, declaring that 'the *Mien* is no other, than this *muscular IMPRESSION*, of some Disposition in the purposing *Mind*'. His understanding of the body is at least in part Cartesian, in that he believes the pineal gland to be the seat of the soul and sluice gate of the animal spirits:

WITHOUT entering into the Disputes of *Philosophers*, concerning the SEAT of the *Soul*, It will suffice for my present Intention, to assign a Throne to the IMAGINATION, upon her little *Gland*, in the Middle of the *Brain*: whence the *Animal Spirits*, (surrounding her, like *Life-Guards*) are *detach'd*, for Execution of her *Orders*, into Every Part of her Empire, the *Body*, by a Conveyance, with the *Blood*, and the *Humours*.⁴³

What is interesting here is that the route by which affect manifests itself in the body is different from that which Hill had delineated in 1716 when describing Booth's voice-first technique: in the *Prompter* article, the animal spirits, which medical theory at this point still considered to be the prime initiators of moving muscles, first made their presence known in the *face*; most specifically, in the eye:

THE first, and obvious, Effect, of such a Surplus Effusion of *Spirits*, about the *Brain*, is a sparkling Impression of the Purpose, breaking into the EYES, as the *nearest* Remove, from their *Master*.

⁴¹ HILL, *ibid.*

⁴² HILL, *ibid.*

⁴³ HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. CXVIII, Friday December 26th, 1735.

BUT the *Eyes*, wanting *Space*, to retain so redundant a 'Tide, The FACE becomes (all over) stamp'd, with Marks of the *same Character*, by a Receipt, (into its *Muscles*) of those *Spirits*, so charg'd by the Imagination, with Execution of that *Specific Purpose*.⁴⁴

From the eyes and face, the spirits carried the imaginative 'Purpose' or conception downwards throughout the body, affecting the voice by the time they reached the chest. This is in contrast to Hill's description of Booth matching his face to his voice. *The Prompter* sums up the acting system in four points:

1st. — The *Imagination* assumes the *Idea*.

2^{dly}. — It's [sic] *Marks*, and characteristic Impressions, appear, first, in the *Face*; because nearest to the *Seat* of the Imagination.

3^{dly}. — THENCE, impell'd by the *Will*, a commission'd Detachment of the *Animal Spirits* descending, into the dependant Organization of *Muscles*, and *Swelling*, and *adapting* them, in its Progress, bends, and stimulates, their Elastic Powers, into a *Position*, apt to *execute* the Purpose, (or express the Warmth of) the *Idea*.

4^{thly}. — THUS, the *Look*, *Air*, *Voice*, and *Action*, proper to a Passion, preconceiv'd, in the *Imagination*, become a *mere*, and *mechanic*, NECESSITY; without Perplexity, Study, or Difficulty.⁴⁵

Far from being static or rigid, Hill described this 'inside out' system as capable of expressing all the nuances of the imagination itself. Formed to a purpose by the mind, the force and quality of the movement of the animal spirits produced concomitant muscular reactions:

there are DEGREES, in the Motions here assign'd to the *Spirits*, conformable to their different Purposes. — In the *soft*, and *desirable* Passions, They SLIDE, *Sweet* and *serenely*; while, in the *Angry*, and *Violent*, they RUSH, *stormy*, and *turbulent*; swelling, wild, and irregular, like the *Starts*, they *produce*, in Mens [sic] *Temper*s.⁴⁶

Hill, in the two issues of *The Prompter* examined here, proposed a picture of a body that is, in its freedom and ease, open to the effects of the animal spirits. These, directed by the imagination and the will to act, produced the physical expressions of emotion: 'that is to say, an *Elastic* Operation of the *Muscles*, by Influx of the *Animal Spirits*, pressing through, with the *Nervous Juice*, and disposing them for *Agitation*.'⁴⁷ The resulting acting was natural because it activated the body's natural affective system, and would cause the audience to feel those alarms and distresses that Hill believed were necessary for their moral improvement, and for the success of tragedy on the stage.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HILL'S SYSTEM: ZARA (1735–1736)

TWO PRODUCTIONS OF ZARA: 1735 AND 1736

On February 25th, 1730, Robert Wilks (c.1665–1732) wrote to Aaron Hill:

permit me to say, that, without Exception, I think you the best Judge of Dramatic Performance, in all its Branches, I have ever known. It were to be wish'd, that every Spectator had your Penetration, and could so justly distinguish the different Passions, and the Manner of working 'em.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ HILL, *ibid*.

⁴⁵ HILL, *ibid*.

⁴⁶ HILL, *ibid*. that Hill here refers to the concupiscible and irascible passions of Thomas Aquinas throws the purity of his Cartesianism into question.

⁴⁷ HILL, *ibid*.

⁴⁸ In *A Collection of Letters, Never before Printed: Written by Alexander Pope, Esq; and other Ingenious Gentlemen, to the late Aaron Hill, Esq;* (Dublin: Richard James, 1751), pp. 72–3.

Such high praise from a man who was the manager of Drury Lane Theatre, as well as one of the most celebrated actors in London, gives us pause for thought. Was Wilks merely flattering Hill? If not, we need to take Hill's system very seriously indeed. I now turn to the premiere, at Drury Lane, of Hill's *Zara*, an adaption of *Zaire* by Voltaire (1696–1778). This performance can serve as a case study of Hill's system since in it two young performers trained by him took the starring roles. Hill's mordacious attacks on London's theatre companies, published in *The Prompter* in the months leading up to *Zara*'s Drury Lane premiere, combined with the antics of the play's tumultuous opening-night audience, lent notoriety to the event that it otherwise would not have enjoyed. This in turn resulted in the publication of a detailed review of the acting that can be used as a case study to test whether or not Hill's system was efficacious in preparing actors for the stage – at least by eighteenth-century standards.

Hill published one scene of his translation/adaption of Voltaire's tragedy *Zaire*, which had premiered in Paris in August, 1732, in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in May of 1733. He spent the next two years trying to persuade the managers of the patent theatres to produce his play, without success. John Rich (1692–1761) turned it down flat. The management of Drury Lane had promised to put it on in 1734, but perpetually postponed doing so. Hill ultimately settled for an amateur performance at the York Buildings, for the benefit of his friend William Bond (c. 1675–1735), who was gravely ill. Despite his poor health, Bond took the role of Lusignan in the play. He collapsed onstage during the first night, dying the next day, on May 30th, 1735.⁴⁹

The death of Bond, however, did not mean the end of the run. For the following performances, the gentleman who was playing the role of Osman took on the role of Lusignan as well, and played both characters. This young man came in for great praise in *The Prompter*:

the Spirit, and astonishing *Propriety*, (in Look, Voice, and Action) wherewith, amidst the universal and deserv'd *Applauses* of the Audience, I saw the Parts of *Osman*, and of *Lusignan*, perform'd, by *One, and the same, Actor*—The Part of *Osman*, a gay, violent, imperial, amorous *Conqueror*—and the Part of *Lusignan*, an old, dejected, miserable, *Captive*, —BOTH, perform'd, full up to all the elevated Grace of *Nature, Attitude, Force, Glitter and Perfection*—by a *Youth*, quite *new* upon the *Stage*—and who has scarce seen *twenty* Years of Life, yet!⁵⁰

This remarkable young gentleman was Aaron Hill's nephew, also named Aaron Hill (c. 1715–1739). The older Hill was quite proud of his relative, and may have coached him at least as early 1733, when the youth twice performed a prologue, at Drury Lane, on August 20th and 21st, 1733.⁵¹ The prologue seems to have been written especially for him by his uncle in order to display his talents in expressing the passions.⁵² Three weeks later, Broomstick published a general description of good acting, in which we can surely see a portrait of the younger Hill:

Thus, the happiest Qualification which a *Player* shou'd desire to be Master of, is a *Plastic Imagination*.—This alone is a FAUSTUS for the *Theatres*: and conjures up *all Changes*, in a Moment. —In one Part of a *Tragic Speech*, the conscious Distress of an Actor's Condition stamping *Humility* and *Dejection*, on his FANCY, strait, His *Look* receives the Impression, and communicates Affliction to his *Air*, and his *Utterance*. —Anon, in the same Speech, perhaps the Poet has thrown in a Ray or two, of HOPE: At

⁴⁹ See: HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. LX, Friday, June 6th, 1735.

⁵⁰ HILL, *ibid*.

⁵¹ For this complicated history see Philip H. HIGHFILL, Kalman A. BURNIM and Edward A. LANGHANS, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), Vol. 7, p. 306.

⁵² See HILL (1753), *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 119–122.

This, the Actor's *Eye* shou'd suddenly *take Fire*: and invigorate with a *Glow* of *Liveliness*, both the *Action*, and the *Accent*: till a *Third* and *Fourth* Variety appearing, He stops short, upon *pensive* PAUSES, and makes *Transitions*, (as the Meanings vary) into *Jealousy*, *Scorn*, *Fury*, *Penitence*, *Revenge*, or *Tenderness*! All, *kindled* at the *Eye*, by the Ductility of a *Flexile* Fancy, and APPROPRIATING *Voice* and *Gesture*, to the very *Instant* of the *changing* *Passion*.⁵³

Yet Aaron Hill the younger must not have merely activated standard passions within himself for both Osman and Lusignan: Hill the elder expresses his admiration for his nephew's ability, despite his youth, to act the characters and passions of both a young and an old man. Surely the injunction 'Be, *what you seem*' includes actual characterization, an embodied conception not only of general passions but of their particular manifestation in individual characters?

Zara's success in 1735 in its amateur dress led to it being accepted for professional performance at Drury Lane in January of 1736. The young Hill reprised his role of Osman. In the title role, Susannah Cibber (1714-1766) made her debut as an actress in spoken theatre (she had already made a promising start as a singer). The elder Hill coached both young people. His expectations were high. He pointedly predicted that the performances of the novices would once and for all prove the worth of his acting system to the world.⁵⁴ The belligerent tone he adopted in *The Prompter* in December, 1735, the detailed public explanation of the workings of his system, can be read in the light of what he believed to be his approaching vindication. Hill appears to have been ramping up his criticisms of the theatre establishment as preparation for what he believed would be a great moment of triumph, in which his future as a playwright and manager, so long thwarted by the London patent theatre managements, would be assured.

In this context, the jubilant tone of the preface to the text of *Zara*, published on 28 January, 1736, is striking. Hill claims that a young actor following nature can reach perfection on his very first performance on the stage. Hill challenged the idea that only great experience made great actors, asserting that stage experience merely engrained affectation and unnatural mannerisms. He pretended that his was not the hand guiding Broomstick's plume, in order disingenuously to assert that he had been inspired to present a passionately acted *Zara* by the bellicose essays of *The Prompter*:

I had (of late) among the Rest of the Town, been depriv'd of all rational Pleasure from the Theatre, by a monstrous, and unmoving Affectation: which, choking up the Avenues to Passion, had made Tragedy FORBIDDING, and HORRIBLE!

I was despairing to see a Correction of this Folly; when I found myself, unexpectedly, re-animated, by the War which The PROMPTER has proclaim'd, and is now, Weekly, waging, against the Ranters, and Whiners, of the Theatre; after having undertaken to reduce the Actor's lost Art, into PRINCIPLES, with Design, by reconciling them to the

⁵³ HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. LXVI, Friday, June 27th, 1735.

⁵⁴ Reports of the occasion had a long life in France: 'On lit dans une Préface des Œuvres de M. de Voltaire, qu'un jeune Lord de vingt ans, & une jeune personne de dix-huit, qui n'avait jamais récité de Vers ni l'un ni l'autre, jouèrent l'un Orosmane & l'autre Zaïre, la première fois que cette Pièce fut représentée sur le Théâtre de Londres, que loin de suivre le mauvais goût, qui dominait en ce Temps tout les Comédiens Anglais, ils ne consultèrent que la saine raison & leur âme, & réussirent cependant à tel point que les Comédiens furent obligés de changer leur manière de jouer, & d'adopter la belle simplicité.' ['One reads in a preface to the works of M. de Voltaire that a young Lord of twenty years, and a young woman of twenty-eight, who had never either of them recited verses, played Orosmane and Zaïre the first time that this play was presented in the London theatre; and far from following the bad taste which dominated all the English actors in this period, they only consulted healthy reason and their soul, and yet succeeded to such an extent that the actors were obliged to alter their manner of acting, and to adopt a beautiful simplicity.'] Tournon de la Chapelle, 'L'Art du comédien vu dans ses principes' (1782), *Écrits sur l'art théâtral (1753-1801)*, Vol. I, ed. by Sabine CHAOUCHE (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005), 689–773, p. 699. All translations by the author.

*touching, and spirited, Medium, to reform those wild Copies of Life, into some Resemblance, at least, of their Originals.*⁵⁵

Hill believed that the public, being moved by his mentees, would consequently demand better acting from other performers on the London stage. His prediction partially came true: both the play and Susannah Cibber's portrayal of the heroine were hugely successful and *Zara* enjoyed 14 performances. Only one of these, however, included the young Aaron Hill. He met with such an aggressive reception from audience members, who came armed with whistles to drown out his speeches, that he withdrew from the production after the premiere. Later writers, in discussing the failure, have often assumed that the nephew simply was not good enough, that he was too inexperienced to take his place on the professional stage. Young Hill was not, however, wholly inexperienced. Not only had he had seven performances of *Zara* with the amateur cast in June and July of 1735, he had also performed the role of Marcus in a professional production of Joseph Addison's (1672–1719) *Cato* at Drury Lane in September of that year.⁵⁶ Why then did he fail so miserably in January 1736 that he withdrew from an otherwise extremely successful production?

REVIEWS: *ZARA* IN DRURY LANE (1736)

What precisely happened at the premiere of *Zara* can only be deduced by examining documents of later date. Broomstick took his time to comment on the premiere, hinting in *The Prompter* of January 23rd, 1736 that he was prepared to discuss 'an Affair, that concerns, in particular, some of the *modest* Gentlemen of *Drury Lane Theatre*'.⁵⁷ This 'discussion' finally appeared in the issue on February 3rd, which contained both commentary by Broomstick and a letter attributed to the hand of the young gentleman who performed the role of Osman. The tone of this issue is exceedingly bitter. It begins with Broomstick speaking of punishment for the malicious actors who organised the young actor's miscarriage. After all, he had performed in a manner 'beyond all Comparison, *Superior*, to the *Bunglers*, I hint at, in an Art, which they are *paid*, for *disgracing*.'⁵⁸

The letter, signed 'Osman', then proceeds to thank the group of 'kind, good-natur'd *Players*' who had organized a hissing, laughing, whistle-blowing cabal to accompany Osman's speeches, providing 'the *persuasive* Influence of a Musical Society, call'd *Penny Trumpeters*'.⁵⁹ Apparently another part of the audience had supported the young actor with applause, but the insult took and the actor withdrew from further performances. The letter was further accompanied by an ironic reply to 'The Actor's Epitome', called 'The Player's Epitome' (see above). Thereafter, Broomstick again showered lavish praise on the younger Hill, and wrote very unkindly of William Mills (1701–1750), who took over the role of Osman on the 19th of January. Though it might seem a bad case of sour grapes for *The Prompter* to attack young Hill's successor, Hill's dislike of Mills's acting had, in fact, a longer history: for instance, on February 23rd, 1731 Hill wrote to David Mallet (1705–1765):

in the midst of all his startings, and convulsive agitations of body, he [Mills] looks not, as if he were in earnest: —at least, he wants weight, and appears too light, for the solemn *dignity* of his sorrow, which

⁵⁵ Aaron HILL, *The Tragedy of Zara* (London: John Watts, 1736), second edition, np.

⁵⁶ Joseph R. Roach is incorrect in asserting that Hill 'was so confident in the scientific rightness of his acting "system" that he cast his nephew, a complete neophyte who had never been near the stage, in the leading part of Osman in his own translation of Voltaire's *Zaire* (1736)'. See: Joseph R. ROACH, *The Player's Passion* (Ann Arbor: the University of Michigan Press, 1993), p. 82.

⁵⁷ HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. CXXVI, Friday, January 23rd, 1736.

⁵⁸ HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. CXXIX, Tuesday, February 3rd, 1736.

⁵⁹ HILL, *ibid*.

is occasioned by his *not knowing, or remembering*, the harmony between the *eyes*, and the organs of the *voice*.⁶⁰

In 1732, Hill again wrote of Mills' inability to properly perform tragedy, warning an anonymous correspondent that: 'I know, he [Mills] will be very well receiv'd by the town; but there is a distress, a heart-rending tenderness – a weight, and a *something to be felt* – which Mr. *Mills* will no farther enter into, than a *Snail* into a *pavement*.'⁶¹

It is worth noting that Hill was not alone in these sentiments. The playwright and novelist Henry Fielding (1707–1754) remarked of Mills that:

He was at all times a very safe actor; and as he never shocked you with any absurdity, so he never raised horror, terror, admiration, or any of those turbulent sensations to that dangerous height to which Mr. *Garrick* [...] hath been guilty of carrying them.⁶²

It is no wonder, then, that Hill was anguished to see a leading role in his play pass from the youth he himself had trained to display fully embodied passions, to an actor noted only for an amiable mediocrity. *The Prompter* laments that Mills 'LEFT OUT the *Passions*, in the Character, because He cou'd not *reach* them; and *be-butcher'd* all the *Softnesses*, because He cou'd not *comprehend* them.' Hill ends the issue bitterly:

'For my Part, I begin to look upon the *Stage*, as a DEAD BODY, *without Hopes of Resurrection*: —It's *Managers* [...] provided they GET MONEY enough, are quite *indifferent* to the *Plays*, or *Playing*, whence they *draw* their Profit: and, if, in such a prostituted State of Management, neither *Court*, nor *Town*, COMPELS a *Reformation*, farewell all Prospect of *Reviving SENSE*! —Hail, *Harlequin!* and *W'antonness!* and *Darkness!* and *Corruption!*'⁶³

The controversy had not yet been brought to an end, however, for on Thursday, 25 March, 1736 the *Grub-Street Journal* published a letter, signed Meanwell, attacking both the Hills, but especially the elder:

Amongst other laudable attempts that have been made of late for the improvement of the English Stage by our Theatrical *Projectors*, I must confess, I was somewhat surprized at one, which was started by an * *extraordinary Genius* in that way some time ago.—The Scheme seemed to me to be built on no less a *Postulatum* than the following, That it might be an easy thing for him (the *Projector*) through his own *uncommon discernment* in all requisites for the Stage, to fix on some young persons with good capacities, who, on their first appearance, would exceed all those whom we, in our present depravity of taste, call *good Actors*; and would infallibly convince the world, that long study and experience were not necessary to form a Player; and that, provided a man would put on the *resolution* to BE *for an hour or two, the very person, he would seem*, he could not miss success.⁶⁴

Clearly Hill's acerbic tone and blunt criticism of the London actors and managers had caused deep anger, and not only recently. Someone signing off as Meanwell had written earlier to *The Prompter* (February 25th, 1735) in an aggressive manner and been even more aggressively rebuffed by Hill, who noted that Mr. Meanwell was 'very *scurrilous*', 'very *ill-bred*' and 'very *ignorant*', summing it up: 'In short, Mr. *Meanwell* MEANS VERY ILL'.⁶⁵ Meanwell now gave both the Hills a lashing, referring the reader to provocative statements that appeared both in *The Prompter* and in the preface

⁶⁰ HILL (1753), op. cit., Vol. I, p. 47.

⁶¹ HILL, *ibid.*, pp. 113–4.

⁶² Cited in *The Criticism of Henry Fielding*, ed. by Ioan WILLIAMS (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1970), p. 167.

⁶³ HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. CXXIX, Tuesday, February 3rd, 1736.

⁶⁴ The asterisk refers to the following footnote: 'See *Preface to Zara*.' *The Grub-Street Journal*, Numb. 326, Thursday, March 25th, 1736.

⁶⁵ HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. XXXI, Tuesday, February 25th, 1735.

to *Zara*. Unfortunately for us, Meanwell's criticism of young Hill's acting is too general to be of any use in determining the efficacy of his uncle's acting system. Meanwell mocks the young gentleman using theatrical clichés: 'decked out in all the pomp of tinsel and dramattick finery, stalking about the Stage, *sawing the air with his hands, and tearing a passion to rags* some of the Audience laughing, and all of his friends pitying him; whilst he, confident of his own superior merit, and careless of the sentiments of the Spectators, persists undaunted, alternately whining and bellowing'.⁶⁶

Luckily for us, on April 1st, 1736, *The Grub-Street Journal* published a response to Meanwell's letter by a certain J. English. The letter contains an extensive review of young Hill's acting that shows greater nuance than either Meanwell or Hill displayed in theirs, and is worth looking at in detail here. The writer describes young Hill's first entrance as the character Osman:

The Young Gentleman's first Appearance, gave me reason to believe Him very Conceited, He coming on, with a Haughty, Grandeur of Step, and a Look, that really Spoke an *Imperious, Self-dependant* EASTERN *Emperor*: [...] but I must own I began to alter my Opinion, [...] when he left his Attendant, and address'd himself *zara*, [sic] he fell from that Haughty Air, into a Genteel Easy Attitude, and a Voice quite chang'd from the Stern, and Commanding, to the Soft, Easy, and Natural.⁶⁷

This description shows the influence of Hill's system on his nephew's acting: the young player admirably displayed, in his first scene, his ability to change affect in body and voice in order to suit the passion of the text. The haughty character of his entrance may also have been dictated by his uncle. In 1733 the older Hill, coaching an inexperienced actor in the role of Othello, wrote:

But, as the first appearance strikes most strongly, and it is easier to receive than to remove, a bad impression, I could wish, you would assume, from your very first step on the stage, all the warlike boldness of air, that arises from keeping the nerves (as well of the arms, as the legs) strongly braced, and the visage erect and awful [sic]; carrying marks of that conscious superiority, inseparable from a character, so dignified as *Othello's*.⁶⁸

It therefore is unsurprising that in the role of Osman, the young Hill would adopt a similar style of entrance. However, the adverse circumstances of the evening may have led to an exaggeration of the affect, as J. English notes in his review:

when He first Appear'd, and they began to *Hiss* before He had *Spoke*, He threw an Indignant Eye, round the House; rather *too* much in the Character of the Emperor: but considering He had no Dependance on the Audience, as appear'd by the Preface of *Zara*; I think, a Man of any Spirit, cou'd not have done less.⁶⁹

English also remarked that Hill's portrayal of various passions was judicious and laudable:

He knew very well what he said and laid down all the Sentiments in his Part (which are very many, and very strong) with great Weight, and Judgement; [...] I find, all that Gay, Spirited Majesty he put on, is absolutely necessary, to give a just Idea of the Character, and certainly deserves Praise instead of Censure, and if so, the *Letter* sign'd MEANWELL, has certainly a Meaning quite contrary to what the Author wou'd have it understood.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *The Grub-Street Journal*, Numb. 326, Thursday, March 25th, 1736.

⁶⁷ *The Grub-Street Journal*, Numb. 327, April 1st, 1736.

⁶⁸ HILL (1753), op. cit., Vol. I, p. 217.

⁶⁹ *The Grub-Street Journal*, Numb. 327, April 1st, 1736.

⁷⁰ *The Grub-Street Journal*, *ibid*.

Despite this warm praise, however, English admitted 'I am far from thinking the Gentleman deserv'd the Character, which a *Prompter* of last May or June, somewhat too partial, gave of him, he committing [sic] many Faults, which, as an Impartial Person, I shall take Liberty to mention.'⁷¹

The first fault concerned young Hill's declamation: 'He was continually laying such strong Emphasis on single words, such as *I, my, thee, thy*, &c. that destroy'd the sound of the remaining sentence, gave pain, to the Hearers, and made Himself appear Unnatural, and Conceited.'⁷² This is a serious charge, for the elder Hill was very concerned with proper emphasis in declamation. We have seen that he underlined the emphatic words, when marking up the actors' parts. Indeed, Davies, in his *The Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.*, noted of Susannah Cibber that Hill 'interlined her part with a kind of commentary upon it; he marked every accent and emphasis'.⁷³ However, the printed text of *Zara*, which does contain italicised words for emphasis, does not very abundantly italicize '*I, my, thee, thy &c.*' in Osman's speeches. This passage from Act I may serve as an example:

Not so—I love—and wou'd be lov'd, again;
Let me confess it, I possess a Soul,
That what it wishes, wishes, *ardently*.
I shou'd believe, you *bated*, had you *Power*
To *love*, with *Moderation*: 'Tis my Aim,
In every Thing, to reach supreme Perfection.
If, with an equal Flame, I touch your Heart,
Marriage attends your Smile—but know, 'twill make
Me wretched, if it makes not *Zara* happy.⁷⁴

Here 'I', 'you' and 'my' are left unitalicized; while the italicized '*Me*' in the last line makes perfect rhetorical sense, balanced as it is against an italicised '*Zara*'. It seems likely, then, that the unnatural and too frequent emphases English complained of in the young Hill's declamation did not reflect the elder Hill's tutelage.

English further criticised the young actor for mismanaging his voice, staying too long at too high a pitch ('upon an Unnatural Stretch, beyond what the Passions requir'd'). This is certainly something of which Hill the elder would *not* have approved. Indeed, we have seen the importance he placed on the use of the voice as a signifier of affect, starting as early as 1716 in his preface to *The Fatal Vision*. English did, however, offer an excuse for the young Hill's high-pitched declamation, noting that his tormentors were consciously challenging the power of his voice by using their penny trumpets: 'the Audience had an Inclination to try whether it [Hill's voice] was strong enough to be Heard, above the *Musick*, they brought to keep him Company.'⁷⁵ English's final criticism is on a matter of stagecraft, and again he blamed the aggressive behaviour of the audience at least in part:

⁷¹ *The Grub-Street Journal*, *ibid.*

⁷² *The Grub-Street Journal*, *ibid.*

⁷³ Thomas DAVIES (1780), *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 137.

⁷⁴ [Aaron HILL], *The Tragedy of Zara*, The Second Edition, (London: John WATTS, 1736), pp. 8–9.

⁷⁵ *The Grub-Street Journal*, Numb. 327, April 1st, 1736.

He [Hill] also, kept, almost, a continual *Profile* to the Audience, (except in Soliloquies) which threw his Voice, in, among the *Scenes*, and made it in some Places, come imperfect to the Audience. [...] which in some measure, might proceed from their ill-usage of him.⁷⁶

It is possible that the young Hill, when addressing his fellow actors on stage, turned away from the abuse he was receiving from the auditorium. His uncle certainly would not have approved of an actor standing in profile under normal circumstances. The elder Hill had, in fact, chastised an actor for doing just that in 1733: ‘Sometimes, either by turning your *face* too much from the *front*, or not enough raising the articulation of your *voice*, we lost a line, or half a line, in the *boxes*.’⁷⁷ Otherwise, in terms of stagecraft, English found much to praise in the young Hill’s performance:

I believe no Disinterested Auditor, will deny, that he Trod the Stage with a Grace, and Majesty, which I really cou’d wish to see equal’d by some of our best Performers [...]. I must own, I never saw Action better Adapted, and with more Grace, and Spirit; and throughout his whole Part, he had not the least Action, or Movement [...] but what was as free, and disingag’d, as if it had been his Practice from his Infancy.⁷⁸

Although there is every chance – despite his assertion ‘I assure you, I am intirely unacquainted with the young Gentleman’ – that J. English was in fact someone from the Hill circle, and that the letter is a disguised puff of the young man’s performance, I take it at face value here, because it does sound notes of criticism as well as of praise. Yet, perhaps the most convincing remark that indicates the quality of Hill’s system and coaching comes from a snide dig made about Susannah Cibber, who played the title role in *Zara*. On January 27th, 1736, while *Zara* was nearing the end of its run, the *Daily Journal* announced that Mrs. Cibber would soon appear in *The Beggar’s Opera*, remarking that she had:

during the Run of *Zara*, shewn her natural Genius, by never any one Night varying in either Tone of Voice or Action from the Way she was taught: and it is not doubted that Mrs. Cibber will on this Stage rise as much in the Opinion of the Town by her Acting, as she did on several others (when Miss Arne) by her Singing.⁷⁹

This certainly makes it look as if the actress, doggedly following the instruction she had received from Hill, was a smash hit in the role of Zara, while the poor nephew, as Osman, served as a sacrificial lamb offered up to the animosities Hill himself had provoked in the theatre world with his acerbic attacks in *The Prompter*.

LIKE GNATS IN A SUNBEAM (1736–1749)

HILL’S *THE ART OF ACTING* (1746)

The last issue of *The Prompter* appeared on July 2nd, 1736. However, undaunted by its mixed success – and that of *Zara* – as a tool for promoting his ideas, Hill had not yet exhausted his efforts to disseminate his acting system. In May of 1743, he confided to fellow-dramatist David Mallet:

I am very *busy*, but it is, like the *Gnats*, when they people a *sun-beam*. My excursions are various, but short: one pursuit [sic] meets and crosses, another: I begin many starts, but end nothing: Imagination

⁷⁶ *The Grub-Street Journal*, *ibid*.

⁷⁷ HILL (1753), *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 218.

⁷⁸ *The Grub-Street Journal*, Numb. 327, April 1st, 1736.

⁷⁹ *Daily Journal*, Issue 5592, January 27, 1736. See also HILL, *The Prompter*, February 6th, 1736.

is a kind of *wife* to the judgment; she attracts, and delights by her beauties; but then she quite spoils all relish of a coarser society, however, solid or dirtily useful.

I AM proceeding by fits, in my *Essay on expressing the passions*.⁸⁰

Although Hill had difficulties finishing the projects he started in this period, in 1746 he did publish the first part of a didactic poem entitled *The Art of Acting*. This work – four hundred and sixteen lines in length – claimed to derive ‘RULES *from* a NEW PRINCIPLE, for ‘Touching the PASSIONS in a Natural Manner’. The work is prefaced by an extensive dedication (to Philip, Earl of Chesterfield) which tells us that there was to be a second part, also in verse, that would treat ‘the COMIC Walk in the dramattick Passions, [...] as also, All the numerous COMPOUND PASSIONS, in their several Natures; – their entangled Mixtures with, and intricate Dependencies on, One Another.’⁸¹ Hill further states that this two-part *The Art of Acting* in verse would serve as an abstract of a future ‘prose Tract, which I prepare upon this Subject, for a fuller Explanation of these Hints, with all the requisite Variety of Reasonings, Demonstrations, and Examples’, adding ‘I have hopes to leave the System undeniable.’⁸² Such were his ambitions. They would not be realized. The promised poem on comic acting never appeared. The ‘prose Tract’ may have been the same text that was published posthumously in *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill, Esq.* (1753) as the unfinished ‘An Essay on the Art of Acting’. If this is so, then Hill may have begun work on it as early as 1743, when, as we have seen in his letter to Mallet, he mentioned that he was writing an ‘*Essay on expressing the passions*’. I, at any rate, conclude from all this that in the 1740s Hill was working simultaneously, by fits and starts, on various acting treatises in prose and verse, but that at the time of his death in 1750 he had only completed the first part of the 1746 *The Art of Acting*: ‘*Gnats, when they people a sun-beam*’, indeed!

Yet, we must be grateful for what Hill did achieve: *The Art of Acting* Part I presents the idea of the ‘mazy Round’ or the circular nature of the emotional pathway available to the actor (from imagination to body and from body to imagination), a concept which, as we shall see in the second part of this article, proved to be as controversial to posterity as it was useful to my experiments:

See Art's short Path! —'tis easy to be found,
Winding, delightfull, thro' the mazy Round!
 [...]
 Still, as the Nerves constrain, the Looks obey,
And what the Look enjoins, the Nerves display:
Mutual their Aid, reciprocal their Strain,
 [...]
 'Tis Cause, and Consequence⁸³

Hill then treats ten ‘dramatic passions’ (joy, grief, fear, anger, compassion, scorn, amazement, hatred, love and jealousy) with close attention, discussing the quality of imagination, the look in the eye and the physical muscle tension associated with each. The final lines of *The Art of Acting* offer a summary of the system, underscoring its close relationship to that proposed in *The Prompter* a decade earlier:

⁸⁰ HILL (1753), op. cit., Vol. II, p. 15.

⁸¹ AARON HILL, *The Art of acting* (London: J. Osborn, 1746), p. vi.

⁸² HILL, *ibid.*

⁸³ HILL, *ibid.*, p. 11.

Previous to Art's first Act—(till then, *All, vain*)
 Print the *ideal Pathos*, on the *Brain*:
 Feel the Thought's Image on the *Eyeball* roll;
 Behind that *Window* sits th'attentive SOUL:
Wing'd at *her* Beck, th'obedient MUSCLES fly,
 Bent, or relaxing, to the varied Eye:
 Press'd, moderate, lenient, VOICE'S organ'd Sound,
 To Each felt Impulse, tones the tunefull Round:
 Form'd to the Nerves, concurring MIEN partakes, —
 So, the mov'd Actor MOVES — and Passion SHAKES.⁸⁴

AARON HILL'S LETTERS TO DAVID GARRICK (1746–1749)

On April 20th, 1744, a year before William Hogarth (1697–1764) painted his famous portrait of Garrick as a startled Richard the Third (See Fig. 1), Hill wrote to Mallet:

One day, last week, I was at *Macbeth*, and saw, for the first time, your *favourite*, Mr. Garrick: — He is natural, impressed, and easy; has a voice articulate, and placid: his gesture never turbulent and often well adapted; is untouched by affectation. His peculiar talent lies in pensively preparatory attitudes; whereby, awakening expectation in the audience, he secures and holds fast their attention.⁸⁵



Fig. 1. *Mr Garrick in the Character of Richard III^d*. Nineteenth-century print, T. Clark after William Hogarth (1745). Author's collection.

⁸⁴ HILL, *ibid.*, p. 22.

⁸⁵ HILL (1753), *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 34–5.

Hill was not yet prepared to declare in David Garrick's (1717–1779) favour, however:

He gave me no occasion to discern, what *strength* he has in the more agitated passions; —what power of compass, in indignation, extasy, love, scorn, joy, or furious and unbridled anger. If his voice can reach the *swells* peculiar to those sharper transports, with the same propriety and gracefulness, wherewith he touches the soft *falls* of sorrow, terror, and compassion; and, if his motions, in such risings, are as nervous and majestic, as the mien requires, in active changes, from the pensive, or the mournful, into the indignant and elastic—I shall then take great pleasure, in pronouncing him, an amiable and accomplished Actor.⁸⁶

Although Hogarth's 1745 portrait shows an energetic Garrick making use of muscle tension (the spread fingers, grasping hand and arched back) in order to express surprise, it seems that in 1744 Hill had been treated to a rather bland portrayal of Macbeth. However, by 1749 his assessment of the actor's powers had changed radically, for that year he wrote to the man himself:

Such heart-thrilling changes, as you touch in the display of manly passions, such mark'd action, painted purpose, eloquence of look, and agitated force of attitude, are rare, and noble qualities, but of two [sic] wide a compass for a *letter*, or a *conversation*. I will endeavor to convince you, in a fitter place, how little I say of you to yourself, compar'd with what you make me *feel*, upon the *subject*.⁸⁷

The extant letters from Hill to Garrick do not allow a detailed reconstruction of the course of their relationship, but there seems to have been a certain bond of trust between the two that allowed them to discuss, in detail, matters of acting. By October 14th, 1746 Hill was offering to help Garrick prepare the role of Othello by marking up a part book for him.⁸⁸ In the same letter Hill admits that he had not been to the theatre in years: 'for the last time I was in any Theatre, was, when I saw *you* in *Macbeth*, and that is now almost three years ago; and, I believe, the next will hardly be before *you* call me thither.'⁸⁹

The 1740s were difficult years for Hill, marked by illness, pain, significant financial troubles and personal tragedy. During the course of 1749, Hill's health deteriorated; he died on February 8th, 1750. In the final year of his life, he seems to have decided that Garrick's stage performances offered the best means of disseminating his system: Garrick himself was to lead by example, showing the way to other actors through his practice. Hill penned a letter to him on the 29th of March, 'under torture of a pain, in the left side, that I can hardly sit to write':

you are *legion* in yourself; the sure and *single hope* of our *theatric* world: [...] there is no promise of a likelihood, that I shall ever live, to see *another* actor rise, with *your* capacity, to taste, improve, or even to comprehend, the *use* of such a system, as I had designed to *publish*, that I am, now, determined against *printing* it at all, but will abstract the *essence* of it, in a course of private letters, for your own inspection singly; and they shall be sent you, as I can have leisure to select, and abridge their subjects.—You will find things useful, and not common, in 'em: and whatever you think proper to *illustrate*, by your *practice*, will be better understood and *propagated*, by effect of your *example*, than from all the *theory* of a dead reasoning.⁹⁰

Hill, in fact, believed that Garrick was already making use of his system. Given that he had mentioned *The Art of Acting* to Garrick in 1746, the latter could have been implementing some of

⁸⁶ HILL, *ibid.*, p. 35.

⁸⁷ HILL, *ibid.*, p. 363.

⁸⁸ See: HILL, *ibid.*, p. 266.

⁸⁹ HILL, *ibid.*, p. 264.

⁹⁰ HILL, *ibid.*, p. 372.

its principles. If so, they would have provided a link between the acting of Barton Booth and Garrick. Hill, at any rate, felt sure Garrick really was utilizing his method:

I lately saw, how sure a *consequence* this will be found when, you repeated a strong speech, or two from *Lear*, and *Tancred*: I observ'd, with great delight, how, paintedly, you brought the *passions*, first, in your *eye*, before you *spoke* a syllable: and thence with what adapted, and *pathetic force*, your voice receiv'd and threw out, the *sensation*. By this single mastery, you have, at once, conceiv'd, and executed, *nature's* noblest scheme of *excellence* in *acting*; and you are the *only actor*, who has ever felt or understood it, rightly.⁹¹

On the August 3rd, Hill, in order to explain the system to Garrick in greater detail, wrote a lengthy letter: it was an abridged version of the first part of the prose text which would be published in 1753 as 'An Essay on the Art of Acting'. It is worth mentioning that Hill's letter to Garrick contains some interesting insights absent from the 1753 publication, for instance, a discussion of the proper use of French artworks in the actor's training and advice on how to create notebooks to prepare a role. Hill mentioned the 'ten great *changes* in [the] *brow* and *muscles*' that presumably correspond to the ten 'dramatic passions' of 'An Essay on the Art of Acting' (1753), but he also wrote about mixed passions, showing that his system encompassed many (up to at least 25) possible emotions:

THERE are *other* passions, of a *complex* kind; which cannot be reckon'd as *dramatic* ones, and yet are to be represented, by *subtracting* from 'em. As, when you are painting *hope*, you borrow *half* your colouring from *joy*; but take the other half from *grief*, because *hope* is not *certainly*: 'tis mixed with *doubt*, and therefore, tho' it asks a *smiling* face, and *elevation* of the *eye-brow*, yet it leaves a kind of *languid* tone upon the *muscles*. There are twelve, or fifteen of these complex passions, which I will *distinguish* in another letter.⁹²

THE 'ESSAY ON THE ART OF ACTING' AND ITS RECEPTION (1753–1801)

THE WORKS OF THE LATE AARON HILL, ESQ. (1753)

The Works of the Late Aaron Hill, Esq., published in four volumes in 1753 by Hill's daughter Urania, contained a number of works that promoted and explicated Hill's system, including the prologue to *The Tuscan Treaty*, which his nephew may have spoken as a young man in 1733, *The Art of Acting* and the unfinished prose work entitled 'An Essay on the Art of Acting'.⁹³ The latter contains practical instructions illustrated with select passages from plays to be used as exercises to teach actors how to generate affect in the performing body. It was this work which Hill had abridged for Garrick in a letter from 1749.

The inclusion of these key acting texts in the *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill, Esq.* meant that they were very widely disseminated indeed: the publication had a subscription list of 1,400 names, which Pat Rogers has qualified as 'impressive' and ranked at 'about twentieth among known eighteenth-century subscription lists'. Rogers further notes the high number of celebrities who subscribed, including:

⁹¹ HILL, *ibid.*, pp. 372–3.

⁹² HILL, *ibid.*, pp. 383–4.

⁹³ The prologue to *The Tuscan Treaty* published in *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill, Esq.* is not the same as that published in *The Tuscan Treaty: or Tarquin's Overthrow* (London: J. Watson, 1733), though both were written by Aaron Hill.

Handel, Hogarth, Pitt the elder, Samuel Johnson, Horace Walpole, John Wilkes, Lord Chesterfield, Edward Young, David Garrick, Colley Cibber, Peg Woffington, Kitty Clive, Charles Macklin, Samuel Foote, William Boyce, Lord Rockingham, Beau Nash, Rysbrach the sculptor, and very many others.⁹⁴

No matter how tempting it may be, however, to suppose that because important theatrical people had subscribed to the edition they also had read it, caution is needed here: the list can perhaps better be seen as a sign of solidarity with Hill's surviving family, for whose benefit *The Works* was published. The simple fact of possession does not guarantee that Hill's system was known by those who owned the books.

'An Essay on the Art of Acting' (1753) declares itself to be 'a short abstract of the Art, in its most comprehensive and reduced idea. But there must follow *Applications* of the general rule, by particular references, for the practical use of the actor'.⁹⁵ Hill further qualifies the scope of his treatise by noting that 'there are only ten dramatic passions; – that is, passions, which can be distinguished by their outward marks, in action; all others being relative to, and but varied degrees of, the foregoing'.⁹⁶ These 'ten dramatic passions' are: joy, grief, fear, anger, pity, scorn, hatred, jealousy, wonder and love. They are the same ones Hill treated in the 1746 poem *The Art of Acting*.⁹⁷

Hill seems to have struggled with the categorization of the passions over a long period. Indeed, as early as 1725 Hill had singled out nine passions as being discrete and recognizable on stage, if the actor's words were:

pronounc'd with a tuneful *Voice*, and invlivened by expressive *Gesture*, painting naturally the Passion, or Condition, of the Mind; and *graphically delineating*, as it were, to the *Eye* (as well as addressing to the *Ear*) the Bounds, Distinctions, and peculiar Attributes, of *Joy, Grief, Wonder, Fury, Jealousy, Compassion, Fear, Love, Hatred*, and the rest of those Emotions, which the acted Mind is subject to.⁹⁸

In 1735, in *The Prompter*, Hill had limited the number of 'dramatic passions' to only six: joy, sorrow, fear, scorn, anger and amazement.⁹⁹ However, as has been mentioned, both the prose 'An Essay on the Art of Acting' (1753) and the rhyming *Art of Acting* (1746) treat ten dramatic passions, which further supports the idea that they date from the same period, sometime after the demise of *The Prompter* in 1736. Perhaps one can sum up the complex history of Hill's texts thus: Although he had written about how to act in 1716 in his preface to *The Fatal Vision*, he felt it necessary in 1735 to try again repeatedly in *The Prompter*, at one point noting that: 'It is practicable, unless I greatly deceive myself, to reduce the total *Theory* of such an *Art*, into the Compass of a *single* PROMPTER; by an *Essay* on the *Dramatic* Passions, that is to say, on the *Power* of EXPRESSING *them*'.¹⁰⁰ Yet these attempts, too, proved unsatisfactory, leading to the plans of the 1740s. By the end of that decade, however, Hill had given up on the idea of successful transmission through the written word and pinned his hopes on Garrick's acting.

This means that it was necessary for me as practice-based researcher to collate various bits and pieces scattered throughout Hill's works and letters in order for the unfinished 'An Essay on the

⁹⁴ Pat ROGERS, 'Richardson and the Bluestockings', *Samuel Richardson: Passion and Prudence*, ed. by Valerie GROSVENOR MYER (London/Totowa, NJ: Vision Press, 1986), 147–162, p. 152.

⁹⁵ HILL (1753), op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 356–7.

⁹⁶ HILL, *ibid.*, p. 357.

⁹⁷ I take pity and compassion to be synonymous in Hill's system.

⁹⁸ [Aaron HILL], *The Plain Dealer*, no. 94, Friday, February 12th, 1725.

⁹⁹ See HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. LXVI, June 27th, 1735.

¹⁰⁰ HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. CXVIII, Friday, December 26th, 1735.

Art of Acting' of 1753 fully to make sense to me. That is to say, I pieced together a version of Hill's system that could function as a starting point for practice-based research. Before proceeding to Part II, however, I will briefly trace the fate of Hill's system in the long eighteenth century.

THE RECEPTION OF HILL'S SYSTEM (1775–1801)

Hill's system received attention after his death, but only, as far as I am aware, as presented in the posthumous and unfinished text of 'An Essay on the Art of Acting' (1753).¹⁰¹ William Cooke (d. 1824) wrote about it in his *Elements of Dramatic Criticism* in 1775, in the chapter entitled 'General Instructions for Succeeding in the Art of Acting':

The most methodical treatise on this subject, we have ever remembered to have seen, is Mr. Aaron Hill's "Treatise on the Art of Acting," where he has distributed the whole into ten dramatic passions, joy, grief, fear, anger, pity, scorn, hatred, jealousy, wonder, and love. Each if these he has afterwards defined, and added to this definition, particular directions how to accommodate the voice and action; so that, from so copious a treatise, one would be led to imagine he had exhausted the subject.¹⁰²

Cooke speaks of *accommodating* the voice and action to the passion, which implies that he believed Hill intended the suggested muscular configurations themselves (working exclusively with the 'outside') to be sufficient to express the passions on stage. This has been a common misunderstanding of what Hill meant since the publication of the treatise, usually leading to the unfair accusation of pedantry and over-regulation, as when Cooke continues:

But he [Hill] has, in our opinion, rather mistaken the manner of treating it; attempting to give a rule for everything, he has reduced those things to a standard of mechanism, which should be left to *nature* and *observation*; and when he talks of the *stretching of the neck*, the *inflation of the breast*, the *erection of the backbone*, the *minute* disposition of the *arms, wrist, fingers, hip, knee, ankle*, &c. he writes more like a Martinet on Tactics, than a philosopher in the investigation of the human passions.¹⁰³

This is not fair to Hill, who more often describes the muscular tension around the joints than 'minute dispositions' of each. Even more disturbing is that Cooke admits that what Hill is advocating is in fact valid in the case of William Shakespeare's (1564–1616) 'tiger' speech (from *Henry V*, Act III, scene 1). Hill had used this text as a step-by-step guide for awakening anger in the actor's body, and Cooke admits:

Shakespeare, however has given us a specimen of this kind of instruction in the passion of anger, which is at once so much a *rule* and an *example*, that 'tis impossible for a man of feeling to express the speech otherwise than he has directed [...]. Lessons containing such admirable instructions as this speech gives us, we would recommend to the serious perusal of every actor; but this great natural preceptor, was too busy in drawing the passions themselves to leave us many rules how they should be mechanically expressed; hence this knowledge must principally be obtained by every performer's own observation and natural feelings.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ The following re-worked versions of Hill's text will not be discussed here: *The Actor or Guide to the Stage* (London: John LOWNDES, 1821); *The Actor or Guide to the Stage* (New York: Circulating Library and Dramatic Repository, 1823); *The Actor or Guide to the Stage* (Philadelphia: Turner & Son, 1825); *The Actor or Guide to the Stage* (Philadelphia: Turner & Son and C. Neal, ca. 1830); 'An Essay on the Art of Acting' in James E. Murdoch, *A Plea for Spoken Language* (Cincinnati/New York: Van Antwerp, Bragg & Co., 1883).

¹⁰² William COOKE, *Elements of Dramatic Criticism* (G. Kearsly: London, 1775), p. 179.

¹⁰³ Cooke, *ibid.*, pp. 179–180.

¹⁰⁴ Cooke, *ibid.*, p. 180.

In his zeal to praise Shakespeare, Cooke delivers a final blow to Hill: ‘rules, so exceedingly exact, (except, perhaps, in the hands of so inimitable a master as Shakespeare) would be the fetters, instead of the aids of genius’.¹⁰⁵

This negative review, however, did not stop J. Dixwell of London from printing *An Essay on the Art of Acting* in 1779. Dixwell’s edition of Hill’s text was supplemented with a newly devised table summarizing the system, described as an ‘ANALYSIS, whereby the Manner in which any particular Passion is to be expressed may be instantly seen, with References to its Definition, &c.’.¹⁰⁶ The publication was further enriched by the addition of a poem by Hill entitled *The Actor’s Epitome*, in which ten dramatic passions are once again described in terms of their physical-mental manifestation.¹⁰⁷ This, however, is not the same poem that was published under the identical title in *The Prompter*. Dixwell had not ‘the least doubt of a general approbation for the author’s labors’ and claimed to have republished the whole with a view more to facilitating improvements to acting rather ‘than in expectation of any pecuniary return’.¹⁰⁸ An altered version of *An Essay on the Art of Acting* appeared in London in 1801, published by J. Smeeton, who, seemingly more interested in a pecuniary return than Dixwell had been, edited that charitable remark out of the foreword.

A year after the appearance of Dixwell’s edition, Thomas Davies (c. 1712–1785) published *The Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.* (1780) in which he wrote at length about Aaron Hill, ‘almost the only gentleman who laboured assiduously to understand the art of acting, and who took incessant pains to communicate his knowledge of it to others’.¹⁰⁹ Davies was himself an actor and he thus very briefly writes about: ‘a fragment called an Essay on the Art of Acting, which, it is much to be lamented, that he did not live to complete. What remains is worth an actor’s consideration’.¹¹⁰

More interestingly, John Walker (1732–1807), who also had been a professional actor, published an extensive review of Hill’s system in the second volume of his *Elements of Elocution* in 1781. It is an odd, contradictory assessment. Walker places it in a chapter entitled ‘The Passions’, which he begins by prioritizing changes in the voice as expressions of passion – as is only meet for a work on elocution. He begins with the question of timing that is at the very heart of Hill’s system:

When we speak our own words, and are really impassioned by the occasion of speaking, the passion or emotion precedes the words, and adopts such tones as are suitable to the passion we feel; but when we read, or repeat from memory, the passion is to be taken up as the words occur; and in doing this well, the whole difficulty of reading or repeating from memory lies.¹¹¹

Finding the appropriate quality of voice for each passion, Walker admitted, can be a challenge. He offered examples of good practice taken from the ancients: using mental images or reliving emotional moments from one’s own experience. Indeed, the story of Polus animating his grief on stage by lamenting over the ashes of his own son makes its somewhat predictable appearance. Walker, however, continued:

¹⁰⁵ Cooke, *ibid.*, pp. 180–1.

¹⁰⁶ Aaron HILL, *An Essay on the Art of Acting; in which the Dramatic Passions are Properly Defined and Described, with Applications of the Rules peculiar to each, and selected Passages for Practice* (London: J. Dixwell, [1779]), title page.

¹⁰⁷ For a discussion of the various versions this poem, see: Claudio VICENTINI, *Theory of Acting from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Napoli: Marsilio & Acting Archives, 2012), p. 152.

¹⁰⁸ HILL (1779), *op. cit.*, n. p.

¹⁰⁹ DAVIES, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

¹¹⁰ DAVIES, *ibid.*

¹¹¹ John WALKER, *The Elements of Elocution*, Vol. II (London: 1781), pp. 272–3.

our natural feelings are not always to be commanded; and when they are, stand in need of regulation and embellishments of art; it is the business, therefore, of every reader and speaker in public to acquire such tones and gestures as nature gives to the passions; that he may be able to produce a semblance of them when he is not actually impassioned.¹¹²

This formed a perfect introduction to Hill's system, and indeed seemed to presage a positive critique; but Walker instead turned to a related and highly relevant passage by 'Mr. Burke':

Mr. Burke [...] observes, that there is such a connection between the internal feeling of a passion, and the external expression of it, that we cannot put ourselves in the posture, or attitude, of any passion, without communicating a certain degree of the passion itself to the mind. The same may be observed of the tone of voice which is peculiar to each passion: each passion produces an agitation of the body, which is accompanied by a correspondent agitation of the mind: certain sounds naturally produce certain bodily agitations, similar to those produced by the passions, and hence music has power over the mind, and can dispose it alternately to joy, or sorrow; to pity, or revenge. When the voice, therefore, assumes the tone which a musician would produce in order to express certain passions or sentiments in a song, the speaker, like the performer on a musical instrument, is wrought upon by the sound he creates; and though active at the beginning, at length becomes passive, by the sound of his own voice on himself.¹¹³

This must surely refer to Part IV of Edmund Burke's (1729–1797) *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, wherein are discussed 'certain affections of the mind, that cause certain changes in the body; or certain powers and properties in bodies, that work a change in the mind.'¹¹⁴ Walker thus prefaced his discussion of Hill by citing Burke's support for an 'inside-outside-inside' or 'mazy round' model for affect in the human body. It is surprising, then, to see that Walker, turning his attention to 'An Essay on the Art of Acting', clearly admired and somehow also deeply distrusted Hill's system:

Aaron Hill, in his Essay on the Art of Acting, has made a bold attempt at such a description of the passions as may enable an actor to adopt them mechanically, by shewing, that all the passions require either a braced or relaxed state of the sinews, and a peculiar cast of the eye. This system he has supported with much ingenuity, and it were to be wished he had lived to give his original idea the finishing he intended; and to have seen it combated by opposite opinions, that he might have removed several objections that lie against it, and render the truth of it a little doubtful. It must be owned, however, that this writer deserves great praise for the mere attempt he has made to form a new system, which, under some restrictions, may not be without its use.¹¹⁵

Walker thereafter, like Cooke before him, waxed lyrical about Shakespeare's depiction of anger, reprinting the 'tiger' speech from *Henry V*, and noting that the playwright had 'given us an admirable picture of this passion in its violence, and has made this violent tension of the sinews a considerable part of its composition.'¹¹⁶ Walker, however, went on to criticize the *intellectual* underpinnings of Hill's ten dramatic passions, questioning not the effectiveness of the combination of eye and nerves, but rather Hill's justification as to why each combination produces the desired effect. Walker admitted, when discussing Hill's description of scorn as 'negligent anger', that 'This seems a very accurate picture of the passion, and the slackness of the nerves appears

¹¹² WALKER, *ibid.*, p. 276.

¹¹³ WALKER, *ibid.*, pp. 278–9.

¹¹⁴ EDMUND BURKE, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1757), p. 119.

¹¹⁵ WALKER, *op. cit.*, pp. 281–2.

¹¹⁶ WALKER, *ibid.*, p. 283. Samuel Foote also mentions this speech in relationship to anger in the actor's body, noting 'in every Degree of this Passion, the Muscles are contracted'. See: SAMUEL FOOTE, *A Treatise on the Passions, so Far as They Regard the Stage* (London: C. Corbet, [1747?]), pp. 12–3.

necessarily to enter into the proper method of expressing it.¹¹⁷ Yet, in discussing Hill's description of joy, he fell back on tradition: 'No author I have ever yet met with, has supposed pride to be a necessary part of the composition of joy'. In discussing pity, Walker once again censured Hill's definition for being non-standard:

Pity, he [Hill] defines to be active grief for another's afflictions; but this definition seems not to include the most leading trait of pity, which is, benevolence and love; and though pity is always accompanied with a degree of sorrow, which often excites us to assist those we pity, yet pity is often bestowed on objects we neither can nor endeavour to assist. The poets have always strongly marked this alliance between pity and love, and with great propriety.¹¹⁸

Walker also questioned whether it is 'conceivable that the eye can express an emotion directly contrary to the feelings of the whole frame?'¹¹⁹ Such abstract queries strike the practice-based researcher as very odd indeed: why did Walker, a trained actor, not simply try out the exercises and deliver an opinion based on practical experience? Instead, having already agreed that braced and unbraced nerves are essential physical elements of the passions, he cast doubt on what he had previously confirmed via Burke:

The distinction, therefore, of braced and unbraced muscles, upon which his whole system turns, seems at best but a doubtful hypothesis; and much too hidden and uncertain for the direction of so important a matter as the expression of the passions. Modelling the attitude, countenance, and voice, to the expression of a passion, may not only give the beholder an idea of the passion we imitate, but serve, in some measure, to awaken a feeling of it in ourselves; this is agreeable to experience and sound philosophy; but bracing or relaxing the sinews seems to be entering too boldly into the sacred recesses of nature, and taking her peculiar work out of her own proper hands.¹²⁰

One cannot help feeling that Hill's system made its reviewers uncomfortable because it demonstrated all too clearly the very mechanical nature of emotions in the body. This is something that I will discuss in Part II, as I too, in trying out the system, was sometimes confronted with a kind of horror or bewilderment in experiencing this: Hill's system, offering such a 'delightful' and 'easy' path into the 'mazy round', did indeed at times seem to be 'entering too boldly into the sacred recesses of nature', causing me to question my sense of self.

¹¹⁷ WALKER, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

¹¹⁸ WALKER, *ibid.*, p. 286.

¹¹⁹ WALKER, *ibid.*, p. 288.

¹²⁰ WALKER, *ibid.*, p. 288.

PART II: RESEARCH THROUGH PRACTICE

KINDS OF SCHOLARSHIP

On October 29th, 1746, the novelist Samuel Richardson (1689–1761) wrote to Aaron Hill describing his aborted attempt to read Hill's didactic verses entitled *The Art of Acting*. Richardson confessed that he was:

not aware, that I should be so mechanically, as I may truly say, affected by it: I endeavoured to follow you in your wonderful Description of the Force of Acting, in the Passion of Joy, Sorrow, Fear, Anger, &c. And my whole Frame [...] was shaken by it: I found, in short, such Tremors, such Startings, that I was unable to go thro' it.¹²¹

Paul Goring, writing in 2005 in *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, attributed ambiguity to this passage:

It is not absolutely clear what Richardson intends when he writes that he 'endeavoured to follow' Hill in his account of how the 'passions' should be performed on stage. Does he mean he tried to 'follow' Hill's argument and instructions in an intellectual sense? Or is he suggesting that he went some way towards actually acting out the signs of the emotions as described in the poem? Or is he referring to a type of reading practice that falls somewhere between these two senses of 'follow'?¹²²

The ambiguity Goring attributes to Richardson's text helps him to identify the parameters of his book's topic of inquiry: it allows him more generally to pursue questions of embodiment, emotional arousal, and the performance of affect in the eighteenth century. From perceived ambiguity he creates a 'framing' that allows him to pursue his research as he sees fit. This is an approach to which we have grown accustomed in the humanities in recent times. As Brian Massumi put it, in reference to the work of Deleuze and Guattari: 'The question is not: is it true? But: does it work? What new thoughts does it make it possible to think?'.¹²³ Whether or not Goring would agree with Massumi's statement, his framing of Richardson's experience of *The Art of Acting* serves as a useful wedge for opening up his chosen path of academic inquiry.

When I first read this passage from Richardson's letter, on the other hand, I never doubted for a moment that he had simply tried out Hill's prescriptions to see if they would work, before subsequently breaking off the attempt in a state of alarm. I took the text to mean what it said. This is in part because when I tried out these ten 'dramatic passions' for the first time, I myself had had a similar abortive experience. Overwhelmed and shocked by the effectiveness of Hill's system, and disconcerted by my trembling and affected body, I abandoned the experiment after the fourth 'application'.¹²⁴

The point I would like to make here is that there are different kinds of scholarship, and that they can lead to differing research outcomes: I here place more traditional academic study in contrast to practice-based research. Hill's 'An Essay on the Art of Acting' (1753) has certainly received a good deal of scholarly attention, both before and since Goring's work, quite recently by

¹²¹ *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, ed. by John CARROLL (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), pp. 74–5.

¹²² Paul GORING, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge University Press: 2004), p. 1.

¹²³ Cited in William CONDEE, 'The Interdisciplinary Turn in the Arts and Humanities', *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies*, No. 34, (2016), 12–29, p. 20.

¹²⁴ Hill presents ten 'Applications', one for each of the ten 'dramatic passions'. I have taken them as exercises, although he does not use that word. The research was begun in 2018, when fellow Dutch Historical Acting Collective member Anne Smith and I read 'An Essay on the Art of Acting' out loud and tried out Hill's system. Both of us found the experiment so startling that we had to stop.

academics who take performance and its implications very seriously indeed: both David Wiles in his *The Player's Advice to Hamlet* (2020) and James Harriman-Smith in *Criticism, Performance and the Passions in the Eighteenth Century: The Art of Transition* (2021) look deeply into Hill's system, taking the performer's perspective into account. The results are important and stimulating. However, I am not aware of anyone as yet having put Hill's system physically to the test in order to disseminate the results by means of video recording.

The work documented here was crafted to answer a single, specific research question: could Hill's system be of use to actors today? I therefore chose to use the methodology of *research through performance*, or practice-based research, which I felt was more suited to answering this question than a non-somatic approach would have been. What follows is a description of the manner in which my research was carried out. I further document, with video recordings, my performance of Hill's 1735 version of *The Actor's Epitome* and the first thirteen 'exercises' (the ten 'applications') in 'An Essay on the Art of Acting' (1753). The answer to the research question about the relevance of Hill's system for actors today can be answered individually by the viewers and readers examining my work, based on their own aesthetic standpoints: however, as far as my own acting practice is concerned, I am convinced that Hill's system has been of great use.

Practice-based research should always present its findings as documenting a purely subjective experience, one that can have *implications* for scholarly work, but which produces results which at best point towards historical *possibilities*. I do not, for instance, believe that I felt *exactly* what Richardson felt in trying out Hill's system simply because the words he uses in his account also accurately describe my own experience. In this sense one could argue that the outcomes of practice-based research, too, belong in Massumi's 'does it work?' category of scholarship, as they can rarely answer the question 'is it true?'. At any rate, I have tried to carry out my research using a carefully crafted and historically grounded methodology. I lay the methodology itself bare for scrutiny here because I believe it is as significant as the embodied outcomes themselves.

‘AN ESSAY ON THE ART OF ACTING’ (1753) AS A TRAINING METHOD FOR THE 21ST-CENTURY ACTOR

HILL'S TEXT

We have seen that Hill struggled to promote his acting system from the 1730s until his death in 1750 – through poems and in prose, through public performances, publications and in private letters – without ever succeeding in creating a definitive, all-encompassing didactic text. As William W. Appleton and Kalman A. Burnim noted:

His twenty-line poem, "The Actor's Epitome" ([*The Prompter*] No. 113), grew into an eighty-line poem. And subsequently into a four hundred and sixteen-line poem, "The Art of Acting." Still later it was expanded into a prose *Essay on the Art of Acting*, published posthumously in his 1753 *Works*.¹²⁵

The research undertaken here is based on the 1753 'An Essay on the Art of Acting', although the other works by Hill cited in the first section of this article have also contributed to my interpretation of that text – in particular, 'The Actor's Epitome' from which I here too will draw citations. In the opening pages of the 'Essay' Hill begins by proposing the following as 'an absolutely necessary, and the only general rule':

¹²⁵ Aaron HILL, *The Prompter*, ed. by William W. APPLETON and Kalman A. BURMIN (New York: Benjamin BLOM, 1966), p. XIII.

To act a passion, well, the actor never must attempt its imitation, 'til his fancy has conceived so strong an image, or idea, of it as to move the same impressive springs within his mind, which form that passion, when 'tis undesigned, and natural.¹²⁶

As Hill himself emphasizes this rule above all others, it has formed the basis for my work. I understand it in the following way: the actor, through a 'picture' in his imagination ('fancy'), tricks the body into triggering the physical response natural to the image, had it been real. When Hill speaks of a *passion*, I understand it to be a psychosomatic state – that is to say, one in which the body takes part. Therefore the 'impressive springs' within the actor's mind mould, shape or form the body, conjuring up a natural psychosomatic, affective state from an intentional act of imagination or thought. This is corroborated by the opening lines of the 1735 version of 'The Actor's Epitome':

*He, who wou'd act, must THINK:—for, Thought will find
The Art to form the Body, by the Mind.*¹²⁷

I take the meaning of 'THINK' here to be the broadest category of mental activity, encompassing and combining the rational and the imaginative: the body follows the thought, and is formed into a passion.

Hill continues his *Essay* by proposing a four-step process for the actor:

1st, The imagination must conceive a *strong idea* of the passion.

This 'idea' could incorporate such varying stimuli as the actor's imagining that she or he actually is the character being portrayed; the mental image of the actor's own natural facial expression while experiencing a passion; or the use of specific personal memories to access emotions that had been felt in the past by the actor in his or her private life.¹²⁸ The following two points in Hill's four-step process indicate that these mental stimuli affect the body:

2dly, But that idea cannot *strongly* be conceived, without impressing its own form upon the muscles of the *face*.

3dly, Nor *can* the look be muscularly stamp'd, without communicating, instantly, the same impression to the muscles of the *body*.

The actor therefore is not coldly to assume an attitude, or expressive posture, but rather warmly to experience the somatic results of his strong conception of the passion. In 'The Actor's Epitome', Hill speaks of this warmth as essential to verisimilitude. Moreover, he uses the passive imperative voice, bidding the actor to 'let *Expression* paint', to 'let *your Voice take Wing*' and to let 'Nerves, *elastic, into Passion, spring*'; as well as to 'Let *ev'ry Joint* keep TIME; [let] *each Sinew* bend' and finally to let 'the Shot SOUL, in every Start, ASCEND.' I have found this passive imperative voice to be very important in achieving the proper mental state in which the actor both *wills* and *allows* something to happen. Experimenting with this process has led me to different conclusions from those reached by scholars like Earl R. Wasserman and Joseph R. Roach, who see Hill's system as

¹²⁶ HILL (1753), op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 355.

¹²⁷ HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. CXIII, Tuesday, December 9th, 1735.

¹²⁸ For becoming a character, see 'The Actor's Epitome', line 13 in HILL, *ibid*. For the use of mirrors to catch facial expression mid-affect, see: HILL (1753), op. cit., Vol. II, p. 378. For personal memories, see: HILL (1746), op. cit., p. 11, lines 9–10.

a purely Cartesian one in which the will works on the passive body: I, on the other hand, see the system as one promoting, through terminology influenced by Descartes, an approach combining a prompt to imagine (an act of volition) with a psychosomatic receptivity to the resulting imagery.¹²⁹ This shall become particularly apparent when we discuss Hill's 'shortcut'.

In both the *Essay* and 'The Actor's Epitome' this fourth and final step (taken 'to act a passion well') results in qualities of gesture and voice appropriate to the passion to be expressed. In the *Essay* Hill writes:

4thly, THE muscles of the body, (brac'd, or slack, as the idea was an active or a passive one) must, in their natural, and not to be avoided consequence, by impelling or retarding the animal spirits, transmit their own conceived sensation, to the sound of the *voice*, and to the disposition of the *gesture*.¹³⁰

Here muscle tension is correlated with the idea or image of the affect to be portrayed. The effect of the concomitant muscle tension on the voice and gestures is what makes the acting style natural. Hill's system thus promotes a rapid sequence running along a physical path from the brain (imagination) into facial expression, then into the torso and extremities (muscle tension) and finally into the 'acting' itself.

Now the 'Essay' gets really interesting, for Hill goes on to propose a shortcut to the four-step sequence. He first describes ten 'dramatic passions' (which he defines as 'those which can be distinguished by their outward marks, in action'¹³¹), assigning to each of them a specific bodily state consisting of two (or sometimes three) components: active or passive muscles (body tension), a look (facial expression), and a specific 'look in the eye'. In the four-step sequence, if the imagination is strong enough, the eye, look and tension specific to each of the ten dramatic passions will follow as natural consequences of the actor's thought (mental image). If, however, the actor's imagination is for some reason not strong enough to trigger the body into an affect, Hill encourages him or her to aid the transition by entering directly into the distinct physical state produced by the intended passion, meaning any one of these ten combinations of muscle tension, look and eye. Here is how he describes the 'shortcut' to joy (which he says combines 'muscles intense, and, a smile in the eye'¹³²):

the actor [...] may help his defective idea, in a moment, by annexing, at once, the *look* to the *idea*, in the very instant, while he is bracing his nerves into sprightliness: for so, the image, the look, and the muscles, all concurring, *at once*, to the purpose, their effect will be the same, as if each had succeeded another, progressively.¹³³

Hill's 'shorter road', then, is consciously to combine steps two and three (face and body) of his four-step system, allowing them to occur simultaneously with step one (the imagining). This conscious act of somatic adjustment permits the imagination to act upon a body that is prepared to receive it, thus facilitating the transition into any given passion. It is tricky to describe this sequence in terms of the acts of volition (will) to which the actor subjects himself in order to carry it out. Writing about the artistic experience is notoriously difficult, without falling into a vocabulary of ecstatic personal imagery – which is, after all, how it works. It takes many words – rational,

¹²⁹ For instance, I feel uncomfortable with the use of the verb 'enforce' in the following quotation: 'Hill, therefore, made acting little more than an act of the will in enforcing the idealized concept of the emotion upon the plastic imagination'. See Earl R. WASSERMAN, 'The Sympathetic Imagination in Eighteenth-Century Theories of Acting' in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (July, 1947), 264–272, p. 267. See also ROACH, op. cit., p. 85.

¹³⁰ HILL (1753), op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 356.

¹³¹ HILL, *ibid.*, p. 357.

¹³² HILL, *ibid.*, p. 402.

¹³³ HILL, *ibid.*, p. 362.

grammatical, logical – to describe events that occur like flashes of lightening in the consciousness. To verbalize that which looms up as a non-verbal image in the actor's 'Thoughts', is to deform a very intimate and familiar embodied experience into something foreign, abstract and even confrontational.¹³⁴ However, I will try my hand at this difficult task. What follows will take much longer to read than it does to occur in the body, where the transitions are rapid, sometimes nearly instantaneous. My analysis is also personal: I do not – indeed cannot – speak for other actors. Nor do I propose that mine is the right way, or even is what Hill intended (which ultimately is unknowable). In short, it should be read as descriptive, and not as prescriptive.

In transitioning from one strongly affective state to another specifically using Hill's shortcut – for instance from anger to pity without intermediary relaxation (i.e. a return to 'normal') – I have found that I must first 'feel' when the timing is right to start the transition. This 'feeling' has both an artistic and a technical component: by 'artistic' I mean an active aesthetic sense striving towards an expressive goal; by 'technical' I indicate a conscious somatic awareness of how this goal might best be achieved. At the moment of transition, I *sense* or *feel* a psychosomatic pause or a slowing of the performative arc that indicates the moment that the text for anger has been fully expressed. My aim is to *sense* when the audience has had a chance to absorb the meaning and beauty of the words, the artistic-performative qualities of poetry and voice; simultaneously I allow myself to *feel* when the internal performative energy has ebbed propitiously, creating an opportunity for me to begin the transition, without allowing the energy to dip, which would break the flow and create an 'unnatural' gap, making a smooth transition difficult to achieve. Thus, at this tipping point, there is an artistic/technical choice to be made, in which embodied acting experience plays a decisive role. I agree with dancer-researcher Suzan Tunca when she describes her experience of such delicate moments during performance thus:

How does a performer know what is the 'proper' point? I am always fascinated by these 'artistic' insights. [...] it feels almost like an 'absolute' kind of knowing, implying some kind of agency of the artistic work that 'commands' certain choices into being, I think it's something larger that just incorporated skills through training, it is a kind of intuitive 'knowing of'...¹³⁵

At the proper point, I begin the process of transition from anger to pity, by first experiencing the general state of muscular tension in my body, thereafter – if need be – by focussing on any lingering manifestations of muscle tension that are natural to anger but that would be detrimental to the 'painting' of pity in the body. For me this often (but not inevitably) involves muscles of the back, neck and shoulders, as well as the eyelids and temples. In a cold, calculating, technical act of volition, I imagine-request these muscles to move from 'brac'd' to 'slack'. As soon as I perceive that the slackening has started, and feel that the muscles have begun to respond, I (in a warmer, gentler act of artistic will) summon up images associated with pity. Now both the *imagined* sound of the voice and facial expression that I associate with pity, as well as the *imagined* situation in which the character (in this case, Belmour, from *The Fatal Extravagance*) finds himself, work further on the muscles – but they in turn also affect the *imagination*. Acts of imagining result in changes not only in the body, but also in the mind and thus in the very imagination itself. In Hill's shorter way, the role and nature of consciousness oscillates between active and passive as the transition becomes increasingly physical. The actor's path, the 'mazy round', leads back and forth, round and round, from artistic to technical to artistic and so on. From thinking-imagining how to get to the

¹³⁴ Artist-Researcher Anna Scott describes this as a kind of grieving, see, in this volume, Paul Craenen, 'Roundtable: The Artist-Researcher Inside Out: Strategies, Methodologies, Refractions'.

¹³⁵ Suzan TUNCA, private communication (26-07-2021).

new affective state, to imagining-feeling the psychosomatic state as it manifests itself, the roles of ‘ghost’ and ‘machine’ are involved in a neat choreography, and, like Fred and Ginger, are inseparable, indeed at times nearly indistinguishable.

However, it should be noted here, particularly in relation to the role of the will in this process, that having achieved what I believe to be the state of receptivity in the body promoted in ‘The Actor’s Epitome’ (see hereafter), two modes of imagining are possible: sometimes a specific image of pity can be consciously chosen (an act of will), while at other times images – answering the mind’s more general call – become perceptible all on their own. That is to say, my mind may simply be moved towards an indeterminate sensation of pity, rather than call up one specific image associated with it. This notion might then trigger the manifestation of a more specific image from all the images possible. The selection process is not, in this case, conscious and is seemingly random. I often experience such an impulse as ‘spiritual’, as being both ‘outside of time’ and yet somehow determined by the artistic/technical timing of the transition process described above. All of this makes me question current criticisms of eighteenth-century acting for being ‘mechanical’, as when Roach notes of two such different figures as Hill and Gotthold Lessing (1729–1781): ‘They saw mind, which for them consisted of conscious thought, acting on body, which consisted of matter, and body acting on mind, but they saw little or nothing in between.’¹³⁶ Having experimented extensively with Hill’s system, and experienced a good deal ‘between’ body and mind that I cannot put adequately into words, I refrain from endorsing such statements.

THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

THE ACTOR’S EPITOME (1735)

Although I had been working with *An Essay on the Art of Acting* on and off for about three years before embarking on this specific project, there are a number of factors which distinguished this most recent engagement from previous ones, and which have significantly affected the outcome. First of all, I prepared my body to experiment with the ‘Essay’ by first working on the 1735 version of ‘The Actor’s Epitome’. It appeared, as has been noted, in *The Prompter* on December 9th, 1735, and Hill, who delighted in ‘every Opportunity of furnishing *Them* [the actors] with *new Lights*; and the *Publick* with new *Reasons*, why they ought to be esteem’d and encourag’d’, introduced the poem thus: ‘I recommend to the (*Tragic*) Incumbents of the Stage, a Resolution to *lay up*, in their *Memories*, an auxiliary Copy of Verses, which lately fell into my Hands, and seems, (like *Homer* in his *Nut-shell*) to contain THE WHOLE, in a LITTLE.’¹³⁷

I decided that this poem could be used to bring the acting body into a specific state of alert awareness and muscular ease which in turn could serve as a propitious starting point from which the passions as described in the *Essay* could be developed. I first studied, annotated and memorized the text, and then began working on it as a declamatory piece to be performed with gesture. During this process I made choices about how much word painting to use, and which affects to paint, as these strongly influence the energy level of the actor in any given line.

By means of this practice, I felt that I improved my ability to excite the imagination, rendering it more ‘ductile’ (a quality Hill deems essential in ‘An Essay on the Art of Acting’) through somatic memory and repetitions of visual imagery (*‘each pictur’d Passion weigh’*). After much practice, I found myself – by the time I came to the last four lines – in a state of excited anticipation for the final declamatory ascent, which I performed in a monotone, rising the musical interval of a fifth to the

¹³⁶ ROACH, op. cit., p. 85

¹³⁷ HILL, *The Prompter*, Numb. CXIII, Tuesday, December 9th, 1735.

line ‘And the Shot SOUL, in every Start, ASCEND’. This final climbing declamation, and Hill’s brilliant imagery, indeed more often than not, affected my body in an electric and thrilling manner.

Hill’s language and the density of images in this poem make it something of a challenge to interpret. In attempting to determine what Hill meant by ‘Shot SOUL’, I was struck by the link made both in Samuel Johnson’s (1709–1784) *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) and Noah Webster’s (1758–1843) *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828) between ‘shoot’ and a sprouting seed. This, in turn, reminded me of a passage from Hill’s 1746 *The Art of Acting* that I had hitherto found very obscure:

Mark, when th’expanding *Seed*, from Earth’s moist Bed,
Starting, at Nature’s Call, prepares to *spread*;
First, the prone ROOT breaks downward—thence ascend
Shot *Stems*—whose *Joints* collateral *Boughs* extend:
Twigs, from those Boughs, lend *Leaves*. —Each *Leaf* contains
Side-less’ning *Stalks*, transvers’d by *fibry Veins*.
So, from injected Thought, shoots *Passion’s* Growth;
No Sprout spontaneous——no *chance Child*, of Sloth:
IDEA lends it ROOT. —Firm, on touch’d Minds,
Fancy, (swift Planter!) first, th’Impression binds;
Shape’d, in *Conception’s* Mould, *Nature’s* prompt Skill
Bids subject *Nerves* obey th’inspiring WILL:
Strung to obsequious Bend, the *musc’ly* Frame
Stamps the shown Image—*Pleasure—Pity—Shame—*
Anger—Grief—Terror, catch th’adaptive *Spring*,
While the *Eye* darts it! —and the *Accents* ring.¹³⁸

Taken together with the final line of the 1735 ‘The Actor’s Epitome’, I began to see the image of the shot seed or shot soul as very important. I came to understand this passage in an Aristotelian sense: just as the essence of a cherry pit is its potential to become a huge, fruit-bearing tree, so too the essence of each thought/image of a passion is its potential to manifest itself in great detail and variety in the actor’s body as it ‘sprouts’ in the ‘soul’. I began using this imagery in carrying out Hills ‘applications’ and found it yet quicker and more effective in most cases than my initial method, described in detail above. This ‘sprouting’ conception of the art of acting as *a triggering of the innate potential of affect-images to manifest themselves – perceptibly and in diverse abundance – in the body*, however, stands in stark contrast to the view many theatre scholars have today of historical acting practices and styles. The determination to develop an overarching and linear scholarly narrative leading from the supposedly more objective ‘oratorical style’ of the Restoration period to our current efforts at naturalism in acting has in some cases, in my opinion, led to an oversimplistic view of the first half of the eighteenth century as a time in which all the stage had to offer was static poses with predetermined meanings, accompanied by inflated declamation – at least, we are told, before the arrival of Garrick in 1741. Hill’s lush, leafy imagery, however, so full of growth, movement and manifold possibilities, strongly suggests the potential for a variety of ‘natural’ outcomes in the actor’s body.

All in all, then, my work on *The Actor’s Epitome* proved to be a rich experience both on a scholarly and on a practical level. Making use of the resulting (embodied) knowledge while performing the ‘applications’ from the *Essay* undoubtedly influenced the final outcome of the project.

¹³⁸ HILL (1746), op. cit., pp. 10–11.

AN ESSAY ON THE ART OF ACTING

Hill wrote lengthy prose descriptions of each of the ten dramatic passions (joy, grief, fear, anger, pity, scorn, hatred, jealousy, wonder, love), and chose one or two appropriate theatrical texts for the actor to memorize and declaim. James Harriman-Smith has noted that:

Hill does not see these ten ‘dramatic passions’ as stable monoliths, but rather as elements of a dynamic experience [...]. The actor should not seek out the passions as a static background for a scene or speech, but rather focus on the process by which that emotion rises, evolves in the moment, and departs.¹³⁹

The preparations for this particular round of engagement with Hill’s ‘An Essay on the Art of Acting’ were both scholarly and performative. Researching and writing the first section of this article formed an important basis and allowed me to draw new conclusions about how Hill’s texts could be understood and used. Only thereafter did I begin warming up the texts, which I had retained quite well in my memory from previous experiments. I practiced them every day for several weeks.¹⁴⁰ The final stage involved presenting my work to the Dutch Historical Acting Collective during a week-long meeting in August 2021, and filming ‘The Actor’s Epitome’ as well as the sequence of passions from the ‘Essay’. The feedback I got from the members of DHAC, and the experience of presenting my work before them (after a pandemic – a live audience!), led me to change my intentions: where I had originally used Hill’s texts purely technically, as springs to inner feeling, I now began to incorporate the tools of the actor, such as declamation, gesture and attitude. Thus, I stopped using the exercises merely as a training ground for a ductile imagination, and began seeing them as *études*, or performance pieces whose underlying theatrical affects were generated by means of Hill’s specified somatic configurations. It was therefore necessary to take the larger dramatic context of these excerpts into account.

Two videos are available of my work with Hill. Neither of them fully documents the process described above.¹⁴¹ A single skirmish cannot encapsulate the entire war. In this version of the latter, I return my body to neutral in between the ten dramatic passions, rather than transitioning directly from one to the next.

MY CONCLUSIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF RECENT SCHOLARSHIP

I finish by comparing my conclusions and experiences to what some select scholars have written about Hill’s system in the last fifty years. This serves not only as a manner of comparing my embodied research to academic opinions on the topic, but also points out the uses of practice-based research in the arts.

The most important conclusion, for me at least, is that Hill does not propose that the specific combinations of muscle tension and facial expression he advocates comprise the art of acting *as such*, but rather that the actor can consciously use them to awaken affect in the body through intentional (willed) imaginings. On the other hand, some scholars have taken the somatic combinations as an end rather than a means, which has led them to undervalue both Hill and his system. Take for instance Thomas R. Preston:

At the end of his *Essay*, Hill supplies an abbreviated version of the rules for representing the ten major passions, and except for the look in the eye, six of the rules are identical. They deserve listing to show

¹³⁹ James HARRIMAN-SMITH, *Criticism, Performance, and the Passions in the Eighteenth Century: The Art of Transition* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 33.

¹⁴⁰ See Fn. 8.

¹⁴¹ The videos can be found here: <https://jedwentz.com/wentz-edps/> (last accessed 23-02-2022).

how the rules for representing a particular passion inevitably led to their application to nearly all passions indiscriminately.¹⁴²

Preston understands Hill's system as rules for *representing* the ten major passions, rather than as a somatic shortcut to triggering multifarious manifestations of affect in the body, and he greatly undervalues the importance of the look in the eye in stimulating the actor's imagination. More recently, the reviewer of a facsimile edition of *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill Esq.* sardonically dismissed Hill's system on the same grounds:

Volume 4 concludes with "[An] Essay on the Art of Acting." As with many pages throughout the four volumes, the reprint is very lightly inked, and many words are lost to illegibility. At times, however, one does not really mind not being able to read Hill's thespian insights, such as the fact that love is shown by "muscles intense, – and respectful attention in the eye" while fear would have the "muscles and look both languid – with an alarm in eye and motion," and jealousy "by muscles intense, and the look pensive; or the look intense and the muscles languid, interchangeably." At times the century embarrasses even its staunchest defenders.¹⁴³

Paul Goring's understanding of Hill is more nuanced than these, but he still sees Hill's writing as prescriptive:

Hill advances an acting technique in which the performer should attempt to *feel* the emotions which the fictional character would feel in the various situations engineered by the playwright – a technique akin to that famously promoted much later by the Russian actor and producer Konstantin Stanislavsky and also later by 'method' actors. But while Hill promotes such an internalised technique, he is at the same time partly prescriptive when it comes to illustrating the bodily signs that feelings actually produce. [...] There is then, a certain methodological tension in *The Art of Acting*, as Hill invites his trainee actors to follow not only their imagined emotions but also his own illustrations of moved bodies moving.¹⁴⁴

The problem here is that while Hill is certainly filling the actor's 'Thoughts' with images so that she or he may '*each pictur'd Passion weigh*', he both encouraging the actor to make a psychosomatic *shortcut*, and describing a range of physical consequences which may arise from triggering the natural responses of the body to any given affect, particularly in the 1746 poem *The Art of Acting*. To return to the imagery of the germinating seed, the leaves and shoots of passion need not be identical with each sprouting.

Claudio Vicentini, too, sees prescription in Hill's work, writing of the: 'rather unwieldy presence of a pre-established expressive code to be learnt by heart.'¹⁴⁵ Vicentini sums up Hill's thought by bringing together, quite incongruously, the physical characteristics Hill considered most suitable for stage actors (eye colour) with the principles of his acting system, in order to declare the whole paradoxical and stifling:

In short, then, armed with a script marked passion by passion in red and black; trained in the stimulus-response mechanism linking the imagination with the facial and bodily muscles, the outcome of which has been duly verified in a mirror; groomed to produce, at the drop of a hat, the ten movements of the facial muscles which would elicit the required expression, and endowed with well-defined features, including the requisite eye-colour, clearly visible from the back rows, the actor is finally ready to tread the boards with some hope of success. The system is hardly one to leave space for creativity.

¹⁴² Thomas R. PRESTON, 'The "Stage Passions" and Smollett's Characterization', *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (January, 1974), 105–125, p. 120.

¹⁴³ [ANONYMOUS], *The Scriblerian and the Kit-Kats*, Vol. 40, Numbers 1-2, (Autumn 2007–2008), p. 146.

¹⁴⁴ GORING, op. cit., pp. 3–4.

¹⁴⁵ VICENTINI, op. cit., p. 154.

Paradoxically, however, it was elaborated as a short-cut to the same results as those produced by the more direct method of the emotionalist acting technique.¹⁴⁶

Vicentini seems to find embodiment ('groomed', 'at the drop of a hat') and preparation ('marked passion by passion in red and black') as stifling to creativity, but this was far from my experience in carrying out my research. In fact, my extensive training and performance experience as a musician makes this kind of reasoning seem quite naïve: professional musicians devote many years to repetitive practice, in order to be able to carry out complex sequences of movements in a precise order and with a predetermined affective flow and timing; and yet we do not generally feel artistically or emotionally stifled by our embodied technique. On the contrary, we gain confidence from it, knowing that embodiment helps us to be creative – for the sake of expression – in *how* these predetermined sequences of notes, phrases and affects are to be performed. Furthermore, for a practical performer rather than a theoretician, there is no paradox between Hill's method and goals in 'An Essay on the Art of Acting' (1753). His shortcut – as I and other members of the Dutch Historical Acting Collective who have experimented with the system have found – really is a shortcut. It has enabled us to feel somatically the transitions between affects, and practicing it has also increased our receptivity, which in turn has resulted in a *greater* variety of expression in the acting.

Joseph R. Roach, much like Vicentini, seems to have thought of Hill's system as cumbersome or laborious. In *The Player's Passion*, he rather fancifully wrote that actors using Hill's system might have resorted to (and irritated Garrick with) 'offensive offstage rituals'.¹⁴⁷ This is somewhat odd, as it is clear that Hill's intention was to train actors to summon up affect easily, quickly and naturally on stage, that is to say, mid action. Roach, however, lays a more serious charge against Hill when he argues that quick transitions are incompatible with certain principles of Cartesian philosophy:

For all their elaborate physiological descriptions, Aaron Hill and the mechanists [...] had ignored an important passage in *Les passions de l'âme*, article 46, entitled "The reason which prevents the soul from being able wholly to control its passion." Here Descartes described the slowness with which the strong passions, once stirred, relinquish their grip. This tends to make hash out of imaginative ductility.¹⁴⁸

It is possible that Roach is here using Descartes to pass judgement ('hash') on one of Hill's basic principles. If so, my experience leads me to an opposite conclusion, for Hill's shortcut actually *solved* the problem of the tyranny of the stronger passions, and resulted in more rapid transitions than 'nature herself' would allow. I would propose that when the actor intentionally changes his or her look and muscle tension at the same time as the imagination produces the image of the passion, the resistance described by Descartes – which I interpret as that stubborn muscular tension which impedes transition like a kind of 'somatic inertia' – is removed, clearing the way for a new affect rapidly to manifest itself.¹⁴⁹ It seems to me that this is the very crux of Hill's method, and for this reason it does not surprise me that Hill considered Garrick (that master of transitions) to be the avatar of his system.

It is possible, however, that Roach – rather than using Descartes to discredit the efficacy of imaginative ductility in and of itself – is actually reproaching Hill for being inconsistent in his

¹⁴⁶ VICENTINI, *ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁴⁷ ROACH, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

¹⁴⁸ ROACH, *ibid.*, p. 112.

¹⁴⁹ In article 46 of *Les Passions de l'Âme*, Descartes writes that 'the passions are not only caused but maintained and strengthened by some particular movement of the spirits.' He describes in article 11 how the spirits cause muscles to shorten or lengthen. See 'The Passions of the Soul' in *Descartes: Selected Philosophical Writings* tr. by John COTTINGHAM, Robert STOOTHOFF and Dugald MURDOCH (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 235 and 222. See also the description of unsuccessful grief in HILL (1753), *op. cit.*, Vol. 4., pp. 364–5, starting at 'His muscles must fall loose'.

application of Cartesian concepts. One of the differences between Roach's approach and my own is that I do not expect, nor do I actively look for, paradigm shifts when reading historical sources. Indeed, I am, as a performer, generally more interested in continuity and the gradual metamorphosis of performative traditions. As Alan S. Downer noted: 'Styles of acting change, but the change is gradual. Not only the actor but the audience must change, for the spectator must be prepared to believe what he sees.'¹⁵⁰ That is why I have pointed out (in the first part of this article) that the influence of Barton Booth on Hill should be taken into account when examining the latter's system, and why I have proposed that Hill's work might be seen as a bridge between the acting of the first half of the eighteenth century and the second. It is dangerous to assume that just because a writer makes use of ideas and images from Descartes, that said writer was therefore in all things consistently Cartesian. As Jennifer Montagu pointed out in her work on *the Conférences sur l'expression Générale et particulière* of Charles Le Brun (1619–1690): 'Le Brun's debt to Descartes has often been cited, and the *Traité sur les passions* was certainly the most important source from which Le Brun borrowed material for his lecture. But it was not the only one.'¹⁵¹ Montagu then goes on to point out that Le Brun also quotes from Marin Cureau de la Chambre's (1594–1669) *Les Caracteres des Passions* (the first volume of which appeared in 1640), a work 'firmly in the Scholastic tradition'. Indeed, the chain of sources Le Brun used stretched back as far as 1585 with Guillaume de Vair's (1556–1621) *La Philosophie morale des Stoïcs*. Robert D. Hume has argued against Roach's methodological approach to theatre studies and I will not retrace his steps here.¹⁵² My point is merely that I have reached different conclusions than Vicentini or Roach because of my chosen methodology, general starting points and embodied outcomes.

Finally, Christine Gerard, in her biography of Hill, raises a few issues that I feel should be discussed. The first has to do with the idea that Hill was a progressive acting coach:

Hill considered himself progressive and modern in his views on acting. Many of the *Prompter* essays anticipate the 'realistic' approach espoused by Macklin and Garrick in the 1740s, where less emphasis was placed on set formulas for character representation and more on the need for the actor to cultivate empathy for the character he was playing.¹⁵³

One can understand Gerrard's remarks, indeed, in reading *The Prompter* one might even draw the conclusion that Hill promoted an entirely naturalistic style of acting, one that arose purely and spontaneously from the psychosomatic state of the actor. After all, Hill scoffed at actors who followed the rules for orators laid down by Quintilian, discouraged the extensive use of mirrors to train the actor's body and warned in *The Prompter* against painting and drawings being used as guides for attitudes and facial expressions. And yet, Hill suggested to Garrick – in the same letter in which he confined the use of mirrors to a 'few day's practice'¹⁵⁴ – that the great actor himself could profit from studying French painting. Hill first makes a case for relying entirely on nature:

For in natural consequence of an impression, muscular and mental, every attitude that offers, cannot fail to be a proper one; and those, that best become a passion, aim'd at, will arise spontaneously; as fast, as they are wanted; just as *words* invest *ideas*: more, or less, indeed, expressively, as the conception of their *utterer*, is a clear, or a confused one.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Alan S. DOWNER, 'Nature to Advantage Dressed: Eighteenth-Century Acting', *PMLA*, Vol. 58, No. 4, Dec. 1943, p. 1005.

¹⁵¹ Jennifer MONTAGU, *The Expressions of the Passions: The origin and influence of Charles Le Brun's Conférence sur l'expression Générale et particulière* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 156.

¹⁵² See: Robert D. HUME, *Reconstructing Contexts: The Aims and Principles of Archaeo-Historicism* (Oxford, OUP, 1999), pp. 166–170.

¹⁵³ GERRARD, op. cit., p. 168.

¹⁵⁴ HILL (1753), op. cit., Vol. II, p. 381.

¹⁵⁵ HILL, *ibid.*, p. 382.

A bit further on, however, and quite out of the blue, he brings up French history painting:

If ever any *painter, statuary or engraver*, in the world, had such *creative* power, as one *life-painter* has, whom *nature* lodged in Mr. GARRICK's fancy, 'tis in *France*, he must be looked for. They have their innumerable *prints*; all filled in masterly perfection, with whatever is, or was, most celebrated, in the *history-pieces*, and *fine statues*, of antiquity, And a well-chosen *collection*, from the *best* of these, would furnish infinite *supply* of *hints*, to so compleat a *judge* of *attitudes*, as I here, wish 'em *viewed* by. I say *hints*, because, in many of the *finest* of 'em all, there are *defects*, which *you* could rectify.¹⁵⁶

Hill then goes on to flatter the actor:

For you will see, with pleasure, they grew chiefly (as I everywhere observed, in *Italy*) from some *unnerved* remissness, in the *joints*, that lamed the purposed *animation*, in the *posture*, and you cannot fail to draw a *proof* from that remark, how much the *painters* may improve, by copying Mr. Garrick, and what little room there is, for *his* improving, by the *painters*.¹⁵⁷

Even as he compliments, he still seems to be insisting that there is at least something ('what little room there is') that Garrick could learn from the study of painting. It seems that Hill did indeed expect actors to learn about attitudes from painting.

This leaves some room for speculation as to the 'newness' of Hill's acting aesthetic. Once again, I would return to the idea that Hill greatly admired the acting of Barton Booth, and indeed that his acting theory was inspired by having witnessed Booth's performances. This brings us to the acting style in vogue around the turn of the eighteenth century, and particularly to Thomas Betterton, with whom Booth worked. Although one might question exactly what Betterton himself might have made of the words attributed to him in Charles Gildon's (ca. 1665–1724) *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton*, there is no reason to discount it as a source; and as it was published in London in 1710, Hill certainly would have had every opportunity to read it. An examination of the propositions in Gildon's book regarding acting reveals many points that would later be promoted by Hill as essential to his own acting system. There were, of course, differences: Gildon, for instance, advocates the use a mirror and observes the rule that actors not raise their hands above their eyes.¹⁵⁸ However, on key points there is enough agreement between Gildon and Hill to see in the latter a continuation of certain aspects of the acting style of the late seventeenth century. This all makes it very difficult for us at a distance of 300 years to determine in what ways and to what degree Hill should be called progressive. Perhaps he could better be described as an advocate for the renewal of a manner of acting that was temporarily lost (during a period in which superb actors were scarce), rather than the creator of something that was entirely new?

Two final quotations from Gerrard's biography to be examined here concern possible reasons why Hill's system has not been more positively received by some recent academics. I do not want to hang a generally negative assessment exclusively on Gerrard. I believe her feelings are shared by others when she writes:

Perhaps the greatest shortcoming of Hill's theory was its confident but over-simplistic identification of the mind with conscious thought, acting on body, which consisted of matter: a Cartesian dualism which took no account of the subconscious or unconscious part of the imagination.¹⁵⁹

As has been mentioned above, Roach's *The Player's Passion* also contains a passage proposing that Hill 'saw little or nothing in between' mind and body. My response is that such statements tell us

¹⁵⁶ HILL, *ibid.*, p. 385.

¹⁵⁷ HILL, *ibid.*, p. 385.

¹⁵⁸ See GILDON, *The life of Mr. Thomas Betterton, the Late Eminent Tragedian* (London: Robert GOSLING, 1710), pp. 54–5 and p. 76.

¹⁵⁹ GERRARD, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

more about the assumptions of contemporary scholars than about the shortcomings of Hill's system. One should be wary of denying the participation of the unconscious simply because it is not explicitly mentioned in Hill's text. As I have pointed out, in my experience the unconscious seems somehow to participate in raising images in the imagination: whether or not Hill could conceive of the unconscious is irrelevant to what an actor using his system experiences.

However, the final quotation I examine from Gerrard's biography of Hill – one that itself cites Roach's *The Player's Passion* – seems to go quite a way towards explaining the current antipathy to Hill's 'mechanical' approach: 'Pushed to an extreme, there was also something faintly repellent about Hill's vision of the actor as 'a hydro-dynamic passion mill, all springs, and cogs, pulling strings and pushing gears'.¹⁶⁰

Here then we come full circle, returning to Richardson's shaken frame as a metaphor for what appears to be a persistent discomfort experienced by humans when they are confronted with the mechanical, that is to say, somatic nature of feelings. I am convinced that the very real effects of this 'faintly repellent' vision are exactly what Richardson actually *felt* in 1746, when his whole body was shaken by 'Tremors' and 'Startings'. I too was struck by a kind of horror, as if I had learned something most unpleasant about myself, when I first engaged with 'An Essay on the Art of Acting' (1753). Yet, the most important thing I have gleaned from this research trajectory – and it is something that will certainly be useful to me in my future practice-based work on historical acting – is to welcome the *feeling* of these consciously triggered physical manifestations of the passions: learning first to tolerate, then to manipulate and finally to relish, the pushing and pulling of nature's most admirable affecting cogs and springs.

Jed WENTZ
Universiteit Leiden

¹⁶⁰ GERRARD, *ibid.*, p. 170. See also Roach, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

ACTING THROUGH THE LENS OF THE PRESS

Impulsive Styles, Truthful Tones and Scenic Expressivity in Eighteenth-Century France

Observing the evolution of stage practices over the course of the century, the newly appointed editor of the *Journal des théâtres* wrote in 1777:

Nous observerons en passant, que c'est au Drame que l'on doit le mauvais goût et l'indécence de la plupart des Acteurs ; les situations hors de nature qui s'y rencontrent sans cesse, forcent le Comédien, à des élans convulsifs qui ne lui laissent pas la liberté de s'observer, et lui font peu à peu abandonner la contenance honnête sans laquelle on n'est point admis dans les bonnes Sociétés.¹

The rise of the bourgeois drama, as we know, had repercussions for staging, leading to the fuller and more expressive physical action that was promoted by Denis Diderot (1713–1784) in his *Entretiens sur Le Fils naturel* (1758). The editor points to new stage practices which, according to him, force the actor to be in the moment (because he no longer watches himself act) and to let go of himself on stage in a marked manner. But if the gestures seem to break free from the old rhetorical model, being based on impulsiveness, they are also somewhat spasmodic. As I have recently shown, under the influence of the medical sciences and the study of nerves, an expressionist style of playing was emerging which could sometimes be combined with vocal effects.² These effects reflected a desire to communicate emotions in a different way, that is to say, in a more spontaneous and dynamic way, at the risk of causing incredulity, if not contempt, among connoisseurs; for instance what Claude-Joseph Dorat (1734–1780), not without disapproval, described as ‘tones of truth’ (*tons de vérités*) in his poem on declamation:

Plusieurs de nos Acteurs se félicitent d'avoir introduit dans leur jeu ce qu'ils appellent des tons de vérité. Ces sortes de tons, tout à fait disparates avec ceux qui précèdent et qui suivent, m'ont quelquefois paru trop brusques, trop saillants, et tombent presque toujours dans ce familier qu'il faut éviter avec autant de soin que l'emphase et le gigantesque.³

According to the author, actors initiate vocal modes that aim to give speech a form of sincerity – this is probably what he means by the use of the term ‘truth’. It is therefore important to identify what aspect of these vocal styles could be considered impulsive, even though the actor had, of course, rehearsed his or her role before performing it. How did actors adapt to new genres, and which new styles responded to a need for a different form of expressivity on stage, i.e. the desire to experience emotion in action?

¹ ‘We shall observe in passing, that it is to the [bourgeois] drama that we owe the bad taste and indecency of the majority of actors; the unnatural situations which are constantly found there compel the actor to convulsive impulses which do not leave him the freedom to observe himself, and which make him gradually abandon the respectable composure without which one is not admitted into good society.’ *Journal des théâtres ou Le Nouveau Spectateur* (Paris: Esprit, 1777), n° I, 1 April, p. 5. Abbreviated as follows in this article: *JDT*.

² See Sabine CHAOUCHE, ‘Expressionist Acting. Paroxysmal Emotions at Play on the Late Eighteenth-Century French Stage’, *European Drama and Performance Studies*, 17:2 (2021), 97–124.

³ ‘Several of our actors congratulate themselves on having introduced into their acting what they call tones of truth. These kinds of tones, very different from those which precede and follow, have sometimes seemed to me too abrupt, too bold, and almost always fall into that familiarity which must be avoided with as much care as affected pomp and exaggeration.’ Claude-Joseph DORAT, *La Déclamation théâtrale. Poème didactique en trois chants* (1766), in *Écrits sur l'art théâtral. Spectateurs*, Sabine CHAOUCHE (ed.) (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005.a), Vol. 1, p. 21.

The voice of those actors who left their mark on their time, especially the actresses whose vocal style was often commented on, was generally included in the history of theories of declamation and analysed on the basis of writings on the theatrical art, particularly treatises, but also according to whether or not they complied with the rhetorical rules that classified the passions and their vocal manifestation. Beyond rhetoric (which gave the orator a general framework for speaking in public), and theory (which sought to standardize tragic or comic acting),⁴ styles that were presented as very distinct from one another were mocked or admired over the decades: the ‘singing’ declamation of Marie Desmares, known as La Champmeslé (1642–1689);⁵ the ‘octave’ diction of Marie-Anne de Chasteauneuf, known as La Duclos (1664–1747);⁶ the more ‘intimate’ declamation, i.e. less grandiloquent, of Adrienne Lecouvreur (1692–1730), whose voice did not seem to be very conducive to great passions and outbursts; the surprising deviations and irregularities of Françoise-Marie Marchand, known as Mlle Dumesnil (1713–1803). But these styles were not only feminine. Thus, Baron made an impression with his ‘spoken’ diction,⁷ as Jean-François Marmontel put it.

Dorat published his first poem on tragic declamation at the end of the 1750s, but we wish here to look at a later period, the end of the 1770s, in particular to certain new *sociétaires* who have so far been little studied, but who nevertheless sought to find their own voice,⁸ or more precisely, the ‘voice of the heart’, whether in the tragic or comic genre; a voice capable of transmitting emotion to the spectators and producing what Sylvaine Guyot and Clotilde Thouret have called an ‘affective chain’ from the stage to the audience.⁹ The second half of the eighteenth century is most interesting from this point of view, because the voice, as much as the gestures, is the focus of stage research that may seem unusual. Indeed, the period before the Revolution is still very little explored by researchers, which is why I am presently endeavouring to retrace the history of the Parisian and provincial play, as it is ‘said’, or even ‘told’, in the press.

From a methodological point of view, I rely on primary sources that are neither treatises nor theoretical essays. As far as the approach chosen is concerned, it is not a question of discussing whether or not the actor feels the text, or even of discussing the actor’s tears or his relationship to the role. Nor is it a question of analysing the staging and the relevance of the way in which the verses are declaimed in relation to the words that are to be spoken, as Charles-Joseph de Ligne (1735–1814) does, for example, in his *Lettres à Eugénie* and his *Mélanges sentimentaux*, playing the role of dramatic critic.¹⁰ Instead, this study is based on little-explored sources, such as the press, which may be controversial. Indeed, the newspapers of the time give us the opportunity to hear declamation through the exogenous and sometimes divergent voices of different spectators: declamation as it was perceived by – and transmitted by – the latter, who did not hesitate to ridicule certain practices that they deemed degrading.

⁴ See Sabine CHAOUCHE, *L’Art du comédien. Déclamation et jeu scénique en France à l’âge classique (1629–1680)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2001) and also Julia Gros de Gasquet, *En disant l’alexandrin, l’acteur tragique et son art, XVII^e siècle–XX^e siècle* (Paris: Champion, 2006).

⁵ Sabine CHAOUCHE, ‘La Poésie racinienne: chant ou déclamation?’, *Racine Poète*, *La Livorne*, 50 (1999), 235–256.

⁶ CHAOUCHE, *ibid.*

⁷ Sabine CHAOUCHE, ‘La diction théâtrale au XVIII^e siècle: “déclamer” ou “parler en récitant”?’, *L’Information Littéraire*, 3 (2000), 82–93.

⁸ Sabine CHAOUCHE, ‘L’acteur et la création. Modeler le sentiment’, *European Drama and Performance Studies*, 14:1 (2020), 49–66 and ‘La déclamation au XVIII^e siècle: de l’effet vocal à l’effet de réel’, *The Frenchmag* (2012), https://www.thefrenchmag.com/La-declamation-au-XVIIIe-siecle-de-l-effet-vocal-a-l-effet-de-reel-Sabine-Chaouche_a605.html (last accessed: 12/02/2021); see also Laurence Marie, *Inventer l’acteur. Émotions et spectacle dans l’Europe des Lumières* (Paris: Sorbonne Université Presses, 2019). On the history of emotions see *Histoire des émotions*, Georges VIGARELLO et Alain CORBIN (eds.) (Paris: Seuil, 2016), Tomes 1 & 2.

⁹ Sylvaine GUYOT and Clotilde THOURET, ‘Des émotions en chaîne: représentation théâtrale et circulation publique des affects au XVII^e siècle’, in *Les Émotions publiques et leurs langages à l’âge classique*, Hélène MERLIN-KAJMAN (ed.), *Littératures classiques*, 68:1 (2009), 225–241.

¹⁰ See Sabine CHAOUCHE, ‘La scène au prisme de la critique “sentimentale”. Charles-Joseph de LIGNE et ses écrits sur la pratique théâtrale’, *Études sur le XVIII^e siècle*, 45 (2017), 163–175.

In order to better understand the history and functioning of the *Journal des théâtres* studied here in particular, and to assess the reliability of its reviews, the world of theatre criticism in the eighteenth century is discussed, including its role, the periodicals available, and the programmatic idea of a new spectator as a commentator on the theatrical performances of his time; but also, as an influencer. Three major techniques seem to have been experimented with by actors in the second half of the eighteenth century, designed to mark the disorder and outburst of emotions at the very moment the character speaks and/or acts. The interruption of speech relates to a non-fluidity of diction in that it does not necessarily follow the syntax of the lines and their writing. Furthermore, the addition of words or sounds, and stammering to make the flow jerky can be seen as the result of searching for new techniques. Finally, dissonance involves a range of techniques such as moaning, shouting or discordant diction.

THE JOURNAL DES THÉÂTRES AND THEATRE CRITICISM

Dramatic criticism emerged in the seventeenth century with the creation of gazettes, the most famous of which was undoubtedly the *Mercurie galant*. The eighteenth century saw the multiplication of these periodicals, some of which, exclusively informative, regularly included a few pages on theatrical life and the daily or weekly programming of entertainments.¹¹ They sometimes gave details of the composition of the troupes and the employees of the major institutions such as the Comédie-Italienne, the Académie royale de musique and the Comédie-Française. New journals were fully dedicated to the Parisian and, in some cases, provincial stages. *L'Observateur des Spectacles ou Anecdotes théâtrales* by Antoine Chevrier was published in the early 1760s. The following decade saw the emergence of thinking that was much more critical than had previously been the case. As Gregory Brown puts it: 'Writers such as Jean-François Marmontel, Antoine-François Prevost, Pierre Rousseau, Elie-Catherine Fréron and Grimm began to write *comptes rendus* of dramatic texts and performances regularly in the second half of the eighteenth century'.¹² These journals were, in a way, official organs, such as the *Mercurie de France*. However, according to Gregory Brown, journals were also 'created with more pronounced points of view, such as the *Journal encyclopédique*, the *Année littéraire* and the manuscript newsletter *Correspondance littéraire*'.¹³ A critical discourse on eighteenth-century theatrical art thus developed that in some cases proved to be antagonistic.

The creation of new and more politically engaged newspapers that tried to go against the mainstream and resolutely opposed the conventional, if not convoluted tone of the literati who frequented the capital's troupes, symbolized a brief period of theatrical life in which critical thinking was not only about observation but also about disapproval. This risky and dissenting stance, as Nina Gelbart shows,¹⁴ challenged 'journalism' as it was reflected in the circles of high culture, i.e. a court-centred and self-righteous journalism – one might even say politically correct – that was protected by the actors and politicians. The rebellious spirit was symbolized in the 1770s by Sébastien Mercier and Jean-Pierre Le Fuel de Méricourt (then in his late twenties). The latter

¹¹ See, for instance, *L'Avant-coureur*, *La Feuille sans titre* etc.

¹² Gregory BROWN, 'Le Fuel De Mericourt and the *Journal des Théâtres*: Theatre Criticism and the Politics of Culture in Pre-Revolutionary France', *French History*, 9:1 (1995), 1–26, p. 5. Newspapers include: *Le babillard*; *L'Almanach des spectacles*; *Tablettes dramatiques, contenant l'Abrégé de l'Histoire du Théâtre François, l'Établissement des théâtres à Paris, un dictionnaire des Pièces, et l'abrégé de l'histoire des auteurs et des acteurs* (1752–1758); *L'Observateur des spectacles ou Anecdotes théâtrales, ouvrage périodique par M. de Chevrier* (1762–1763); *Correspondance dramatique, ou Lettres critiques et historiques sur les spectacles* (1776–1778); *Journal des spectacles de la cour* (1764–1765, 1770–1774, 1785); *L'Observateur des spectacles* (1780).

¹³ BROWN, *ibid.*

¹⁴ Nina R. GELBART, 'Frondeur' Journalism in the 1770s: Theater Criticism and Radical Politics in the Prerevolutionary French Press', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 17:4, Special Issue: The Printed Word in the Eighteenth Century (Summer 1984), 493–514.

paid ‘£12,000 to £15,000 to Prévost d’Exmes, his predecessor, and to his printer Pierres, for the rights to the *Journal des théâtres*.’¹⁵

The full title of the periodical – *Journal des théâtres, ou Le Nouveau Spectateur, servant de répertoire universel des Spectacles étrangers et de la France, avec des anecdotes et une notice sur les ouvrages des auteurs dramatiques et des musiciens* – was intended to be programmatic:¹⁶ the aim was to provoke debate among connoisseurs on various aspects of French and European theatrical life. The *Journal des théâtres* intended to review the ‘activités des théâtres Français, Italien, Opéra; Lyon, Rouen, Bruxelles, Angleterre, puis Bordeaux, Strasbourg, puis Fontainebleau, Versailles; la Cour mais aussi le théâtre Montansier’ [‘activities of the French, Italian and Opera theatres; Lyon, Rouen, Brussels, England, then Bordeaux, Strasbourg, then Fontainebleau, Versailles; the Court but also the Montansier theatre’], while aiming to be neutral.¹⁷ The editorial line, however, does not seem to have been so impartial, as suggested by Alexandre Grimod de la Reynière, who, when he became editor in 1778, praised ‘le ton de modération qui règne dans le troisième volume et dans les suivants’ [‘the tone of moderation that reigns in the third and subsequent volumes’].¹⁸

The first editor of the series of issues published in 1776 was Le Fuel de Méricourt. He belonged to a group of reformist thinkers who were trying to break the monopoly of the Comédie-Française and who ran several newspapers such as *Le journal anglais* (Pierre le Tourneur), *Le journal des dames* (Sébastien Mercier) or *Le journal de politique* (Simon-Nicholas Henry Linguet).¹⁹ As early as Volume 8, dated July 15th, 1776, Le Fuel de Méricourt clearly showed his desire for independence:

*Nul intérêt personnel, nul ressentiment ne m’animent. Je ne suis ni l’ami ni l’ennemi d’aucun des Membres de la Troupe Française. Ils ne m’ont fait ni tort, ni grâce. Je ne les connais qu’au Théâtre: j’applaudis de bonne foi à ceux d’entre eux qui ont du talent, quand toutefois ils veulent bien se donner la peine d’en montrer; mais je ne vois qu’avec un extrême déplaisir tous les désagréments qu’ont à essayer tous les Auteurs Dramatiques.*²⁰

Advocating from the outset to open up the field to competition – while proposing to reform the selection of plays – could only offend the *Comédiens Français*, who were proud of their privilege of 1680 and were reluctant to tolerate interference in the internal affairs of the troupe. (A letter from François-René Molé (1734–1802) was published in issue No. 9 of 1776, reframing the editor’s remarks).²¹ Moreover, sarcastic remarks about the ‘talent’ of the members of the troupe could not go unnoticed either, even though some pages of the *Journal* warmly praised some of the actors such as Mlle Sainval cadette, Molé, Brisard, Mme Vestris or even Lekain (1729–1778) for example.²² However, according to Matthieu Pidanzat de Mairobert, the journal was ‘une espèce de bal dramatique, où, sous le masque, on se disait toutes les vérités piquantes’ [‘a sort of dramatic ball, where, under the mask, all the piquant truths were told’].²³ According to Le Fuel de Méricourt, the creation of

¹⁵ <https://dictionnaire-journalistes.gazettes18e.fr/journaliste/492-jean-pierre-le-fuel-de-mericourt> (last accessed 01/12/2021).

¹⁶ <https://www.gazettes18e.fr/> lists the following issues: “1er avril 1777-15 juin 1778. 4 volumes. Prospectus du 5 mars 1777. Paraît tous les quinze jours; un seul retard, le 15 avril 1778 (n° XXVI). 26 livraisons par an. Datation des volumes: Tome I, 1er avril-15 juil. 1777 (n° VII); Tome II, 1er août-15 nov. 1777 (n° XVII); Tome III, 1er déc. 1777-15 mars 1778 (n° XXIV); Tome IV, 1er avril-15 juin 1778 (n° XXX)”. The newspaper was taken over by Le Fuel de Méricourt and titled: *Le Nouveau Spectateur, ou Journal des théâtres*. Alexandre Grimod de la Reynière became the third general editor.

¹⁷ <https://dictionnaire-journaux.gazettes18e.fr/journal/0716-journal-des-theatres> (last accessed 01/12/2021).

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ GELBART, art. cit., pp. 501–3.

²⁰ “No personal interest, no resentment animates me. I am neither friend nor foe to any members of the French troupe. They have done me neither harm nor favour. I know them only in the theatre: I applaud in good faith those of them who have talent, when they are willing to take the trouble to show it; but I see only with extreme displeasure all the inconveniences that all the dramatic authors have to endure.” *JDT* (Paris: RUAAULT & ESPRIT), n° VIII, 15 July 1776, p. 469.

²¹ *JDT*, n° IX, 1 August 1776, pp. 35–7.

²² *JDT*, n° VIII, 15 July 1776, pp. 518–9 and IX, 1 August 1776, p. 61.

²³ *L’Espion anglais* (London: ADAMSON, 1783), Tome 5, Letter VIII, p. 208.

the *Journal des théâtres* aroused ‘la haine des comédiens qui cherchèrent à le faire supprimer’ [‘the hatred of the actors who sought to have it suppressed’].²⁴ Coqueley de Chaussepierre, the censor who soon replaced Crébillon fils – at the time very favourable to Le Fuel de Méricourt’s activities – was then the adviser to the Comédie-Française troupe, as reported in *L’Espion anglais*.²⁵ According to Matthieu Pidanzat de Mairobert’s account, he was therefore keen to get rid of Le Fuel de Méricourt, who was too troublesome but nevertheless appreciated by the subscribers. He was constantly bickering, whether by crossing out entire sections or, when the pages could not be censored, by hastily cancelling the publication of an issue sent to print. These manoeuvres, described by Nina Gerbart as a ‘purge’, soon led to the editor’s downfall and the threat of imprisonment: ‘Journalistic expropriations now began in earnest. Some of the frondeur editors were replaced with others thought to be more docile: Le Fuel by Le Vacher de Charnois, son-in-law of the actor Prévile, Mercier by the ‘gentle poet’ Dorat, Linguet by the staid academician Jean-François de La Harpe (1739–1803). But the whitewashed papers proved an embarrassment, because subscribers clamored for the original editors’ return’.²⁶

As Michel Biard suggests, at the outset, ‘l’objectif est avant tout de donner une vue d’ensemble des productions théâtrales du royaume’ [‘the aim was above all to give an overview of the kingdom’s theatrical productions’].²⁷ In this sense, the journal differed from its competitors, which were too focused on Paris and the Comédie-Française. Some amateurs said they sent their article to the journal. They often signed their ‘antidogmatic’ review with an illuminating epithet (‘L’Insouciant’, ‘Le Pacifique’, ‘Le Voyageur’, ‘Le Sceptique’) masking their identity in order, no doubt, to pique the readers’ curiosity. In this way, well-known personalities such as Sébastien Mercier, for example, or even, according to Enrico Rufi, ‘les Linguet, les Des Essarts, les Le Tourneur, les François de Neufchâteau, les Du Coudray’ [‘the Linguets, the Des Essarts, the Le Tourneur, the François de Neufchâteau, the Du Coudray’],²⁸ were able to hide their identities under the veil of anonymity or pseudonymity. Some spectators, living (apparently) in the provinces, sometimes wrote unsigned reviews of performances in the major cities of the kingdom. *The Journal des théâtres* thus contributed to the formation of a public opinion on the theatre of the time and the functioning of the monopolistic institutions, playing in a way the role of ‘influencer’. While royal academies were created as early as the seventeenth century (painting and literature), the theatre did not yet benefit from a group of judges known for their skills in stage acting.

Thanks to the press, the theatrical performances of the time were judged freely and informally. Beyond antipathies and prejudices, taste remained one of the main evaluation criteria. A number of connoisseurs; certain authors²⁹ who had a right of reply when they were mentioned or blamed; or simple amateurs or strangers, who we can assume were sometimes friends of the young editor, took up the pen to share their views and impressions. These readers, actively engaged in a form of contention, acted as drama critics, debating the appropriateness of the acting, the quality of the staging or the delivery, or some of the new trends that were emerging.

The newspaper’s motto, ‘Je loue avec plaisir, je blâme avec courage. Pope. Essai sur la critique, traduction de l’abbé du Resnel’ [‘I praise with pleasure, I blame with courage. Pope. *Essay on Criticism*

²⁴ Jean-Pierre LE FUEL DE MERICOURT, *Requête au Roi par M. Le Fuel de Méricourt, contre les abus de pouvoir commis à son égard, par Camus de Neville, directeur de la librairie* (s.l.s.n.), 1 Mars 1777, pp. 23–4.

²⁵ Mathieu François PIDANZAT DE MAIROBERT, *L’espion Anglois: Ou, Correspondance Secrète Entre Milord All’Eye Et Milord* (London: John Adamson, 1785), Tome 5, Letter VIII.

²⁶ GELBART, art. cit., p. 508.

²⁷ Michel BIARD, ‘De la critique théâtrale, ou la conquête de l’opinion’, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 302 (Oct.-Dec. 1995), p. 1.

²⁸ Rufi ENRICO, ‘Le Nouveau Spectateur de Le Fuel de Méricourt: une entreprise très mercérienne’, *Les « minores », Littératures classiques*, 31 (1997), 155–164, p. 156.

²⁹ For instance: Adrien-Michel-Hyacinthe BLIN DE SAINMORE, Jean-François CAILHAVA DE L’ESTENDOUX.

translated by abbé du Resnel'], shows a willingness to tell a certain 'truth' which may differ from one connoisseur to another. As Pope's translator stated, '*dans tous les temps, les plus grands Critiques ont porté des jugements entièrement opposés*' ['in all times, the greatest critics have made entirely opposite judgements'].³⁰ This polyphonic speech that blamed or praised remained in the realm of commentary and did not necessarily seek to theorize theatrical practice. It was therefore, in a way, beyond its didactic and epideictic character, 'free', even caustic,³¹ since its frankness could divide the readers or offend the actors. It should be noted that, over the course of the issues, fairly coherent or relevant essays were selected or developed that fit into a temporal dimension and precise circumstances that were easily identifiable at the time for the spectator familiar with Parisian theatres.

Writing concisely, not 'haphazardly', was evidence of constructive scrutiny. Satire or overt animadversion could undermine critical thinking. Yet authors often risked ridiculing actors for their flaws or lack of work. While humour and exaggeration were enjoyable and perhaps expected by readers to keep the criticism from being too dry, anything that seems forced remains tendentious for the historian, as it is often difficult to determine if the criticism is simply in jest, and therefore unfounded or exaggerated. However, the unjust critic himself could, in turn, be blamed. Different points of view were vigorously opposed from one issue to the next, as when a certain M. d'Attilly disagreed with what had been said about Mme Vestris, for example, claiming that the praise had been 'outrageous'.³² This interplay of criticism and counter-criticism does not seem to differ from some previously published works listing the qualities and faults of actors.³³ One can legitimately think that if the criticism was most often negative, it was nevertheless anchored in reality and in facts that were not necessarily contested in themselves. Counter-criticism animated the life of the *Journal des théâtres*. The articles that ratiocinated on the quality of stage practices did not call into question the *descriptions* of diction or acting. In this sense, polemical or mocking criticism bore witness to existing styles or modes of performance which, by their strangeness, defectiveness or recklessness, left their mark. It can therefore be seen as an abundant source of information which the historian should not ignore or turn away from on the pretext that it is subjective.

While the articles constantly evoke the voice of the heart, as I shall explain, the journalist's profession must find the voice of reason in order to obtain recognition for its cultural activities and status in society. Fuel de Méricourt wrote about the profession of journalist:

Rien n'est plus respectable et moins respecté, avec raison, que l'état des journalistes. Il demande les plus vastes connaissances, et l'impartialité la plus scrupuleuse; et l'on sait, à n'en pouvoir douter, qu'un Journaliste ne dira jamais de mal de la pièce d'un de ses amis.³⁴

A reformist, just like Mercier, he had issues with the Comédie-Française troupe: he was physically assaulted and expelled from the French theatre in 1776.³⁵ Antipathy for the *Comédiens Français* is

³⁰ Alexander POPE, *Essai sur la critique, poème, traduit de l'anglois de Mr Pope, avec un discours et des remarques*, Jean-François Du Resnel du Bellay (ed.) (Paris: T. Le Gras, Vve Pissot, & P. N. Lottin, 1730), p. 28 (preface by the translator).

³¹ According to Louis-Petit de Bachaumont, in his *Mémoires secrets* (17 November 1778), Le Fuel de Méricourt had many enemies because of his political and liberal views.

³² *JDT*, n° x, 15 August 1776, pp. 109–10.

³³ See for instance Antoine MAILLET-DUCLAIRON, *Essai sur la Connaissance du théâtre français* (Paris: s.n., 1751).

³⁴ 'Nothing is more respectable and less respected, with good reason, than the status of journalists. It requires the broadest knowledge and the most scrupulous impartiality; and one knows, without a doubt, that a journalist will never say anything bad about the work of one of his friends'. Attributed to LE FUEL DE MERICOURT, *Lettre de Mme Le Hoc à M. Le Hic au sujet de la Fausse Magie, opéra comique de MM. Marmontel et Grétry, représentée pour la première fois par les comédiens italiens, le 1er février 1775. (15 juillet 1775.)* (s.l.n.d.), p. 43.

³⁵ ENRICO, art. cit., p. 157.

clearly perceptible in the hostile reactions of amateurs – probably close friends of the editor of the first issues published in 1776 – which vilified the celebrities at the risk of tarnishing their reputations. But was this criticism more violent than that of the years 1777 and 1778? Criticism devoted to theatrical acting was varied while always remaining piquant. According to G. Brown:

The meaning of the Journal, for the eighteenth-century reader as for the contemporary historian, results from an interpretative hypothesis of the multiple authors, voices and texts read collectively – interacting with the historical, cultural context.³⁶

Indeed, the *Journal des théâtres* was, on the whole, a space for dialogue which prolonged the performances and which also allowed for fairly open expression thanks to its anonymity. It willingly echoed controversies because they fuelled the debates, even if the latter remained marked by the ambiguity of their authorial voices. It is true that, as G. Brown points out,³⁷ Le Fuel de Méricourt was able to write many texts in 1776, and therefore to take on several roles, but once the journal was taken over by Jean-Charles Levacher de Charnois, various contributors also gave their views on the art of the actor, often severely and not without a touch of humour, attacking yet other personalities. A year later, the newspaper was more cautious in presenting its editorial line:

*En nous chargeant du soin de composer le Journal des Théâtres, nous ne nous dissimulons point combien cette entreprise est pénible et délicate. Blesser l'amour-propre des Auteurs, quelque ménagée que soit la critique; irriter la susceptibilité des Comédiens; combattre les opinions erronées des prétendus Connoisseurs, toujours aveuglés par la haine ou par l'enthousiasme; en un mot, détromper le Public et le ramener à la vérité, telles sont les obligations que nous nous imposons. Dans cette carrière où les dangers sont, pour ainsi dire, toujours renaissants, nous avons besoin sans doute d'un courage qui ne se démente jamais. En nous attachant à mériter le suffrage des vrais talents, nous nous attendons à exciter le murmure de la médiocrité: mais satisfaits de plaire au Public judicieux et éclairé, en coopérant au progrès et à la gloire de l'Art Dramatique, nous braverons la fureur des petits partis, et nous entendrons, sans nous émouvoir, les cris de l'ignorance et de la partialité.*³⁸

This programmatic discourse aimed at contributing to the progress of the dramatic art, and attached great importance to 'truth' (although truth is relative, since the contributors ought to have been connoisseurs, but some of them were not worthy of the title, being governed by their emotions and their partiality). Criticism served, after all, to educate the public outside the theatre, that is, away from the cabals, and to enlighten them. A critic's work required certain qualities, including natural interpersonal skills and tact. Jean-Charles Levacher de Charnois (1750?–1792), protected by his family ties (he was Préville's son-in-law) was able to criticize the actors' performances, which, according to him, had seized the attention of the public, which '*paraît désirer que cette partie, d'où dépend principalement l'illusion du Spectacle, soit traitée avec soin*' ['seems to desire that this part, on which the illusion of the spectacle mainly depends, be treated with care'].³⁹ He argued

³⁶ BROWN, art. cit., p. 9.

³⁷ BROWN, *ibid.*, p. 10.

³⁸ 'In taking on the task of compiling the *Journal des théâtres*, we do not conceal from ourselves how painful and delicate this undertaking is. To wound the authors' self-esteem, however sparing the criticism may be; to irritate the actors' touchiness; to combat the erroneous opinions of the so-called connoisseurs, ever blinded by hatred or enthusiasm; in a word, to disabuse the public of their beliefs and to lead them back to the truth; such are the obligations that we impose on ourselves. In this career, where, so to speak, the dangers are always re-emerging, we need an unfailing courage. By endeavouring to merit the approval of those in possession of real talent, we expect to arouse the murmurings of the mediocre: but, satisfied with pleasing the judicious and enlightened public by cooperating in the progress and glory of the dramatic art, we will brave the fury of the little factions [*petits partis*] and hear, without being moved, the cries of ignorance and partiality.' *JDT* (Paris: Esprit), n° 1, 1 April 1777, prospectus p. 2.

³⁹ *JDT*, *ibid.*, p. 3.

that his criticism would be ‘*impartiale et toujours motivée*’ [‘impartial and always reasoned’].⁴⁰ From 1777 onwards, the *Journal des théâtres* appeared to be free of past quarrels and one can therefore consider that the criticism of the French actors’ performances was informed, even though it could be particularly benevolent towards the Prévile clan.

The 1777 and 1778 volumes contain a series of judgements on the staging, diction and gestures of the actors, but also on the costume. The authors did not necessarily appreciate the liberties and innovations of the actors, although they were acclaimed by the public, in so far as they contrasted with the idea of ‘*mélodieuse*’ or ‘*harmonieuse*’ declamation, which was often considered to be at its best in the theatre during the early modern period. Not all the articles in the *Journal des théâtres* were written by authors who had been mistreated by the Comédie-Française troupe. Although the articles cannot be considered entirely reliable, they must still be taken seriously. Indeed, certain fashions launched in Paris spread to the provinces, attesting to real phenomena in terms of stage practices. The recorded testimonies – the veracity of which may be debatable but difficult to verify, as has been pointed out, since it is above all a question of aesthetic perception and transmission of the performing arts according to a particular reading – nevertheless put the history of theory and the history of stage practices into perspective. They help us to grasp the question of the individuality and style of a personality in the world of show business, as well as the complexity of an editorial line that had to contend with censorship and various networks of influence, including French actors themselves (in addition to, perhaps, financial embezzlement).⁴¹

According to Grimod de la Reynière, ‘*les comédiens eurent le crédit de faire supprimer le journal au 30e numéro*’ [‘the actors had the power to suppress the newspaper after the 30th issue’].⁴² The phenomenon of stardom flourished at the same time, driven in part by the development of the press. Critics could undoubtedly make and break reputations, hence their power to cause harm. In his history of the press, Eugène Hatin recalls, for example, that ‘*La critique dramatique occupait une large place dans tous les journaux littéraires, et ce n’est qu’assez tard qu’elle eut des organes spéciaux, ce qui s’expliquerait encore par la difficulté qu’il y avait de parler de messieurs les comédiens*’ [‘dramatic criticism occupied a large place in all the literary journals, and it was not until quite late that it had its own specialized outlets, which can be explained by the difficulty there was to discuss actors’].⁴³ The

⁴⁰ JDT, *ibid.*

⁴¹ According to Pierre Peyronnet whose claims were based on *L’Espion anglais* published in 1783, the development of the newspapers was difficult: ‘*Le Prévost d’Exmes avait obtenu en 1770 un privilège pour Le Nouveau Spectateur, ou Examen des nouvelles pièces de théâtre. Le Fuel de Méricourt rachète le journal en 1776, moyennant une pension viagère de 600 £, versée à Le Prévost; le lieutenant de Police Lenoir était, au dire de l’Espion anglais (p. 205), favorable à cette transaction, et le censeur Crébillon fils devait lui accorder son appui, en partie contre les Comédiens Français, dont il avait eu à se plaindre. Mais en 1776, la direction de la Librairie passe à Camus de Neville, qui choisit comme censeur Coquelay de Chaussepierre, avocat des Comédiens Français. En butte aux tracasseries de son nouveau censeur, Le Fuel fait appel à ses lecteurs dans la « Lettre aux souscripteurs du Journal des théâtres » du 10 novembre 1776, mais doit finalement céder la place. Le Vacher de Charnois, gendre du comédien Prévile, bénéficie de l’appui financier de son beau-père et traite directement du rachat avec Le Prévost d’Exmes, qui avait gardé un droit sur chaque souscription perçue*’ (London: ADAMSON, 1783), Tome 5, letter VIII). The scrambles and hassles accompanying the development of the newspaper seem to be the result of tensions between different parties, revealing the different networks governing Parisian life and the way in which they could influence theatrical criticism (groups hostile or not to the actors of the Comédie-Française). Thus, Pierre Peyronnet adds: ‘*Mais le Journal des théâtres loue trop souvent Prévile et sa fille, au détriment d’autres acteurs, particulièrement Molé, contre lequel Le Vacher revient sans cesse (cf. 6). A son tour, il est dépossédé. Dans une note d’une lettre de Caillava à Le Vacher, celui-ci déclare renoncer au Journal des théâtres (Tome II, n° 11, 1er sept. 1777, p. 114); dans ce même numéro, on trouve un Avis à son successeur et les Adieux du rédacteur, (p. 122, 126). Le journal est alors continué par Grimod de La Reynière et son groupe, jusqu’en janvier 1790 semble-t-il; les mêmes auteurs, s’inspirant du jeu Journal des théâtres, fonderont en 1797 Le Censeur dramatique. Le Vacher de Charnois, à partir du 15 juin 1778, collabore au Spectateur national*’. However, according to Jean Sgard, a handwritten letter from Grimod de la Reynière reveals some internal problems in the management of the journal. Dated 21 July 1780 (François Moureau collection), it is addressed to an unknown recipient. It is argued that ‘*M. Le Fuel a disparu au 14e numéro après avoir emporté l’argent des souscriptions, et ce n’est que 6 mois après que notre bail a commencé*’ (<https://dictionnaire-journaux.gazettes18e.fr/journal/0716-journal-des-theatres> last accessed 10-12-2021). Le Fuel de Méricourt published a *Requête au Roi* (1er mars 1777, s.l.s.n.) that explained the hidden story behind his fall.

⁴² <https://dictionnaire-journaux.gazettes18e.fr/journal/0716-journal-des-theatres> (last accessed 12-12-2021).

⁴³ Eugène HATIN, *Histoire politique et littéraire de la presse en France: avec une introduction historique sur les origines du journal et la bibliographie générale des journaux depuis leur origine* (Paris: s.n., 1859–1861), Tome 3, p. 226.

development of a specialized press was very probably perceived as a threat by the Comédie-Française troupe: not only to their reputation, but also to their purse. The negative publicity could tarnish the image of the actors, but above all it could undermine the business, as the fair theatres had done in the first half of the century by caricaturing the tragedians.

The singularity of some theatrical styles reported between 1777 and 1778 (i.e. after the ousting of Le Fuel de Méricourt), and on which I will focus, reveals new fashions beyond the norms or conventions. They provoked negative, even sarcastic, reactions from the critics who were undoubtedly opposed to the idea of naturalism in diction. According to Brown:

The episode of the *Journal des theatres* may be thus understood broadly as indicative of a moment in which both the supremacy of salon cultural ideals and the power of governing institutions of cultural production were coming to be contested simultaneously, through the medium and the rhetoric of print.⁴⁴

The accounts published during these two years, in part, most probably took issue with the cultural and ideological values defended by Le Fuel de Méricourt and his circle of friends, such as the promotion of the bourgeois drama⁴⁵ and a form of exacerbated popular emotion on stage; the rejection of an exclusively elitist culture; and finally, an opening to competition of the cultural market which would only be established in 1791 with the Le Chapelier law.

AUTO-INTERRUPTION, 'NON-DITS' AND EQUIVOCATION

Certain 'schools' of acting may have been at odds with each other, since the young actors were trained by their peers who had their own style. Criticism can thus reflect the different trends that may have run through the Comédie-Française, either through forms of diction inspired by the masters of declamation, or as a result of individual experimentation in relation to the actor's personality but also the very evolution of society and fashions of the time.

Breaks, or even self-censorship, were a tried and tested technique in the eighteenth century. They had been adopted in the seventeenth century by dramatic poets such as Jean Racine, who wished to break the rhythm of the verses. Racine developed a particular technique for writing out his verses that was similar to a punctuation of the emotions. Racine used interjections and pathetic modalities, as well as suspension points, to give the lines a more lively and spasmodic rhythm, which allowed him to recreate the inner life of the character by giving the illusion of a moving affect, whether this interruption marked hesitation, fear, reluctance or even the activation of mental faculties such as the imagination.⁴⁶ This process of making a mental and emotional inner world perceptible on stage, i.e. reflecting an 'intimate' space, proved to be particularly effective in *Athalie* and *Esther* as it revealed a sub-text that led the actor to internalize the role and its unspoken aspects. The actor could stand in for the author and show originality by having a style of his own that could be described as equivocal.

A debate on diction arose in the first half of the eighteenth century. It called into question the metre and its artificial character,⁴⁷ as prose seemed more natural. Antoine Houdar de la Motte, who was in favour of introducing prose, nevertheless saw two major obstacles to reforming diction: on the one hand, tradition (bombastic alexandrines were expected by the audience) and

⁴⁴ BROWN, art.cit., p. 26.

⁴⁵ See the first quotation of the introduction.

⁴⁶ Sabine CHAOUCHE, 'Les tragédies religieuses de Racine: une ponctuation de l'émotion?', *Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature*, 32: 63 (2005), 441–465.

⁴⁷ CHAOUCHE (2007), pp. 195–208.

the nobleness of versification, which in his opinion were unchallengeable; and on the other hand, a certain conservatism on the part of the actors who were reluctant to give up some of their routines. Indeed, versification gave rhythm to declamation and made it easier to memorize lines.⁴⁸

Although silent acting was revived thanks to an improvement in material conditions, in particular the enlargement of the stage space – since the benches near the actors, where the gentlemen sat, were removed – and, in fact, better occupation of the stage, the vocal effects capable of translating feelings were not totally abandoned. The idea of the actor taking a breath in the lines is rooted in the second half of the century. It was explicitly formulated during the Consulate by Pierre-Paul Gobet (1745-1816), known as Dorfeuille, in his *Éléments de l'art du comédien* (*Elements of the Actor's Art*), where he distinguished between obligatory silence and preparatory silence.⁴⁹ In the eighteenth century, actors followed in the footsteps of authors trying to break the uniformity of the verses but deliberately deviating from the text, as can be seen in prompter's manuscripts, for example, where interruptions were probably noted by the troupe during rehearsals (they were not necessarily the author's doing, since the majority of the plays staged at the time were revivals). As can be seen in these extracts, they reflected irritation mixed with a disturbed soul (example 1) and the incomprehension of the valet (example 2):

Example 1

MONCADE.

Pasquin.

PASQUIN.

Monsieur.

MONCADE.

*Donne-moi le miroir, écoute, ~~ma tabatière, un fauteuil~~ attends, approche ~~ce fauteuil,~~
~~hey~~ donne-moi mon écritoire, ~~une plume, de l'encre~~ non donne-moi un peigne, du
~~papier, une table,~~ allons donc te dépêcheras-tu.*

PASQUIN.

Dites-moi donc auparavant ce que vous voulez?

MONCADE.

*Je ne sais, je veux m'asseoir, ---- Madame Léonor, Madame Léonor, vous m'avez
joué d'un tour. Eh là, là, patience⁵⁰.*

[MONCADE.]

Pasquin.

PASQUIN.

Monsieur.

MONCADE.

*Give me the mirror, listen, ~~my snuff box, an armchair,~~ wait, bring ~~that~~
~~armchair,~~ hey give me my writing-box, a pen, ink; ~~no give me a comb,~~
~~paper, a table;~~ let's go and hurry up.*

PASQUIN.

Tell me first what you want?

MONCADE.

*I don't know, I want to sit down, ---- Madame Leonor, Madame
Leonor, you've played a trick on me. Hey, wait a minute.]*

⁴⁸ Antoine HOUDAR DE LA MOTTE, 'Discours sur la tragédie', *Œuvres de M. Houdar de la Motte* (Paris: Prault, 1754), Tome 4, pp. 393–4.

⁴⁹ DORFEUILLE, *Les Éléments de l'Art du Comédien, ou l'Art de la représentation théâtrale considéré dans chacune des parties qui le composent* (Paris: s.n., 1801) in *Écrits sur l'art théâtral, Acteurs*, Sabine CHAOUCHE (éd.) (Paris: Honoré CHAMPION, 2005.b), Vol. 2, and Sabine CHAOUCHE, 'Quoi de plus complet que le silence? Interruptions du discours et interprétation de l'acteur au XVIII^e siècle', *L'Éloquence du silence*, Helene BILIS and Jennifer TAMAS (eds.), *European Drama and Performance Studies*, 2 (2014), 155–174.

⁵⁰ Michel BOYRON, *L'Homme à bonne fortune* (Paris: J. RIBOU, 1718), annotated play, II.9.

Exemple 2

PASQUIN.
Me voilà?
 MONCADE.
Il baisse au nez de Pasquin.
 „„„„ *Quel temps fait-il?*
 PASQUIN.
 „„„„ *Il n'en fait point.*
 MONCADE.
*Maraud, n'est-il venu personne me demander?*⁵¹
 [PASQUIN.
 Here I am?
 MONCADE.
 (He looks down on Pasquin.)
 „„„„ What is the weather like?
 PASQUIN.
 „„„„ Nothing special.
 MONCADE.
Maraud, has no one come to ask me?]

The two versions of *L'Homme à bonne fortune* have different interpretations of the lines, and the signalling of the silences differs from one prompter's book to the other. The emotion played by the actor is independent of the text. The search for expressiveness is made visible by precise marks such as a succession of commas or dashes. The performance of the feelings as they are supposed to be expressed on stage is meant to be obvious and the work of the actor alone. This can be understood as the construction of a form of semiotics of the actor's voice, namely a set of symbolic signs that translate the presence of emotion, its intensity and content. The actor can thus deliver a personal interpretation of his lines, as this example from 1777 suggests:

L'Actrice [Mlle Sainval] a voulu pour je ne sais quelle raison, donner une grande valeur à ce vers; en conséquence elle l'a déclamé ainsi:

*C'était.....pendant l'horreur d'une profonde nuit.*⁵²

*Cette affectation de s'arrêter après le mot c'était, et l'éclat donné à la première syllabe du mot pendant annoncent évidemment le dessein et la certitude d'entraîner les suffrages d'une multitude de sots dont les yeux sont fascinés et dont les connaissances sont nulles, et comme l'effet suit l'intention de l'Actrice, il n'est pas étonnant qu'elle se permette de pareilles extravagances. De là ces dissonances ridicules qu'on appelle des transitions; de là, ce ton pleureur et enfantin qu'on appelle de la sensibilité[.]*⁵³

The actors tried to be unique, no doubt taking into consideration that the alteration of the voice and the interruption of the verse were signs of emotional disorder. Indeed, curious techniques seem to have been used to make the delivery more natural, even naturalistic. Having attended a performance, a spectator analysed the diction of Dugazon, who was a future professor of

⁵¹ Michel BOYRON, *L'Homme à bonnes fortunes* (Paris: Compagnie des libraires, 1757), annotated and printed play, I.6.

⁵² Jean RACINE, *Athalie*, II.5.

⁵³ 'The actress [Miss Saibvall] wanted, for some reason, to give great value to this line, consequently she declaimed it as follows: It was.....during the horror of a deep night.

This affectation of stopping after the word[s] 'It was', and the force given to the first syllable of the word 'during', announce, of course, the intention and certainty of attracting the approval of a multitude of fools whose eyes are fascinated and whose knowledge is nil, and as the effect follows the actress' intention, it is not surprising that she permits herself such extravagances. Hence those ridiculous dissonances one calls transitions; hence this weeping and infantile tone that one calls sensibility'. *JDT*, 1777, n° VII, 1 July, p. 306.

declamation at the Paris Conservatoire (he was appointed in 1808),⁵⁴ in particular ‘*les petits temps avec lesquels il a coutume de couper une phrase en deux parties*’ [‘the little beats with which he is wont to cut a sentence into two parts’]⁵⁵ and what resembled a cough or a way of clearing his voice. He wrote in this regard:

Dans les discours fleuris je perds la tramontane, heu!

*La probité d'accord doit marcher la première,
Notre intérêt après, les scrupules heu! heu! derrière,*

À la plume, à l'épée, heu! exploiters à deux mains

*Une Nièce, Monsieur, on ne peut s'aliéner
C'est comme un propre heu!*

Où, vous l'épousez mal, mon maître y rentrera heu!

*C'est proprement frauder les droits de la justice.
La voler heu!*⁵⁶

[In the flowery speeches I lose the tramontana, *heu!*

Probity, of course, must come first,
Our interest after, scruples *heu! heu!* behind,

With the pen, with the sword, *heu!* two-handed exploiters

A Niece, Sir, we cannot alienate ourselves
It's like a clean *heu!*

Yes, you marry her badly, my master will get in *heu!*

It's a real fraud on the rights of justice.
Stealing from her, *heu!*]

The accumulation of short excerpts, not necessarily from the same scene, but nevertheless presented one under the other, is intended to give more weight to the criticism levelled at the actor playing Falaise in Charles Rivière Dufresny's *La Réconciliation normande* (a five-act comedy, 1719). Although the critic considers these interruptions untimely because they disrupt the rhythm of the lines, they nevertheless add meaning, as they seem to have the function of commentaries, or to symbolize an underlying thought that is not explicitly stated and formulated. They demonstrate an approach to the text that is not only literal (what is said), but also performative and connotative in that they seem to be inserted into the dialogue strategically, in order to make the character's speech more suggestive and comic: the actor seems to be making innuendos. The interpretation of the verse not only makes audible the words (the voice), but also allows one to understand the feelings of the character that is being staged by the actor, who creates a framework of new meanings. These are superimposed on the text, symbolising an internal voice that manifests itself through sounds, but not necessarily through words.

⁵⁴ Jean-Henri GOURGAUD, known as DUGAZON (1746–1809). He made his *débuts* in 1771 at the Comédie-Française.

⁵⁵ *JDT*, 1777, n° VII, 1 July, pp. 314–5.

⁵⁶ *JDT*, *ibid.*

Moreover, the anonymous author notes that the actor ‘breaks up the same sentence’, punctuating the verses with strange ‘pauses’ which he marks with a dash so that the reader can understand his explanations:

*Il est juste qu'on gagne une mauvaise cause
Puisqu'à perdre la bonne en plaidant — on s'expose*

Un Juge bien payé verra plus clair — que moi,

En conscience on peut plaider — à l'amiable⁵⁷

It is right to win a bad case
Because to lose the right one by pleading — one exposes oneself

A well-paid Judge will see more clearly — than I,

In conscience one can plead — amicably.

The frequent interruptions in these excerpts from *La Réconciliation normande*, whether ungrammatical pauses or coughing intertwined with the words, suggest an intimate rendering of the actor's acting, or at least a personalisation of diction, as Dugazon attempts to distinguish himself from his companions by adopting his own style. The cough, unusual if it is, may have been a technique used to give the speech an ‘ordinary’ aspect by interspersing it with inarticulate sounds deemed by the disgruntled spectator to be ‘childish, tiring to excess’.⁵⁸ Whether or not it is in bad taste, the interruption is welcomed by some actors, who then create their own technique to allow the verse to breathe differently. Inarticulate sounds are part of a set of new practices that have renewed the forms of diction and that stem, in a way, from the debates of the time on declamation. These invited the actor to show emotions differently on stage, without necessarily considering the rules of *actio oratoria*. The extreme fluidity of the speech may have seemed artificial. The new methods experimented with by the actors went against this. The expressiveness of the emotions was translated into a spasmodic diction, but no longer a psalmody. In this sense, sounds became a unique means of conveying raw emotions.

EXPERIMENTING, JOLTING AND JUMPING

The idea of a much more jolting delivery than had previously been the case seems to have developed in the second half of the century. In their theoretical works, respectively *Le Comédien* (1747) and *Observations sur l'art du comédien* (1764), Pierre Rémond de Sainte Albine (1699–1778) who was a spectator, and Jean Nicolas Servandoni d'Hannetaire (1718–1780) who was an actor and director of the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, urged actors to change the lines when necessary (the concept of additional acting). Sainte-Albine thought of the actor in authorial terms: ‘*Il faut qu'il devienne Auteur lui-même; qu'il sache non seulement exprimer toutes les finesses d'un rôle, mais encore en ajouter de nouvelles; non seulement exécuter, mais créer*’.⁵⁹ D'Hannetaire's *Observations* went further,

⁵⁷ JDT, *ibid.*

⁵⁸ JDT, *ibid.* See the extracts in the appendix.

⁵⁹ ‘He must become an author himself; he must know not only how to express all the finesses of a role, but also how to add new ones; not only to perform, but to create’. Pierre Rémond de Sainte-Albine, *Le Comédien* (1747), in *Sept Traités sur le jeu du comédien de l'action oratoire à l'art dramatique, 1657–1750*, Sabine CHAOUCHE (ed.) (Paris: Honoré CHAMPION, 2001), pp. 547–8. See CHAOUCHE (2007), p. 294 sq.

urging actors not to ‘*suivre littéralement le sens de l’Auteur*’ in order to ‘*s’écarter et franchir les bornes ordinaires en donnant [au] personnage un caractère plus neuf*’.⁶⁰ The rendering of the voice, like the gestures, seemed to be an effect that would engage the audience because it showed individual research as well as a refusal of routine. In this sense, the actor-creator strove to please the audience and to show his talent as an artist. Claude-Joseph Dorat suggested that the actor should ‘*Par de nouveaux moyens*’, ‘*attacher [le]s regards*’ [‘use new means’ to ‘catch the eye’];⁶¹ at the same time, Prince Charles-Joseph de Ligne, a close friend of D’Hannetaire’s, called for more diversity on stage, with actors capable of ‘constructing’ and ‘deconstructing’ their roles.⁶²

This advice, which may have been given by the actors of the Comédie-Française or inspired by practices already implemented in the major theatres, seems to have been taken literally. In my book on staging, I examined the way in which the text was deconstructed and recomposed by the Comédie-Française troupe, and in a way ‘torn to pieces’.⁶³ The prompter’s manuscripts preserved at the Comédie-Française, relating to the delivery of plays in the repertoire, contain numerous cuts, etc. However, these do not necessarily show the additions or the oral techniques used to make the dialogue more ‘ordinary’, i.e. similar to a real conversation. Once the alteration of the text became acceptable, the actors invented their own heartfelt voice, inspired by the Racinian technique of interjection, with the following difference: they decided themselves where to add text, and when to make these interjections or sounds in the speech.

The *Journal des théâtres* provides numerous examples of a fashion that seems to have spread in the second half of the century, most probably driven by the bourgeois drama. One spectator complained about Mme Molé’s declamation, which was ‘out of place’ and too familiar in his opinion:

‘[C]es ah! eh! oh! [...] fatiguent et produisent souvent un effet plus désagréable encore. C’est principalement dans les morceaux de sensibilité, qu’elle en fait l’usage le plus fréquent, et un Amateur a eu la patience de compter jusqu’à trente-sept de ces exclamations, dans une seule scène de *Mélanide*’.⁶⁴

According to the author, she intended to erase the measure of the verse, in order to introduce an impulsive character reflecting the outbursts of the soul, into this *comédie larmoyante*. The same criticism was addressed a second time to the actress in another issue of the newspaper: ‘*Madame Molé, si jamais elle parvient à se défaire de ces interjections, qui lui sont trop familières, qui donnent à sa déclamation un air niais, et rompent la mesure du vers, fera toujours plaisir dans de certains rôles*’.⁶⁵ This technique, which had perhaps become an automatism for the actress, took the form of an instantaneous oral emotional punctuation, whether or not it was prepared in advance.

The non-verbal interjection is an expressive or affective morpheme that has been studied in the context of ‘spontaneous’ speech.⁶⁶ Whether or not it is a phoneme, it expresses a raw emotion,

⁶⁰ ‘follow literally the meaning of the author’ and ‘deviate and cross the ordinary boundaries by giving [the] character a newer character.’ Jean-Nicolas SERVANDONI D’HANNETAIRE, *Observations sur l’art du comédien* (Paris: aux dépens d’une société typographique, [1664], 1774), p. 117; in *Écrits sur l’art théâtral. Acteurs*, S. CHAUCHE (éd.), (2005.b).

⁶¹ Claude-Joseph DORAT, *La Déclamation théâtrale, poème didactique en trois chants* (Paris: S. Jorry, 1766), p. 59; in *Écrits sur l’art théâtral. Spectateurs*, S. CHAUCHE (éd.), Paris, Honoré CHAMPION, 2005, Vol. 1.

⁶² Prince Charles-Joseph de LIGNE, *Lettres à Eugénie* (Paris: s.n., 1774), p. 180; in CHAUCHE (2005.a).

⁶³ Sabine CHAUCHE, *La Mise en scène du répertoire à la Comédie-Française, 1680-1815* (Paris: Honoré CHAMPION, 2013).

⁶⁴ ‘These ah! eh! oh! [...] are tiring and often produce an even more unpleasant effect. It is mainly in the sections [characterized by] sensitivity that she makes the most frequent use of them, and an amateur has had the patience to count up to thirty-seven of these exclamations in a single scene of *Mélanide*.’ *JDT*, 1777, n° III, 1 May, p. 114. Play by Pierre Nivelle de la CHAUSSEE (1741).

⁶⁵ ‘Madame Molé, if she ever manages to get rid of these interjections, which are too familiar to her, which give her declamation a naïve air, and break the measure of the verse, will always be a pleasure in certain roles.’ *JDT*, 1777, n° VI, 15 juin, p. 249.

⁶⁶ Laurence ROSIER, ‘Interjection, subjectivité, expressivité et discours rapporté à l’écrit: petits effets d’un petit discours’, *Cahiers de praxématique* [online], 34, 2000, <http://journals.openedition.org/praxématique/390>; (last accessed 02-11-2021). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/praxématique.390>.

an immediate and somewhat irrepressible feeling, i.e. a reaction to a present situation and a specific environment. It does not specifically designate a particular emotion, being in fact attached to a range of emotions: surprise, disgust, admiration etc. Being recurrent in spoken language according to Damourette and Pichon, its use reflects the ‘cultures of emotions’ specific to an era, in this case the decoupling of text and voice which expresses a theatrical dynamic, that of the dramatization of the voice of the heart.⁶⁷ Laurence Rozier shows that ‘*Naturel et expressivité sont les deux sèmes communs de nombreuses définitions de l’interjection*’⁶⁸ and summarizes the positions of those who have examined the relationship between interjection and emotion in the context of debates on speech and shouting, or, more generally, on the expression of the passions. On the one hand, ‘*saisi dans une perspective diachronique, le discours linguistique ou grammatical sur l’interjection laisse toujours entendre son attachement profond aux origines des premières verbalisations*’ [‘taken from a diachronic perspective, linguistic or grammatical discourses on interjection always suggest: its deep attachment to the origins of the first verbalizations’];⁶⁹ on the other hand, ‘*l’expressivité de cette verbalisation*’ [‘the expressivity of this verbalisation’] is taken into consideration.⁷⁰ Highly effective in speech, ‘emotive interjections’⁷¹ and sounds appear to be a special means of expression, but also an ideal tool for a lively vocal delivery. To the expression is added the expressiveness necessary to highlight the intensity of the emotions the character is going through. The altered voice becomes, in all likelihood, a declamatory style in itself, which seems to be rooted in the bourgeois drama and the idea of a theatre for the people.

This fashion is not the sole work of Mme Molé. Other actors tried their hand at this expressiveness outside of verse:

*Le talent de cet acteur est un chaos difficile à débrouiller [...] Il est bien vrai qu’à travers un millier de hay, bay, bay, ba, ba, ta, ta, heu, heu, queu, ho, ho, cinq ou six mon Dieu, mon Dieu, plusieurs mais si, mais oui, car, ha, ba, nous avons de temps en temps des demi-vers, des vers entiers, des distiques même, qui nous semblaient être de Molière ; mais cela était si rare, qu’à tout moment nous admirions la prodigieuse facilité dont le Sieur Courville est doué, pour improviser comme un Docteur. Cela n’est pas étonnant après tout; cet Acteur possède sept langues. Quel dommage qu’il ne possède pas aussi le Français!*⁷²

The critic has a conservative position, calling for a diction that could be described as purist. The alteration of the verses by adding interjections, or even onomatopoeia as it appears here, gradually spread to the provinces, it seems, particularly to the Spectacles de Lyon. Mlle Valville, probably influenced by the capital’s tone, appropriated this technique and multiplied the expressive sounds:

*Je dois lui faire un reproche mieux fondé puisque les autres ne dépendent pas d’elle; c’est celui d’ajouter trop souvent dans toutes les pièces en prose, et plus désagréablement encore dans celles en vers des eh bien! mais... mais je dis... des ha! des hô, etc. sous le prétexte de mettre plus de naturel.*⁷³

⁶⁷ J. DAMOURETTE et É. PICHON (dir.), *Faits de Langues*, n° 6, 1995.

⁶⁸ ‘naturalness and expressiveness are the two common sèmes of many definitions of interjection’. ROZIER, art. cit.

⁶⁹ ROZIER, *ibid.*

⁷⁰ ROZIER, *ibid.*

⁷¹ See Cliff GODDARD, in ‘Interjections and Emotion (with Special Reference to “Surprise” and “Disgust”’, *Emotion Review*, 6:1 (Jan. 2014), 53–63 (‘emission of sounds’ was ‘efficient in the highest degree as a means of expression’).

⁷² ‘The talent of this actor is a chaos that is difficult to unravel [...] It is true that through a thousand hay, bay, bay, ba, ba, ta, ta, heu, heu, queu, ho, ho, five or six mon Dieu, mon Dieu, several mais si, mais oui, car, ha, ba, we have from time to time half verses, whole verses, even distiches, which seemed to us to be by Molière; but this was so rare, that at all times we admired the prodigious facility with which Sieur Courville is gifted, to improvise like a Docteur. This is not surprising after all: this actor has seven languages. What a pity he doesn’t also speak French’. *JDT*, 1777, n° xv, November, p. 315.

⁷³ ‘I must make her a more justified reproach since the others do not depend on her; it is that of adding too often in all the prose pieces, and even more unpleasantly in those in verse, eh bien! mais... mais je dis... des ha! des hô, etc., under the pretext of adding more naturalness’. *JDT*, 1777, n° xii, 15 September, p. 198.

Certainly, the diction becomes looser, the metrics broken, but the ‘*factif nominal* [interjection] *dont le seul but est de causer un émoi*’ [‘nominal factive [interjection] whose sole purpose is to cause a stir’] introduces a new rhythm into the speech.⁷⁴

Another technique aimed at making speech more dynamic also appears in the reviews of the 1770s. Contrary to all expectations, stammering is added to interjections. A pronunciation vice in rhetoric (cf. the stammering lawyer in *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* and the comical effect of his stammering), it nevertheless wonderfully mimics the bursts of speech when thought is in motion. Monvel,⁷⁵ who was to promote melodrama, distinguished himself in this unusual style when he performed in Nicolas-Thomas Barthes’ *Les Fausses Infidélités* (1768). The critic, a certain Le Bègue [the stutterer!], judged the method extravagant and ridiculous:

VALSAIN.

Angélique est outrée.

DORMILLY

Ab! que dites-vous là? il

Il lui sied de boudier! lé lé les femmes? lé lé les voilà.

.....
.....*O! vous, vous aimez bien. Ce*
Ce ce c'es C'est le plus beau sang-froid!

.....*Vous verriez Dorimène*
Pour quelqu'heureux [sic] mortel n'être point inhumaine, que
Que, que, qui, Qu'immobile témoin et rival complaisant, vous
Vous trouveriez, je crois, le procédé plaisant.

.....
.....*Vous riez; mais je vois, je*
Je en, en, je, Je vois tout

.....
Et mon amante enfin, jeune et fidèle encore, mais
mais, Mais qui peut-être, hélas! dans peu me trahira. Vous n'
vous, Vous ne connaissez rien, Monsieur, de tout cela. j'ai
j'ai, J'ai peine à concevoir comment on se marie. vous
vous, Vous le concevez, vous.....
.....

VALSAIN.

Croyez à ses vertus.

DORMILLY.

*que, que, que, co, co, com, Comment, lorsqu'Angélique, etc.*⁷⁶

[VALSAIN.

Angélique is outraged.

DORMILLY

Ah! what are you saying?

It suits her to sulk! *the the the* women? *There there there* they are.

.....
.....*O! You, you like it. This*
This is the most beautiful composure!

⁷⁴ DAMOURETTE & PICHON, *ibid.*, § 732.

⁷⁵ Jacques Marie BOUTET (1745-1812).

⁷⁶ *JDT*, 1777, n° xv, 1 November, pp. 322–3.

.....You would see Dorimene
 For some happy mortal not to be inhuman, *that*
That, that, that, That immovable witness and complaisant rival, you
 You would, I think, find the process pleasant.

.....You laugh; but I see, *I*
I mm, mm, I, I see all

.....
 And my lover at last, young and faithful still, *but*
But, But who perhaps, alas! in a little while will betray me. *You don't*
you, You know nothing, Sir, of all this. *I*
I can, I can hardly conceive how one marries. *You,*
you, You conceive it, you.....

VALSAIN.

Believe in her virtues.

DORMILLY.

What, that, that, how, how, how, How, when Angelica, etc.]

Of course, these various extracts, probably annotated by the critic, may seem exaggerated, probably because the effect of accumulation helps to emphasize the strangeness of such diction. The actors' experiments seem to bewilder the critics, whose views remain overwhelmingly negative, probably because they are members of the public attached to certain traditions, or to a certain French, classical style. In their eyes, sensitivity requires more grandeur. A jerky diction, attained by dint of redoubling certain segments of the verse, seems to them an aberration because it does not convey the intended feelings. Le Bègue adds: '*croit-il que l'on puisse rendre l'expression de l'amour, de la sensibilité, et de la jalousie, sans balbutier sans cesse, comme il a fait dans tout le rôle de Dormilly*' ['does he believe that one can convey the expression of love, sensitivity and jealousy without stammering incessantly, as he did throughout the role of Dormilly?'].⁷⁷ Two decades later Grimod de la Reynière, who was a friend of Monvel, remarked in his *Censeur* that the actor '*est reconnu par tous les bons juges comme un des meilleurs diseurs qui existent*' ['is recognized by all good judges as one of the best tellers in existence'].⁷⁸ If his diction was judged perfect by la Reynière at the end of the century, we can think that at the beginning the actor chose vocal naturalism, rather than a specific mannerism.

The choppy diction presumably mimics a certain agitation, symbolized by pathetic modalities such as exclamation or interrogation. According to Faulkner, anger causes '*le tremblement de la voix et le bégaiement*' ['trembling of the voice and stammering'].⁷⁹ These repetitions considerably alter the rhythm of the lines and seem, in a way, to become interjections, or at least other vocal signs intended to reinforce the expressiveness of the performance. The alteration of the voice, whether caused by astonishment, incredulity or irritation, is thus part of a construction of authentic theatrical speech. The troupe of the Comédie-Française, renowned for its excellence, concerned itself with that which was unarticulated (like expressive sound), or, on the contrary, re-articulated (thanks to the repetition of the same syntagma). These are not techniques aimed at breaking down the verse, strictly speaking, but at adding an extra dimension to it. This is revealed by a system of oppositions that integrates different antagonistic elements: the spoken vs. the unspoken as we have seen, the rigidity of versification vs. the flexibility of prose, the simple enunciation vs. the

⁷⁷ JDT, *ibid.*

⁷⁸ Alexandre Balthazar Laurent GRIMOD DE LA REYNIÈRE, *Le Censeur dramatique, ou Journal des principaux théâtres de Paris et des départemens, par une société de gens de lettres* (Paris: Desenne, Petit et Bailly, 1798), 1 January, p. 23.

⁷⁹ William FALCONER, *De l'influence des passions, sur les maladies du corps humain* (Paris: Knapen and Momoro, 1788), p. 38.

duplicated one. Thus, the written and the oral, though opposed, are staged concomitantly, aggregated to each other. In this sense, the actor fully takes ownership of the work. The text is subordinated to oral expressivity and emotion, and not the other way round. The actors' approach goes against the oratorical rules, where passion is revealed only by the text and visible in the text.

It is true that since the seventeenth century the passions had been considered as an ailment of the soul, and therefore internal. Nevertheless, their physiological manifestations, in particular through the voice, were the subject of a quasi-scientific study by scholars, since lists of 'tones' were drawn up in rhetoric manuals, such as René Bary's (fl. 1640–1680) *Méthode pour bien prononcer un discours et pour le bien animer* (1679), in which a range of accents could be observed (anger, love, hatred, etc.).⁸⁰ In these works, the oratorical accent, as examined, was not dissociated from the text: it was derived from it.⁸¹ In the second half of the eighteenth century, this strict text-centric approach weakened in favour of an interpretation of emotion that moved away from the rhetorical ideal where a need for aesthetics, that of embellishment, predominated. An aesthetic of the ungainly, or of bad grace as defined by Carine Barbafiéri,⁸² which already existed in the previous century, gained visibility, without being expressed as such. The craze for this aesthetics may explain why some theatre lovers who presented themselves as connoisseurs were shocked or very doubtful. These styles gave priority to scenic authenticity, but not necessarily to the harmonious or melodious, which had been central until then and were defended at the same time by Denis Diderot in his *Observations sur une brochure intitulée Garrick ou Les Acteurs anglais* (1770).

It appears that these techniques were sometimes combined. Swearing, onomatopoeia, interjections and stammering were interwoven with the text. One critic was surprised by the way Granger⁸³ adapted the text of *Le Méchant* (1747) by Jean-Baptiste-Louis Gresset (1709–1777).

Le sieur Grangé [sic] se serait-il figuré embellir Gresset, en forgeant des vers tels que ceux qui suivent?

*Ce petit étourdi s'est pris de goût pour moi,
Et me croit son ami, parbleu, je ne sais pas pourquoi.
Quand je n'y trouverais que de quoi m'amuser,
Oh! parbleu, c'est le droit des gens; et je veux en user.
Bien fou qui là-dessus contraindrait ses desirs.
Va, mon cher, Les sots sont ici-bas pour nos menus plaisirs.*

FRONTIN.

*Lisette vaut, je crois, la peine qu'on s'arrête,
Et je veux l'épouser.*

CLEON.

*Hem? Tu, tu serais assez bête
Pour te marier, toi? Mon pauvre garçon, ton amour, tes desseins
N'ont pas le sens commun.*

⁸⁰ René BARY, *Méthode pour bien prononcer un discours et pour le bien animer* (Paris: D. Thierry, 1679); in Chaouche (2001). See Julia Gros de GASQUET, 'Rhétorique, théâtralité et corps actorial', *Dix-septième siècle*, 236:3 (2007), 501–519. The accents are: the oratorical accent (one had to vary their voice according to the parts, figures, and passions of the speech), the prosodic accent (three main tones: low, high, circumflex), and the grammatical accent (the articulation of words and punctuation to be paid attention to).

⁸¹ Sabine CHAOUCHE, 'L'acteur et la création. Modeler le sentiment', *European Drama and Performance Studies*, 14:1 (2020), 49–66.

⁸² Carine BARBAFIERI, *Anatomie du « mauvais goût » (1628-1730)* (Paris: Éditions Classiques Garnier, 2021), introduction. See also: Sabine CHAOUCHE, 'L'acteur de mauvais goût au XVIII^e siècle: ami ou ennemi des avant-gardes scéniques?', in *Vices de style et défauts esthétiques, XVI^e-XVIII^e*, C. Barbaferi & J.-Y. Vialleton (eds.), (Paris: Éditions Classiques Garnier, 2017), 527–538.

⁸³ Granger made his debut at the Comédie-Française in 1763, but soon retired to the provinces. He returned to Paris in 1784. See Alexandre RICORD, *Les fastes de la Comédie française, et portraits des plus célèbres acteurs* (Paris: ALEXANDRE, DELAUNAY, PETIT ET MONGIE, 1821), pp. 246–52.

FLORISE.

Oui, c'est très-bien pensé: mais faites-vous des vers?

CLEON.

*Eh! morbleu! Qui n'en fait pas? Est-il si mince coterie....
Enfin, si je n'ai pas suivi cette conquête,
Ma foi, La faute en est aux Dieux qui la firent si bête.
Il... il... Il ne vous fera pas grâce d'une laitue.
Moi, Lisette, amoureux, allons donc, tu te moques de moi.
Qu'a.... qu'a.... Qu'avez-vous? Vos... Vos beaux yeux me semblent moins sereins.
Co... co... Comment, belle Florise? Et quel affreux caprice
Mais... mais... Mais est-ce bien à moi que ce discours s'adresse?
À... à... À moi, dont vous savez l'estime et la tendresse!*

FLORISE.

Ne me voyez jamais.

CLEON.

*Co... comment donc? La dignité s'en mêle?
Vous... Vous mettez de l'humeur à cette bagatelle?*

Qu'on ne m'accuse pas d'une maligne imposture. J'avais le crayon à la main, et je pourrais donner la liste d'une infinité d'autres vers que j'ai marqués sur le livre même, si je n'appréhendais de tomber dans une prolixité ennuyeuse.⁸⁴

[Did Sieur Grangé [sic] imagine that he would improve Gresset, by forging verses such as those which follow?

This little fool has taken a liking to me,
And thinks me his friend, *bloody hell*, I know not why.
When I could find nothing but amusement in it,
Oh, *dammit*, that's a man's right; and I'll use it.
Foolish man who would constrain his desires on this matter.
Off you go, my dear, Fools are here below for our small pleasures.

FRONTIN.

Lisette is, I think, worth stopping for,
And I will marry her.

CLEON.

Hm? You, you'd be stupid enough
To marry? You? My poor boy, your love, your plans
Have no common sense.

FLORISE.

Yes, that's very well thought out: but do you write verses?

CLEON.

Well, by Jove! Who doesn't? Is it so thin coterie...
I mean, if I have not followed this conquest,
My goodness, the fault is with the Gods that made her so dumb.
He... he... he'll not give you a penny.
I, Lisette, in love with her, *come on*, you're making fun of me.
What what what have you got? *Your...* Your beautiful eyes seem less serene to me.
How... How... How, beautiful Florise? And what an awful whim
But... but... but is this speech for me?

⁸⁴ *JDT*, 1778, n° XXI, 1 February, pp. 253–4.

To... to... to me, whose esteem and tenderness you are aware of!

FLORISE.

Never see me again.

CLEON.

My... how so? Does dignity interfere?

You... You are moody because of this trifle?

Let no one accuse me of a malignant imposture. I had the pencil in my hand, and I could list an infinite number of other verses which I have marked on the book itself, if I did not fear to fall into a boring prolixity.]

Vocal markers, similar to exclamations, seem to have been in vogue in the 1770s, with different actors delivering their lines in unconventional ways. At the same time, thinkers were debating the notions of naturalness and emotions. Tournon de la Chapelle's work, published in 1782, was part of this movement to no longer imitate nature while embellishing it, but 'to follow' it [*suivre la nature*],⁸⁵ whatever its irregularity or singularity.⁸⁶ The new styles observed by theatre critics suggest that the actors adopted the somewhat jerky forms of spoken discourse, especially the way in which feelings come out spontaneously in speech, or with very sloppy diction – which raised the question of the real quality of the younger actors. However, the articles published in the *Journal des spectacles* then edited by Levacher de Charnois leave little doubt that the actors of the Comédie-Française were experimenting with ways of *saying* verse.

The report of stammering, which was not denounced as a pure invention by other critics, seems credible. It remains without doubt one of the most unexpected, as the idea of a majestic and fluid declamation still prevailed among connoisseurs. The simplicity and sincerity of the stage were correlated with imperfect diction, as suggested by this story told by Jean-François Marmontel (1723-1799):

On raconte d'une actrice célèbre qu'un jour sa voix s'éteignit dans la déclaration de Phèdre: elle eut l'art d'en profiter; on n'entendit plus que les accents d'une âme épuisée de sentiment. On prit cet accident pour un effort de la passion, comme en effet il pouvait l'être, et jamais cette scène admirable n'a fait sur les spectateurs une si violente impression.⁸⁷

The voice of the heart was first and foremost a sound that translated – better than words – the characters' mood.⁸⁸ Trembling, moaning, or screaming symbolized emotion in a superior way because they were its true accents.

DISSONANCE, MOANING AND YELPING

Most staged feelings are the result of a strong inner turmoil which, in essence, cannot be 'beautiful', although it can be staged and rehearsed to make the expressiveness perfect. This is a paradigm shift resulting from a reflection on the violent representation of the troubles of the soul. Dissonant

⁸⁵ Attrib. to Alexandre TOURNON DE LA CHAPELLE, *L'art du comédien vu dans ses principes* (Amsterdam & Paris: CAILLEAU, 1782); in CHAOUCHÉ (2005.a).

⁸⁶ These elements of the debate can be found in Denis Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien*.

⁸⁷ 'It is said of a famous actrice that one day she lost her voice during the declaration of Phèdre; she managed to take advantage of this; one could only hear the accents of a soul exhausted by feeling. This accident was mistaken for the result of passion, as indeed it could have been, and never had this admirable scene made such a violent impression on the spectators.' Jean-François MARMONTEL, *Éléments de littérature* (Paris: FIRMIN & DIDOT frères, 1848), p. 320.

⁸⁸ See *Les sons du théâtre. Angleterre et France (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle). Éléments d'une histoire de l'écoute*, Xavier Bisaro and Bénédicte LOUVAT-MOLOZAY (eds.), (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2019).

expression is a vector of emotion: it is given in a raw, even primitive way, as if reason yielded exclusively to the heart.

The most famous example in the theatre, still known and reported in the eighteenth century, is La Champmeslé's interpretation of Monime, particularly this passage marked by a strong tonal break. This vocal effect was a great success with the public and was mentioned by Abbé Dubos.⁸⁹ According to Riccoboni fils, this so-called 'singing' declamation was emulated because it highlighted the power of the actress's voice, and, one might add, because it had a certain lyricism and deep subjectivity, in harmony with the Racinian poetry.⁹⁰ Other attempts were made a few decades later, with Mlle Clairon who, according to commentators of the time, was the first to laugh in tragedy, or when Mlle Dumesnil chose a more chaotic style, made up of disparities, breaking with tradition. This actress seems to have understood very quickly that emotion had to be both energetic and impulsive on stage, at the risk of deviating from acting conventions. To play sensitively was to create a sensation in the audience. Some testimonies depicted her energetic diction, as well as speeded up delivery which, in all likelihood, contributed to creating an effect of tension in the audience,⁹¹ as reported by Dorfeuille (who however had not necessarily seen the actress on stage in her early youth and at the height of her glory):⁹²

*Mademoiselle Dumesnil, [...] disait jusqu'à six vers fortement prononcés lorsque l'action l'exigeait, sans prendre aucun repos [...]. Les quatre premiers vers du monologue de Cléopâtre, Serments fallacieux, salutaire contrainte... n'étaient interrompus qu'à la fin du quatrième qu'elle frappait en disant: vains fantômes d'état évanouissez-vous; et son débit serré était brûlant.*⁹³

François-René Molé followed in Mlle Dumesnil's footsteps, in turn setting the standard of sensitivity in on stage speaking his lines quickly. He was soon imitated by his young companion: '*Est-ce donc une nécessité de parler toujours très vite pour bien faire sentir? Mlle Doligny a pris aussi cette habitude, et souvent le Public perd beaucoup de ce qu'elle dit.*' [Is it then a necessity to speak always very quickly in order to express oneself well? Mlle Doligny, too, has developed this habit, and the public often loses much of what she says'],⁹⁴ claims a reviewer in number VIII of the *Journal des théâtres* published in 1777. The approach seems musical: it is not the meaning of the verses that matters most but rather their sound and rhythm.

The tragic genre and bourgeois drama (much more so than comedy) were played a century later with a dramatic vocal style that was neither lyrical nor poetic. The end of the century was accompanied not only by somewhat frenetic gestures,⁹⁵ but also by howling and moaning. A number of testimonies, such as those that follow, referred to a performance that mixed wild movements with inarticulate sounds such as screams:

Molé, à qui on vient dire au milieu du troisième acte qu'on enlève un de ses enfants, [...] au même instant pousse un cri, s'élance hors de sa boutique, et revient un moment après pâle, échevelé, tenant entre ses bras un petit enfant de trois ou quatre ans qu'il a l'air d'avoir enlevé aux ravisseurs, et qu'il jette encore avec effroi sur les genoux du père de sa femme

⁸⁹ Abbé Jean-Baptiste du Bos, *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture* (Paris: J. Mariette, 1733), III.9, pp. 144–5.

⁹⁰ 'La fameuse Champmeslé, si brillante du temps de Racine, avait une voix fort sonore et fort éclatante dans le haut. Les tons élevés lui étaient favorables, elle les employait avec succès.' Antoine Riccoboni, *L'Art du Théâtre* (Paris: Giffart et Simon, 1750), p. 18; in Chaouche (2001.b), *Sept Traités sur le jeu du comédien*.

⁹¹ *JDT*, 1777, n° VIII, 15 July, p. 347.

⁹² He was born in 1745 and was thirty when Mlle Dumesnil retired in 1775.

⁹³ 'Mademoiselle Dumesnil [...] would say up to six strongly pronounced lines when the action required it, without taking any breath [...]. The first four lines of Cleopatra's monologue *Serments fallacieux, salutaire contrainte* were only interrupted at the end of the fourth, when she struck, saying *vains fantômes d'état évanouissez-vous*, and her taut delivery was blazing.' Dorfeuille, p. 329, in Chaouche (2005.b), *Écrits sur l'art théâtral, Acteurs*.

⁹⁴ *JDT*, 1777, n° VIII, 15 July 1777, p. 305.

⁹⁵ S. Chaouche (2021), 'Expressionist Acting', pp. 112–21.

*qui est là, assis auprès d'une table. En même temps il se promène égaré et comme hors de lui-même dans sa boutique, en criant tantôt sa femme et tantôt son enfant. Il pousse des cris inarticulés qu'on entend à peine, sa voix est étouffée.*⁹⁶

*Un balancement perpétuel sur ses hanches, une tête dont les mouvements fréquents ne paraissent avoir d'autre but que de faire onduler les plumes de sa coiffure [Mlle Sainval], des élans convulsifs, accompagnés de cris qui s'arrêtent quelquefois sur un mot qu'ils coupent par la moitié: une déclamation dolente, monotone, et qui rappelle quelquefois à la mémoire les gémissements d'un malade qui se plaint des maux qu'il éprouve.*⁹⁷

*Pourquoi ce jeune homme se laisse-t-il aller à ces mouvements convulsifs? [...] pourquoi se balance-t-il sur les reins pour jeter ensuite ses bras en l'air, et pour sortir sur le champ en poussant les cris d'un homme qu'on exorcise?*⁹⁸

At the end of the century, similar criticisms were published in the *Censeur dramatique* about an actor from the boulevard who moved to the Comédie:

*D'un bout à l'autre de ce rôle, il n'a cessé de crier, de beugler même; tous ses mouvements ont été des contorsions; ses traits ont été dans une convulsion continue; [...] ses gestes ont été multipliés au point d'accompagner chaque vers, et de faire craindre, en dernier résultat, la dislocation de ses membres.*⁹⁹

According to Violaine Sebillotte-Cuchet in her study of Greek tragedy, the cry '*reste du domaine du spontané, du non esthétique*' ['remains in the realm of the spontaneous, the non-aesthetic'], whereas '*la musique est du domaine de l'élaboration et de la technique*' ['music is in the realm of elaboration and technique'].¹⁰⁰ The inner turmoil, as it is revealed in the second half of the eighteenth century, is thus outside the classical aesthetic. It is therefore possible to understand certain issues in relation to sensibility, i.e. the expression of emotion, in the theories on pre-melodramatic theatrical art: it is not so much sensitivity that is problematic as its expressiveness; it is not so much the notion of naturalness that is discussed as that of authentic artistic expression; finally, it is not so much the aesthetics on which the play is based (feeling vs. reason) that is questionable, as the very absence of aesthetics in that the actor's art no longer responds to '*des exigences ou à des lois de beauté*' ['requirements or laws of beauty'],¹⁰¹ nor even to a search for beauty. Commenting on a writing by Jean-François de La Harpe, an admirer of Monvel reminds us that embellishment was consubstantial with the dramatic art:

Mais cependant nous avouerons ici que nous sommes d'un sentiment contraire au sien, quand il dit: 'qu'au moment où le sieur Monvel revient à lui et où il tombe dans un état de désolation qui doit suivre son crime, sa voix, dans les gémissements et dans les pleurs, devient un beuglement odieux qui offense l'oreille. C'est, ajoute M. de la Harpe, le cri d'un homme sur

⁹⁶ 'Molé, who is told in the middle of the third act that one of his children has been kidnapped, [...] at the same instant cries out, rushes out of his shop, and returns a moment later pale, dishevelled, holding in his arms a little child of three or four years old that he appears to have taken from the kidnappers, and which he throws again with fright into the lap of his wife's father, who is seated there by a table. At the same time, he wanders around his shop, lost and like one deranged, shouting sometimes at his wife and sometimes at his child. He utters inarticulate cries that are barely heard, his voice is muffled'. Maurice Henriot, 'Correspondance inédite entre Thomas and [Nicolas-Thomas] Barthe', *Revue littéraire de la France*, 1919, Letter LVI, p. 613.

⁹⁷ 'A perpetual swaying on his hips, a head whose frequent movements seem to have no other purpose than to make the feathers of [Miss Sainval's] headdress undulate, convulsive outbursts which sometimes stop at a word cut in half: a dolorous, monotonous declamation, which sometimes recalls the groans of a sick person complaining of the ills he suffers'. *JDT*, 1777, n° VIII, 15 July, p. 305.

⁹⁸ 'Why does this young man permit himself these convulsive movements? [...] Why does he bend backwards, in order thereafter to throw his arms up in the air and immediately exit with the cries of someone being exorcized?' *JDT*, 1777, n° V, 1 June, p. 198.

⁹⁹ 'From one end of this role to the other, he never stopped shouting, even bellowing; all his movements were contortions, his features were continually convulsive; [...] his gestures were multiplied to the point of accompanying each verse, and to make one fear they would lead to the dislocation of his limbs.' Grimod de la Reynière, *Tome 3*, p. 541.

¹⁰⁰ Violaine Sebillotte Cuchet, 'Cris de femmes, cris d'hommes. Éléments de critique pour l'interprétation du cri en Grèce ancienne', in *Haro! Noël! Oyé! Pratiques du cri au Moyen Âge*, Didier Lett et Nicolas Offenstadt (eds.), (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2003), pp. 205–216.

¹⁰¹ 'Esthétique', *Trésor de la langue française*, en ligne: <https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/esth%C3%A9tique/adjectif> (last accessed 03/11/2021)

Une loi de rigueur.

Contre vous, après tout, serait-elle écoutée?
Pour effrayer le Peuple, elle paraît dictée.

AMENAIDE.

H B

Elle attaque Tancrède.... Elle me fait borreur

H

Trop de prévention... peut-être... me possède; mais...

H B

Je ne puis souffrir.... Ce qui n'est pas Tancrède.

ARGIRE

Lui! Tancredi!

AMENAIDE

H B
Et Quel autre eut été mon appui?
H B
Non.... Il n'est point de honte....en mourant pour Tancrède.
H B
On peut m'ôter le jour.... Et non pas me punir.
H B
Qui va répondre à Dieu... parle aux hommes sans peur.
H B
Il devrait présumer qu'il était.... Impossible....
B
Que jamais je trahisse un si noble lien.
H B
Ce cœur était en tout.... Aussi grand que le sien.
H B
Moins soupçonneux sans doute.... Et surtout plus sensible.
Je renonce à Tancrède, au reste des mortels;
Ils sont faibles, cruels,
H B
Ou trompeurs.... Ou trompés.¹⁰⁴

[I learned from an abandoned, wandering mother,
To endure exile and the fate of outcasts,
H L
And false pity.... Worse than contempt.
To my father's bosom I saw myself recalled:
An unheard-of misfortune had exiled me from it.
H H L
Perhaps... He is coming back... for a misfortune that is new.
H
I know what interest, what spirit animates you; but
L
Of your enemies I saw myself the victim.
H
I have devoted my feelings and my life to you; but
L
To dispose of it, wait a few days.
The Muslims
H

¹⁰⁴ *JDT*, 1777, n° XVI, 15 November, pp. 397–8 (IV.6).

Have changed Sicily, have hardened your mores; but

L

Who can alter your paternal kindness;

FANIE.

A law of rigour.

Against you, after all, would it be listened to?

To frighten the people, it seems dictated.

AMENAIDE.

H

L

She attacks Tancred.... To me, she is horrible

H

Too much prevention... perhaps... possesses me; but...

H

L

I cannot stand.... That which is not Tancred.

ARGIRE

Him! Tancred!

AMENAIDE

H

L

And Who else could have given me support?

H

B

No.... There is no shame...in dying for Tancred.

H

L

One cannot take the day from me.... And not give me a punishment.

H

L

Who will answer to God... speaks to men without fear.

H

L

He should assume that he was.... Impossible....

L

May I never betray so noble a bond.

H

L

This heart was in everything.... As big as his.

H

L

Less suspicious no doubt.... And above all more sensitive.

I renounce Tancred, the rest of the mortals;

They are weak, cruel,

H

L

Or deceitful.... Or deceived.]

Mme Verteuil, who was a member of the Bordeaux theatre company, ‘spoke’ the lines of tragedy, alternating high and low tones. The high and low tones on monosyllables imitated, perhaps, the sound of an outburst or, on the contrary, of a suppressed and thus internalized emotion. These accents are not grammatically logical and do not make sense from the standpoint of their content, although they are vaguely reminiscent of certain poetic rules formulated in the seventeenth century (voice that rose in the first hemistich, and lowered in the second hemistich).¹⁰⁵ The inflections have similar tonal movements, as if systematized, but the sound that results from these vocal variations seems discordant, or at least dissonant. The sixty-year-old spectator, perplexed by the ‘loudest applause’ of young people, suggests that this declamation was still somewhat strange, or at least extravagant, since the accentuations did not seem to have a precise rational explanation – this type

¹⁰⁵ Lamy, *L’Art de parler avec un discours dans lequel on donne une idée de l’art de persuader* (Paris: A. Pralard, 1676), pp. 142–3 and p. 170.

of declamation was imperceptibly similar to a donkey's braying. The representation of emotion did not, however, seem extreme.

Another more confusing account is published in 1778 in *Le Journal des théâtres* about Mlle Lavoy:

H
Que ce Prince..... à l'abri de toute trahison,
 H H
Accable, s'il se peut, mais rrrespecte Didon.¹⁰⁶

Pour faire mieux valoir ce dernier hémistiche, on s'est donné un grand coup de poing sur la poitrine, et cela était noble. La scène cinquième avec Énée, de la tendresse, de la sensibilité jusqu'à ce vers:

Non, tu n'es point du sang des Héros ni des Dieux, etc.¹⁰⁷

Ici le délire et les glapissements ont pris le dessus. C'était un tapage horrible; et par une vertu électrique; les convulsions de l'Actrice se sont communiquées jusqu'aux Spectateurs, qui battaient des mains et des cannes, sans ouïr un mot de la tirade. [...] Mas l'imprécation, Monsieur, l'imprécation! Ah! Quel ravissement! Quelle pâture délicieuse pour le Parterre! [...] Imaginez-vous la Demoiselle Lavoy se démantelant la figure, s'égosillant, déchirant sa poitrine, prononçant avec force le premier mot de chaque vers, poussant des cris aigus au milieu des acclamations les plus bruyantes.¹⁰⁸

H
 That this Prince..... safe from all treachery,
 H H
 Torment, if he can, but rrrespect Dido.

To make this last hemistich more effective, she gave herself a big thump on the chest, and that was noble. The fifth scene with Aeneas, tenderness, sensitivity until this line:

No, you are not of the blood of the Heroes or the Gods, etc.

Here the delirium and the yelps took over. It was a horrible uproar; and by an electric property the convulsions of the actress passed to the spectators, who clapped their hands and canes, without hearing a word of the tirade. [...] But the curse, Sir, the curse! Ah, what a delight! What delicious feed for the parterre! [...] Imagine the Demoiselle Lavoy tearing her face apart, shouting, tearing her chest, pronouncing with force the first word of each verse, uttering high-pitched cries in the midst of the loudest cheers.]

The lexicon describes the 'sounds' emitted by the actress, or rather howls: 'noise' indicates a violent, discordant and disordered sound; 'yelping' corresponds to high and loud, even sharp, sounds; and 'shouting' refers to the idea of intense vocal sounds. The hysterical aspect of the movements and gestures, which again illustrate a distortion of the lines and a visually shocking, even unbearable performance, is emphasized, while the convulsions win the audience's approval despite their transgressive aspect and in turn arouse a form of collective delirium. The actress' declamation is also annotated:

Voici quelques vers coupés, pris du corps de la pièce, et notés sur le livre même [...]. Je vous donne la clef par des lettres de convention.

H *haut.*
 B *bas.*
 TF *très-fort.*
 TH *très haut.*
 C *cris.*
 *Suspension.*

¹⁰⁶ Jean-Jacques Lefranc de Pompignan, *Didon* (1734), III.3.

¹⁰⁷ *Didon*, III.5.

¹⁰⁸ *JDT*, 1778, n° XXIII, 1 March, pp. 359–60.

T.F.

Non..... tu n'es point du sang des Hérrros, ni des Dieux.

T.F.

Au milieu des rrochers tu reçus la naissance,

T.H. H.

Et tu n'as rien d'humain.... Que l'art..... trop dangereux

B. C.

De sé-duire une amante..... et de trahir ses feux.

T.H.

Ah!..... ces présages vains n'ont rien qui m'épouvante.

C. H.

Ze devrais te haïr..... in-grat, Et ze t'adore.

Et de La-omédon connaître l'héritier.

C.

De tes lâches aïeux, va.... Tu n'es que trop digne.

C.

Trremble, in-grat.... Ze mourrai, mais ma haine vivra.

Cette manière boitense de déclamer est aujourd'hui très à la mode dans les Provinces. Plus elle est bizarre et contre nature, plus elle fait fortune.¹⁰⁹

[Here are a few verses cut from the body of the play, and noted on the book itself [...]. I give you the key using some letters as a code.

H	high.
L	low.
VS	very strong.
VH	very high.
S	screams.
....	suspension.

V.S.

No..... you are not of the blood of Herroes, nor of the Gods.

V.S.

In the midst of the rrocks you were born,

V.H. H.

And you are a rruthless man.... Have only the art..... too dangerous

L. S.

To se-duce a lover..... and betray her flame.

V.H.

Ah! these vain omens have nothing to frighten me.

S. H.

Zi should hate you..... un-grateful, And you zi adore.

And of La-omédon know the heir.

S.

Of your cowardly forefathers, go.... You are only too worthy.

S.

Trremble, un-grateful..... Zi will die, but my hate will survive.

This metrically defective [*boitense*] manner of declaiming is very fashionable in the provinces today. The more bizarre and unnatural it is, the more successful it is.]

¹⁰⁹ JDT, *ibid.*

This excerpt which once again is a compilation of lines extracted from a few scenes shows a variety of tones used and accents chosen by the actress to create a discordant effect. The high-pitched tones and the screams, seem strange to the twenty-first century researcher who can somehow hear why the audience might have considered this ‘voice of the heart’ to be that of a ‘demonic’ person. It is not possible to know how loud the shouting was, or even to what extent the actor was acting hysterically, but these few samples, collected from the pages of the *Journal des théâtres*, give a fairly intelligible account of a form of disinterest in the rules of oratory, and an interpretation of emotion that is stylistically more expressionist than it probably had been in the first half of the century. Attempts to understand the declamatory style by Kat Carlson and myself, confirm how strange this interpretation may have been on stage and the dissonant effects created by way of illogically stressing certain terms and using screams and extreme pitch tones.¹¹⁰ In addition, large movements of the arms most likely played a pivotal role, facilitating breathing and giving more energy to the screams and high pitch tones – thus creating strong vocal effects.

The second half of the eighteenth century was marked by a new reflection on the expression of emotions and their oral forms. The use of interjections, stammering, the addition of words or pauses in speech are evidence of personal experiments that may have launched fashions. What might have been seen in the past as a flaw in the oratorical art was now hailed by the audience in the pit, which was becoming more diverse, as Grimod de la Reynière pointed out: ‘*c’est le parterre seul qui décide du sort d’une pièce. Aujourd’hui cet aréopage est constitué de journaliers, de garçons perruquiers, de marmitons*’ [‘it is the parterre alone that decides the fate of a play. Today this Areopagus is made up of day-labourers, wig-makers and scullions’].¹¹¹ The audience’s taste undoubtedly evolved towards greater emotion and irascibility.

The sound of unbearable pain, deep sorrow and intense distress went hand in hand with a new aesthetic conception of performance which, presumably, led to a change in the way actors constructed their characters vocally and performed emotions. In this sense, the new players favoured alteration, discordance or dissonance. This voice of the heart, which was more intense, more authentic as it mimicked the movements of the rising soul through the body, was strongly criticized for being very ungraceful. We can thus observe a resistance to the changes the actors wanted, who, for their part, tried to satisfy the public, i.e. to respond to the desire to see more ‘human’ characters, or characters torn by strong emotions. Perhaps the actors no longer sought to convey emotion in a pathetic but rather in a dramatic way, not through the hackneyed expression of passions described and listed in rhetorical books, but through the expressiveness achieved by large bodily movements and more pronounced, almost cacophonous, vocal accentuation. One can suppose that paroxysmal acting in the tragic or authentic in the comic genres contributed to the advent of melodrama – and the stereotypes to which it would be linked – long before the nineteenth century. It promoted the release of heightened emotions. This hypnotic and suggestive form of stage acting may have had curative and cathartic virtues, provoking in some spectators what could be compared to an abreaction.

Sabine CHAUCHE

Sunway University and SCR Brasenose College,
Oxford

¹¹⁰ The recordings can be found at: <https://jedwentz.com/chaouche-edps/>.

¹¹¹ Grimod de la Reynière, Tome 10, p. 341, January 1774.

EXCERPTS

Excerpt 1

La Réconciliation normande by Charles Dufresny, sieur de la Rivière (1719)

Cited extract

Full lines

FALAISE

FALAISE

Dans les discours fleuris je perds la tramontane, heu!

*J'en ai l'air, je le suis, et j'avouerai de plus
Qu'étant nourri, stylé dans la basse chicane,
Dans les discours fleuris je perds la tramontane.*

(I.8, vv. 298–300)

*La probité d'accord doit marcher la première,
Notre intérêt après, les scrupules heu! heu! derrière,*

*Du frère, moi, je vais à la sœur dire rage,
Je dirai pis que pendre au frère de la sœur;
Et disant mal des deux je ne suis point menteur,
Quoique je sois natif de Falaise. Allons boire,
Et me bien rafraîchir, en buvant, la mémoire
Des manœuvres documents d'un maître très sensé.
Pateliner l'arbitre; eh j'ai bien commencé,
Trigauder frère et sœur, épier l'orpheline;
Prendre les souterrains, tourner virer Nérine;
Défiance surtout, ne disant oui, ni non,
Manoeuvre plus obscure encore que le jargon.
Je viens exprès du Mans enfin pour être traître,
Je vais tenir ici la place de mon maître.
Le grand homme en intrigue! On peut dire pourtant
Qu'il n'est pas un parfait fripon, mais cependant
Il croit en probité les excès ridicules:
Les sots veulent, dit-il, mettre un tas de scrupules
Entre la probité solide, et l'intérêt;
C'est pour l'homme d'esprit un incommode apprêt;
La probité, d'accord, doit marcher la première,
Notre intérêt après, les scrupules derrière.*

(I.9, vv. 344–64)

À la plume, à l'épée, heu! exploiters à deux mains

*Vous faites pour la nièce un excellent acquêt;
Mon maître est à bon droit Marquis de Procinville,
Il est brave guerrier, et plaideur très babil;
Tels étaient ses aïeux, la terreur des humains,
À la plume, à l'épée, exploiters à deux mains.
La noblesse normande ainsi court à la gloire:
Exploits guerriers gravés au temple de mémoire;
Exploits enregistrés dans les greffes du Mans.
Certain Robert le Roux, général des Normands,
Conquérant renommé surtout en procédures,
Au sortir des combats faisait ses écritures
Lui-même.*

(II.4, vv. 436–47)

*Une Nièce, Monsieur, on ne peut s'aliéner
C'est comme un propre heu!*

Oui, vous l'épousez mal, mon maître y rentrera heu!

*J'ai peur,
Tremblez aussi; mon maître a pour lui le tuteur;
La sœur n'est pas battante à livrer Angélique?
C'est acquisition fausse, et non juridique.
Une nièce, monsieur, ne peut s'aliéner;
C'est comme un propre. Enfin on va vous chicaner.
Mon maître sait ravoir son bien en bonne guerre,
Il sait bien par retrait rentrer dans une terre;
Oui, vous l'épousez mal, mon maître y rentrera*

(IV.5, vv. 1182–9)

*C'est proprement frauder les droits de la justice.
La voler heu!*¹

*De sa conquête enfin l'amant sera sevré;
Nous allons replaider et de tierce et de quarte
En procès, comme au jeu, plus on mêle la carte,
Et plus le gain devient légitime, loyal.
Accorder un procès, est-il un plus grand mal?
C'est proprement frauder les droits de la justice,
La voler.*

(IV.7, v. 1246–52)

*Il est juste qu'on gagne une mauvaise cause
Puisqu'à perdre la bonne en plaidant — on s'expose*

Un Juge bien payé verra plus clair — que moi,

*Qui? Mon maître!
Le père des procès n'en pourrait faire naître?
Quand j'ai, car moi c'est lui, le moindre échantillon
Tenant le bout du fil du moindre procillon,
Un quartier de terrain dans toute une province,
Je m'accrois, je m'étends, j'anticipe, j'évince,
J'envabis, et le tout avec formalité
Procédure est chez nous la règle d'équité;
Sur le terrain des sots j'arrondis l'héritage
Par droit de bienséance, et droit de voisinage.
En gagnant par justice, on, a rarement tort;
Mais supposé qu'on l'eût, tout est sujet au sort,
Il est juste qu'on gagne une mauvaise cause,
Puisqu'à perdre la bonne en plaidant on s'expose.
Car enfin après tout, qui sait en certain cas
Si la terre d'autrui ne m'appartiendra pas,
Par quelque nullité, vice de procédure?
Pour être à mon profit dans une affaire obscure,
Un juge bien payé verra plus clair que moi.*

(III.8, vv. 878–95)

En conscience on peut plaider — à l'amiable.²

*Tant de plaideurs dévots disent: Fasse le ciel
Qu'un arrêt foudroyant rende un tel raisonnable.
En conscience on peut plaider à l'amiable.*

(III.10, vv. 924–6)

¹ JDT, 1777, n° VIII, 15 July, pp. 314–5.

² ibidem.

Excerpt 2
Les Fausses Infidélités by Nicolas-Thomas Barthe (1768), I.1

VALSAIN.
Angélique est outrée.
 DORMILLY
Ab! que dites-vous là? il
Il lui sied de bouder! lé lé les femmes? lé lé les voilà.

*Ô! vous, vous aimez bien. Ce*
Ce ce c'es C'est le plus beau sang-froid!

*Vous verriez Dorimène*
Pour quelqu'heureux mortel n'être point inhumaine, que
Que, que, qui, Qu'immobile témoin et rival complaisant, vous
Vous trouveriez, je crois, le procédé plaisant.

*Vous riez; mais je vois, je*
Je eu, eu, je, Je vois tout

VALSAIN.
Angélique est outrée.
 DORMILLY.
Ab! que dites-vous là?
Il lui sied de bouder! Les femmes, les voilà.
Ont-elles quelque tort? Si nous osons nous plaindre,
Elles sont d'une adresse! Elles savent contraindre
A demander pardon, du tort qu'elles ont eu.
 VALSAIN.
Mais voulez-vous toujours douter de leur vertu?
Vous êtes plus jaloux qu'il n'est permis de l'être...
 DORMILLY.
 Moi!
 VALSAIN.
Sous un triste nom c'est se faire connaître.
On cause, disons mieux, on rit à vos dépens.
 DORMILLY.
Qui? ces gens du bel air, cœurs légers, froids plaisants,
De maîtresse et d'ami changeant comme de modes,
Pacifiques époux et même amants commodes.
Je leur permets de rire; un cœur tel que le mien
Doit étonner le leur. Oh! vous, vous aimez bien:
C'est le plus beau sang-froid! ...
 VALSAIN.
Nous n'aimons pas de même.
Les Femmes, j'en conviens, peuvent être infidèles...
 DORMILLY.
Peuvent être est fort bon.
 VALSAIN.
Mais, pour les croire telles,
Pour les juger enfin coupables en amour,
Je veux des preuves, moi, plus claires que le jour...
 DORMILLY.
 J'entends.
 VALSAIN.
L'amour jaloux a trop l'air de la haine.
Formons d'heureux liens, et point de triste chaîne.
De l'Amour, s'il se peut, n'ayons que les douceurs:
Moi? j'en ai la tendresse... et d'autres, les fureurs.
 DORMILLY.
D'accord; vous êtes doux. Vous verriez Dorimène
Pour quelque heureux mortel n'être pas inhumaines,
Qu'immobile témoin et rival complaisant,
Vous trouveriez, je crois, le procédé plaisant.
Cela s'appelle aimer.
 VALSAIN, riant.
Pour vous prouver que j'aime
Je veux être jaloux, jaloux de Mondor même.
 DORMILLY.
Pourquoi non? Ce Mondor me déplaît.
 VALSAIN.
 Je le crois:
 Il est si dangereux!
 DORMILLY.
Vous riez; mais vois,
Je vois tout. Franchement, votre Mondor m'assomme.
 VALSAIN.
 Hier, je m'en doutai.
 DORMILLY.
Soyez sûr que cet homme
A des desseins secrets. Je ne suis point jaloux;
Mais je sais que Mondor conspire contre nous.
Oui, j'ai vu Dorimène, et même sa Cousine

bas et d'un ton effrayé.

Rire avec lui, d'un air, là...

VALSAIN.

C'est qu'on le badine.

De tels originaux sont si divertissants!

Un riche, au ton badin, un fat de quarante ans,

Quelque esprit, mais si vain qu'il en est parfois bête,

Croyant à tout le sexe avoir tourné la tête;

Lui prodiguant les bals, les fêtes, les soupés [sic]

Assez mauvais railleur sur les maris trompés;

Achetant des travers par ses dépenses folles...

DORMILLY.

Eh! bien, il réussit.

VALSAIN.

Où, ces femmes frivoles,

Qui ne se piquent pas de choisir leurs amants,

Ont daigné quelquefois lui donner des moments;

Et, trompant avec art sa vanité crédule,

En ont fait, à plaisir, un fat très ridicule.

Et vous ne voulez pas qu'on en rie?

DORMILLY.

Oh! j'ai vu

De vos femmes de bien, prodiges de vertu.

Tel homme était d'abord plaisanté par ces Dames,

Qui bientôt... tout s'arrange avec les bonnes âmes.

Tenez, mon cher Marquis; notre siècle, nos mœurs,

Et ce sexe maudît, que je hais, que j'adore,

Et mon amante enfin jeune et fidèle encore,

Mais qui, peut-être hélas! dans peu me trahira...

Vous ne connaissez rien, Monsieur, de tout cela.

J'ai peine à concevoir comment on se marie:

Vous le concevez, vous.

VALSAIN.

Très bien; mais, je vous prie,

Du respect pour le Sexe, ou je romps avec vous:

Ses vertus sont de lui, ses défauts sont de nous.

Croyez à ses vertus...

DORMILLY l'interrompant.

Comment! lorsqu'Angélique...

VALSAIN

Apaisez-la bien vite; et, d'un ton pathétique,

Jurez-lui d'être enfin plus doux, moins emporté,

De ne plus tant crier à l'infidélité:

Mais surtout, il faudra, comme à votre ordinaire,

Après avoir juré, protesté, n'en rien faire.

.....
.....
Et mon amante enfin, jeune et fidèle encore, mais
mais, Mais qui peut-être, hélas! dans peu me trahira. Vous n'
vous, Vous ne connaissez rien, Monsieur, de tout cela. j'ai
j'ai, J'ai peine à concevoir comment on se marie. vous
vous, Vous le concevez, vous.....
.....

VALSAIN.

Croyez à ses vertus.

DORMILLY.

que, que, que, co, co, com, Comment, lorsqu'Angélique, etc.³

³ JDT, 1777, n° xv, 1 November, pp. 322–3 (I.1).

Excerpt 3
Tancredi by Voltaire (first performed in 1760)⁴

ACTE I, Scène 4
 ARGIRE, AMÉNAÏDE.

[...]

AMÉNAÏDE.

*J'appris sous une mère abandonnée, errante,
 À supporter l'exil et le sort des proscrits,*

Et la fausse pitié. ... Pire que le mépris.

*Dans le sein paternel je me vis rappelée;
 Un malheur inouï m'en avait exilée.
 Peut-être... Il revient... pour un malheur nouveau.*

*Je sais quel intérêt, quel esprit vous anime; mais...
 De vos ennemis je me vis la victime.*

*J'appris sous une mère abandonnée, errante,
 À supporter l'exil et le sort des proscrits,
 L'accueil impérieux d'une cour arrogante,
 Et la fausse pitié, pire que le mépris.
 Dans un sort avili noblement élevée,
 De ma mère bientôt cruellement privée,
 Je me vis seule au monde, en proie à mon effroi,
 Roseau faible et tremblant, n'ayant d'appui que moi.
 Votre destin changea. Syracuse en alarmes
 Vous remit dans vos biens, vous rendit vos honneurs,
 Se reposa sur vous du destin de ses armes,
 Et de ses murs sanglants repoussa ses vainqueurs.
 Dans le sein paternel je me vis rappelée;
 Un malheur inouï m'en avait exilée:
 Peut-être j'y reviens pour un malheur nouveau.
 Vos mains de mon hymen allument le flambeau.
 Je sais quel intérêt, quel espoir vous anime;
 Mais de vos ennemis je me vis la victime:
 Je suis enfin la vôtre; et ce jour dangereux
 Peut-être de nos jours sera le plus affreux.*

ARGIRE.

*Il sera fortuné, c'est à vous de m'en croire.
 Je vous aime, ma fille, et j'aime votre gloire.
 On a trop murmuré quand ce fier Solamir,
 Pour le prix de la paix qu'il venait nous offrir,
 Osa me proposer de l'accepter pour gendre;
 Je vous donne au héros qui marche contre lui,
 Au plus grand des guerriers armés pour nous défendre,
 Autrefois mon émule, à présent notre appui.*

AMÉNAÏDE.

*Quel appui! Vous vantez sa superbe fortune;
 Mes vœux plus modérés la voudraient plus commune.
 Je voudrais qu'un héros si fier et si puissant
 N'eût point, pour s'agrandir, déposé l'innocent.*

ARGIRE.

*Du conseil, il est vrai, la prudence sévère
 Vient punir dans Tancredi une race étrangère:
 Elle abusa longtemps de son autorité;
 Elle a trop d'ennemis.*

AMÉNAÏDE.

*Seigneur, ou je m'abuse,
 Ou Tancredi est encore aimé dans Syracuse.*

ARGIRE.

*Nous rendons tous justice à son cœur indompté.
 Sa valeur a, dit-on, subjugué l'Illyrie;
 Mais plus il a servi sous l'aigle des césars,
 Moins il doit espérer de revoir sa patrie:
 Il est par un décret chassé de nos remparts.*

⁴ Based on the edition on www.theatre-classique.fr (last accessed 16-02-2022). High tones are underlined and low tones are **boldly underlined**.

AMÉNAÏDE.

Pour jamais! Lui? Tancrède?

ARGIRE.

*Où, l'on craint sa présence;
Et si vous l'avez vu dans les murs de Byzance,
Vous savez qu'il nous bait.*

AMÉNAÏDE.

*Je ne le croyais pas.
Ma mère avait pensé qu'il pouvait être encore
L'appui de Syracuse et le vainqueur du maure;
Et lorsque dans ces lieux des citoyens ingrats
Pour ce fier Orbassan contre vous s'animèrent,
Qu'ils ravirent vos biens, et qu'ils vous opprimèrent,
Tancrède aurait pour vous affronté le trépas.
C'est tout ce que j'ai su.*

ARGIRE.

*C'est trop, Aménaïde:
Rendez-vous aux conseils d'un père qui vous guide;
Conformez-vous au temps, conformez-vous aux lieux.
Solamir et Tancrède, et la cour de Byzance,
Sont tous également en horreur à nos yeux.
Votre bonheur dépend de votre complaisance.
J'ai pendant soixante ans combattu pour l'état;
Je le servis injuste, et le chéris ingrat:
Je dois penser ainsi jusqu'à ma dernière heure.
Prenez mes sentiments; et, devant que je meure,
Consolez mes vieux ans dont vous faites l'espoir.
Je suis prêt à finir une vie orageux:
La vôtre doit couler sous les lois du devoir,
Et je mourrai content si vous vivez heureuse.*

AMÉNAÏDE.

*Ah, seigneur! Croyez-moi, parlez moins de bonheur.
Je ne regrette point la cour d'un empereur.
Je vous ai consacré mes sentiments, ma vie;
Mais, pour en disposer, attendez quelques jours.
Au crédit d'Orbassan trop d'intérêt vous lie:
Ce crédit si vanté doit-il durer toujours?
Il peut tomber, tout change, et ce héros peut-être
S'est trop tôt déclaré votre gendre et mon maître*

ARGIRE.

Comment? Que dites-vous?

AMÉNAÏDE.

*Cette témérité
Vous offense peut-être, et vous semble une injure.
Je sais que dans les cours mon sexe plus flatté
Dans votre république a moins de liberté:
À Byzance on le sert; ici la loi plus dure
Vient de l'obéissance et défend le murmure.
Les musulmans altiers, trop longtemps vos vainqueurs,
Ont changé la Sicile, ont endurci vos mœurs:
Mais qui peut altérer vos bontés paternelles?*

ARGIRE.

*Vous seule, vous, ma fille, en abusant trop d'elles.
De tout ce que j'entends mon esprit est confus:
J'ai permis vos délais, mais non pas vos refus.
La loi ne peut plus rompre un noeud si légitime:
La parole est donnée, y manquer est un crime.
Vous me l'avez bien dit, je suis né malheureux:
Jamais aucun succès n'a couronné mes vœux.
Tous les jours de ma vie ont été des orages.
Dieu puissant! Détournez ces funestes présages;*

Je vous ai consacré mes sentiments, ma vie; mais....
Pour en disposer, attendez quelques jours.

Les Musulmans
Ont changé la Sicile, ont endurci vos mœurs; mais....
Qui peut altérer vos bontés paternelles;

*Et puisse Aménaïde, en formant ces liens,
Se préparer des jours moins tristes que les miens!*

ACTE II, scène 1
AMÉNAÏDE, FANIE.

AMÉNAÏDE.
*Où porté-je mes pas? ... d'où vient que je frissonne?
Moi, des remords! ... Qui? Moi! Le crime seul les donne...
Ma cause est juste... ô cieus! Protégez mes desseins!
À Fanie, qui entre.
Allons, rassurons-nous... suis-je en tout obéie?*

FANIE.
Votre esclave est parti; la lettre est dans ses mains.

AMÉNAÏDE.
*Il est maître, il est vrai, du secret de ma vie;
Mais je connais son zèle: il m'a toujours servie.
On doit tout quelquefois au dernier des humains.
Né d'aïeux musulmans chez les syracusains,
Instruit dans les deux lois et dans les deux langages,
Du camp des sarrasins il connaît les passages,
Et des monts de l'Etna les plus secrets chemins.
C'est lui qui découvrit, par une course utile,
Que Tancrède en secret a revu la Sicile;
C'est lui par qui le ciel veut changer mes destins.
Ma lettre, par ses soins remise aux mains d'un maure,
Dans Messine demain doit être avant l'aurore.
Des maures et des grecs les besoins mutuels
Ont toujours conservé, dans cette longue guerre,
Une correspondance à tous deux nécessaire;
Tant la nature unit les malheureux mortels!*

FANIE.
*Ce pas est dangereux; mais le nom de Tancrède,
Ce nom si redoutable, à qui tout autre cède,
Et qu'ici nos tyrans ont toujours en horreur,
Ce beau nom que l'amour grava dans votre cœur,
N'est point dans cette lettre à Tancrède adressée.
Si vous l'avez toujours présent à la pensée,
Vous avez su du moins le taire en écrivant.
Au camp des sarrasins votre lettre portée
Vainement serait lue ou serait arrêtée.
Enfin, jamais l'amour ne fut moins imprudent,
Ne sut mieux se voiler dans l'ombre du mystère,
Et ne fut plus hardi sans être téméraire.
Je ne puis cependant vous cacher mon effroi.*

AMÉNAÏDE.
*Le ciel jusqu'à présent semble veiller sur moi;
Il ramène Tancrède, et tu veux que je tremble?*

FANIE.
*Hélas! Qu'en d'autres lieux sa bonté vous rassemble.
La haine et l'intérêt s'arment trop contre lui:
Tout son parti se tait; qui sera son appui?*

AMÉNAÏDE.
*Sa gloire. Qu'il se montre, il deviendra le maître.
Un héros qu'on opprime attendrit tous les cœurs;
Il les anime tous, quand il vient à paraître.*

FANIE.
Son rival est à craindre.

AMÉNAÏDE.
Ah! Combats ces terreurs,

Et ne m'en donne point. Souviens-toi que ma mère
 Nous unit l'un et l'autre à ses derniers moments;
 Que Tancrède est à moi, qu'aucune loi contraire
 Ne peut rien sur nos vœux et sur nos sentiments.
 Hélas! Nous regrettions cette île si funeste,
 Dans le sein de la gloire et des murs des césars;
 Vers ces champs trop aimés qu'aujourd'hui je déteste,
 Nous tournions tristement nos avides regards.
 J'étais loin de penser que le sort qui m'obsède
 Me gardât pour époux l'oppresser de Tancrède,
 Et que j'aurais pour doct l'excécrable présent
 Des biens qu'un ravisseur enlève à mon amant.
 Il faut l'instruire au moins d'une telle injustice;
 Qu'il apprenne de moi sa perte et mon supplice;
 Qu'il hâte son retour et défende ses droits.
 Pour venger un héros, je fais ce que je dois.
 Ah! Si je le pouvais, j'en ferais davantage.
 J'aime, je crains un père et respecte son âge;
 Mais je voudrais armer nos peuples soulevés
 Contre cet Orbassan qui nous a captivés.
 D'un brave chevalier sa conduite est indigne:
 Intéressé, cruel, il prétend à l'honneur!
 Il croit d'un peuple libre être le protecteur!
 Il ordonne ma honte, et mon père la signe!
 Et je dois la subir, et je dois me livrer
 Au maître impérieux qui pense m'honorer!
 Hélas! Dans Syracuse on hait la tyrannie;
 Mais la plus excécrable et la plus impunie
 Est celle qui commande et la haine et l'amour,
 Et qui veut nous forcer de changer en un jour.
 Le sort en est jeté.

FANIE.

Vous aviez paru craindre.

AMÉNAÏDE.

Je ne crains plus.

FANIE.

*On dit qu'un arrêt redouté
 Contre Tancrède même est aujourd'hui porté:
 Il y va de la vie à qui le veut enfreindre.*

AMÉNAÏDE.

*Je le sais; mon esprit en fut épouvanté:
 Mais l'amour est bien faible alors qu'il est timide.
 J'adore, tu le sais, un héros intrépide;
 Comme lui je dois l'être.*

FANIE.

Une loi de rigueur.

*Contre vous, après tout, serait-elle écoutée?
 Pour effrayer le Peuple, elle paraît dictée.*

FANIE.

Une loi de rigueur

*Contre vous, après tout, serait-elle écoutée?
 Pour effrayer le peuple elle paraît dictée.*

AMÉNAÏDE.

Elle attaque Tancrède.... Elle me fait horreur

AMÉNAÏDE.

*Elle attaque Tancrède; elle me fait borreur.
 Que cette loi jalouse est digne de nos maîtres!
 Ce n'était point ainsi que ses braves ancêtres,
 Ces généreux français, ces illustres vainqueurs,
 Subjuguèrent l'Italie et conquéraient des cœurs.
 On aimait leur franchise, on redoutait leurs armes;
 Les soupçons n'entraient point dans leurs esprits altiers.
 L'honneur avait uni tous ces grands chevaliers:
 Chez les seuls ennemis ils portaient les alarmes;
 Et le peuple, amoureux de leur autorité,
 Combattait pour leur gloire et pour sa liberté.
 Ils abaissaient les grecs, ils triomphaient du maure.*

*Trop de prévention... peut-être... me possède; mais...
Je ne puis souffrir... Ce qui n'est pas Tancrède.*

ARGIRE

Lui! Tancrède!

AMÉNAÏDE

Et Quel autre eût été mon appui?

*Aujourd'hui je ne vois qu'un sénat ombrageux,
Toujours en défiance, et toujours orageux;
Qui lui-même se craint, et que le peuple abhorre.
Je ne sais si mon cœur est trop plein de ses feux;
Trop de prévention peut-être me possède;
Mais je ne puis souffrir ce qui n'est pas Tancrède:
La foule des humains n'existe point pour moi;
Son nom seul en ces lieux dissipe mon effroi,
Et tous ses ennemis irritent ma colère.*

ACTE IV, scène 6
ARGIRE, AMÉNAÏDE, suite.

[...]

ARGIRE.

Lui, Tancrède!

AMÉNAÏDE.

Et quel autre eût été mon appui?

ACTE II, scène 7.
Aménaïde; soldats, dans l'enfoncement.

AMÉNAÏDE.

*J'ai donc dicté l'arrêt... Et je me sacrifie!
Ô toi, seul des humains qui méritas ma foi,
Toi, pour qui je mourrai, pour qui j'aimais la vie,
Je suis donc condamnée!... Oui, je le suis pour toi;
Allons... je l'ai voulu... Mais tant d'ignominie,
Mais un père accablé, dont les jours vont finir!
Des liens, des bourreaux... Ces apprêts d'infamie!
Ô mort! Affreuse mort! Puis-je vous soutenir?
Tourments, trépas honteux... Tout mon courage cède...
Non, il n'est point de honte en mourant pour Tancrède.
On peut m'ôter le jour, et non pas me punir.
Quoi! Je meurs en coupable!... Un père, une patrie!
Je les servais tous deux, et tous deux m'ont flétrie!
Et je n'aurai pour moi, dans ces moments d'horreur,
Que mon seul témoignage, et la voix de mon cœur!*
[...]

*Non.... Il n'est point de honte...en mourant pour Tancrède.
On peut m'ôter le jour.... Et non pas me punir.*

ACTE III, scène 6

La scène s'ouvre: on voit Aménaïde au milieu des gardes; les chevaliers, le peuple, remplissent la place.

ARGIRE, à Tancrède.

*Généreux inconnu, daignez me soutenir;
Cachez-moi ces objets... C'est ma fille elle-même.*

TANCRÈDE.

Quels moments pour tous trois!

AMÉNAÏDE.

Ô justice suprême!

*Toi qui vois le passé, le présent, l'avenir,
Tu lis seule en mon cœur, toi seule es équitable;
Des profanes humains la foule impitoyable
Parle et juge en aveugle, et condamne au hasard.
Chevaliers, citoyens, vous qui tous avez part
Au sanguinaire arrêt porté contre ma vie,
Ce n'est pas devant vous que je me justifie.
Que ce ciel qui m'entend juge entre vous et moi.
Organes odieux d'un jugement inique,
Oui, je vous outrageais, j'ai trahi votre loi;
Je l'avais en horreur, elle était tyrannique:
Oui, j'offensais un père, il a forcé mes vœux;
J'offensais Orbassan, qui, fier et rigoureux,*

Qui va répondre à Dieu... parle aux hommes sans peur.

*Il devrait présumer qu'il était... Impossible...
Que jamais je trahisse un si noble lien.
Ce cœur était en tout... Aussi grand que le sien.*

*Moins soupçonneux sans doute... Et surtout plus sensible.
Je renonce à Tancrède, au reste des mortels;
Ils sont faibles, cruels,
Ou trompeurs... Ou trompés.⁵*

*Prétendait sur mon âme une injuste puissance.
Citoyens, si la mort est due à mon offense,
Frappez, mais écoutez; sachez tout mon malheur:
Qui va répondre à Dieu parle aux hommes sans peur.
Et vous, mon père, et vous, témoin de mon supplice,
Qui ne deviez pas l'être, et de qui la justice
[...]*

ACTE IV, scène 5

[...]

AMÉNAÏDE.

*Il devait me connaître;
Il devait respecter un cœur tel que le mien;
Il devait présumer qu'il était impossible
Que jamais je trahisse un si noble lien.
Ce cœur est aussi fier que son bras invincible;
Ce cœur était en tout aussi grand que le sien,
Moins soupçonneux, sans doute, et surtout plus sensible.
Je renonce à Tancrède, au reste des mortels;
Ils sont faux ou méchants, ils sont faibles, cruels,
Ou trompeurs, ou trompés; et ma douleur profonde,
En oubliant Tancrède, oubliera tout le monde.*

⁵ JDT, 1777, n° XVI, 15 November, pp. 397–8.

Excerpt 4.⁶
Didon by Jean-Jacques Lefranc de Pompignon (1734)

ACTE III, scène 5
 DIDON, ÉNÉE

*Non..... tu n'es point du sang des Héros, ni des Dieux.
 Au milieu des rochers tu reçus la naissance,*

*Et tu n'as rien d'humain.... Que l'art..... trop dangereux
 De sé-duire une amante..... et de trahir ses feux.*

Ah!..... ces présages vains n'ont rien qui m'épouvante.

DIDON.
*Non, tu n'es point le sang des Héros, ni des Dieux.
 Au milieu des rochers tu reçus la naissance.
 Un monstre des forêts éleva ton enfance;
 Et tu n'as rien d'humain que l'art trop dangereux
 De séduire une Amante et de trahir ses feux.
 Dis-moi, qui t'appelait aux bords de la Lybie?
 T'ai-je arraché moi-même au sein de ta Patrie?
 Te fais-je abandonner un Empire assuré,
 Toi, qui dans l'Univers proscrire, désespéré,
 Rebut des flots, jouet d'un espoir inutile
 N'as trouvé qu'en ces lieux un favorable asile?
 Les immortels jaloux du soin de ta grandeur,
 Menacent tes refus de leur courroux vengeur.
 Ah! ces présages vains n'ont rien qui m'épouvante:
 Il faut d'autres raisons pour convaincre une amante.
 Tranquilles dans les Cieux, contents de nos Autels,
 Les Dieux s'occupent-ils des amours des Mortels?
 Notre cœur est un bien que leur bonté nous laisse;
 Et si jusques à nous leur Majesté s'abaisse,
 Ce n'est que pour punir des traîtres comme toi,
 Qui d'une faible amante ont abusé la foi.
 Crains d'arrêter encor leur puissance suprême:
 Leur foudre ne doit plus gronder que sur toi-même;
 Mais tu ne connais point leur austère équité.
 Tes Dieux sont le parjure et l'infidélité.*

ÉNÉE.
*Hélas! Que vos transports ajoutent à ma peine!
 Moi-même je succombe, et mon âme incertaine
 Ne saurait soutenir l'état où je vous vois...*

DIDON, l'interrompant.
*Adieu, cruel! Pour la dernière fois.
 Va, cours, vole au milieu des vents et des orages;
 Préfère à mon palais les lieux les plus sauvages;
 Cherche, au prix de tes jours ces dangereux climats
 Où tu ne dois régner qu'après mille combats.
 Hélas, mon cœur charmé t'offrait dans ces asiles
 Un Trône aussi brillant, et des biens plus tranquilles.
 Cependant tes refus ne peuvent me guérir;
 Mes pleurs et mes regrets qui n'ont pu t'attendrir,
 Loin d'éteindre mes feux les redoublent encore...
 Je devrais te haïr, ingrat, et je t'adore.
 Oui, tu peux sans amour t'éloigner de ces bords,
 Mais ne crois pas du moins me quitter sans remords.
 Ton cœur fût-il encor mille fois plus barbare,
 Tu donneras des pleurs au jour qui nous sépare,
 Et du haut de ces murs témoins de mon trépas;
 Les feux de mon bûcher vont éclairer tes pas.*

Ze devrais te haïr..... in-grat, Et ze t'adore.

ACTE V, scène 4.

[...]

DIDON
*Eh bien, je vous entends.
 Il n'y faut plus penser. Ah! barbare! Ah! perfide
 Et voilà ce Héros dont le Ciel est le guide,
 Ce guerrier magnanime, et ce Mortel pieux,*

⁶ The play was published in 1734 but Jean-Jacques Lefranc de Pompignon published a corrected version in 1756 that was used likely by the Comédiens Français, as the critique uses this second version.

Et de Laomédon connaître l'héritier.

De tes lâches aïeux, va... Tu n'es que trop digne.

Tremble, ingrat... Ze mourrai, mais ma haine vivra.

*Que sauvé de la flamme et son Père et les Dieux!
Le Parjure abusait de ma faiblesse extrême;
Et la gloire n'est point à trahir ce qu'on aime.
Du sang dont il naquit j'ai dû me défier,
Et de Laomédon connaître l'héritier.
Cruel tu t'applaudis de ce triomphe insigne!
De tes lâches Aïeux, va tu n'es que trop digne.
Mais tu me suis en vain, mon ombre ti suivra.
Tremble, ingrat. Je mourrai, mais ma haine vivra.
Tu vas sonder le Trône où le destin t'appelle,
Et moi je te déclare une guerre immortelle.
Mon Peuple héritera de ma haine pour toi;
Le tien doit hériter de ton horreur pour moi.
Que ces Peuples rivaux sur la terre et sur l'onde
De leurs divisions épouvantent le monde.
Que pour mieux te détruire, ils franchissent les mers:
Qu'ils ne puissent ensemble habiter l'Univers;
Qu'une égale fureur sans cesse les dévore;
Qu'après s'être assouvie, elle renaisse encore;
Qu'ils violent entre eux et la loi des traités,
Et les droits les plus saints, et les plus respectés;
Qu'excités par mes cris les enfants de Carthage
Jurent dès le berceau de venger mon outrage,
Et puissent en mourant, mes derniers successeurs
Sur les derniers Troyens être encor mes vengeurs. [...]⁷*

⁷ 1734 version: 'Eh bien, je vous entends, / Il n'y faut plus penser. Mais, non, je ne puis croire / Qu'Enée en me quittant, n'ait suivi que la gloire. / Ah! J'ai dû pénétrer ses détours odieux, / Il attestait en vain son honneur et ses Dieux; / Le cruel abusait de ma faiblesse extrême, / Et la gloire n'est point à trahir ce qu'on aime. / Non, non, des mêmes feux il n'était plus épris; / Mais le Ciel punira tes barbares mépris. / Pourquoi te rappeler? Fuis, cruel, fuis perfide, / Et conduis tes sujets où l'Oracle les guide; / Au bout de l'Univers la guerre les suivra. / Tremble, ingrat; je mourrai, mais ma haine vivra. / Puisse après mon trépas s'élever de ma cendre / Un feu qui sur la terre aille un jour se répandre, / Excités par mes vœux puissent mes successeurs / Jurer dès le berceau qu'ils seront mes vengeurs, / Et du nom des Troyens ennemis implacables, / Attaquer en tous lieux ces rivaux redoutables. / Que l'Univers en proie à ces deux nations / Soit le théâtre affreux de leurs dissensions, / Que tout serve à nourrir cette haine invincible, / Qu'elle croisse toujours jusqu'au moment terrible / Que l'une ou l'autre cède aux armes du vainqueur, / Que ses derniers efforts signalent sa fureur, / Et qu'enfin parvenue à son heure fatale, / Elle cède en tombant le monde à sa rivale.'

TEMPO IN DECLAMATION ACCORDING TO GUSTAV ANTON FREIHERR VON SECKENDORFF

When exploring acting techniques from before the invention of recording devices, one invariably encounters subjects which, due to the impermanent nature of physical performance, elude authors' abilities to write about them in sufficient detail. The immense difficulty of such an undertaking has not stopped people from trying, however: Joshua Steele's (1700–1791) *Prosodia Rationalis* (1779) is one of the books that attempts accurately to notate melody and rhythm in speech; Gilbert Austin's (1753–1837) *Chironomia* (1806) proposes a notation for oratorical gesture; and Gustav Anton Freiherr von Seckendorff (1775–1823), amongst other things, aimed to provide some guidelines for declamatory tempo in his *Vorlesungen über Deklamation und Mimik* [*Lectures on Declamation and Facial Expression*] (1816).

Seckendorff illustrates the importance of speed of delivery in declamation: *Wer ein poetisches Ganze, eine Dichtung nicht im richtigen Gesamt-Zeitmaasse vorträgt, beleidigt unser Gefühl ebenso sehr, als wenn er in den Einzelheiten dieses Ganzen anstösst* 'He who does not recite a poetic entity, a poem in the correct overall measure of time [i.e. tempo], offends our sensibility just as much as if he errs in the details of this whole'.¹ Choosing the right tempo, then, was vital; moreover, Seckendorff proposes a very large range of tempi at which texts could be declaimed.² Engaging with this source in a practical manner has left me at times surprised at the speeds demanded by the author, at times frustrated by ambiguities and lack of detail owing to the nature of vocal performance, but in the end excited about an enlarged arsenal of expressive tools. I have recorded my performances of Seckendorff's practical examples in order to give access to the results of my practice-based research. Although these performances are not meant to be prescriptive for other performers, I would recommend that reciters of poetry try out Seckendorff's instructions: even if a performer were to decide that the tempi proposed in the *Vorlesungen* do not work in modern venues or for modern audiences, the additional expressive tools that are to be gained by engaging with this treatise can only enrich one's repertoire of techniques.

SECKENDORFF AND HIS *VORLESUNGEN* (1816)

Gustav Anton Freiherr von Seckendorff, alias Patrik Peale, was born into a family of the minor German nobility. Little information survives about his early life. After what appears to have been a perfectly ordinary school education he studied law and governing sciences, following which he travelled to the United States of America in 1796 where, amongst other things, he is said to have taught music and declamation.³ Despite teaching music, Seckendorff seems not to have considered himself a professional musician: he added musical compositions to his 1805 tragedy *Otto III*, 'die

¹ Gustav Anton FREIHERR VON SECKENDORFF, *Vorlesungen über Deklamation und Mimik* (Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg, 1816), Vol. I, p. 252.

² In both musical performance and the declamation of poetry, there is a clear distinction between tempo and rhythm. Whereas the term *tempo* describes the overall speed of performance, *rhythm* describes the relative lengths and timing of individual sounds, gestures, etc. within a performance. Just as two pieces of music can be at the same tempo but have different rhythms, so can the same piece of music be sped up or slowed down without changing its rhythm. Nor should *tempo* be confused with *meter*, as the latter describes the groupings of stressed and unstressed syllables or notes. Just like rhythm, meter is independent of tempo.

³ Johannes TÜTKEN, *Privatdozenten im Schatten der Georgia Augusta: Zur älteren Privatdozentur (1734 bis 1831)* (Göttingen: 2005), Vol. 2, p. 908.

*meiner Seele etquollen und von einem Musiker regulirt worden.*⁴ However, in his *Vorlesungen* Seckendorff writes on musical matters with an ease and confidence which seems to have come from personal experience. Certainly, collaborating with the actress Henriette Hendel in 1809 (who had herself been educated in acting and music by Johann Jakob Engel, Georg Anton Benda, and Anton Schweitzer)⁵ would have given Seckendorff the opportunity to observe a professional at work and to solidify his knowledge of music.

After working first as a state servant and later as a professional declaimer and actor, Seckendorff briefly entered the world of academia in 1812, teaching at the university in Göttingen for only a year. In 1814 he would return to academia, this time in Braunschweig, where he taught philosophy until 1821. Declining health prompted him to return to the USA where he died two years later in poverty.⁶

Seckendorff's *Vorlesungen über Deklamation und Mimik* were published in two volumes (with the appendix bound separately) in Braunschweig in 1816, at a point in time when the declamatory concert (known as a *Deklamatorium*) was experiencing its highpoint in popularity.⁷ By this time, Seckendorff was able to look back on at least two decades of personal, professional experience with declamation. His performances received a reception ranging from highly enthusiastic to profoundly disdainful. For example, one reviewer wrote in 1811:

*Wir haben noch nicht Gelegenheit gehabt oder genommen, einer andern geistvollen und schönen Unterhaltung zu erwähnen, woran die Erinnerung noch sehr wohlthätig ist, obgleich der edle Mann, der sie gab, uns seit zwey Monaten schon wieder verlassen hat. Wir meinen die mimischen Darstellungen und Deklamation des Hrn. Patrik-Peale [...]. Wir danken es ihm mit Wärme, durch seine schönen und vielseitig vortrefflichen Kunst-Ausstellungen uns zu einer Zeit und unter Umständen, die solchen Eindrücken nicht günstig waren, gewissermaßen unwillkürlich uns selbst entrissen, uns unter den schönen griechischen Himmel, unter die hohen Ideale der Kunst versetzt, und uns dort so manchen reinen Genuß bereitet zu haben.*⁸

Yet, the same journal had published the following just over a year before:

*Hr. Patrik Peale, dessen schon mehrmalen in Ihren Blättern gedacht wurde, ist in einigen Gastrollen bey uns aufgetreten. Als Marinelli befriedigte er das Publikum, die leidenschaftlichen Scenen ausgenommen, nicht; und noch weniger als Leicester in Maria Stuart. Man beschuldigte ihn eines manierirten Spiels, einer Ueberladung der Mimik und einer eintönigen Deklamation, die nicht selten in ein wahres Predigen ausarte.*⁹

Seckendorff had also been busy not just as a performer, but also as a teacher of declamation and in fact states that the *Vorlesungen* are lectures which he gave, as he puts it, ‘*auf meinen Reisen in mehreren*

⁴ ‘which poured from my soul but were regulated by a musician’. Gustav Anton FREIHERR VON SECKENDORFF, *Otto III, Erster Theil. Der gutgeartete Jüngling* (Torgau: 1805), p. 138.

⁵ Lodewijk MUNS, *Gustav Anton Freiherr von Seckendorff, alias Patrik Peale: A Biographical Note*, 2016, p. 4. <https://hcommons.org/deposits/item/hc:28471> (last accessed 25-11-2021). The biography given here is indebted to Muns’ work.

⁶ TÜTKEN, op. cit., p. 908.

⁷ For a rich contextualisation of Seckendorff’s work both as a declaimer and author see Mary Helen DUPREE, ‘From “Dark Singing” to a Science of the Voice: Gustav Anton von Seckendorff and the Declamatory Concert Around 1800’, *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 86.3 (2012), 365–396.

⁸ ‘We have not yet had or taken the opportunity to mention another spirited and beautiful piece of entertainment which we still remember very favourably, although the gentleman who presented it to us left us again two months ago. We refer to the mime and declamation of Mr. Patrik-Peale [...]. We thank him warmly for - by means of his beautiful and varied excellent exhibitions of art, and despite a time and circumstances that were not favourable to such impressions - removing us from ourselves, as it were, and transporting us to beautiful Greek skies, taking us under the high ideals of art and there offering us many a pure pleasure.’ *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände*, Tübingen: April 3rd, 1811, p. 320.

⁹ ‘Mr. Patrik Peale, who has already been mentioned several times in your journal, has appeared on our stage in several guest roles. He did not satisfy the audience as *Marinelli*, except in the passionate scenes; and much less as *Leicester* in *Maria Stuart*. He was accused of a mannered performance, an overload of mimicry, and a monotone declamation which often [*nicht selten*] devolved into veritable preaching.’ *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände*, Tübingen: January 18th, 1810, p. 64.

Städten’ [‘on my travels in several cities’].¹⁰ They deal with topics ranging from the difference between speaking and singing to pronunciation, rhythm, tempo, melody, and affect in the first volume, all the way to the physiognomy, history, and artistic application of mime in the second volume. The appended volume of plates contains musical examples to accompany the first volume, as well as engravings of gestures, facial expressions, and attitudes to accompany the second.

A central idea in Seckendorff’s writings is that declamation is a ‘*Konzert auf der Sprechtonleiter, welches, mit dem beschreibenden Worte vereint, den Zustand des Gemüths und Geistes ausdrückt*’ [‘concert on speech’s scale of tones, which, united with descriptive words, expresses the state of the soul and mind’].¹¹ He devotes a significant amount of time to defining the difference between singing and speaking (always taking singing as the basis for comparison) and remarks at one point of his own demonstration of *Des Mädchens Klage* by Schiller that:

*Es kommt nämlich darauf an, praktisch darzuthun, dass Sprache und Gesang sich nur durch die mehrere Stärke des Tones unterscheiden, dass aber die Sprache nicht weniger der Tonleiter und der Melodie (Bewegung auf der Tonleiter) fähig sey, als der Gesang.*¹²

Seckendorff divides the musical aspects of speech, which he calls the ‘*deklamatorische Musik der Sprache*’ [‘declamatory music of speech’], into the following twelve parts:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. <i>Gesetze des Lautsprechens</i> | 1. Rules of projection |
| 2. <i>Lehre vom Pathos und Nichtpathos</i> | 2. ‘Theory of pathos and non-pathos |
| 3. <i>Lehre von der Melodie</i> | 3. ‘Theory of melody |
| 4. <i>Lehre von der musikalischen Malerei</i> | 4. ‘Theory of musical painting |
| 5. <i>Krescendo und Dekrescendo</i> | 5. Crescendo and decrescendo |
| 6. <i>Tempo or Gesamtzeitmaass</i> | 6. Tempo or measure of time |
| 7. <i>Portament und Pizzikato</i> | 7. Portamento and pizzicato |
| 8. <i>Deklamatorischer Akzent</i> | 8. Declamatory accent |
| 9. <i>Deklamatorischer Pause</i> | 9. Declamatory pause |
| 10. <i>Stimmregister</i> | 10. Voice register |
| 11. <i>Allgemeiner Anblick verschiedener Gemüths-Zustände in der Stimme</i> | 11. General view of various states of feeling in the voice |
| 12. <i>Allgemeine Betrachtungen des Wesens der Poesie und Musik, in Beziehung auf Deklamation</i> | 12. General observations on the nature poetry and music, in relation to declamation ¹³ |

It seems likely that this musicality in speech was a source of at least some of the criticism of his work, as there was at this time in Germany a very strong movement propagating a more naturalistic style of declamation and acting.¹⁴ Seckendorff himself refers to this school several times in the *Vorlesungen*, but warns against allowing everyday life to make its way into acting, as it would disturb the immersive quality of the performance, and blunt the actor’s effectiveness in expressing emotions:

¹⁰ SECKENDORFF (1816), op. cit., Vol. I, p. 1.

¹¹ SECKENDORFF, *ibid.*, p. 138. Seckendorff here suggests that speech, like music, navigates a scale of pitches. He was, by the way, not the first to consider successful declamation to stem from music. As Gottsched writes: ‘*Unsere Sprache muß eine Art von Musik in sich haben: Wie sich denn auch die musicalischen Regeln der Alten bis auf die Rede erstreckt haben.*’ [‘Our language needs to have a kind of music in it, just as the musical rules of the ancients were applied to their speech.’] Johann Christoph GOTTSCHED, *Ausführliche Redekunst* (Leipzig: 1736), p. 348.

¹² ‘It is important to show practically that speaking and singing differ only in the greater strength of the sound, but that speech is no less capable of the scale and melody (movement on the scale) than singing.’ SECKENDORFF, *ibid.*, p. 128.

¹³ SECKENDORFF, *ibid.*, p. 123.

¹⁴ Seckendorff himself was aware of this trend: ‘*Nun wählen die Teutschen abwechselnd bald das Licht, bald den Reflex, bald beide zugleich. Der eine rief: Natur des gewöhnlichen Lebens! der andere: Ideal! Der Dritte sprach, sich selbst bewundernd: Die Mittelstrasse!*’ [‘Now the Germans alternately chose the light, now the reflection, or both at the same time. One person cried: The Nature of ordinary life! the other one: The Ideal! The third one spoke, admiring himself: The middle road!’] SECKENDORFF, *ibid.*, pp. 15–6.

Wer in das wirkliche Leben eintritt während des Spieles, zerreisst die Empfindung des Hörers eben so, als der wirkliche Feuerlärm das Schauspiel und sogar den Gottesdienst unterbricht. [...]. Viele Anfänger in der Deklamation können nicht begreifen, warum sie, mit reger Empfindung im Herzen, doch gar keine Wirkung hervorbringen, allein der Grund ist ein gedoppelter: Entweder haben sie gar nicht die Fähigkeit, aus der Wirklichkeit heraus in das Gebiet der Kunst zu treten, oder es hat sich das künstlerische Seyn in ihnen noch nicht genug von ihrer Wirklichkeit gesondert.¹⁵

Seckendorff proposes that the declamation of both reality and acting (*‘Deklamation der Wirklichkeit und des Spieles’*) are subject to a *‘Schönheitsgesetz’* or ‘law of beauty’; one that *‘steht [...] in jede Brust niedergeschrieben da’* [‘stands written in every breast’].¹⁶

SECKENDORFF ON TEMPO

In his *Fünfte Vorlesung* [Fifth Lecture], Seckendorff begins by drawing the following parallel between declamation and music:

Die Musiker nennen das Gesamt-Zeitmaas schlechthin Tempo, folglich Zeitmaas; hierdurch aber wird der Begriff nicht erfüllt, denn jeder Takt bewahrt in sich ein Zeitmaas, als Verhältniss der Dauer der einzelnen Noten. Das Gesamt-Zeitmaas ist einem allgemeinen Strome der Bewegung, einem Maasse der Geschwindigkeit der Strömung überhaupt zu vergleichen, worin die Takte mit ihren Theilen nur wie Wellen sich erheben, und mit dem Ganzen verbunden sind durch Rhythmus. Wer ein poetisches Ganze, eine Dichtung nicht im richtigen Gesamt-Zeitmaasse vorträgt, beleidigt unser Gefühl eben so sehr, als wenn er in den Einzelheiten dieses Ganzen anstösst.¹⁷

Here Seckendorff impresses upon the reader the necessity for choosing the correct tempo in declamation. He then discusses the prevailing nomenclature for musical tempi, and – singling out seven Italian tempo words arranged from slowest to quickest – warns of their subjective use by musicians:

Die Musiker haben den verschiedenen Gesamt-Zeitmaassen Namen gegeben. So z. B. Largo, Adagio, Andante, Andantino, Allegretto, Allegro, Presto. Hierdurch werden, durch stillschweigende Uebereinkunft, Verhältnisse angedeutet, die jedoch nur allzuleicht missverstanden werden, je nachdem eines oder des anderen Musikers Gemüth sich die grösstmöglichst langsamste oder grösstmöglichst geschwindeste Bewegung zur Richtschnur gleichsam gewählt hat. Sollte es nicht besser seyn, wenn die Komponisten zu jedem der obigen Namen hinzusetzten, wieviel sie ungefähr, sogenannte Viertel oder Achtel, auf eine Minute rechnen? Eine kleine Abweichung von dem Gefühle des Komponisten, bei der Darstellung eines musikalischen Ganzen, kann den ganzen Charakter der Komposition stören.¹⁸

Von Seckendorff’s proposed solution to the imprecision of the Italian tempo words was to supplement them with an indication of roughly how many crochets or quavers were to be counted in one minute. Seckendorff stresses, however, that the question of tempo is a more complex one in declamation than in music, because there are more frequent fluctuations of tempo in the former

¹⁵ ‘He who enters real life during performance disturbs the audience’s sensation just as much as the real fire alarm interrupts the play and even the church service. [...] Many beginners in declamation cannot understand why they, with lively emotion in their hearts, still cannot create any effect; however, the reason is twofold: Either they do not have the ability to exit reality and enter the realm of art, or their artistic being is not yet sufficiently separated from their reality.’ SECKENDORFF, *ibid.*, p. 139.

¹⁶ SECKENDORFF, *ibid.*

¹⁷ ‘Musicians generally call the overall measure of time tempo, that is speed; but this does not fully encompass the term, as within every bar is preserved a unit of time, as the ratio of the duration of the individual notes. The overall measure of time is comparable to a general stream of movement, to a measure of the speed of this stream in general, in which the bars with their parts merely rise like waves, connected to the whole by rhythm. He who does not recite a poetic unit, a poem in the correct overall measure of time, offends our sensibility just as much as if he errs in details of the whole.’ SECKENDORFF, *ibid.*, p. 252.

¹⁸ ‘Musicians have given names to the measures of time, such as largo, adagio, andante, andantino, allegretto, allegro, presto. Through these – by silent convention – relationships are indicated, which are, however, misunderstood all too easily, depending on whether the temperament of one musician or another, as it were, has made the slowest or fastest possible movement the guideline. Would it not be better if composers added to each of the above-mentioned names the number of crochets or quavers roughly to be counted in one minute? A small deviation from the composer’s feeling can, in presenting a musical whole, disturb the entire character of the composition.’ SECKENDORFF, *ibid.*, pp. 252–3.

than in the latter. Moreover, singers can sustain syllables longer than can a speaker, meaning that their slowest tempi do not directly correspond to the slowest tempo of one who declaims:

Gesang- und Instrumental-Musik haben selten so viele einzelne Abschnitte eines Ganzen, mit denen das Gesamt-Zeitmaas wechselt, als dies der Fall in der Wortpoesie und deren deklamatorischem Vortrag der Fall ist. Ja, in der Instrumental- und Gesang-Musik findet selten ein so allmähliges Hinübergeben von einem in das andere Gesamt-Zeitmaas Statt, wie in der Deklamation, besonders der dramatischen. Dagegen, weil der Sprechende den einzelnen Ton nicht so lange halten kann wie der Sänger, oder der Instrumental-Virtuose, [...] so kann die Deklamation, selbst durch das widernatürlichste Schleppen kein so langsames Largo hervorbringen, als dies der Gesang- und Instrumental-Musik möglich ist.¹⁹

Seckendorff now makes concrete proposals for tempi based on practical experience and the nature of the text to be declaimed:

Aus der Erfahrung gezogen ergeben sich für die Deklamation folgende Mittelbestimmungen einiger Gesamt-Zeitmaasse. Dem Gebete und der heiligen Ode kommt das langsamste Largo und Adagio zu. Dabei werden in einer Minute ungefähr 140 bis 180 Sylben gehört. Der ernsten Erzählung, vorzüglich dem heiligen, und nach diesem dem krieherischen Epos, kommt das Andante mit 220 bis 240 Sylben in der Minute zu. Auf jede Sylbe kann man im Teutschen 3 Buchstaben im Mittel rechnen, (im Französischen 2, im Englischen 4,) folglich 660 bis 720 Buchstaben in der Minute. Die heitere Erzählung schreitet von 260 bis zu 280 Sylben in der Minute, und das Presto des Geschnatters kömmt bis zu 340 und 360 Sylben in der Minute.²⁰

Although Seckendorff is not explicit about it, one can surmise that he has correlated his original seven musical categories with four kinds of texts: 1. prayers or sacred odes (Largo-Adagio); 2. serious and sacred narratives as well as martial epics (Andante – and presumably Andantino as well); 3. cheerful narratives (presumably the Allegretto and Allegro); and 4. the ‘Presto of chatter’, which is, again presumably, for comedy. This results in four basic tempo categories, arranged from the slowest to the very quickest. The following table correlates these genres and tempo categories with the number of syllables suggested per minute:

	Tempo category	Textual characteristics	Syllables per minute
1.	Largo-Adagio	prayers, sacred odes	140-180
2.	Andante [Andantino]	serious and especially sacred narratives, as well as martial epics	220-240 (= 660-720 letters)
3.	[Allegretto, Allegro]	cheerful narratives	260-280
4.	Presto	‘chatter’	340-360

Table 1: Seckendorff’s Tempo categories

¹⁹ ‘There are rarely as many different sections of the whole in which the overall measure of time changes in vocal and instrumental music as is the case with poetry [*Wortpoesie*] and its declamatory recitation. Indeed, in instrumental and vocal music, such a gradual transition from one measure of time into another as that in declamation (especially in the dramatic declamation) only rarely takes place. On the other hand, as a speaker cannot sustain a single tone for as long as the singer or the instrumental virtuoso, [...] declamation cannot produce a largo as slow as is possible in vocal or instrumental music, even by means of the most unnatural dragging.’ SECKENDORFF, *ibid.*, pp. 253–4.

²⁰ ‘Speaking from experience, the following average definitions of some of the overall measures of time can be determined for declamation. Prayers and the sacred ode receive the slowest largo and adagio. Here roughly 140 to 180 syllables will be heard per minute. The serious narrative, especially the sacred and, after that, the martial epic, receive the andante with 220 to 240 syllables per minute. One can reckon on average with three letters for each syllable of the German language, (in French two, in English four,) and thus 660 to 720 letters per minute. The cheerful narrative moves at 260 to 280 syllables per minute, and the presto of quick chatter reaches up to 340 and 360 syllables per minute.’ SECKENDORFF, *ibid.*, p. 254.

One can see that Seckendorff does not pretend to an absolute precision: his tempi ranges are to be considered as *Mittelbestimmungen einiger Gesamt-Zeitmaasse* [‘average definitions of some of the overall measures of time’]. All declamatory texts demand changes of tempo in performance, some more frequently than others, depending on their genre. Moreover, the articulations between the words need to be taken into account: ‘*Dabei darf man nicht vergessen, dass die Pausen zwischen den Worten, wie klein man sie auch im eifrigen Gespräch mache, doch als Zeiträume von gewisser Dauer betrachtet werden müssen, wenn gleich ohne Klang*’.²¹ All of this makes the precise calculation of declamatory tempi quite difficult; indeed, the treatment of the articulations has been of special importance in determining the outcome of my performances of Seckendorff’s illustrative poems. Rests between words and sentences are necessary for intelligibility and expression. Seckendorff had already dealt with rests in a previous section entitled ‘*Vom Artikuliren*’ [‘On Articulation’].²² He there indicated that the length of individual articulations was related to a variety of factors, including the overall tempo of the passage. His example shows just how miniscule his calculations could be (see Figure 1).

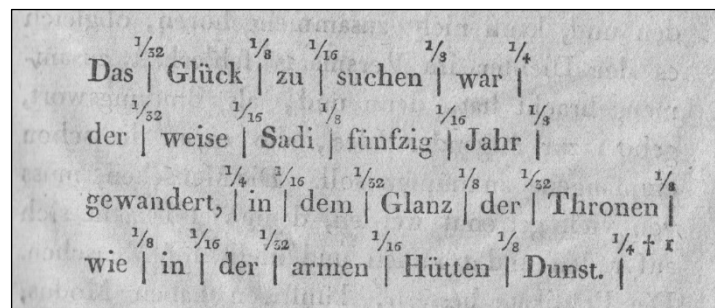


Fig. 1. Articulation pauses according to von Seckendorff, from *Vorlesungen über Deklamation und Mimik*. Author's Collection.

Despite this information, the realization of the rests in making my tempo calculations was most troublesome, even when consulting a metronome. It might appear to those who are used to metronomic performances that I have sometimes made a very liberal application of Seckendorff's directions, utilizing a great deal of flexibility and freedom. In the musical performance practice of the nineteenth century, however, *tempo rubato* was an essential part of the expressive arsenal. Whereas *rubato* is nowadays generally understood to mean a flexibility of the pulse, during Seckendorff's time it referred to the practice of allowing a metrically flexible melody to depart from the regular underlying pulse to such a degree that the melody coincides with the pulse only in some places.²³ Taking Seckendorff's instructions as describing a metronomically accurate and regular distribution of text would therefore go against the musical-historical context of his remarks. Instead, allowing individual syllables to not coincide with the beats of the metronome (if and where appropriate) could be understood in relation to this particular aspect of the musical practice of the time.

FIVE POEMS

In closing, I offer a few words on the texts that I recorded to accompany this article. Seckendorff published five poems of varying length, meter, style, and subject in order to illustrate his ideas on

²¹ 'In this one must not forget that the rests between words, however small they are made in eager conversation, must still be regarded as intervals of certain length, albeit without sound.' SECKENDORFF, *ibid.*, p. 254.

²² See SECKENDORFF, *ibid.*, pp. 112–6.

²³ See for instance Domenico CORRI, *The Singers Preceptor* (London: 1810), Vol. I, p. 6.

tempo.²⁴ Each poem is preceded by a text informing the reader about the character and appropriate speed using either musical terms and/or the number of syllables per minute. The first of these poems, by Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, is entitled *Psalm* and is based on The Lord's Prayer. Here Seckendorff indicates two alternating tempo ranges: Largo (150-180 syllables per minute) for the prayer itself, and Adagio-Andante (up to nearly 250 syllables per minute) for the ode that Klopstock wove around it. The performer must shift between these two speeds as he goes. The second poem, entitled *Sehnsucht der Liebe*, is by Seckendorff himself and was originally intended for song: indeed, the appendix to the *Vorlesungen* includes the score of a version for singing voice with piano accompaniment. Interestingly, this score indicates relatively few changes of tempi, marked only by the word *ritardando* and by a few *fermate*. Seckendorff notes that when the poem is spoken, the tempo 'geht vom ruhigsten Adagio bis zum kraftvollsten Allegro' ['goes from the most peaceful Adagio to the most powerful Allegro']. This would seem to indicate a very large range, from 140-280 syllables per minute. The changes in *Sehnsucht der Liebe*, however, are unlike those in the poem by Klopstock, where speeds alternate structurally between the prayer and the ode: instead, in Seckendorff's poem the tempi paint the ebb and flow of the protagonist's feelings, 'die Stimmung des Gemüthes' ['the moods of the soul']. The third poem, *Hiob und Jael*, is by Gottlieb Konrad Pfeffel. Seckendorff here merely notes that '[d]er ernsten Erzählung kommt das Andante zu' ['[t]he serious narrative is befitting for the Andante'], which indicates the range of 220-240 syllables per minute. The fourth poem, also by Seckendorff himself, is *Chlotilde*. It is a 'heitere Erzählung' or 'cheerful narrative' and requires a livelier tempo than the preceding poem: Seckendorff suggests Allegretto, which probably falls somewhere in the range of 260-280 syllables per minute. Finally, the 'Presto des lebhaften, scherzenden Umganges' ['the Presto of lively, jesting company'] is illustrated by a short poem in the form of a dialogue by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Vorschlag zur Güte*. This falls within the range of 340-360 syllables per minute. The recordings of these illustrations can be found here: <https://jedwentz.com/gilger-edps/> (last accessed 20-02-2022).

Andreas GILGER

²⁴ For what follows, see SECKENDORFF, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 256–263.

TESTIMONY

PAST INTO PRESENT: BREATHING LIFE INTO CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE WITH HISTORICAL ACTING

For the past few years, thanks to my involvement in the Dutch Historical Acting Collective (DHAC), I have been attempting to incorporate as many aspects of historical acting into my musical work as possible. In my performances with my ensemble *Nymphes et Monstres*, I have included declamations of poetry and set these to lute music, creating ‘mini-melodramas, if you will. My lutenist, Punto Bawono, and I choose the pieces and poems ourselves, and often attempt to match composer and author geographically and in terms of era, but this practice is not necessarily historical in approach. However, my preparation of the texts, and the acting style I perform these with are derived from my work with DHAC and my study of various historical texts on acting and declamation.

As an ensemble, *Nymphes et Monstres* have always tried to situate our work within the present day, whilst also being mindful of the past. We always begin our musical interpretation by working from historical treatises, and we perform on period instruments (or replicas thereof). However, we are also aware that the context of our performances is a modern one, and that as such we must be mindful of modern conventions as well. This has always been something of a tricky balancing act, and the real ethos of our ensemble is to find a performance practice that takes account of historical sources, but uses them in a way that is compelling for both us as modern-day performers, and for modern-day audiences. To this end, we have spent a lot of time working from not only musical sources, but from acting treatises as well.

Nymphes et Monstres’ standard way of working was devised through the process of writing my master’s thesis, which was an exploration of how historical acting methods could be used in combination with modern movement techniques to tackle eighteenth-Century French vocal repertoire. This project posited that historically informed movement techniques are not incompatible with modern movement (the style of movement I explored was derived from mime), and sought to find a way of using both in combination. This research led to the way in which *Nymphes et Monstres* works whenever tackling a new piece of repertoire, which is as follows: we play through a piece, then we discuss what passions we think fit the music, dividing it (whether it has text or not) into sections based on these passions. Then we play through the piece again, trying to express these passions through our instruments, bodies and my voice.

All performers in our group, be they instrumentalist or singer, have read and experimented with at least part of Aaron Hill’s work and have worked together on embodying the passions; in rehearsals, we often begin by working through several of Hill’s descriptions of the passions.¹ We have also worked extensively with *Studio MAPA Nederland* on their own modern movement style, which is derived from mime technique but has a musical focus.² What strikes me most when working with these seemingly different movement styles is how similar the approach to embodiment and physicality is; both techniques have a strong focus on expressing emotion

¹ For a description of Hill’s method see, in this volume, Jed WENTZ, ‘And the wing’d *muscles*, into meanings fly: Practice-Based Research into Historical Acting through the Writings of Aaron Hill’.

² For more information about MAPA see: <https://www.mapa.nl> (last accessed: 03-12-2021).

through the body, and both techniques make me more aware of what I am doing physically on stage.

When creating the aforementioned ‘mini-melodramas’ with *Nymphes et Monstres*, we follow a simple process. First, I prepare the text by following the same method as I do with all DHAC work; I begin by reading it through several times, making sure I understand all the words in their historical context and the general meaning of the text as a whole. Then I read it aloud to myself, and begin to assign passions to the text. I will repeat this step several times, experimenting with different passions before settling on an affective sequence that I find compelling emotionally. This means that my interpretation of a poem is very much based on my own emotional reading of a text. Often, I begin to experiment with and assign gestures at this point.

It is worth noting that nothing is set in stone; the whole process is very experimental and nothing becomes fixed; nothing is written down. However, later on in the process, I usually do create a written document that records the gestures I have decided upon, notated in the style of Gilbert Austin’s *Chironomia* (1806). This is very helpful since, even when performing the same poem with different passions, I do not usually alter the gestures. This is visible in the recordings we made in August of 2021; the chosen passion affects many things such as the colour of my voice, the tension and expression in my body and face.³ As a result, the gestures seem very different in execution when performed with different passions, despite being technically the same, and therefore notated as such.

Next, I meet with Punto Bawono, my lutenist. I will perform the poem for him and we discuss passions and gestures together. He then chooses some pieces that he thinks fit the passions we have assigned to the poem. For instance, if we have assigned mostly sorrow as a passion, he will pick a slower piece, whereas for a piece that has more joy, he will choose something lighter; often a dance. If the poem is strophic, he will often suggest we work with a piece that is repetitive; a rondeau or something with a ground bass. He usually comes with two or three options, which we then play and recite together. We decide which pieces we think best fit our original idea of the passions. Sometimes we will also experiment with changing the passions, choosing a piece that seems to change the meaning of the poem entirely. At this point, we tend to consider what else is in the entire concert programme, and make our decision based on how the ‘mini-melodrama’ will fit with other pieces in performance. This is also crucial to the ethos of our group; programming is very important to the performances we create, as we like to create programmes that have an emotional journey for both us performers and the audience. We often use the same poems accompanied with completely different musical pieces in different performances, which dramatically changes the context and our personal interpretation of both the poem and the accompanying lute piece.

When performing these musical-declamatory pieces, Punto has told me that his playing style is altered. He makes different musical choices than when he is performing the music as a solo; he tries to emphasize key words that we have decided require more colouring, and will alter his rhythmic interpretation, carefully timing his playing to match with the patterns of my declamation. He has told me:

I also pay special attention to special/strong or emotive words by emphasizing the harmony or arpeggiating the chords in different ways, or even plucking the notes in different ways to give the words a special colour. On top of that, one can achieve various sound colours by varying one’s plucking technique and playing position of the right hand. The lute is a very special instrument in this sense since it has quite a broad range of dynamics, one can be very soft, almost whispering or very strong and

³ The four video contributions to this article can be found here: <https://jedwentz.com/carson-edps/> (last accessed 25-02-2022).

percussive. These capabilities make the lute an ideal instrument for accompanying poetry in my opinion.⁴

I also believe that not only does the addition of poetry change the way Punto plays, and the addition of music change the way I recite the poetry, but that the combination of these two gives a different experience to anyone hearing or watching the performance. The text of the poems adds additional layers of meaning to the music, and the music can intensify the passions expressed in the text of the poetry.

A CASE STUDY: BLAKE'S 'A POISON TREE'

We have recently been working on a few versions of *A Poison Tree*, by William Blake. We had already performed the poem with *Rondeau la Montfermeil* by Robert de Visée.⁵ For this setting, we decided on the passions listed below:

I was angry with my friend; [anger]
I told my wrath, my wrath did end. [wonder]
I was angry with my foe: [anger]
I told it not, my wrath did grow. [intensified anger]

And I watered it in fears, [fear]
Night and morning with my tears: [sorrow]
And I sunned it with my smiles, [joy]
And with soft, deceitful wiles. [desire]

And it grew both day and night. [wonder]
Till it bore an apple bright. [intensified wonder]
And my foe beheld it shine, [joy]
And he knew that it was mine. [intensified joy]

And into my garden stole, [wonder]
When night had veiled the pole; [intensified wonder]
In the morning glad I see; [joy]
My foe outstretched beneath the tree. [intensified joy]

The passions listed above are not as simple as this diagram might lead one to believe; while these are the basis for my performance, the words and the context of the poem mean that they are often coloured by other emotions; for example, the joy I express at the end of the poem is slightly mixed with pride or triumph, and is coloured as a wicked glee, due to the subject matter of the poem. Since each line in the poem does not exist in a vacuum, the context and overall narrative of the poem ensure that I must to some degree become a character: for this piece, a person who finds joy in the demise of their enemies. This is a necessity since a performance of this poem with every line recited differently in a 'pure' form of the passion would not only be wild and unhinged, I do not believe it would even be possible, since the structure of poetry creates a narrative of its own, which in turn influences me as a performer.

⁴ Interview on 17-08-2021.

⁵ See *Four Studies Towards a Performance of William Blake's A Poison Tree: Study 1*, <https://jedwentz.com/carson-edps/> (last accessed 25-02-2022).

During the most recent iteration of the DHAC in August 2021, I used the opportunity to experiment with this poem, and worked on it with the collective by altering the passions I was performing, while keeping the gestures and text the same. It was an interesting exercise, as I usually only alter the passions based on the music we are setting it to. It was wonderful to see the freedom that one has as a performer to make different choices without the support or constraint of music. I had a real sense that I was truly able to do anything, and to make any passion I decided upon in the moment convincing. In this way, the meaning of the poem was often changed for me; although the words and structure of the poem remained completely unaltered, that character I was playing was different, and the words had a different meaning, depending on what choices I made. For instance, in one experiment, I chose sorrow and disgust, meaning that the character I was performing was horrified with their own actions and disgusted by the initial joy they felt for the death of their enemy, something that was completely opposite to my initial interpretation. I was also surprised by how many different versions of the declaimed poem, performed with very different sequences of affects, seemed effective to me and to the other DHAC members. It was also worth noting that I was able to maintain the same gestures whilst completely changing the passions, and was informed by members of the collective that the gestures gained entirely new meanings when performed with different passions. It was the *speed* of a gesture, or the word that I choose to emphasize, that had changed, while the actual movement of my hand or arm remained the same.

In our video recordings we decided to showcase these different versions: the first is the declamation with the above passions and *Rondeau la Montfermeil*, by Robert de Visee, for the second, we performed the poem with *Sarabande* from Suite no. 34 in D minor by Sylvius Leopold Weiss.⁶ This declamation has an entirely different mood; one that is inflected with sorrow and angst, rather than the perverse delight present in my original interpretation; I am horrified and looking back with remorse and sorrow on the fate of my enemy:-

I was angry with my friend; [sorrow]
 I told my wrath, my wrath did end. [wonder]
 I was angry with my foe: [sorrow]
 I told it not, my wrath did grow. [sorrow/fear]

And I watered it in fears, [fear]
 Night and morning with my tears: [sorrow]
 And I sunned it with my smiles, [fear/disgust]
 And with soft, deceitful wiles. [intensified fear/disgust]

And it grew both day and night. [fear]
 Till it bore an apple bright. [intensified fear]
 And my foe beheld it shine, [fear/sorrow]
 And he knew that it was mine.

And into my garden stole, [wonder]
 When night had veiled the pole;
 In the morning glad I see; [disgust]
 My foe outstretched beneath the tree. [intensified disgust]

⁶ See *Four Studies Towards a Performance of William Blake's A Poison Tree: Study 2*, <https://jedwentz.com/carson-edps/> (last accessed 25-02-2022).

I do not have a preference for either of these performative choices, and I will likely use both in future programmes, depending on what other music is present in a specific concert. I am very glad to have undertaken this experiment, as I am now aware of the incredible freedom, the great number of options available to me as a performer. We also recorded a version of the poem without music; you can see in this video that while the music supports the passions and can help to drive the emotion of a performance, when declaiming without it, the performer has a lot more freedom, certainly in terms of time taken.⁷ I have found that the transitions between passions are a lot easier to judge without the music as I am not constrained by metre or musical phrasing. I also feel that I can change the tone, timbre and volume of my voice a lot more than when I am declaiming with lute music, even though, due to the instrument's dynamic possibilities, I do not have to worry about being heard.

As for Punto's version without poetry, I find that he performs with a much more cohesive style.⁸ This is neither good nor bad, but I do find that his playing is more emotionally constrained when playing without declamation; he tends to pick fewer passions, sometimes even only choosing one, whereas when we perform together, he is often forced by the text to choose more disparate and extreme passions than the music itself necessarily suggests to him.

So, whilst the addition of music can alter our experience of declamation (or even reading a poem), the addition of a poem can alter our experience of both playing and hearing music. The positioning of these 'mini-melodramas' within other performances also plays a role in how we as performers experience them, and how an audience receives them. Performing the same poem and music in different forms, as we did for the recording, was an exciting experience. It gave me a new understanding of Blake's poetry and opened up new meanings and possibilities within the text that I had not considered. This method of crafting 'mini-melodramas' is highly creative, and places storytelling and narrative, as well as emotional delivery, above all else.

Looking to the future, I would like to experiment with setting more famous texts to music. I believe an interesting project would be to place sung settings of poems next to a declamation, with music, of the same text side by side in performance. I would be interested to see an audience's reaction to this, and I believe that it would give me as a performer a richer understanding of the text. I aim to pursue this work in an explorative manner, and to continue to use this technique as a storytelling device in performances; I don't know how it will turn out but it's definitely an interesting and enriching process.

Kat CARSON

⁷ See *Four Studies Towards a Performance of William Blake's A Poison Tree: Study 3*, <https://jedwentz.com/carson-edps/> (last accessed 25-02-2022).

⁸ See *Four Studies Towards a Performance of William Blake's A Poison Tree: Study 4*, <https://jedwentz.com/carson-edps/> (last accessed 25-02-2022).

THEATRE, HO!

“Try not the pass,” the old man said;
“Dark lowers the tempest overhead;
The roaring torrent is deep and wide!”
And loud that clarion voice replied,
Excelsior!¹

¹ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, ‘Excelsior’ (1841)

SEVEN PROPOSITIONS TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW KIND OF THEATRE FESTIVAL

PROPOSITION ONE

A scientific, psychological and practice-based engagement with past acting techniques is not predicated on nostalgia, but rather engages with the present through contemporary forms of research.

Since in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries theories of acting were closely allied with then current understandings of the human body – that is to say, *medicine* – it is logical to reunite these disciplines today, and to examine the potential of historical acting techniques to teach us something about how our bodies work; this with regard not only to the actor's body, but to that of the public as well. Historically, those bodies were linked in a lively and emotionally charged feedback loop. The stage performance was created by the ebb and flow of feeling of *all* those participating, both onstage and in the auditorium, in an even more marked manner than it is today. Although modern medicine has left certain concepts behind (humours, temperaments, Galen's anatomical mistakes) it is possible to examine psychophysical cause and effect in the expression of strong emotions (affect) using contemporary medical techniques and insights.

PROPOSITION TWO

Historical acting techniques can make repertoire currently deemed 'too difficult' for today's young people accessible by giving priority to emotional transmission and empathy. It thus can foster understanding and proprietorship of cultural heritage across chasms of time.

In the past, theatres were places where both the elite and the lower classes gathered together to admire, as one organism, the *actio* of the actors on stage. Opening the heart to grand passions in tragedy made it possible for elaborate language to move all of the public, regardless of their educational level. Therefore, the primacy that historical acting gives to gestures, attitudes and facial expression, united with its soulful and musical declamation in which rhythm, pitch and tempo contribute to the expression of specific affects, should be able – if our body-machines of today so closely resemble those of our ancestors as science currently tells us they do – to affect us too, and as forcefully as the audiences of the past. Young people who feel little or no connection with tragedy (even when this repertoire is made 'accessible' through performances in a contemporary style) should be able to connect *through the body* when the performance style is historical.¹ A research

¹ 'Non negherò che in certi casi, ed in special modo nella tragedia, la vivezza dei gesti non contribuisca moltissimo a rendere intelligibili i sentimenti più complicati ed astrusi.' Antonio MORROCCHESI, *Lezioni di declamazione e d'arte teatral* (Florence: Tipografia alla insegna de Dante, 1832), p. 246. ['I will not deny that in certain cases, and especially in tragedy, the vividness of the gestures does not contribute greatly to making the most complicated and abstruse sentiments intelligible'. See, in this volume, Anne SMITH, 'A Translation of the 'Lezione dei gesti' and the 'Lezione di compostezza e passo' from Antonio Morrocchesi's *Lezioni di declamazione e d'arte teatral* (Florence: Tipografia alla insegna di Dante, 1832)].

festival, which cultivates a young audience and prepares it to be receptive to performances of this nature, could put this theory to the test.

PROPOSITION THREE

Plotting the future path for performing historical theatre can be supported by the creation of collaborative scientific studies, symposia and performance projects involving cognitive psychologists and theatre scholars, in which not only the actors but also the audience serve both as subjects and as participants.

The humanities once were viewed as a flourishing branch of science. They were – and still are – the deepest expressions of mankind contemplating itself. We joyfully embrace the hard sciences as indispensable; but it is untenable, given present-day revaluations of the role of subjectivity, interaffectivity and kinaesthesia in psychological research, to claim that the humanities are any less so. They tell us something urgent about ourselves, about what we feel and desire, about what we *need*; and as such they are worthy of being re-connected to scientific study. Collaborations between psychologists, performers and historians working in the same field of theatre research by studying the actors and the audience in the past and the present would be exemplary of this approach.

PROPOSITION FOUR

Audiences viewing historical repertoire in the context of research (see Proposition Three) should be encouraged to co-create performances, to feel agency, co-curatorship and an engagement with the unfolding *actio*, to give themselves up to entrainment and feelings of catharsis.

Rather than asking the audience to ‘connect’, in silence and in the dark, to theatre pieces from the past by making them ‘accessible’ through modernization, we propose that the audience be encouraged to react, to own, to co-curate performances. This will initially require setting some ground rules of decorum for interaction with the actors. Historically, it was the so-called ‘parterre’ – the socially diverse, fanatical group of audience members standing at the front of the stage – who engaged in the most vociferous vocal exchanges with the actors mid-performance. In order to stimulate such interaction today, a core audience group could be cultivated and primed as to how this might take place, allowing the performances of both actors and public to develop naturally from there. Actors unaccustomed to booing during a performance might be better served, in the beginning, with applause as a reaction to something that went particularly well; but slowly one might be able to create an audience of keen connoisseurs who could help craft and shape the event by encouraging, censoring and inspiring the actors. A sense of being deeply involved in the unfolding *actio* would, we hypothesize, create an extra emotional charge for all involved and potentially lead to those deep feelings of catharsis described in historical sources.

PROPOSITION FIVE

Music, art and dance can be allowed to inform the acting and declamation of theatrical performances in order to enchant the senses and awaken the imagination of the audience.

Twentieth-century theories of audience alienation, of encouraging thought and avoiding entrainment – of keeping the audience guessing in order to keep them ‘awake’ to the tricks of the theatre – have looked down in disdain on the wonder associated with a more ‘naïve’ theatrical tradition. In the past, however, the sensory experience, the pure sensation of live music and theatre, was viewed as a dose of medicine to cleanse the emotions. A willing suspension of disbelief, and the concomitant stimulation of an unbridled imagination, were key to provoking this cleansing effect. If indeed there is a physiological basis for any of this, it should still function today. Here again contemporary science and psychology can step in, to help us test our hypotheses.

PROPOSITION SIX

The presence of historically inspired performances in the cultural landscape does not constitute a declaration of war against the ongoing development of twentieth-century practices and ideals by colleague theatre-makers, but rather an enrichment of the theatrical landscape.

Although theatre makers working in the twentieth-century tradition may protest that their artistic *habitus* is morally or politically superior, and that therefore the theatre of the past is better left stone dead, we have no ambitions to banish contemporary performances. A rich cultural landscape seems vastly preferable to an impoverished one. However, if contemporary theatre makers, choreographers, or actor-orators would like to use historical techniques for their own ends and create new repertoire inspired or in some way reacting to the past, we would welcome this without imposing any criteria of ‘purity’ or nostalgia upon them. We live *now*.

PROPOSITION SEVEN

Examinations of the past are of greatest assistance when they enable us to see ourselves more clearly in the here and now. The elaborate stage behaviour of the past invites us to reflect on the *habitus* of today; on naturalism, the cultivation of the human body as a resource, and the power of ‘superfluous’ beauty.

In order to understand humanity better, and in order to offer an emotionally powerful experience to the public, we hope to establish a five-year research festival focused on historical theatre in which experimentation takes place through science and art. Symposia involving theatre scholars, artist-researchers and cognitive psychologists, as well as research modules involving young people interested to explore a new/old kind of theatrical expression, would feed into a yearly three-day festival in which different kinds of performances, workshops and exhibitions could revitalize theatrical heritage. At the same time, in order to ensure relevance and to create dialogue, each festival edition would engage, through specific projects, with the needs of a young and diverse audience. Space would be created for encounters with topics of contemporary concern. Thus, the festival can serve, in part, as a platform from which non-Eurocentric voices and forms of expression can address societally relevant themes.

A pilot event is being organized, an initiative of the Festival Oude Muziek Utrecht [Utrecht Early Music Festival] in collaboration with the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts (ACPA) of Universiteit Leiden [Leiden University]. This pilot festival is the expression of the long-term partnership that brings the Utrecht Festival, an arts festival of international outreach, together with ACPA, a leading centre of artistic research. By combining forces, these institutions strive to put artistic research onto a new footing through dissemination *in performance*. Other partners – also from Universiteit Leiden – include faculty members of the psychology department, notably from the Social and Organizational Psychology unit and the Health, Medicine and Neuropsychology unit. Various cultural organizations in Leiden, such as the Leidse Schouwburg [Leiden Municipal Theatre], Letterlijk Leiden (Leiden's international literature festival) and Leiden European City of Science 2022 have also given their support. This pilot festival will be called *Over Acting*.

Xavier VANDAMME
General Director of Festival Oude Muziek
Utrecht

Jed WENTZ
Festival Oude Muziek Utrecht

A LIST OF VIDEO MATERIALS RELATED TO THIS VOLUME

The following materials can be found here: <https://jedwentz.com/european-drama-and-performance-studies/>

1. *A Sequence of Passionate Attitudes Drawn from Theoretische lessen over gesticulatie en mimiek* by Johannes Jelgerhuis, performed by Laila Cathleen Neuman
2. *Etude on the Facial Expressions of Charles Le Brun 1*, performed by João Luís Paixão
3. *Etude on the Facial Expressions of Charles Le Brun 2* performed by João Luís Paixão
4. *Etude on the Facial Expressions of Charles Le Brun 3* performed by João Luís Paixão
5. *Etude on the Facial Expressions of Charles Le Brun 4* performed by João Luís Paixão
6. *Suite I, Without Transitions*, performed by João Luís Paixão
7. *Three Attempts at Love and Joy*, performed by João Luís Paixão
8. *Improvisations, Oratorical Mode*, performed by João Luís Paixão
9. *Improvisation, Epic Mode*, performed by João Luís Paixão
10. *Improvisation, Dramatic Mode*, performed by João Luís Paixão
11. *Encouragement vs. Temptation*, performed by João Luís Paixão
12. *Suite II, without Transitions*, performed by João Luís Paixão
13. *Improvisation, One Character*, performed by João Luís Paixão
14. *Improvisation, Two Characters*, performed by João Luís Paixão
15. *Improvisation on 'Eve's Account of her Troublesome Dream', Muted Text*, performed by João Luís Paixão
16. *Improvisation on 'Eve's Account of her Troublesome Dream', Spoken Text*, performed by João Luís Paixão
17. *Three Studies Towards a Performance of a Monologue from Alfieri's Oreste 1*, performed by João Luís Paixão
18. *Three Studies Towards a Performance of a Monologue from Alfieri's Oreste 2*, performed by João Luís Paixão
19. *Three Studies Towards a Performance of a Monologue from Alfieri's Oreste 3*, performed by João Luís Paixão
20. *Pilade's Monologue (Act IV, Scene 2) from Oreste by Vittorio Alfieri (1749–1803)*, performed by João Luís Paixão
21. *'The Actor's Epitome' by Aaron Hill*, performed by Jed Wentz
22. *Ten Applications from Aaron Hill's Essay on the Art of Acting (1752)*, performed by Jed Wentz
23. *Lines from Jean-Jacques Lefranc de Pompignan, Didon (1734)*, performed by Kat Carson
24. *Lines from Jean-Jacques Lefranc de Pompignan, Didon (1734) 1*, performed by Sabine Chaouche
25. *Lines from Jean-Jacques Lefranc de Pompignan, Didon (1734) 2*, performed by Sabine Chaouche
26. *Realizations of Five Poems Found in von Seckendorff's Vorlesungen über Deklamation und Mimiek (1816): Psalm*, performed by Andreas Gilger

27. *Realizations of Five Poems Found in von Seckendorff's Vorlesungen über Deklamation und Mimiek (1816): Sehnsucht der Liebe*, performed by Andreas Gilger
28. *Realisations of Five Poems Found in von Seckendorff's Vorlesungen über Deklamation und Mimiek (1816): Hiob und Yael*, performed by Andreas Gilger
29. *Realisations of Five Poems Found in von Seckendorff's Vorlesungen über Deklamation und Mimiek (1816): Chlotilde*, performed by Andreas Gilger
30. *Realisations of Five Poems Found in von Seckendorff's Vorlesungen über Deklamation und Mimiek (1816): Vorschlag zur Güte*, performed by Andreas Gilger
31. *Four Studies Towards a Performance of William Blake's A Poison Tree: Study I*, performed by Kat Carson and Punto Bawono
32. *Four Studies Towards a Performance of William Blake's A Poison Tree: Study II*, performed by Kat Carson and Punto Bawono
33. *Four Studies Towards a Performance of William Blake's A Poison Tree: Study III*, performed by Kat Carson and Punto Bawono
34. *Four Studies Towards a Performance of William Blake's A Poison Tree: Study IV*, performed by Kat Carson and Punto Bawono

ABSTRACTS AND KEYWORDS EDPS

Jed WENTZ

Introduction: 'I was *just saying the lines.*'

Summary

This introduction takes a lengthy 'confession' made by Sir Ian McKellen (about his performance in 2017 as King Lear) as a starting point for reflections on historical acting both in the late 20th century and today. New approaches to past acting styles are proposed in order to bring acting theory up to date with current cognitive principles. These approaches are contrasted with the 20th-century ideals of practitioners like Eugène Green and Dene Barnett.

Keywords

Sir Ian McKellen, Stanislavski, Freud, Method Acting, audience, declamation, physical acting, Early Music, artistic research, videos

Jed WENTZ

Introduction: 'I was just saying the lines.'

Résumé

Cette introduction s'inspire de la longue « confession » faite par Sir Ian McKellen (sur son interprétation de King Lear en 2017). Cette confession sert de point de départ à une réflexion sur le jeu du comédien de la fin du ^{xx}e siècle à nos jours. De nouvelles approches des styles de jeu passés qui contrastent avec les idéaux du ^{xx}e siècle de praticiens comme Eugène Green et Dene Barnett sont proposées, afin d'intégrer les principes cognitifs actuels à la théorie du jeu ancienne.

Mots clés

Sir Ian McKellen, Stanislavski, Freud, Method Acting, public, déclamation, jeu physique, musique ancienne, recherche artistique, vidéos

Mary CARRUTHERS

Of Notes and Unfolding Sound – Perspectives from Grammar and Geometry

Abstract

This essay explores the relationship between words, breath and sounds from Classical to Medieval times. Medieval conceptions of sound vibrations, travelling through the so-called ‘animating spirit’ to the brain, were transformed into images which could then be understood and remembered. Imagination (image-making) is, in this view, a complex of brain activities. Remembered sounds could thus be notated, either as words or as music.

Keywords

neume, grammar, reading, medieval, music, breath, imagination, voice, sound

Mary CARRUTHERS

Of Notes and Unfolding Sound – Les points de vue provenant du champ grammatical et de la géométrie

Résumé

Cet essai explore la relation entre les mots, le souffle et les sons de l'époque classique à l'époque médiévale. Les conceptions médiévales des vibrations sonores, voyageant jusqu'au cerveau grâce aux soi-disant 'esprit animaux', furent transformées en images qui pouvaient ensuite être comprises et mémorisées. L'imagination (création d'images) est, de ce point de vue, une forme complexe d'activités cérébrales. Les sons remémorés pouvaient ainsi être notés, soit sous forme de mots, soit sous forme de musique.

Mots clés

neume, grammaire, lecture, époque médiévale, musique, souffle, imagination, voix, sonner

Anne SMITH

Reflections on Historical Acting and the Alexander Technique

Abstract

This article discusses how the work with actors in a recent workshop was fruitful, in that it allowed the participants to simultaneously go deeper into the vision of the characters, as well as gain new insights into the Alexander Technique.

Keywords

Shakespeare, reciting, realism, theatre, stage, expression, Shylock, Gielgud, Olivier

Anne SMITH

Réflexions sur le jeu historique et la technique Alexander

Résumé

Cet article explique comment, au cours d'un récent atelier, le travail avec les acteurs a été fructueux, en ce sens qu'il a permis simultanément d'approfondir la compréhension des personnages et la Technique Alexander.

Mots clés

Shakespeare, récitation, réalisme, théâtre, scène, expression, Shylock, Gielgud, Olivier

Jed WENTZ / The Dutch Historical Acting Collective
On Embodiment and HIP Practices

Abstract

Musicians engaged in historical acting discuss the embodiment process of learning to perform using affects and gestures. Muscle tension and emotions are inseparable, their union helps or hinders artistic performance, producing muscle memory. The ability to rely on this embodied knowledge however acts as a two-edged sword, opening expressive possibilities, while cutting off others.

Keywords

Alexander Technique, music, practice, acting, emotion, imagination, muscle tension, performance

*Jed WENTZ / Le collectif néerlandais d'acteurs historiques
Sur l'incarnation et les pratiques HIP*

Résumé

Des musiciens engagés dans le jeu historique discutent du processus d'incarnation consistant à apprendre à jouer en utilisant des affects et des gestes. La tension musculaire et les émotions sont indissociables, leur union aide ou entrave la performance artistique, produisant la mémoire musculaire. La capacité de s'appuyer sur cette connaissance incarnée agit cependant comme une arme à double tranchant, ouvrant des possibilités expressives, tout en coupant les autres.

Mots clés

Technique Alexander, musique, pratique, jeu du comédien, émotion, imagination, tension musculaire, performance

Bernhard HOMMEL
Embodiment in Action

Abstract

This commentary attempts to translate the contents of the roundtable discussion between theoretically interested practitioners into psychological mechanistic terms to form a bridge between 'embodiment in action' and mechanistic approaches to human embodiment. The focus is on what can be theoretically learned from practical experience and how practical experience can be informed by theoretical conceptualization.

Keywords

David Hume, method acting, narrative self, Alexander Technique, emotion, self-perception

Bernard HOMMEL
L'incarnation en action

Résumé

Cet article tente de traduire le contenu de la table ronde entre les praticiens intéressés par les théories, en termes de psychologie mécaniste, afin de relier 'l'incarnation dans l'action' et les approches mécanistes de l'incarnation humaine. L'accent est mis sur ce qui peut théoriquement être appris de l'expérience pratique et sur la façon dont l'expérience pratique peut être informée par la conceptualisation théorique.

Mots clés

David Hume, jeu méthodique, soi narratif, technique Alexander, émotion, perception de soi

Paul CRAENEN, Kevin TOKSÖZ FAIRBAIRN, Anna SCOTT, Suzan TUNCA, Jed WENTZ
 Roundtable: The Artist-Researcher Inside Out: Strategies, Methodologies, Refractions

Abstract

Four artist-researchers associated with the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts, Leiden University discuss their manners of documenting and observing their performing selves. What role can intuition play in research? Can self-reflection and performance coinhabit the same corporeal space? Although the participants share points of view, their practices, the materials they engage with and the intended outcomes differ.

Keywords

artistic research, intuition, spectatorship, audience, extended techniques, dissemination, recordings, dance

Paul CRAENEN, Kevin TOKSÖZ FAIRBAIRN, Anna SCOTT, Suzan TUNCA, Jed WENTZ
Table ronde. L'artiste-chercheur à l'envers: stratégies, méthodologies, refractions.

Résumé

Quatre artistes-chercheurs associés de l'Académie des arts créatifs et du spectacle de l'Université de Leiden débattent de leurs façons de documenter et d'observer leur moi performatif. Quel rôle l'intuition peut-elle jouer dans la recherche? Réflexion sur soi et performance peuvent-elles cohabiter dans le même espace corporel? Bien que les participants partagent des points de vue différents, leurs pratiques, les matériaux avec lesquels ils s'engagent et les résultats escomptés diffèrent.

Mots clés

recherche artistique, intuition, spectateur, public, techniques, diffusion, enregistrement, danse

Laila Cathleen NEUMAN

‘Despairing Rage’ and ‘Courageous Pride’: Exploring the Acting Style of Johannes Jelgerhuis through Practice-Based Research

Abstract

While Dutch actor Johannes Jelgerhuis (1770–1836) is best known for his acting treatise *Theoretische Lessen* (1827), his lesser-known private writings reveal the passionate actor behind the theory. Particularly detailed, his manuscript *Toneel Studien* of 1811, casts light on Jelgerhuis’s thoughts and preparations behind the creation and performance of six roles.

Keywords

Amsterdam, screaming, gesture, attitudes, declamation, tragedy, painting, character, emotions, technique

Laila Cathleen NEUMAN

‘Despairing Rage’ et ‘Courageous Pride’: Explorer le style de l’acteur Johannes Jelgerhuis à travers une recherche fondée sur la pratique

Résumé

Alors que l’acteur néerlandais Johannes Jelgerhuis (1770–1836) est surtout connu pour son traité sur le jeu de l’acteur *Theoretische Lessen* (1827), ses écrits privés peu étudiés révèlent l’acteur passionné au-delà de la théorie. Particulièrement détaillé, son manuscrit *Toneel Studien* de 1811, met en lumière les pensées et les préparatifs de Jelgerhuis relatifs à la création et l’interprétation de six rôles.

Mots clés

Amsterdam, cri, geste, attitudes, déclamation, tragédie, peinture, personnages, émotions, technique

João Luís PAIXÃO

Facing the Passions: An Embodied Approach to Facial Expression on the Eighteenth-Century Stage

Abstract

Throughout the eighteenth century, the actor's face was seen as the privileged organ for displaying passion. The exact manner in which those passions would have been expressed, however, has not received enough attention. The present study places the embodied knowledge of the passions at the centre of this investigation, documenting an experiment taken from James Burgh's *The Art of Speaking*. The results point to eighteenth century taxonomy of the passions as a powerful creative instrument for the actor.

Keywords

Valence, affect, Garrick, Macklin, Burgh, Milton, acting, declamation, Le Brun

João Luís PAIXÃO

Face aux passions: Une approche incarnée de l'expression faciale sur la scène du XVIII^e siècle.

Résumé

*Au XVIII^e siècle, le visage de l'acteur est considéré comme le siège privilégié de la manifestation des passions. La manière exacte dont elles devraient être exprimées n'a cependant pas reçu suffisamment d'attention. La présente étude place les passions au centre de recherche, tout en documentant une expérimentation fondée sur *The Art of Speaking* de James Burgh. Les résultats indiquent que la taxonomie des passions du XVIII^e siècle est un puissant instrument de création pour l'acteur.*

Mots clés

Valence, affect, Garrick, Macklin, Burgh, Milton, jeu du comédien, déclamation, Le Brun

Martina PAPIRO

The Plates of Morrocchesi's *Lezioni di declamazione e d'arte teatrale* (1832): An Introduction and Analysis

Abstract

The acting treatise *Lezioni di declamazione e d'arte teatrale* (1832) includes 40 plates of theatrical attitudes. A comprehensive reception of these plates is hindered because the author of the book, Antonio Morrocchesi, places them in a block at the end of the text, only mentioning them in passing. This article therefore endeavours to understand the illustrations and text in context, while introducing this important historical Italian source on the dramatic arts to an English language audience.

Keywords

acting, engravings, gesture, declamation, art history, theatre, treatise, posture, drama

Martine PAPIRO

Introduction et analyse des planches des Lezioni di declamazione e d'arte teatrale de Morrocchesi (1832)

Résumé

Le traité sur le jeu du comédien Lezioni di declamazione e d'arte teatrale (1832) comprend 40 planches d'attitudes théâtrales. Une compréhension exhaustive de ces planches s'avère difficile car l'auteur du livre, Antonio Morrocchesi, les place ensemble à la fin du texte, ne les mentionnant que rarement. Cet article tente donc de comprendre les illustrations et le texte dans leur contexte, et présente cette importante source historique italienne sur les arts dramatiques à un public anglophone.

Mots clés

jeu du comédien, gravures, geste, déclamation, histoire de l'art, théâtre, traité, posture, drame

Jed WENTZ

'And the Wing'd Muscles, into Meanings Fly': Practice-Based Research into Historical Acting Through the Writings of Aaron Hill

Abstract

Aaron Hill was a playwright, acting coach and passionate lover of tragedy on the stage. His acting system has received much attention from theatre scholars recently. This article traces the development of the system in Hill's writings from 1716 until his death in 1750, as well as its relationship to Garrick's own style. Wentz also describes the effects of training his acting body using the system.

Keywords

emotion, facial expression, David Garrick, London, theatre, dramatic passions, imagination

Jed WENTZ

'Et les muscles ailés, dans les significations s'envolent': recherche à partir de la pratique historiquement informée et des écrits d'Aaron Hill

Résumé

Aaron Hill était un dramaturge, un professeur de déclamation et un amoureux passionné des représentations tragiques. Son système pour jouer au théâtre a récemment reçu beaucoup d'attention de la part des spécialistes des pratiques scéniques. Cet article retrace le développement de ce système chez Hill, de 1716 jusqu'à sa mort en 1750, ainsi que son lien avec le style propre de Garrick. Il décrit également comment cet entraînement corporel a impacté l'auteur de cette étude.

Mots clés

émotion, mimique, David Garrick, Londres, théâtre, passions dramatiques, imaginaire

Sabine CHAOUCHE

Acting through the Lens of the Press. Impulsive Styles, Truthful Tones and Scenic Expressivity in Eighteenth-Century France

Abstract

This article examines through the lens of the *Journal des théâtres* and its critiques, the different techniques experimented with by actors in the second half of the eighteenth century, designed to mark the disorder and outburst of emotions. It shows that actors favoured the interruption of speech, the addition of words or sounds, and stammering to make the flow jerky. Finally, dissonance involved a range of techniques such as moaning, shouting or discordant diction.

Keywords

press, drama critic, eighteenth century, actor, voice, drama, pronunciation, Ancien Régime, comedy, tragedy

Sabine CHAOUCHE

Le jeu du comédien au prisme de la presse. Styles impulsifs, sincérité des tonalités et expressivité scénique dans la France du XVIII^e siècle.

Résumé

Cet article examine, à travers les critiques du Journal des théâtres, les techniques expérimentées par les acteurs dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle, destinées à marquer le trouble et l'éclatement des émotions. Les acteurs privilégient l'interruption du discours, l'ajout de mots ou de sons, de même que le bégaiement pour rendre le débit saccadé. Enfin, l'art de la dissonance vocale relève d'un ensemble de techniques telles que le gémissement, le cri ou la diction discordante.

Mots-clés

presse, critique dramatique, XVIII^e siècle, acteur, voix, drame, prononciation, Ancien Régime, comédie, tragédie

Andreas GILGER

Tempo in Declamation According to Gustav Anton Freiherr von Seckendorff (1775–1823)

Abstract

Gustav Anton Freiherr von Seckendorff was an actor-elocutionist who worked in Europe and The United States of America. His manner of declamation was closely aligned with musical practices. In his collection of lectures, published in 1816 as *Vorlesungen über Deklamation und Mimiek*, contains there is a section devoted to the tempo of declamation, that gives recitation speeds. This article accompanies audio material putting voin Seckendorff's remarks into practice.

Keywords

declamation, expression, rhetoric, music, singing, realism, acting, articulation, Goethe, Klopstock

Andréas GILGER

Le Tempo de la déclamation selon Gustav Anton Freiherr von Seckendorff (1775–1823)

Résumé

*Gustav Anton Freiherr von Seckendorff était un acteur spécialiste d'élocution qui a travaillé en Europe et aux États-Unis. Sa manière de déclamer était étroitement liée aux pratiques musicales. Dans son recueil de conférences publié en 1816 sous le titre *Vorlesungen über Deklamation und Mimiek*, une section était consacrée au tempo de la déclamation, comprenant la vitesse de réitations. Cet article est accompagné d'un matériel audio mettant en pratique les remarques de von Seckendorff.*

Mots clés

déclamation, expression, rhétorique, musique, chant, réalisme, jeu du comédien, articulation, Goethe, Klopstock

KAT CARSON

Testimony. Past into Present: Breathing Life into Contemporary Performance with Historical Acting

Abstract

This testimony describes the process of creating mini-melodramas for performance in a programme mixing historical and contemporary materials and techniques. A single text, *The Poison Tree* by William Blake, was experimented with as a declamation and as melodrama. By creating two versions of the latter, using different pieces of music, the author demonstrates that the intention and imagination of the performer determines the affective expression of the gestures.

Keywords

music, declamation, William Blake, gesture, Chironomia, melodrama, emotion, theatre, movement

Kat CARSON

Témoignage. Du passé au présent : insuffler de la vie à la performance contemporaine avec un jeu d'acteur historique

Résumé

*Ce témoignage décrit le processus de création de mini-mélodrames destinés à être représentés dans un programme mêlant matériaux et techniques historiques et contemporains. *The Poison Tree*, texte de William Blake, a fait l'objet d'expérimentation en matière de déclamation et en tant que mélodrame. En créant deux versions de ce dernier et en utilisant des musiques différentes, l'auteur démontre que l'intention et l'imagination de l'interprète déterminent l'expression affective des gestes.*

Mots clés

musique, déclamation, William Blake, geste, chironomie, mélodrame, émotion, théâtre, mouvement

Xavier VANDAMME, Jed WENTZ

Seven Propositions Towards the Establishment of a New Kind of Theatre Festival

Abstract

Research in and through the arts should ideally lead to the production of art both as a research tool and as an object for audience consumption. These seven propositions point towards the possibility of an art platform (a festival) functioning as a research tool, by curating a event that is not only about the performances, but also about the audience's reaction.

Keywords

historical acting, audience participation, emotion, declamation, gesture, psychology, artistic research

Xavier VANDAMME, Jed WENTZ

Sept propositions pour l'établissement d'un festival de théâtre d'un nouveau genre

Résumé

La recherche dans et par les arts devrait idéalement déboucher sur la production d'art à la fois comme outil de recherche et comme objet de consommation du public. Ces sept propositions pointent vers la possibilité d'une plateforme artistique (un festival) fonctionnant comme un outil de recherche, en organisant un festival qui ne concerne pas seulement les performances, mais aussi la réaction du public.

Mots clés

jeu historique, participation du public, émotion, déclamation, geste, psychologie, recherche artistique

BIOGRAPHIES

Lucía CAIHUELA is a mezzo-soprano specialised in early music and historical performance practice, with a special interest in staged music and theatre. She studied singing at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam, where she wrote her master's research paper on how to physically connect singing with emotion, developing specific exercises for classical singers for this purpose.

Lucía CAIHUELA est une mezzo-soprano spécialiste de musique ancienne, avec un intérêt particulier pour la musique scénique et le théâtre. Elle a étudié le chant au Conservatorium van Amsterdam où son mémoire de maîtrise portait sur la façon de relier physiquement le chant à l'émotion, afin de développer des exercices spécifiques pour les chanteurs classiques.

Mary CARRUTHERS is Remarque Professor of Literature (Emerita) at New York University. Her research interests lie broadly in the psychological, socio-cultural, and linguistic aspects of medieval rhetoric in the Latin traditions, including those deriving from monastic meditation and prayer, and in questions of literacy and orality in various medieval literary cultures, clerical and courtly.

Mary CARRUTHERS est professeure Remarque de littérature (émérite) à l'Université de New York. Sa recherche porte largement sur les aspects psychologiques, socioculturels et linguistiques de la rhétorique médiévale dans les traditions latines, et sur les questions d'alphabétisation et d'oralité dans diverses cultures littéraires médiévales, cléricales et courtoises.

Kat CARSON is a soprano specializing in early music. After graduating with a first class degree from Sussex University, she gained a Masters in Music Performance at FONTYS Hogeschool voor de Kunsten. Her thesis was focused on combining historical gesture and modern movement, and came to serve as the foundation for her ensemble Nymphes et Monstres.

Kat CARSON est une soprano spécialiste de musique ancienne. Après avoir obtenu une licence à l'Université du Sussex (mention très bien), elle a obtenu une maîtrise en interprétation musicale à la FONTYS Hogeschool voor de Kunsten. Son mémoire qui portait sur la façon de lier le geste historique et le mouvement moderne, a servi de base à la création de son ensemble « Nymphes et Monstres ».

Sabine CHAOUCHE is Professor and Associate Dean at Sunway University. She is expert in the theatre under the Ancien Régime (*L'Art du comédien* and *Sept Traités sur le jeu du comédien*, 2001; *Écrits sur l'art théâtral*, 2 vols., 2005; *La Philosophie de l'Acteur*, 2007 and *La Mise en scène du répertoire*, 2013). She is currently working on the way acting was described in the eighteenth-century press.

*Sabine CHAOUCHE est Professeure et Doyenne associée à Sunway University. Elle est spécialiste du théâtre d'Ancien Régime (*L'Art du comédien* et *Sept Traités sur le jeu du comédien*, 2001; *Écrits sur l'art théâtral*, 2 vols., 2005; *La Philosophie de l'Acteur*, 2007 et *La Mise en scène du répertoire*, 2013). Ses travaux actuels portent sur le jeu du comédien dans la presse du XVIII^e siècle.*

Paul CRAENEN works at the intersection of artistic practice, education and research. He received a PhD from Leiden University (2011) for his artistic research into the status of the performing body in contemporary composed music. He is research professor at the Royal Conservatoire of The Hague and guest lecturer at Leiden University.

Le travail de Paul CRAENEN est à l'intersection de la pratique artistique, de l'éducation et de la recherche. Il a obtenu un doctorat à l'Université de Leiden (2011). Sa recherche artistique porte sur le statut du corps-interprète en matière de musique contemporaine. Il est professeur-chercheur au Conservatoire royal de La Haye et conférencier invité à l'Université de Leiden.

Kevin TOKSÖZ FAIRBAIRN is a performer, instrument builder, and composer working primarily in experimental music and sound art. His work attempts to understand and bring into practice the complementarity and interdependency of those three modes of creativity.

Kevin TOKSÖZ FAIRBAIRN est interprète et compositeur. Il fabrique également des instruments. Ses recherches portent principalement sur la musique expérimentale et l'art sonore. Son travail tente de comprendre et de mettre en pratique la complémentarité et l'interdépendance de ces trois modes de créativité.

Andreas GILGER is a harpsichordist, educated at Folkwang University, Essen, and Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Cologne. His research ultimately led him to the field of historical rhetoric. He aims to combine his experience in music and rhetoric, endeavouring to become a more expressive performer in both arts.

Andreas GILGER est claveciniste. Il a étudié à l'Université Folkwang d'Essen et à la Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Cologne. Ses recherches l'ont conduit dernièrement à explorer le domaine de la rhétorique historique. Il cherche à combiner son expérience en matière de musique et de rhétorique, s'efforçant de renforcer son expressivité en tant qu'interprète dans ces deux arts.

Ivo HAUN received a Master's degree in Early Music singing at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in 2015. He performs with many leading European ensembles. His main areas of interest are the virtuosic singing style of the Renaissance and Early Baroque, improvisation, historical acting techniques, rhetoric and its application to musical performance.

Ivo HAUN a obtenu une maîtrise de chant (musique ancienne) à la Schola Cantorum Basiliensis. Il donne des concerts avec de nombreux ensembles européens de premier plan. Ses principaux centres d'intérêt sont le style de chant virtuose de la Renaissance et du début du baroque, l'improvisation, les techniques d'interprétation historiques, la rhétorique et son application à la performance musicale.

Prof. Dr. Bernhard HOMMEL studied at Bielefeld University (PhD 1990), worked at the Max-Planck Institute for Psychological Research in Munich, and holds the chair of “General Psychology” at Leiden University since 1999. He is a senator of the German National Academy of Sciences and has authored more than 350 journal articles.

Bernhard HOMMEL est docteur de l'Université de Bielefeld (1990). Il a travaillé au Max-Planck Institute for Psychological Research à Munich. Il est titulaire de la chaire de Psychologie générale à l'Université de Leiden depuis 1999. Il est sénateur de la German National Academy of Sciences et l'auteur de plus de 350 articles universitaires.

Laila Cathleen NEUMAN is a professional singer and PhD candidate at the University of Leiden, where she focuses on the works of Johannes Jelgerhuis as a source for historically informed stage performance. Since 2014, she has taught historical acting techniques in Europe, and has presented her work at symposia in Stockholm (IFTR), at New College, Oxford.

Laila Cathleen NEUMAN est chanteuse professionnelle et doctorante à l'université de Leiden où elle prépare une thèse sur l'œuvre de Johannes Jelgerhuis. Depuis 2014, elle enseigne les techniques d'interprétation historique en Europe et a présenté son travail lors des conférences de la Fédération internationale pour la recherche théâtrale (IFTR) à Stockholm, et à New College, Oxford.

João Luís PAIXÃO is a performer and researcher specialized in historical acting and singing. Since 2014, he has acted, coached, and staged in several productions in The Netherlands and abroad. He is a PhD-applicant at the University of Amsterdam, conducting an artistic research on facial expression on the eighteenth-century stage, and he teaches at the Conservatories in The Hague and Utrecht.

João Luís PAIXÃO est un interprète et chercheur spécialisé dans le théâtre et le chant historiques. Depuis 2014, il a joué, entraîné et mis en scène dans plusieurs productions aux Pays-Bas et à l'étranger. Il est candidat au doctorat à l'Université d'Amsterdam, mène une recherche artistique sur l'expression faciale du XVIII^e siècle, et il enseigne aux Conservatoires de La Haye et d'Utrecht.

Martina PAPIRO studied art history, musicology and German literature in Basel, Berlin, and Florence. In 2012 she received her doctorate with a PhD dissertation on Florentine festival prints of the Seicento. Since 2016 she has been member of the Research Department of the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis.

Martina PAPIRO a étudié l'histoire de l'art, la musicologie et la littérature allemande à Bâle, Berlin et Florence. En 2012, elle a obtenu son doctorat qui portait sur les estampes du festival florentin du Seicento. Depuis 2016, elle est membre du département de recherche de la Schola Cantorum Basiliensis.

Anna SCOTT, an assistant professor at Leiden University, is a classical pianist whose practice has been fundamentally and probably irrevocably altered by precisely imitating historical recordings of the musicians who studied with the nineteenth-century composer-pianists Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms.

Anna SCOTT est maîtresse de conférences à l'Université de Leiden et pianiste classique. Sa pratique a été fondamentalement et probablement irrévocablement modifiée lorsqu'elle a imité de façon précise les enregistrements historiques des musiciens qui eurent pour maîtres les compositeurs-pianistes du XIX^e siècle Clara Schumann et Johannes Brahms.

Anne SMITH taught historical flutes, Renaissance performance practice and the Alexander Technique at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis until her retirement in 2016, as well as being active in various chamber ensembles. Her written work includes *The Performance of 16th-Century Music: Learning from the Theorists* and *Ina Lohr (1903–1983): Transcending the Boundaries of Early Music*.

Anne SMITH a donné des cours de flûte historique, de pratique musicale de la Renaissance et la technique Alexander à la Schola Cantorum Basiliensis jusqu'à sa retraite en 2016. Elle a été également donné des concerts de musique de chambre. Elle publié The Performance of 16th-Century Music: Learning from the Theorists et Ina Lohr (1903–1983): Transcending the Boundaries of Early Music.

Suzan TUNCA (Leiden University), having performed professionally for seventeen years as a dancer, transformed her practice by situating it in an academic context, allowing academic discourse and reflection to infiltrate her awareness about what dance is and could be.

Après avoir donné des représentations pendant dix-sept ans en tant que danseuse professionnelle, Suzan TUNCA (Université de Leiden), a transformé sa pratique en l'intégrant au milieu universitaire. Cette démarche lui a permis de laisser le discours universitaire et la réflexion infiltrer sa conscience et de mieux penser ce qu'est et pourrait être la danse.

Xavier VANDAMME has been director of the Early Music Organization since 2009 and is responsible for the Utrecht Early Music Festival, the Early Music Season and EMTV (Early Music Television). He studied philosophy and Romance languages and literature. Vandamme worked in Brussels as a radio presenter at Klara (VRT), as a music journalist for De Standaard and later as deputy director at BOZAR.

Xavier VANDAMME est directeur de l'Early Music Organisation. Il est aussi responsable du festival de musique ancienne d'Utrecht, de l'Early Music Season et d'EMTV (Early Music Television). Il a étudié la philosophie et la littérature romanes. Vandamme a travaillé à Bruxelles comme animateur radio à Klara (VRT), comme journaliste pour De Standaard et comme directeur adjoint à BOZAR.

Jed WENTZ is assistant professor at the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts, Leiden University. His long career as a performing musician on historical instruments prepared his current work on acting techniques 1680–1930. He is artistic advisor to the Utrecht Early Music Festival.

Jed WENTZ est maître de conférences à l'Académie des arts créatifs et du spectacle de l'Université de Leiden. Sa longue carrière de musicien interprète et son utilisation d'instruments historiques lui ont permis de mener à bien son travail actuel sur les techniques de jeu (1680–1930). Il est conseiller artistique du Festival de musique ancienne d'Utrecht.