

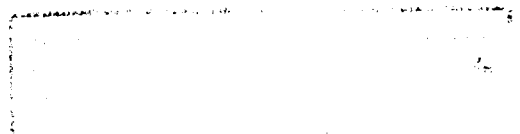
A critical documentation of Mavis Taylor's teaching of Improvisation.

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the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts**

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Abstract

This study documents Mavis Taylor's teaching of Improvisation at the University of Cape Town and provides a critical analysis of the improvisational methods she uses in the training of actors. It places her teaching within the wider field of improvisation understanding the importance of knowledge of 'self' for the craft of acting. There is discussion around the role of the imagination and spontaneity in actor-training, and debate is raised regarding the concepts and practice of sensory and emotional memory training. The significance of teaching structure and form as a method for students to manipulate the medium of improvisation is argued, proposing that the creation of alternative meanings and 'realities' is the essence of acting.

Part One analyses improvisation. Chapter One contextualises improvisation historically, focusing on May 1968 as a 'revealer' of the social change in Europe and America. Reasons for the re-emergence of improvisation as a method of working not only in theatre, but in education and psychology are explained. Chapter Two is a detailed analysis of improvisation as a dramatic technique, identifying the elements that make it a powerful tool for education.

Part Two is a close examination of Taylor's teaching across the three years of actor training of the University's Drama Department. Her lessons are documented and analysed based on close observation of her teaching practices, interviews with selected students, and journal writing. Chapter Three gives insight into the structures she uses to teach 'being' and 'presence'. Chapter Four weighs up the use of emotional recall, questions the difference between theatre and therapy and debates the relationship between actor and character.

Part Three is an exploration of metaphor and archetype as potential educative structures that improvisation offers. Through a discussion around the elements of metaphor in Chapter Five and those of archetype in Chapter Six it is demonstrated how both processes illuminate alternate definitions around the meaning of 'self' knowledge and 'reality'.

This dissertation concludes that the teaching of structure is vital in the training of actors to enable them to manipulate meaning and reality, emphasising that the awareness of 'dual reality' creates flexibility in actors. Questions around imagination and structure are raised for educationists who are concerned with social empowerment and transformation.

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Introduction

Picture a large and shabby prefab building, utilitarian in its simplicity. Its grubby and stained windows on all four symmetrical sides look out onto imposing buildings and a stretch of tarmac which carries the daily wear and tear of student life. Its walls are painted an odd mixture of soothing colours, its floors are old and wooden, splintered by endless use. One old lamp dangles from the central peak of the roof spreading a yellowing light into the room's far corners. Close to the door, on a make-shift chair which has seen better days, sits a frail woman, almost birdlike. She leans comfortably against the back of the chair, composed yet alert. She is watching the moving bodies of her student's who are scattered throughout the room, the intensity of their imagination flattening the walls of the prefab building to create an infinite universe.

On the eastside of this building is the tree-greened walkway of Government Avenue in Gardens. The Avenue, which opens up onto public gardens and fountains, and which is home to hundreds of squirrels and pigeons, runs into the top end of Adderley Street, dividing yet giving the Drama Department access to the South African National Gallery, Museum and Planetarium. To the west is Orange Street which feeds into Long Street, renowned for its numerous second hand bookshops, junk shops and bars.

This shabby construction is the Ping Pong Palace, heart of the University of Cape Town's Drama Department and home for improvisation.¹ Over the many years of use it became synonymous with creative discovery for both staff and students. The figure in the chair is Professor Mavis Taylor, head of the department and legendary teacher of improvisation². I had heard about Taylor before I came to the University of Cape Town's Drama Department as a postgraduate student in 1991. But the first time I saw her I was surprised, for the frame she cut did not match the robust theatre that she had directed.

Taylor's involvement with the Drama Department began with her arrival in 1952 when she was co-opted onto the staff by the Head of Department, Rosalie van der Gucht. Holding a Bachelor of Arts degree with majors in Art and Psychology, and a Teacher's Diploma, both from Natal University, as well as a newly acquired LRAM from London, Taylor was a young and creative force (Morris: 1991). She began her teaching in the

field of design where she delighted audiences at the Little Theatre with her 'bold, lavish, witty and colourful sets and costumes' (Cape Times: 24 May 1962). Soon after, she began to teach acting and by 1953 she had turned her hand to directing. Her first production was Beaumont's The Knight of the Burning Pestle, followed two years later by Camus' Caligula.

By the early sixties Taylor was beginning to make a name for herself as a director of note. With her marked talent in design combined with the forces of her direction she realised productions that drew Cape Town theatre audiences. In 1962 she directed King Lear which she felt marked a journey that she was travelling at the time - incidentally, the same year as Peter Brook with whom she parallels her experience. Of this production it was written: 'she has made what is basically a talkative, static play move with amazing speed and cohesion ... to hold the spectators unflagging interest' (Cape Times: 26 October 1962). She went on to do acclaimed productions of Halliwell's Little Malcolm and his Struggle against the Eunuchs, Ibsen's Peer Gynt and Wilder's Skin of our Teeth. At the turn of the new decade Taylor travelled to America on a Carnegie Scholarship for three months and returned in 1972 to work for a year as a resident director at the LaMama Experimental Theatre Company.

Although Taylor had begun to teach improvisation towards the late sixties, it was after her return from America that she impressed upon the staff the importance of improvisation, locating it at the centre of the actor-training course. Improvisation had always been taught in the Drama Department, alongside acting, movement, voice, stage craft, production and drama studies - the subjects that make up the Performer's Diploma.³ Where improvisation had held equal status with the other subjects, a subtle shift began to occur. By 1977, a year of re-evaluation and reconstruction for the Drama Department, the role of improvisation was redefined. In the staff meeting minutes (SMM) it is recorded that Taylor requested to be given "two periods of three hours and two hours respectively" (SMM: 14 December 1977). This doubled the number of hours per week which would be spent on improvisation. By the mid eighties, students in their first year of study spent four hours - divided equally into two sessions - in improvisation, while

second and third year students had one session of two hours weekly. This structure is still practiced today.

It was also in those course evaluation meetings that the improvisation aims were outlined and recorded. Improvisation for Performer Ones would focus on: finding their own voice, discovering an awareness of the body's potential and of the self as creative instrument, and developing concentration and focus (Ibid). The Performer Twos would continue the aims from their first year of study but would: deepen experiences and build upon them; develop further concentration, focus, sensitivity, imagination and creativity; build characterisation on a mature level; discuss acting styles as well as approach to acting and aims of the actor (Ibid). With the focus on characterisation Taylor emphasised in the following session that 'truth of style and truth in style acting - not just an outward show' should be added to the list of aims.(SMM: 15 December 1977). The aims of the Performer Three students were discussed as follows: to grow in their work on characterisation; to improvise around styles and characterization in style acting; to discuss acting; to discuss characterisation achieved in the production after the production⁴; the exploration of comedy techniques; to develop an awareness of students' own strengths and weakness; to explore the fullest possible extension of the personality in relation to acting; to stress that the actor should balance depth of characterisation, commitment to the play and the role, with skills . It was emphasised that improvisation should 'achieve an overall balance between work on depth improvisation with work on skills' (SMM: 21 December 1977). Improvisation was a dominant feature of the training. It was seen to develop the person in relationship to their training as an actor, giving them a confidence that would equip them for their profession.

The regard with which improvisation was granted and the personal effect that it had on students in relation to both their training and their relationship with the outside world was understood by students. During the mid-eighties, at the height of the State of Emergency, when students took it upon themselves to re-evaluate their education and call for changes, they affirmed the position and role of improvisation in their course. While calling for changes in other areas of the curriculum, writes the chairperson for the Drama Students Council to the staff:

The committee felt that the present improvisation classes for all years were highly effective and central to the training process and should remain as they are in the course structure. (DSC Memorandum: 1985).

They emphasised improvisation's service to society, acknowledging the relationship between improvisation and the 'present South African context' (Ibid).

It was the potential for improvisation to explore the relationship between the individual and their social context that drew me to this study. I had arrived at the University of Cape Town searching for a method of teaching that would empower students through the use of their imagination. After having completed an undergraduate degree in acting and film, and feeling a failed performer, I had begun teaching in a small educational programme in Pretoria that drew students from the surrounding townships. I had been struck by their acceptance of their situation - most of them would not pass matric at the end of the year no matter their valiant efforts. In addition to their setting up of study groups to deal with the 'chalk down' boycott, they travelled each Saturday morning to a small school miles away from home to attend extra classes in their subjects. Every Saturday I would walk into the classroom and look into a sea of faces who were waiting for me to tell them what they must learn and what they must think. And every afternoon I felt useless as I left them behind knowing that I had taught them inadequately, failing to have reached into them and stimulated the one part of their thought which I had taken for granted to be there. Laboriously teaching literature in which they regurgitated stock phrases without any understanding of the human impact and emotional effect they might contain, I realised I would have to try a new technique. When we moved into poetry, I began a series of imaginative exercises hoping to take them into a world of their own making. They looked at me like some odd beast, when I got them to close their eyes and climb a mountain in their head, swim the oceans and plunder the deserts. Unable to understand their resistance and their inability to go on such journeys: to feel the wind prickling their skin, the dull ache in their legs as they clambered over rocks and the sheer pleasure of reaching the top of a mountain and looking out over the downbelow land, it dawned on me that this was probably the first time anybody had asked them to use their

imaginations. Knowing nothing about Drama-in-Education, one field of study I had determinedly veered away from while an undergraduate student, I had simply felt that if their imaginations had been stimulated, their desire to communicate in English would have grown and their level of emotional understanding would have deepened.

I recall this experience, for it had a major impact on my thought, making me realise in some small way the relationship between the imagination and the socio-political situation. For the first time I understood the passivity and acceptance of the students. Angered by the lack of care that had been spent on their creative development in education, I could only but see it as a carefully constructed political ploy to maintain a passive people with neither the skills nor the vision to change their lives.

When I arrived in Cape Town to start my post-graduate studies in Drama-in-Education I was feeling as anxious, unimaginative and powerless as my students in Pretoria had been feeling. Having been educated in the mid eighties, I had been subject to the political turmoil that had streamed onto campus and disrupted lives. Taking part in marches and feeling the need to be politically and socially active had shaped my learning. Much like the politically conscious theatre of the day, learning had taken place in a devastating reality that had marginalised creativity. As performers we were caught up in a literal social comment that hardened our flexibility of imaginative thought. Little time was spent on personal needs but rather in debate between those who felt it a social responsibility to show solidarity and those who wanted to continue their studies regardless of the police invasions and brutality that were happening in the grounds surrounding our building. The dramatic suspension of disbelief was shattered and the hard reality of the State of Emergency crept into every facet of our lives. Some of us could find no meaning in the 'playing' of drama and the worlds of the imagination.

Thus, after four years of a self-imposed rigidity, and a complete inability to enter into the dramatic world of the imagination, my body felt as unspontaneous and 'knowing' as the world I had encapsulated myself in. I felt incapable of entering the performance world of the commercial theatre for purely ideological grounds and I felt too inhibited and inadequate to make my own theatre. Through contact with the Pretoria students and for the first time understanding the value of the arts in education, I changed my direction

and enrolled as a student in Drama-in-Education at the University of Cape Town. Determined to explore every avenue for freeing myself from this inertia, I joined Taylor's Performer One improvisation course. Improvisation as a course for study was new to me. It had not been taught as a subject at my undergraduate university. I wanted to use the time to find a way of freeing myself from my inability to express myself and communicate spontaneously. Thus I entered into the class on a personal level seeing it as 'time for myself'.

Yet simultaneously I was beginning to teach, exposed to the carefree world of the children and a theory that affirmed their playing and worlds of fantasy. Interacting spontaneously with the children and being invited into their worlds shook me to my foundations. I resisted, trying to teach them what I thought was of use, and with the careful persuasion of my teacher I learned to let go. The personal freedom rushed over me in waves of relief, and with it a sense of gaining strength and direction. It had confirmed the thoughts that had first struck me in those stifled classrooms in Pretoria.

For Taylor, imagination and spontaneity is central to actor training. Her classroom is a space where she encourages the students to explore their inner worlds, find their own voices and discover the 'truth' in acting and characterisation. I approached Taylor's classroom as a witness to her teaching methods and objectives with the understanding that 'authenticity' was the character of improvisation.

Method of Analysis

Observation has been my method of analysis. But with any observer, there is the tension between their subject of analysis and who they are as observers: their context, values and beliefs. The challenge offered by observation is 'to go beyond the observation' and give insight to what is seen (Leedy: 1989: 140). Cicourel also defines the role of the observer questioning how both the researcher and the actor 'come to know, understand, predict, or categorize an environment of objects and consequently arrive at findings or socially distributed knowledge?' (1968: vii) suggesting that the researcher's activities must be as much an object of study as the actor's ways of 'knowing' or 'explaining' her environment. In his category of impressionistic data of micro theories he describes the observer as a 'processual theorist' whose concern is to present the actor's point of view and to preserve

the natural setting of the social scene on which they are reporting. They use detailed description and quotations from the respondents, preferring to let them 'speak for themselves'. In this way the reader is made to feel that they are witness to the workings of the social scene described.

The problem of verification is resolved by seeking to convince the reader he has been privileged to witness an exposure that preserves the actor's daily existence by virtue of the observer's special vantage point in penetrating the routine and esoteric activities of the group or organisation. (Cicourel: 1968: 13)

While attempting to be true to all that I observed, what I witnessed has been interpreted by my position as observer, recognising my training in theatre and my beliefs in and understanding of drama teaching. However, I have at all times attempted to place Taylor's teaching within the broader context of improvisation and its educational aims. Through the use of historical information obtained from newspaper cuttings, the small sample of papers written by Taylor, selective interviews with students past and present and the lessons which I witnessed, I have attempted to move beyond the descriptive quality of observation and offer a critical analysis of her teaching methods, the belief behind those methods and its impact. My method of study included a year's observation of Taylor's classes from the first year students through to the final year students. When interviewing, I questioned the subjects around their perceptions of improvisation, their understanding of what they learnt, descriptions of lessons and the impact that improvisation has had on them as performers. I did not record such interviews on tape preferring to write as they spoke. I did however use a tape when interviewing Taylor from which I transcribed parts of the interview.

Interpretation

This dissertation looks at the role improvisation plays in the training of an actor. Although Taylor is a director of considerable note who used improvisation extensively throughout the rehearsal process, this thesis examines her classroom teaching of improvisation and the methods she uses. The chapters that follow, are in the main, a documentation of the final year of Taylor's teaching. I cannot pretend to be an expert on

Taylor's teaching. My experience of her has been limited, and thus the dissertation that follows is simply my observation of what I saw through one year of experiencing her classes and another year in watching her teach across the three years of actor training that the department offers. Thus my experience of Taylor and her work only touches the surface of what she has been teaching over the last forty years, the threads through the observed lessons giving example to her thought and practices. I have attempted at all times to be true to what I observed and what I heard. In the final analysis it is that which has coloured this documentation of her teachings.

The use of Terms and Concepts

There are certain terms used throughout the document which refer to a specific meaning or concept. Although these are defined and discussed in the course of study, when they are used to signify a particular meaning I have placed them within quotation marks .

Such terms are `being', `self' and `blocks'. With the more contentious concept of the real I have placed it in quotation marks when it is used as a definitive state, rather than the argued concept of duality. In the reference to style, I use a capital (e.g. Realism). These terms are used throughout this study.

Definitions

The one definition that I feel I need to reiterate before the start is my use of `objective' and `subjective'. When using the former, I am referring to the Grotowskian definition (Osinski: 1991). Grotowski uses `objective' to describe moving beyond the personal to a shared experience. An objective vision encompasses the individual experience within the broader framework of the universal. Subjective remains limited to the individual experience isolated from the broader framework. I find this in keeping with the ideas that this dissertation explores.

Use of pronouns

To aid clarification I have adopted a convention for gender usage. Throughout the body of the work `actor' is used non-gender specifically and refers to anyone who is involved in the craft of acting. With the use of gender-specific pronouns, I have used them indiscriminately throughout attempting to maintain a balance.

Anonymity

By request, I have not referred to any of my sources by name. To aid clarification and to distinguish between interviewees, I have simply referred to each person as a student. Where quotes have been taken directly out of interviews I have referenced them as a capitalised and bracketed letter (A).

Formatting

To facilitate easy reading, certain formatting conventions have been employed. Chapters three and four shift between documented lessons, commentary and analysis. The lessons are indented, while the critical sections are standardised. Because I have also drawn from students' journals as a resource, I have italicised such journal writing to indicate to the reader that although these observations were brought to awareness during the lesson, they were written up and reflected on afterwards.

Form of the dissertation

I have chosen a critical documentation as my form in order to examine the teaching of Taylor within the broader framework of improvisation. This document is divided into three parts. Part One focuses on improvisation. The first chapter is an historical account of the rise of improvisation as a method for training in theatre. I have chosen to use the American theatre as my example because it was Taylor's travels to America in the early seventies that greatly influenced her theatre practices and teaching. This does not exclude or reduce the changes that were happening in theatre world-wide. The second chapter is an analysis of improvisation as a dramatic technique. It distinguishes six elements particular to improvisation which form the theoretical framework for the analysis of Taylor's teaching.

Part Two forms the bulk of the dissertation and includes the critical documentation of Taylor's lessons. I have divided her work into two chapters: chapter three examines the concept of 'self' and its relationship to the outside world. The focus here is on the state of preparation for the actor; chapter four discusses the use of emotion in actor training and its relationship to the development of character. There is an analysis of the concepts that she is teaching and the methods she employs.

Part Three is the final part. It seeks to look at the educative potential that improvisation provides when it is extended into metaphor and archetype. Chapter five follows the learning that occurs in the metaphoric process and chapter six examines the type of learning that is made possible when the structure of drama is seen as an archetype. The elements of each process find echoes in their improvisational counterparts described in chapter two.

Notes

- 1 - At the end of 1991 the Ping Pong Palace was demolished, despite Taylor's protest. In 1992, after its destruction, the improvisation class moved to the Arena Theatre. The cramped and darkened space had a profound effect on the lessons, many students finding the adjustment difficult.
- 2 - After the death of Professor Robert Mohr, then the Head of Department, Taylor became acting head for a year. The headship was taken over by Professor David Haynes in July 1985. In July 1988, Taylor took over. She remained Head until her retirement in December 1992. In 1993 she moved across to CAPAB (Cape Performing Arts Board) to head Drama.
- 3 - The University of Cape Town's Drama Department, originally offered a Teacher's Diploma course in Speech and Drama in which the students studied both acting and teaching. With the establishment of regional performing arts councils in 1963 both in the Transvaal and the Cape, and with the promise of jobs for actors, the course was restructured under the leadership of Van der Gucht into the Performer's Diploma in Speech and Drama. Where previously the focus had been on teaching and performing, the focus moved to performing only (Morris: 1987).
- 4 - Students in the second and third year of study are involved in departmental productions as part of their course. In first year, no student may be cast in production, restricting their acting to class work only.

Part I

Chapter 1

Taylor and the American Experience

The development of a strong sense of 'self' being the subject of Mavis Taylor's teaching, this chapter examines the concept of 'self' in an historical context. The reasons for the emergence of 'self' are surveyed with specific reference to: firstly, the fifties as a decade of anger, inertia and conformity - Taylor joined the staff of the University of Cape Town as a lecturer in the Drama department during this period; secondly, the sixties as 'revealed' by the events of May 1968; and finally, the rediscovery of improvisation as a means to realise the demands made by new thinking and new methods of working in the theatre. We will see the impact that this artistic ethic had on Taylor and how it influenced her work with regard to the values and principles which guided her teaching of actors.

From the Fifties to the Sixties

It is necessary to overview the post-war fifties in order to understand the creative explosion that transformed the sixties into an era of social change.

Because of the relief of surviving World War Two, the battered and bruised war generation were in no mood to contradict the social order that emerged out of D-Day. Uncritical of the politicians who had brought them to victory, society, harkening back to old values, was mirrored by theatre. As the decade drew to a close, on either side of the Atlantic there grew amongst the young generations, people who wrote out in protest against the blandness and complacency of their society (Feldman & Gartenberg: 1960). The structures of society, they felt, had become rigid and inflexible, thereby excluding them from any meaningful contribution. They wrote of youth retreating into worlds of hedonism, despair and hopelessness.

In America, the Beatniks became a generation of 'subterranean' youth living an alienated and existential existence. Beaten by society and the rat-race of the Squares who conformed to cosy suburban family-life, the Beatniks, with jaundiced eye, viewed life's prizes as worthless and refused to participate 'in a game which kills time, deadens awareness and brutalizes feeling' (11). They revelled in their nothingness and impotence,

neither looking to their past nor imagining their future. Life became an 'immediate experience' in which they wallowed.

In England, the Angry Young Men, rather than retreating underground like the homeless Beatniks, bellowed out in protest against middle-aged Conservatism and demanded a place for themselves in society. More than any other generation, the youth of the fifties boasted a higher percentage of college graduates. However, the struggling economy prevented these graduates from finding meaningful employment and creative outlets. Despite their expressions of frustration and growing anger, they remained ignored and excluded. Musgrove in his book Ecstasy and Holiness, ascribes their despair to a 'deteriorating power-base of the young' (1974: 1). Rather than rebelling, the youth became 'potential suicide or case for psychiatric care' (3). If John Osborne, the angriest of young men, can be taken as symbolic of this generation, his inability to accept the enthusiasm with which his play Look Back in Anger (1956) was received is relevant. Not only was the play's biting anger trapped in the despair of 'looking back', but also his characters' rebellion was purely verbal. It therefore mirrored the physical impotence of his experience. Significantly Look Back in Anger was portrayed within the stylistic and formal conventions of the day (Innes: 1992: 100). By adhering to the theatrical convention of social realism and being 'rooted in Naturalism' (114), the kitchen-sink dramas of Osborne (and his contemporary Wesker) depicted a generation bound and gagged by a rigid social order. Youth became oddly acquiescent.

It was the release of Artaud's Theatre and its Double in 1958 with its demand for violent and blood-stained images of expression that heralded a new decade of action marked by revolution and social rearrangement: politically, England began its long fight for a socialist government; South America saw the assassination of Che Guevara in Columbia; North America went to war in Vietnam in a bloody and hopeless fight to impose democracy (in direct contradiction to the racism and prejudice practiced at home); South Africa's Sharpsville massacre shook the foundations of Apartheid and set in motion a thirty year wobbling act; China, under the leadership of Mao Tse Tung, was enmeshed in the Cultural Revolution. With the rise of socialism in Europe, England and America, students began to rebel against conformity as greater political consciousness opened

doors for action. In France, the dissatisfied and disillusioned student body, children of war-parents, could not accept that social change had not occurred after Liberation in 1945. Fearing the possible re-emergence of fascism, as depicted in Pontecorvo's documentary-style film Battle for Algiers (1965), French students planned the occupation of the Sorbonne. In their Programme of Struggle, the Strike Committee of the Ecole Nationale Supérieure Des Beaux Arts stated their demands which were not new. They wanted to move away from a university system which upheld the class structure through its selection procedures, also from the empty content and pedagogical teaching methods and the role expectation of intellectuals: 'the watch-dogs in a system of bourgeois economic production' (Mittelart & Siegelau: 1983: 387). Despite police intervention, by the end of May nine million workers had joined the revolution and the strike had brought Paris to a virtual standstill. At Columbia University, the rioting was of a similar nature: a fight against the 'planned gentrification of the local community' and in reaction to Vietnam, the condemnation of racism and U.S. Imperialism (Miller: 1988: 54). Common to both universities was the students' provocative occupation of the administration offices. The apparent sudden rioting in Paris in May 1968 exposed the tip of an iceberg of world-wide revolution. Where the students of the fifties were vocal, the students of the sixties not only screamed 'This is INTOLERABLE' (Cape Times Week-end: 6 July 1968) but also physically ousted upholders of the Establishment.

The Theatricality of the Revolution

Despite the same old demands made by the students, what was new and revolutionary was the way the revolution 'lived'. Accounts by Baxandall (1968), Lebel (1969) and Miller (1988) of May 1968 refer to the 'theatricality' of the demonstrations. It is to this theatricality that Fisera directly relates the success of the revolutionary impact: the 'direct action, street activities, streams of improvised speech exchange between strangers, change in the framework and the confine of daily life' (Hanley & Kerr: 1989: 199) heightened the revolutionary experience and brought to life the 'old avant-gardist dream of turning "life" into "art" ... a collective creative experience' (Lebel: 1969: 112). People revelled in the pure pleasure and intoxication of self-expression, openly engaging in

displays of passion in the streets, breaking all social taboos and so, in the process, creating new social realities.

What also occurred in the occupation of the Sorbonne was what Shapiro describes as 'an exchange - or theatre - of gestures between dissidents and the establishment' (Miller: 1988: 55). Student activists engaged in brazen role-swapping, mockery being their weapon. Whilst Professors clutching briefcases, pipes gripped between their teeth, clambered out of windows, long-haired and mustachioed students sprawled in the Establishment's high-backed leather chairs and nonchalantly smoked the President's cigars (Ibid). This small act of exchange (explored by Boal successfully in his work in Brazil, later to become central to his thesis in Theatre of the Oppressed) had a major impact, for it drew attention to the Marcusean suggestion of a 'structural relation between politics and the truth value of poetics' (Ibid) - 'the medium is the message', as stated by MacLuhan.

Prost describes the immediate impact of May 1968 on schools: pupils began openly smoking; trousers were worn by girls and ties were discarded; 'leftist' teachers put their desks into circles and embraced the new freedom while 'reactionary' teachers merely attempted to maintain the status quo (Hanley & Kerr: 1989: 27). Suddenly it became patently obvious that society demanded change. Old forms had to be overthrown and new forms experimented with. Lebel describes this dynamic interchange as bringing about

deep psychic change ... [and the] results of this individual as well as social change were immediate: human relations were freer and much more open; taboos, self-censorship, and authoritarian hangups disappeared; roles were permuted; new social combinations were tried out The first things revolutions do away with are sadness and boredom and the alienation of the body. (1969: 112-113)

Possibly it is for this reason that May 1968 is remembered for its 'unreality'. People abandoned their jobs for the duration of the Paris Revolution and physically participated in the experience, shocking themselves out of their normal routines and values, thereby exposing themselves to the euphoria of a new way of life. Many of those involved in May 1968 still believe that since the revolution things have not been normal either in

France or Europe¹. Many who have written about May 1968 comment on the emergence of 'a myriad of initiatives and aspirations, new forms of organisation and participation, and most of all a new ease of communication' (Hanley & Kerr: 1989: 1). An overwhelming change in attitude towards families and sexuality also emerged. There was a sudden growth of women's movements and a new confidence in the display of open homosexuality.

May 1968 can be considered the culmination and affirmation of the gradual demand for change during the mid-sixties. Informal movements uniting people in a 'new found' spirit of intimacy and togetherness: feminist and encounter groups; communal living and group therapy; politically active groups and street theatre all became a legitimate part of the new society. These groups were characterised by Feasey (1973) as having: a psychological orientation, a political consciousness, as well as aesthetic and emotional objectives concerned with the rediscovery of the myths and rituals of social existence. These philosophical and political issues effected an artistic turn-about.

A New Theatre

That magical year of 1968 also saw the publication of Grotowski's Towards a Poor Theatre which proposed that:

the function of the actor is not to tell a story or create an illusion but to be there in the present, denying the fact of alienation and incompleteness and negotiating a unity between the individual and the collective. The objective ... was to experience and discover the real, Art and Life were to become one. (Biggsby: 1992: 232)

Although working and experimenting extensively in Poland since the early sixties, Grotowski in Towards a Poor Theatre demonstrated a combination of a particular philosophy and practice that many American practitioners were also striving for. Despite their differences in attitude and practice, Towards a Poor Theatre endorsed, in print, the artistic ethic to which they both aspired: the relationship between society and art.

Prior to 1968, there had emerged in America a theatre alternative to even the alternative Off-Broadway theatre. Small companies were springing up on off-Off-Broadway, rebelling against imperialist reality and undemocratic practices, while

attempting to break free from the constraints of Naturalism. Such companies as: the anti-war Bread and Puppet Theatre; the workers union theatre of El Teatro Campeniso; the guerilla theatre of the San Francisco Mime Troupe; the angry Black Theatre Group Workshop; the Negro Ensemble Company; the camp, gay drag theatre of the Play-House of the Ridiculous; the 'community' theatre of Richard Schechner's Performance Group; the Living Theatre of Julian Beck and Judith Malina; the movement workshops of Anna Halprin; the LaMama Experimental Theatre Company and Chaikin's Open Theatre - all produced work whose objective remained the same: to shock society into transformation. Although using vastly differing theatre forms, one feature was commonly adhered to in order to achieve this objective - the move away from the conventional use of language. The written word held associations with traditionalism and was hence avoided. The spoken word, the manipulative tool of politicians, was mistrusted (Shank: 1982: 4). Their search was for a *new* language, one which would 'redefine the real' in order to expose and destroy the hegemonic structures of the day (Biggsby: 1992: 231).

Creativity, Imagination and Freedom

With the desire to embrace and reflect this new reality the avant-garde companies discovered that a training in the school of Naturalism did not equip actors for the non-naturalistic theatre language they wanted to create. Added to which, because of their commitment to social and political activism they attracted many enthusiastic, idealistic but untrained people who recognised in this theatre a potential for effecting social change. But there were major problems to be faced:

Our lives have not the cast of freedom. The customs and institutions of conformity appear to loom more omnipotently and without alternative - despite business-academic social science, bohemian outlets and Socialist politics - than ever previously. (Baxandall: 1969: 94)

An education concerned with empirical values effectively negates the power of imagination. Yet imagination is an essential component for both understanding and interpreting meaning. By learning empirically meaning is rigidly defined demanding unquestioned acceptance. Conversely however, meaning is created, it is variable and

open to interpretation.

If an individual's understanding of society is based on perception which Barber and Legge define as:

the extraction of information from the external environment. It involves the operation of the senses and is effected in the shadow of expectations, hopes, fears, needs and memories that make up our internal world (1976: 54)

then the expectations, the hopes, the fears and memories are an integral part of imagination. These form unique personal as well as social realities. If the uniqueness of these perceptions is denied, both the individual and society can become the victim of another's expectations, hopes, fears and needs. Censorship of the imagination renders the individual and society vulnerable to powerlessness and loss of identity. Through imagination social structures are challenged and new alternatives conceived.

The Rediscovery of Improvisation

Companies seeking to develop the imagination and express the new freedom began to re-experiment with improvisation. Although improvisation was not new in terms of theatrical concepts, its use in commercial text-bound theatre had not been seriously explored. There had been a spate of small improvisatory theatre companies - The Compass Players in Chicago in the fifties followed by Second City and The Premise of the sixties - whose short, sharp impact remained localised. The Compass Players

was artistically radical in every way. It was conceived as a theatre of commentary, close to where people lived so they could come without dressing up; where there would be food and drink and where the players would create skits, scenes, plays or scenarios which reflected the concerns of the community and the society they lived in. The aim, Shepherd is careful to point out, was never to change, but to mirror these concerns. (Coleman: 1974: 12)

Viola Spolin and her work at Settlement House in Chicago, rather than the Commedia dell'arte or the German Uberbrettel, was the inspiration for Paul Sills' The Compass Players. `This origin is significant because later improvisational companies would all retain some measure of the social concern of Spolin's first 1939 workshop'

(Landesman & Marx: 1974: 7). Spolin's theatre games, 'designed to draw forth physical response, encourage spontaneity, and develop intuitive group connections' (Coleman: 1974: 13) were played with the children of immigrant families as a way of aiding communication and 'to help them free themselves' from social prejudice (Sills: 1974: 33). Spolin's games emphasised the principles of transformation and spontaneity, 'the moment of personal freedom when we are faced with a reality and see it, explore it and act accordingly' (Spolin: 1963: 4). These games recognised improvisation both as a process for the actor as well as a product for performance.

But improvisation dated back to 1917 when the psychotherapist J.L. Moreno founded the Theatre of Spontaneity, in which he used improvisation:

to help the individual to "liberate himself from the script", and "from the clichés of part stereotyped ... behaviour and to help him gain new personality dimensions through his ability to perceive and respond to new dimensions." (Moreno, quoted in Greenberg: 1974: 15-16)

Moreno recognised that without spontaneity, an individual could not adapt to change: that his life would always be governed by upholding social structures which dictated his expectations and anxieties.

With the desire to achieve new expressions of freedom and sociological change, attention was refocused on this avenue of experimentation. Lack of creative thought was seen to be the root cause of conformity, rigidity and disempowerment both within society and the individual. While Carl Rogers (1970: 138) argued that creativity was required for a society in a rapidly changing world, psychologists began to explore the relationship between man and his environment. The dominant need for creativity and spontaneity was thus defined by both theatre and philosophy as the foundation for a new society.

Improvisation and the New Language

But although avant-garde theatre was playing with new realities and new relationships, the body bound by old social constraints inhibited freedom of mind. In order to break the existing patterns of social behaviour, theatre had to break its own mould of Naturalism to portray the new ideal. A new form of language was needed to reveal the newly envisaged

world. Through the use of improvisation and the process of deconstructing the entire act of theatre, theatre practitioners discovered

the roots of drama in the actor's body. The center of theatre - for the Groups - is not the writer, but somewhere between the genitals and the navel of each performer. Before, the actor was used to express the essential theatre which was presumed to be the ideas of the writer; now the script is used to express the essential theatre which is presumed to be the feelings of the performer. (Schechner: 1973: 29)

Thus improvisation seemed to be the perfect route for these new American theatre groups, for it allowed them to depart from textual work and work on the vocabulary of the new language. They began working physically, devising exercises which required body contact. Actors aimed to transcend their own limitations, to break barriers between themselves and the audience. However, before this 'encounter' could occur, either between the audience or the other actors, the actor had first to 'encounter' himself. It is the 'encounter' or confrontation between actors that affects and changes the audience, for it 'implies a struggle, and also something so similar in depth that there is an identity between those taking part' (Grotowski: 1975: 56-58). By an actor achieving 'depth' and 'identity' he was able, Grotowski believed, to communicate through emotion rather than language.

Both Grotowski in Poland and Chaikin's Open Theatre in America began a 'stripping down' process aimed at ridding the body and the psyche of preconceived patterns of behaviour and feeling - dubbed by Grotowski as 'via negativa'. This process was devised by Grotowski to discover and celebrate the body's expressiveness. His psycho-physical exercises - exercises that created psychic change - were a way of releasing the body's biological impulses and somatic memory. This intense physicality released an incredible energy 'through the body made suddenly articulate. The conscious and subconscious, body and soul were to join in a celebration of possibility' (Biggsby: 1992: 234). Therefore the actor became the embodiment of theatre language, for it was through him, his relationship to the other actors and to the audience, that an 'encounter' (for Grotowski, the core of theatre) could happen.

'Stripping down' was taken to extremes by some practitioners. Vaccaro of the

Play-House of the Ridiculous took his actors through a rigorous psychological process, forcing them

"to bring out all their psychological hang-ups. I humiliate them. I do it in private, not in front of the others", his justification being that "in order to be cruel to the audience, you have to be cruel to yourself". (Isaac: 1968: 142)

Grotowski had serious doubts about many of the American methods, criticising them for their lack of discipline, their need for 'emotional security and support in their work' and for seeming to engage in spurious 'encounters' (Kumiega: 1987: 133). However, it was understood that the challenge the actor set for himself, he indirectly set for his audience. Training thus became a series of challenges, pushing the actor to surpass what was familiar and known, practicing Grotowski's principle of 'Learn for yourselves your own personal limitations, your own obstacles and how to get around them' (Grotowski: 1975: 185). For if there was an 'emergence from oneself' created by overcoming personal limitations, then an encounter of the self, with itself, and the others, resulted (212). Grotowski believed this overcoming of personal obstacles was essential for an 'encounter' with the audience. Chaikin described this 'encounter' as recognition: 'a kind of total awareness of the moment and of the vital meeting of lives in that moment, in their mortality' (Blumenthal: 1974: 99). He too stressed that for this shared life to exist, both between actors and ultimately between the actor and the audience, the actor must be free of resistance, for resistance prevented communication.

Thus a certain artistic ethic arose described by Halprin as:

a natural process of bringing harmony between mind, body and feeling [which] makes therapy a useful perspective from which to view our work. In our approach to theatre and dance, art grows directly out of our lives. Whatever emotional, physical, or mental barriers we carry around with us in our personal lives will be the same barriers that inhibit our full creative expression. (Jean & Deak: 1976: 51)

The process of acting became liberating for actors as they began to transcend their own limitations and discover a new way of being. Coleman of The Compass Players describing her work in the company as having revolutionised her life said, 'It pulls some'

plug on one's creative mechanism' (1974: 12). Bigsby ascribes this power of breaking 'from the simple enactment of the given' to the wide-spread use of improvisation (1992: 234). Audiences were challenged by encountering these intimate and personal realities - the 'shock of sincerity' (Grotowski: 1975: 192). This principle was for Grotowski the key to actor-audience communication and was carried to its ultimate conclusion by Boal and his 'Spect-Actor'².

In conclusion, the use of improvisation impacted upon the actors not only on stage, but also on their way of life. For the first time actors were encouraged to explore and analyse their relationships both personally and socially. This developed a new self awareness and a new social contact not previously deemed relevant. Because of improvisation's collaborative nature as well as its ability to break 'through an individual or group impasse', real exchange and communication between people occurred (Halprin & Burns: 1969: 132). This sense of 'community' was for Chaikin 'both the method and objective of the work as it was the gift which the theatre offered to a world characterised by alienation' (Bigsby: 1992: 238). The theatre presented the vision of a mutually dependent society.

Hence, the use of improvisation gave the actor a hitherto unrecognised power. Moving away from the European tradition characterised by the dominant director and the subservient actor, the actor became the creator, rather than the interpreter of the text. Thus the actor led the way, showing how individuals could be active and creative in the shaping of their society. For Landesman and Marx (1974) the relevance of improvisation was not so much that it reflected a culture, but that it was a method of working that became culture. Because it used, as its source, the actor's experiences, topicality of subject matter introduced a theatre culture relevant to people's everyday lives. Thus the theatre of this period became educative. Not only did it show audiences a new way of seeing, but the actors experienced a new way of being.

Taylor's Experience

With Taylor's arrival at the University of Cape Town's Drama Department in the early fifties she engaged first in teaching design and then in directing. She is dry about her

teaching in this period, describing it as prescribing to the 'I-know-better-than-you-know, old-school discipline' which was the accepted method of teaching (March 1992). She began directing early on in the decade, her choice tending towards pre-Twentieth Century classics, with a definite leaning towards high comedy.

But as the new decade began, Taylor turned her focus towards contemporary plays with contemporary concerns. In May 1962 she directed N.F. Simpson's One Way Pendulum, written in 1959 and described as an absurdist exploration into the confusions that man faces and the sense that he makes of it through 'situations outside the pale of human experience' (Cape Argus: 24 May 1962). Acclaimed for her ingenuity, and her 'exceedingly intelligent handling' of absurdist plays, this 'nightmarish brand of humour' (Ibid) highlighted her growing fascination for the human psyche. This echoed loudly in her production of 1963, Wilder's Skin of our Teeth. The growing concerns of the sixties led Taylor to concentrate on 'ways of investigating the relationship of man with his society' (Woman's Argus: 19 October 1968). To do this she began experimenting in rehearsals. Taylor recalls, 'it was a new process, a new method. I tried an improvisational method' (March 1992). The results were highly noticeable, the critic of the Cape Argus recognising a 'freedom' amongst the cast (18 March 1963).

This new process continued throughout her productions, but it was towards the late sixties that she left behind the absurdist humour and journeyed into a very different landscape. In 1967 she directed Halliwell's Little Malcolm and his Struggle against the Eunuchs. Reminiscent of Osborne, the play is 'a bare, sad, decrepit and passionate tirade against the "establishment"' (Inskip: 1972: 110). It was the first of her 'bare' plays. Previously she had worked with lavish sets with which she had wooed her audiences. A year later she directed Ibsen's Peer Gynt for which she was honoured for her 'handling of the troll and lunatic scenes' as well as her ability to coax 'her large team to work as a whole group and not as a group of competitive scene-stealers' (Cape Times: 3 March 1968).

It was also in 1968, that Taylor read Towards a Poor Theatre. She recalls, 'it resonated with me - total commitment of the total actor to the total art of acting - if it wasn't true then, it is certainly true now' (March 1992). What shifts she was making prior

to her reading of Grotowski culminated in her production of Jellicoe's The Knack (1970) which utilised the full potential of the actors. Inskip praises this play for the 'grasp of character and motive characteristic of Mavis in her handling of 'bare' play in bare setting where acting is all. This to my mind is her most personal and effective skill, and in such vehicles she gets the absolute best out of (her) players' (Inskip: 1972: 113).

With the new-found ideas of Grotowski and her already experimental approach to directing, Taylor travelled to America, first in 1970 for three months on a Carnegie Scholarship, and then again in 1972 for a year where she worked as a resident director at the LaMama Experimental Theatre Company. Coming from South Africa and the Apartheid way of life, Taylor was shocked into a world and society so utterly different from her own at home. Her recollections, mostly of everyday experience are almost film-like in their minute detail, describing her first introduction to theatre in New York - a play about a recent killing in Vietnam - the experience of simply getting to the theatre as vivid and horrifying as the play she saw. In an attempt to describe the stimulating impact that America had on her, she cannot distinguish between the excitement of New York and its theatre.

Just walking the street in New York is exciting, you know. You walk around the corner and walk into Moondog ... I think he may be dead now, but he's a famous musician, and there he suddenly was, standing with a viking's helmet with horns, on a corner. (June 1993)

On her first visit she travelled the East coast almost exclusively steering clear of the West coast - 'San Francisco couldn't have been duller. It was just a kind of performing arts council type work' (Ibid). She visited drama schools and attended rehearsals and workshops from Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh - there was 'interesting work ... kind of off-Off Broadway type stuff that sometimes went to Ellen Stewart's theatre' (Ibid) - to Yale in New York.

I cut my trip to go back to New York, to the theatre of LaMama. I spent a lot of time there ... I went to see show after show.... The work on the lower east side was all exciting whether it was bad or good - it was packed full of ideas, different ways of doing things. (Ibid)

For Taylor, the excitement of seeing this experimental work was great, for in South Africa 'nothing was happening to speak of except in the university. I myself was doing experimental type work, that's why it was exciting for me to move into it - an area where people were all doing experimental work' (Ibid). Exposed to the new theatre groups of America in the early seventies and their rehearsal processes, Taylor was inspired. She was struck by the way director's worked:

They did not say anything in a rehearsal room. I was totally shocked. I thought "what the hell are these director's doing?" Actors were agonising all over the stage and the director was saying nothing. Looking back on it now, they were being democratic with the actors. (March 1992)

She was moved by the bravery of some of the performances. Watching Lenny Bruce she was overcome by 'the essence of the man ... it was what this man stood for that I really went for ... the topic and just the corruption that was around the man. And the man - brave, you know' (June 1993). She also remembers vividly how exposing the theatre was. Returning to America a year later and working for 'Ellen - very black, very uneducated, very shrewd' (March 1992) she came into close contact with John Vaccaro and Charles Ludlam of Theatre of the Ridiculous and Ridiculous Theatre.

It was very homosexual - clearly homosexual theatre in the days when you wouldn't have dreamed of it here. Everybody was being a cupboard queen in the seventies. Very few people were being blatantly homosexual. (June 1993)

The differences in social freedom between countries was vast.

It was also during her stay at LaMama that she had free access to a multitude of various different lectures and workshops. She went to a lecture given by Grotowski.

He gave a lecture for the profession - question and answer lecture. It started at midnight and finished at six o'clock in the morning. At about five in the morning, some American man got up. Holding his hands wide and standing, he said, "Where to now Mr Grotowski?" to which the answer came, "Don't follow me find your own path - the way that is right for you". What he did was right for the Polish temperament. (March 1992)

And it is possibly that, for she remembers it so clearly, which Taylor brought back to

South Africa from America. When asked, she finds it hard to know, settling rather on her interest in American drama and modern American plays. Her attempts to direct American Hurrah, written by Jean-Claude van Itallie and first performed by the Open Theatre, were thwarted at first. After much argument she finally did the production going on to win the Fleur de Cap award for best director. The impact of America was felt extremely personally. She describes this period as having been very creative. 'I was opened ... lots of things were happening to me personally which kind of opened my eyes to different appreciations of life' (June 1993). But it is possibly in the improvisation class that Grotowski's words, etched into the background of her experiences in America, are most clearly seen.

Notes

- 1 - "When France sneezes, Europe catches a cold" said Austria's Chancellor Metternich' referring to the effects that the French Revolution of 1789 had on the rest of Europe, with uprisings in Habsburg, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Prussia in 1848 (Life: 1969: 47(9): 51). France had set the example of revolution being an 'apocalyptic program for instant social transformation and rebirth.' (47)
- 2 - Boal's Forum Theatre encouraged the spectator, through identification, to become the actor.

Preamble

'You need to enter the world of yourself to enter the world of the actor,' Taylor¹ says quietly to herself, watching her class creating hells for themselves that they may discover their own salvation.

Taylor is working with final year students. It is their first lesson after the long Christmas holiday. There are signs of anxiety as they reflect on their achievements and contemplate what they still have to accomplish before they enter the profession. She gathers the class around her. The students settle in an embracing circle. The chattering is beginning to die down, but the light holiday feeling is very present in the large improvisation room.

'I want one word that describes your holiday period,' Taylor asks the lively class.

'Fun, relaxing, mellow ... ,' the class quickly respond, the energetic but contemplative mood caught not only in the words that they throw into the circle, but also in their tumbling flow.

'I want one word to describe yourself, how you are feeling right now,' she quietly asks them, expecting the words to flow more slowly. Some students respond with strength -

'Excited.'

'Positive.'

'Stimulated.'

Others want to use more than one word, but the rules of this game are strict. Taylor re-iterates, 'One word.' She wants the students to be as specific as possible, to search for a clarity of feeling.

'Now, one word about your third year.' The class becomes more silent, the emptiness echoing a hesitancy which has plunged the students into what Taylor thinks are the fears that they are facing as they enter the last phase of their education.

`Some students feel desperate,' she says quietly as she watches the class battle in the silence.

`Let's throw it around,' she suggests, breaking the circular order which has determined the previous responses, hoping to reduce the pressure of having to respond on cue, but not making the task any easier.

Words slowly filter through.

`Unsure.'

`Strong.'

`Risky.'

`Unbalanced.'

It takes time for all the students to find the right word. Taylor waits. It is important that everyone has had their chance.

`Take a partner.'

`The same partner?' a student enquires referring to the focus exercise that they had done just prior to making the circle².

`That would be quite nice,' she responds, thinking of the connection that has already been made between the partners and how this connection will probably be of importance in the exercises to follow. And then she gives her instructions:

`Through sound and movement, express what your feeling is. If you do find it difficult, be patient with yourself. You can start in a small ball curled up. The other person observes and helps in any way they feel they can help.' The class is uncertain. What she has asked them to do is difficult, exposing, requiring trust.

`Sometimes it is not so easy to know how to help,' she whispers as she watches the gradual metamorphosis of the cocoons, for through a faint hum the curled up bodies begin to break out and grow into an odd mixture of creatures. A student balances on a `tightrope', painstakingly. But with help from her partner, she begins to fly, at first low, then hovering. Another mimics her partner, and before long their spirited playfulness has

become infectious. And yet another has remained motionless, curling tighter, refusing even the look of comfort from his partner - both isolated in their helplessness. Sitting hawk-eyed, she allows the class to explore on their own, waiting for when she feels the time will be right to bring the exercise to an end. As soon as there is a lull into restfulness, her voice quietly brings them to stillness.

‘Okay. Stop. Finish yourself off. Return to your partner,’ she instructs.

‘Now, find a metaphor for what you desire this year. Reach out for it - the other person is there to help you. You are in pursuit.’ She watches as the students turn to each other to negotiate a beginning.

‘If you need to re-focus with your partner, do that. Sometimes partners get separated.’ And as they begin to work, she advises them, ‘See what you need to do to help. Don’t impose yourself, just try and see how you can help.’

Where the students were struggling to find words to express how they were feeling about the year, suddenly the room is transformed into a world of acrobats of all sorts. There are students rushing up ‘high ladders’ and turning to jump with enthusiasm, again and again, each time a little higher. Some are attempting to ‘fly’, while others walk ‘thin wires’. And while there are those taking the risks, there are the others - their partners - learning how to support and catch, learning how to help. Again Taylor watches motionlessly. Occasionally her eyes linger on a particular student. If she feels she needs to, she might slowly move to where that student is struggling. But mostly she watches. The students have partners to help them. ‘The students need to find ways of getting help for themselves. They have to find that help, allow themselves to be helped,’ she says as she watches one particular student who has given up and whose partner is carrying her.

Again she leaves the class until she feels that most have ‘reached

their goals' whether that is the other side of the high wire, or the apple at the top of the tree. Again her voice brings them back into the room and stillness.

This time she instructs, 'Get into groups of four. The same partner, but with another couple. One of you must place the other three people into an image or metaphor of what will stand in your way: oppositional metaphors. Then act it out. Each person, like a statue, must act out the metaphor. They must come alive and act out the opposition presented by the statue that you put them in. After that, start your journey - and learn to deal, or not to deal with them.'

There is a thoughtful silence and then the groups begin to sculpt each other. 'Worlds' gradually emerge, and as they settle, the travellers begin, cautiously, to enter into their creations.

With their first step, the 'worlds' which have lain dormant, gently bubble ready to erupt. Taylor watches these first movements, signs of imminent danger, and warns, 'They are a metaphor, the statues that you have been put into. You must absorb its qualities before you come to life.' Private hells began to emerge, people tormented by finger-wagging figures, figures who bully and kick. This is when she shifts her attention to me:

'You need to enter the world of yourself to enter the world of the actor.'

I have chosen this lesson as a beginning, as an introduction to Taylor's teaching of improvisation, for two reasons. Firstly this lesson reveals the crux of her beliefs as a teacher, and secondly it reveals the various frames which provide the critical framework for analysis. The chapter to follow explores Improvisation as a dramatic technique. Part III examines the educative potential of using metaphor as a framing device and understanding archetype as dramatic structure.

Chapter 2

Improvisation as Dramatic Technique

This chapter is an exploration into the 'real' experience of improvisation. Through a detailed discussion of the elements of improvisation I will explore what makes it a 'real' experience and how it is within this paradox that its power to educate lies.

The Oxford dictionary defines 'improvise' as 'to perform, without preparation: to bring about on a sudden: to make or contrive offhand or in emergency' (Seventh Edition: 1985). This would imply we improvise by living, for the nature of life is unplanned and immediate. This lack of distinction between life and art is mentioned by Hodgson, who describes improvisation as being 'the first link in the chain that holds art and life together' (1966: Preface). It is neither an art form, nor life, but a mode of expression which facilitates the transformation of life into art. Because of its relatively short history as a consciously employed drama technique [despite its ancient origins in the creation of art (Dodd & Hickson: 1971: 17)], practitioners vary in their response to its use, ranging from irrelevance - "We never have time for improvisation; I've never used it and I've never found it necessary" (Tyrone Guthrie, quoted in 1971: 18) - to Grotowski and Chaikin whose use of improvisation is central to the theatre they create. For Hodgson, the difference lies between theatre practitioners who do, or do not lean towards being educationalists.

Improvisation is an expressive response, says Hodgson, an expression of an individual view of the world. This need for expression is born out of a desire for 'wholeness which is involved in ... meeting with the world' (Buber: 1965: 151). Through experiencing the world, and by struggling to understand and articulate feelings and thoughts, there occurs a 'probing of the unknowing, the searching of the self in the very flux and chaos of becoming' (Ross: 1978: 47). The transformation of feeling into form, leads to a discovery not only of a greater sense of 'self' but also of a greater awareness of the world and existence. For this reason improvisers call their work 'training for real life' (Way, Hodgson, Heathcote, Johnstone, Boal, et al) and described by Taylor as:

a process - a process about self-realisation, *growth, a release of creativity,*

sensory development, a stimulation of the imagination For the process of acting you need to connect with your own emotional being, with yourself, in order to understand those people you are going to recreate - and to free yourself from restrictions that society or yourself has imposed. It is a process which allows acknowledgement and recognition emotionally. It is a developmental process. (June 1993)

In essence, improvisational practitioners are seeking methods to aid the individual find the relation 'between the individual and the environment, the self and society, the living consciousness and the object world' (Greene: 1988: 2-3). To function as an individual, free from the expectations and values of society, with the courage to explore, create and take conscious action, the individual's vision needs to be strengthened and shaped (O'Neill: 1983: 7). For many, the opportunity to find expression has been denied: either through schooling, where the imposition of authority and discipline has stunted the imagination, or through political censorship of free expression. Individual forms of expression, once denied, create a stereotyped and impotent society.

Improvisation is a dramatic technique whose 'outer form' alters according to the specific aims and goals of its use. However, despite this apparent lack of uniformity in practice, there are certain elements fundamental to all forms of improvisation and crucial to our understanding of its concept and process. These elements are: its frame of the imaginary; its quality of immediacy; its power of experience; reflection; transformation; and lastly, its potential to expand into metaphor. These six aspects will be examined in some detail below.

Improvisation and the Frame of the Imaginary

Dramatic improvisation, because it has the form of fiction, occurs within the frame of the imaginary where anything can happen. Much like the archetypal hero, the improviser embarks on his journey into the unknown, his only luggage being that which he already knows. But, as he steps into the frame of the imaginary and looks around, nothing is familiar. The frame has recontextualised it, separating it from the known of his previous reality into the unknown of the imaginary. In this frame of the imaginary he may rediscover his world, and when he does, it is as though he sees it for the first time.

For Vygotsky (1976), this process of making meaning through recontextualisation

and discovery provided by the imaginary situation forms the core of his theories on child's play and development. Children, in their play, are stimulated by what they see and experience in the world around them. It is through their playing - what Vygotsky refers to as the imagination in action - that a 'divergence between the fields of meaning and vision' occurs (546). Their enactment, which has been copied from the 'real' world, is transposed into the world of the imaginary. The entry into the frame of the imaginary acts as a 'severing' device. The child relocates the action in the frame of the imaginary, and by doing so, looks at it anew. This fresh perspective and displacement breaks the action from its previously accepted meaning. Playing is thus a process that is central to a growing awareness that objects and meanings are not inseparable: that the world is neither inflexible nor finite. The child, placing his life in fiction and playing that fiction out, re-creates meaning by making that which is unconscious conscious. This enables the child to read meaning into, and understand the relationship that he has with his world. Thus the connection between play and dramatic improvisation are established.

Just as play involves imaginary situations, so it contains imaginary people. Children playing, imitate those around them. By becoming another, the child is adopting a role, and with it, appropriate rules of behaviour. Actions that best display the role are consciously chosen and the child becomes aware of the relationship between a person and his actions. This in turn fosters the child's understanding of his own role in society, the behaviour expected of him, and the reasons for it. Roles can extend into the far realms of the imaginary - the child playing a greedy king - or remain close to the borders of everyday reality. Vygotsky describes sisters playing at being sisters in order to understand their relationship (541). They do what they do in everyday life, but whereas behaviour was unconscious before, now it becomes conscious. So, within the imaginary situation, people can play at being themselves - they are both themselves and roles of themselves, they are both actual and imaginary. Like the sisters, through the use of the imaginary they make conscious what they live unconsciously - thus the frame of the imaginary 'reveals'. When the unconscious rises to the level of consciousness, a change of understanding is made possible. Boal uses this to maximum effect in both his Invisible and Forum theatres. Thus role is a facilitator by enabling the known reality of

consciousness to engage with the unknown reality of unconsciousness.

Yet the boundary between the actual and the imaginary is sometimes confused. Behaviour is often a mask behind which to play out a social life. This mask conceals true thoughts and feelings. So, while wearing this mask, unconscious as it may be, life becomes a pretence, bound by the game which society demands. By playing 'ourselves-in-role' in the imaginary, this mask is consciously put on in order to behave as we do. By making the 'real' mask fictitious, the unconscious emerges, creating a new reality easily observed.

Greene (1988) describes this process as breaking resistances. By seeing the mask for what it is, it can be abandoned thereby creating new opportunities for positive change. A dulled imagination inhibits awareness forcing patterns of behaviour to remain static and determined. Weakened identities, divorced from social responsibility, are made passive through fear or anti-social through disregard. Through a developed imagination, possibilities are created for new meanings that are as real as they are conceivable in the imaginary world.

Improvisation and the Immediate

Improvisation through the frame of the imaginary, assists the unconscious to surface and reveal itself to the conscious. Yet because the very structure of our lives is presented in 'an isolated, linear' way (Wagner: 1979: 166) we are bound by our consciousness to the present material reality, while our unconscious floats in the timeless matrix of the imaginary. This linear perception of time prevents us from being able to 'move back and forth in time' (Winterson: 1991: 90). If the conscious and the unconscious can co-exist simultaneously, hence the co-existence of the imaginary and the real, then there is neither past nor future, neither beginning nor end, for if 'all time is eternally present, there is no reason why we should not step out of one present into another' (Ibid). Imagination links the world of the conscious to the unconscious. By journeying into the imagination we are able to transcend the finite structure of time and discover the 'eternally present' - different presents occurring simultaneously.

It is for this reason the present is often ungraspable. Oakley in Taking it Like a

Woman discusses the relationship between time, being and the present:

why is it so difficult to live in the present "When I forget the question, or imagine that I have found the answer, the quality of present-ness disappears and when I next am more aware I realise I have been lost to dreams, fears, hopes ... To be able to live in the present - to discover who I am (perhaps it is the same) - that is miraculous." (1984: 146)

Linear time detaches us from our other presents. When we are not 'being' or feeling present we experience a split between the conscious and the unconscious. We are less occupied with our actions of the moment and more occupied with the past or the future. We exist in a fractured state.

But only imagination is able to link the conscious and the unconscious. When this happens one feels for a moment, a heightened awareness, a miraculous wholeness, as though you could say:

"I have been here before" [when] perhaps we mean "I am here now", but in another life, another time, doing something else. Our lives could be stacked like plates on a waiter's hand. Only the top one is showing, but the rest are there and by mistake we discover them. (Winterson: 1991: 90-91)

Without imagination we are denied not only a whole sense of ourselves, but also a greater vision of society, mankind and existence.

The language of imagination is not the language of reality, for unlike the latter's linear construct of past, present and future, the former only ever exists in the present: it is forever 'new'. Able to transcend the world and the linear passage of time, it taps simultaneousness, timelessness, being and presence. Thus we remember 'things which never happened. And it is common knowledge that people often forget things which did' (92). We discover new worlds, new visions, new meaning in which 'all times can be inhabited, all places visited' (80).

Improvisation and Experience

A new and different experience is the aim of improvisation. Teachers provide malleable structures in order to generate a variety of experience - feeling, thinking and communicating (Johnson & O'Neill: 1984: 44). Depending on their choice of experience,

teachers employ distinctly different structures. There are two types of experience noted: the emotional experience and the physical experience. Some improvisation teachers emphasise the emotional experience above the physical (Bolton, Way, Heathcote, Taylor) while others (Johnstone, Barker, Spolin, Boal) the physical. However the emotional experience and the physical experience are wholly linked.

Bolton defines these differences as 'internal' action and 'external' action (1979: 17). Internal action expresses the feeling that 'controls the meaning of the behaviour' (24), while external action is the physical expression that releases the emotion. Although Bolton sees them as 'two aspects of the same experience', he favours internal action as the goal of improvisation (23).

Vygotsky and Spolin, however, make no distinction. Spolin argues that the participant must engage in 'the penetration into the environment, total organic involvement with it ... on all levels ... intellectual, physical and intuitive' (1963: 3). The experience of the participant is the direct result of interaction with the environment. Surroundings provide the context for thoughts and feelings. Certain specific thoughts and feelings are released by the body in action as the body is somatic with memories and feelings stored in the muscles. Action creates its own context and generates belief. The concern is about finding an authentic trigger that stimulates the quality of total involvement. In play, if a child executes with accuracy what he has observed in reality, his belief in the imaginary will become real. Thus the greater the belief, the greater the engagement, as the quality of each 'activity' is self-reflective. What we do and what we think are inseparable.

Because of this interaction, by consciously changing the body, we unconsciously change the emotion. It is this premise that underpins the work of practitioners ranging from Boal to Chaikin, for it reinforces the ongoing and accumulative nature of experience both physically and emotionally. This opens new areas of learning and ultimately new meaning.

Improvisation and Reflection

Reflection, what the Greeks refer to as anagnorisis - the moment of recognition and

understanding - is central to the improvisational process. It is utilised by the teacher to facilitate the growth and development of the experience for, as Heathcote says, the 'experience without reflection / leaves the person hungering for more. / The act without digestion never feeds the growth' (1978: 11). There are different ways that the use of this structure can guide students into particular areas of learning. There is reflection at the end of the experience through discussion, writing or painting; or it may be used during the experience through the use of role, questioning or the manipulation of time and place (by changing the context to create a different perspective). Reflection will bring students to a conscious understanding of their actions within the experience.

Yet, improvisation itself, because of the frame of the imaginary, has a self-reflecting structure. By consciously participating in the imaginary world, an awareness of a divided self becomes apparent, what Morris (1983) refers to as the 'self' and the 'self-in-drama'. She argues that it is the constant dialogue between these two selves, that becomes the content of the drama. At times they watch each other, partly doing and commenting. At other times these 'selves' meet. For as long as this dialogue proceeds, the two selves will come closer to meeting. This moment of meeting is what Grotowski describes as 'unity of action'. Heathcote describes this process differently. She writes lyrically:

When anagnorisis can take place
 within the process of catharsis,
 those forces of arrival, and doubt,
 and facts of knowing
 CANNOT MASS to prevent the power of the intuition
 becoming available in the process, to stand beside the
 reasoned reasons. (1978: 15)

It is not enough for students to work on an intuitive level only. Through reflection, the student becomes aware of what Boal describes as the 'simultaneity between feeling and thinking' (1992: 47). Conscious reflection affords the opportunity for understanding how emotion and thought shape and transform each other. For the student should neither be slave to her feelings (unable to overcome them), nor slave to her reason (unable to act). It is for this reason that Heathcote describes reflection as a protective device:

The person conceiving of the idea is the medium by which it is expressed. Therefore, there is in my view important need of the reflection to become active within the experience, so as to provide protection from too deep involvement and to lead toward new growth. (1978: 14)

If the student loses herself to the extent that the imaginary frame becomes her reality, little learning or growth can occur. Reflection is used to recall the imaginary world and thus free the student to partake within that world, with the skills to create and manipulate the choices she has made.

Thus Starrat (1990) describes reflection as 'dramatic consciousness' or learning how to read the situation. It is these governing structures that Heathcote refers to when she writes: 'Reflection creates new acts, not copies of the old / though they may be the same acts' (1978: 14). Opportunities are created for the student to discover the relationship between the context's structure and meaning. Thus by manipulating structure, new meanings are created. For Starrat, the use of reflection has multi-layered consequences: the student becomes aware of how he created himself through engaging in, retreating from or manipulating the world and life's experiences; the student understands that the language of education and bureaucracy is a socially constructed language and that there are alternative realities, those of his ideas; through an understanding of the relationship between form and meaning, the student recognises himself as part of a larger world (Starrat: 1990: 91-93).

Reflection is central to the transformation of thought, feeling and action for it makes explicit the implicit relationship between form and meaning.

Transformation

Transformation is a process of change. Despite its broad usage - encompassing a mere bodily change in characterisation to a change of world view and hence meaning - the process that allows for transformation is essentially the same. In order to understand this process it is necessary to look at the roots of transformation.

Transformation originates in play. Just as theatre holds the mirror up to nature, so

play imitates. A child at play selects what he knows and sees from the world and places them into the imaginary. His placement of those objects reflects his understanding of the world. Because the child plays in the imaginary, he is free to act differently in relation to what he sees. Thus a situation is reached in which the child begins to act independently of what he sees' (Vygotsky: 1976: 545). By living out the imaginary of his play, the child creates opportunities for changing what he sees into his own distinct world.

It is for this reason that Vygotsky defines play as the 'transitional stage' (546), for there occurs a separation between thought and object. The child who imagines that his stick is a horse, lays onto his stick horselike qualities. He selects from what he has observed in the world - whinnying, galloping, jumping. By transferring those qualities onto his stick and thus transforming it into a horse, he has made conscious what 'horse' is. This process is essential for the creation of new meanings - the transformation of reality - for once the child has freed selected elements from their old or customary meaning, he is now able to engage in 'recombining and interpreting' them to create 'some new arrangement' (Wheelwright: 1962: 72). The old world is transformed into the endlessly new.

For Spolin the ability to transform 'is a bodily change and it's a total change of space' (Sills:1974: 43). Her work at the Settlement House was based on the principle that by changing the body through role, and by changing the body's actions - a character in a specific situation - a change in thought and feeling occurs. A conscious decision to act differently shifts both self perception and meaning.

This 'capacity to transcend the given and to look at things as if they could be otherwise' (Greene: 1988: 2) is the goal of learning in improvisation for it 'implies that a man's outlook is transformed by what he knows' (O'Neill: 1983: 10). Through improvisation and the transformational properties of the imagination in action, behaviour, thought and feeling are changed, to develop an awareness and understanding that one person's meaning is not the only meaning - reality is a construct to be manipulated just as meaning fluctuates with the reassembling of ideas, images and words.

Improvisation and Metaphor

Improvisation, because of its existence within the imaginary, extends into metaphor. The Oxford defines metaphor as the 'application of name or descriptive term or phrase to an object or action to which it is imaginatively but not literally applicable' (Seventh Edition: 1985). Metaphor is the expression of the actual through the imaginary. Yet, because both exist, metaphor is both actual and imaginary. The world is experienced both mentally and feelingly, making possible a confusion between often opposing perceptions: the tension between what is thought and what is felt. This inhibits full expression, for like the students in Taylor's class, words are often incapable of expressing the full complexity and dimension of personal experience. To understand and communicate that experience both personally and socially, the individual describes their actuality through an imaginary image. It is through the latter which encapsulates all the aspects of our experience, that self-expression and communication occur. A metaphor has been used to frame the experience and create understanding and meaning.

Much like O'Toole's interplay of contextual frames, the metaphor is embracing rather than exclusive (1992: 51). It does not separate the real or actual from the imaginary, but rather places them over each other that they constantly reflect upon one another while operating individually. For Bolton, it is this proximity and interplay between them that forms the crux and flux of meaning (Davis & Lawrence: 1986: 42). Thus meaning is inherent within a metaphor - they cannot be thought of as separate. It is also for this reason that metaphors are difficult to analyse or explain, for they exist outside the linear construct of language (O'Toole: 1992: 51)).

Education and its empirical training has eroded the original metaphoric language of experience. It has developed a definitive language that fails to combine imaginary and real, thus negating a vision of wholeness. When a stone is dropped into a pond, it disturbs the surface causing ripples to permeate to the very edge. Language defines the stone, the ripples and the act of dropping. The individual no longer experiences but attempts to define the experience. The observer is removed from the observed. They are no longer one. In the search for clarity and meaning the wake is no longer seen, only a solitary stone which sinks and is gone.

The double frame of the metaphor embraces life and art. In antiquity, art was a life-giving force to understanding the universe: as essential as sleeping, hunting and mourning. Art was 'an integral part of the social meaning, growth and function of the society and their position was not questioned' (Taylor: 1992). By splitting art from life, technique is severed from meaning. Much like Grotowski's Objective Drama is a search for techniques or performative elements which in 'all likelihood ... were already present when art was not yet separated from other spheres of life and before there was a division into artistic genre and categories' (Osinski: 1991: 96), so the metaphor combines technique and meaning. What were once expressions, have become techniques: the metaphor is split. The search is now to piece back together the meaning behind technique. Performance outside of social action is meaningless - a mere display of skill. We see the dancer and his steps. The dancer and the dance are not one.

As a stone is dropped into a pool, so an individual reality ripples in ever increasing rings until there is no longer any distinction between the centre and the edge: an individual reality moves beyond the personal into a more holistic or universal experience, that of the pool. The stone's meaning is no longer just located within the stone, but permeates the entire pond. Grotowski describes this world vision as objective reality: a reality that transcends an

"individual view of things and phenomena and thus governed by human caprice" and takes on an "extra- and supra-individual quality, ... thereby reveal[ing] the laws of fate and the destiny of man." (Quoted in Osinski: 1991: 95)

It is this objective reality that the metaphor provides: embracing the personal within the vast expanses of the universe. By extending improvisation into an exploration of the metaphor there arises a language, a metaphoric language which embraces and combines, making no distinction between the world and experience. This process is described more fully in chapter five.

Improvisation is a technique which facilitates the student to engage totally. Because it has the ability to fuse the imaginary with the real, to use a language of immediacy, to unfold and develop an experience, to encourage the co-existence of

emotional and physical action, to create awareness in action as well as to engender real change, improvisation creates no distinction between the student and the work. The students become the work, making it immediate, active and meaningful. It is this total participation that enhances the spontaneity of the real to develop dynamic learning. These elements of improvisation form the framework for the analysis of Taylor's lessons.

Notes

- 1 - Although I have referred to Mavis Taylor as Taylor during the lessons, she was always called Mavis by the students. It was part of the ease and informality of her teaching style.
- 2 - The focus referred to is described in chapter 3.

Part II

LIES 1: There is only the present and nothing to remember.

LIES 2: Time is a straight line.

LIES 3: The difference between the past and the future is that one has happened while the other has not.

LIES 4: We can only be in one place at a time.

LIES 5: Any proposition that contains the word 'finite' (the world, the universe, experience, ourselves ...)

LIES 6: Reality as something which can be agreed upon.

LIES 7: Reality as truth.

(Winterson: 1991: 83)

Chapter 3

Discoveries

'We should as teachers, I believe, be giving our students the courage to open themselves,' Taylor declares, her hands crookedly parting the air in front of her chest to expose the heart.

(November 1992)

Taylor begins the teaching of improvisation with first year students. I have called this selected collection of lessons 'Discoveries' for it is in this body of work that Taylor begins an exploration and unearthing of the 'self' as the necessary preparation for an actor. I have titled and grouped these lessons in harmony with the type of imagery with which she works - viewing the images as the development towards a realisation of a particular facet of the self.

i

Greetings and the Games Children Play

discovering the self

Taylor enters the large improvisation room and settles into a chair. This is her first lesson with novice students who know neither her nor each other. It is their initial lesson in the department and an introduction to their three year actor-training.

After the students have formed a circle on the floor, of which Taylor in her chair is a part, and have sequentially said a little bit about themselves, she rises indicating to the class to follow suit. And in the general atmosphere of nervous expectation, she begins with what appears to be a simple game of greeting.

'Stand in a circle,' she says. And then more meaningfully, 'Look at all the faces around you. Think about yourself, who you are.' There is a quietness among the students, the air thick with expectation. Many have heard about the improvisation classes which have become a legend in the

school. They are perhaps excited at the prospect of 'getting stuck into the real stuff', or perhaps anxious about what is expected of them. 'Before you come to drama school you hear about the effect it has had on other people,' one student said before the first class had begun. 'It's heavy and sounds traumatic.' Through the quietness Taylor repeats her instruction reflectively:

'Think about yourself - who you are,' and in her repetition she is asking the students to go beyond their first response, to enter into their internal thoughts. It is a difficult moment, for although it is a quiet and personal one, Taylor is quietly holding a mirror up for the students to see their reflections and to encounter themselves. *It is the moment you admit to yourself that you're scared and realise that you don't want anyone to know you are. You want to show everyone that you are confident and coping.*

Seconds pass. Then she continues.

'Turn and face a partner. Tell each other your name. Now we're going to move, first passing touching right shoulders, and then passing touching left. We're just going to do that,' she reiterates simply. 'That's all.'

Then, after a silent hesitancy while the instructions settle in, she adds, 'Before we move, let us try also to make some sort of contact with that person. Not words, just some sort of contact. Stop when you get back to your original partner. Keep facing your partner.'

The circle slowly begins to move, then splits into two circles rotating in opposite directions. The students brush each other's shoulders, jovially, intentionally, lightly or even shyly, the consciousness of their movements displaying a deliberate 'theatricality'. These students are coming into the school to act, and there is a desire to make impressions fast, to show themselves as personalities.

'This time we're going to greet,' Taylor says when the circle has

jolted to a halt of recognition as the partners meet up. 'Whatever language you want to use, use it. Still pass on the right. Still pass on the left.'

Once again, the circles shuffle against themselves, more slowly this time for the students are revelling in different types of greetings. With each greeting, they become more dramatic, and eventually extend into animated conversations. When the circle finally grinds to a halt, Taylor reminds them, 'It's not a five minute conversation.' And she pauses to qualify, 'Nothing wrong with a five minute conversation.'

And the circle begins to move quickly and fluently until it reaches its beginning.

'Now, let's just have a greeting. Let's try and keep to right and left shoulders. This time you can put any mood to it. It can be as sincere or as insincere as you like.'

'Must you keep the same greeting?' a student asks.

'No, you can change it as much as you like.'

The circle, with greater precision, begins and ends.

'Did you find any truth in any of the greetings?' she asks. Students respond that many of the greetings were just acts, that there was no reality to them, no real communication.

'This time I want you to try and be very truthful. If you feel shy, be shy. You can change the mood if you like, but be very real. In a space inside you find that real feeling. Raise a hand when you are ready.'

When the students start moving for the last time, the circle moves slowly. There is none of the animation that has characterised the previous rounds, and the air around it has changed. It feels as though the circle has become charged with electricity. *I realised I had to be true to myself, to commit myself. It is painful. The times that I did, I felt a soreness - the pain of really expressing how I was feeling, rather than the easier game of trying to hide it. I felt pain and a certain sadness.* The difference between acting and 'being' has become glaringly obvious.

After the group has turned full circle, Taylor questions, 'Any truth?' The class breaks into discussion around the truth of a greeting and how it affects communication. 'What is true, is what is the truth for you at that moment,' a student comments.

Taylor probes, 'What makes it hard to be true?'

'If you're both true, the greeting is decided,' another says, and they speak of greetings being confrontational, disturbing or unsettling.

'Not all greetings are easy,' agrees a student. Taylor reassures, 'Let's not be perfect. Just normal. It doesn't matter if it doesn't work out perfectly.'

It is beginning to appear that the truth of a greeting is not a constant, but that it is eternally in flux, and modifies according to the relationship between people. What feels true with one person, may not feel true with another.

'I felt shy with one person, but relaxed with another,' says a student.

When the observations draw to a close, Taylor continues.

'Now move, but first look at the person.' She pauses for clarity. 'Greet them using your home language. Hear what they say. You can incorporate some form of physical greeting. I don't know how many languages there are. Try to be true.' The students start the circuit for the last time, and this time the dynamic is different and in perpetual motion. And as they come to standing, Taylor asks, 'Is that feeling still with you?' She waits for them to reflect. She adds, her voice like a conscience, 'Ask yourself, "Was that feeling real?"' There is a pause as the students run the question through their minds, and answer silently to themselves.

This greeting is not so much about greeting others as it is about learning to meet and greet ourselves for the first time. In these early exercises, Taylor encourages the

students to perform the task as themselves. She is setting an assignment which through its simplicity creates an awareness and acceptance of the individual responses and feelings. The students are encouraged just to 'be'. Patiently, she lets them 'play' at greeting, but through repeatedly questioning them on truthfulness, she knows that they will tire and eventually just 'do' the exercise. And in the simple act of doing, they will experience and discover.

She continues to use these principles throughout all three years of training. At the beginning of their conclusive year, Taylor welcomes the students with a class of 'greeting' that tightens the reins after the Christmas holiday. On a scrap of used envelope, Taylor writes:

Express what you feel and walk around the room with that feeling, allowing it to grow and strengthen as you walk. Now imagine your 'best self,' the one you would like to be, and walk around like that. While still walking and greeting, put on and remove a personal 'daily' mask; the 'best self' mask; a mask that represents what 'you hate most about yourself'; your daily mask over the feeling generated by what you hate most about yourself; and finally a return back to the 'best self'. (notes: February 1991)

This acknowledgment and recognition of what we are and what we would like to be is preparatory work for Taylor, and is encapsulated in her instruction: 'Focus!' She insists that every student in the department does a focus exercise before the class begins, for to focus is to clear the mind, to prepare. She believes that without prior focusing, the student cannot concentrate on the work at hand and lets external worries intrude into the work space. In the early lessons she will teach the class different ways of focusing, and later she will either leave the students to focus on their own, or she will lead the entire class through a new focusing exercise. So, either she leaves the class in the silence of their preparation, or she instructs:

'Find a partner. Sit facing your partner. Hold hands and focus on each other's eyes.'

She may either choose to leave them like that, asking them to signal her with a hand when

they feel ready, or else she may continue:

‘There is an A. Put up your hands if you are an A. A makes a statement, B repeats it. The statement can be anything - "I hate you", "I love you." The statement can change - also in mood, tone, pitch, volume.’

The statements the class start making are quiet and tentative, mirroring the hesitancy that this final year group is feeling¹. But the repetition is relaxing and reassuring and soon there is a shift away from their self-conscious concern about what to say and how to say it. Taylor gives them time to mimic each other urging, ‘Louder. Faster’, for she knows that imitating and its accentuation on listening and repeating will loosen up the students. Eventually there is a gear change in the room, as inhibitions dissolve, and the words begin to flow with energy. A while later Taylor interrupts, having listened carefully.

‘Okay. Stop.’ Instantly the voices drop into silence. It is a manifestation of the level of concentration that has been achieved. The quality of the space has transformed.

‘Now B makes a statement.’ The voices begin again with a new assuredness, and through the come-and-go of words and statements one can sense the inklings of exploration. Taylor feeds this energy, urging them on. ‘Work faster. Don't think.’ She is pushing them to respond with an immediacy that will extend them beyond the familiar.

‘Keep up with your partner. Keep emotion and pace. Repeat exactly what is given to you,’ she demands of the students while listening acutely. She wants the students to clear their minds, to be as open and receptive as possible, to take themselves by surprise.

‘Be accurate. Keep eye-focus,’ she insists, her voice penetrating through the rising crescendo of mirror dialogue. When she finally stops the exercise, the air is filled with readiness and presence.

Depending on what she perceives the state of the class to be, Taylor will vary the method. If a class is fraught with worry, she will instruct the partners:

'I want you to sit close to each other. One of you close your eyes.
The other gently blow onto your partner's face.'

Or:

'Get yourselves into groups of three. Sit with your backs together.
Be comfortable, but feel the backs against your own. You are going to
close your eyes and just breathe. Be aware of your own breath and the
other's. Let your breathing synchronise so that you are breathing as one.'

In the stillness of the room you can begin to feel the air pulsating.

'Being' as Cornerstone and Touchstone

The state of preparation is crucial, not only to the actor about to begin work, but more importantly for Taylor, it is the foundation of the actor's training. Taylor believes that for

the process of acting you need to connect with your own emotional being, with yourself, in order to understand those people you are going to recreate - and to free yourself from restrictions that society or yourself has imposed. It is a process which allows acknowledgement and recognition emotionally. (October 1993)

Thus, who you are, what you feel, and how you respond will always be both the cornerstone of your work and your touchstone as an actor. The self is the source. Taylor watches vigilantly for an authenticity of feeling in the students as they work. She is saddened by a student who will not let go of pretences, for she believes that if there is no acceptance or understanding of that basic premise a student will be destined to work with a handicap. Without self-acknowledgement of the 'emotional being', no real development of the actor can take place. 'Being' is the beginning.

The term 'being', coined by Morris in his book No Acting Please and the subject

of his teaching, is defined as the 'point at which you begin' (1977: 11). 'You can't teach a man to run if he hasn't got legs. Nor can you teach a person to act if he isn't connected to his inner feelings' (2). Taylor believes that the actor's internal reality is at the centre. This is the actor's primary source, and in order that it may become the actor's resource, it needs to be nurtured.

This simplicity of beginning is common to improvisational practitioners. Saint-Denis, in his improvisational training of young actors, sets tasks in which the student is

asked only to present those elementary activities of everyday life that he is familiar with from his own personal experience ... he presents the ordinariness of life ... he is to be himself. (1982: 151)

By being herself, the student actor is required to find a personal integrity and authenticity in her actions. Rather than playing at doing, like the students playing at greeting, the student is simply asked to do as she would do. For like the students who played at greeting, no real communication occurs for those playing at doing. 'By avoiding Being, you are placing yourself in an unaffordable state' states Morris (1977: 11). Avoidance hampers true response and communication, he believes. If you come from a position of not-being or 'acting' you are governed by a series of preconditioned set responses. By being, you are subject to a complex web of unpredictability because you are prone to the flux of changing emotions and attitudes.

Acting, with its emphasis on the creation of other characters and other realities, requires, possibly for this very reason, that the actor contain large levels of self-knowledge and acceptance. The greater the acceptance of the 'self', the less threatening it is to move away from the self and explore hitherto unknown territory: acceptance acts as a constant reminder of one's stable boundaries and is thus a safe-guard against getting 'lost' in discovered emotion: a condition that holds a degree of fear for many students. Thus through 'being', an understanding of yourself and your emotional being will always be a touchstone for yourself as actor.

'Being' as Freeing the person from Social modes of Behaviour

For the actor to freely respond, he must be open and receptive and not conditioned by

learnt behaviour. Taylor's improvisation room is a free space for the students, a place where she encourages them to shed their socialised behaviour and have the courage to be vulnerable. It is the space where Berne's 'natural child' can come out and play without the watchful presence of the 'influencing adult' (1964: 26). Students don't find that space easy. 'It was a free space with no expectations. That made it a bit daunting', reflects a student (D). When the 'child' has been inhibited, it is often not easy to let it come out and play freely. Thus Taylor's free space is where the student can 'decommission the Parent ... so that the adapted Child is freed from the Parental influence, and is transformed by release into the natural Child' (Ibid).

Courage is required to dismiss this Parent - which Boal refers to as the 'Cop in the Head' - for it is the Parent who has taught us what is right and acceptable. Thus to be free of the Parent is to transcend our upbringing and our informed social reality; to be free of feeling what we think we should be feeling or experiencing, in order to discover the pain and vulnerability of expressing what we truly feel - often deemed to be unacceptable. It is recognised that this kind of freedom is difficult to achieve 'since most people do not have *permission* to expose behaviour and emotions in public' (Wagner: 1969: 108). The giving of this permission is crucial to the actor who is experimenting with behaviour that could run contrary to the norm - behaviour which would be seen to be anti-social or revolutionary.

But the giving of permission implies protection, and like a therapist, it must be steadfast. This does not imply that the improvisation room becomes a therapy room.

Rather it is simply:

the job of the teacher to devise strategies for cathecting the Child of his student as well as bringing into consciousness the parental injunctions which inhibit necessary behaviour for the stage. (110)

Thus for the 'free' space to be truly free for experimentation, it must be truly free of judgement.

Taylor works at the acceptance and consequent liberation of the emotional human being, for it 'is one of the actor's tasks to expose the emotions of his character ... [he] has

as his only instrument himself. Thus, it is the actor's own emotions which are released in performance' (108). The actor has to feel free or be at ease with those emotions regardless of their social boundaries. Characters often behave in a way that is contradictory to the actor's personal perception and social boundaries. Thus to be truthful to the new reality, the actor has to experience the dynamics of that world view and its type of communication and relationships. Thus it is that Morris, in his work on Being 'encourage[s actors] to be extremely personal with each other, to do away with their social impositional life and to experience the real moment no matter what the imagined consequences' (1977: 2). Real communication is often neither comfortable nor agreeable as students discover, and Taylor will acknowledge that: 'Whoever said it was easy?' Nonetheless she insists that communication needs to be truthful if a 'real' encounter is to take place in the theatre. For Taylor it is the state of 'being' that ensures the encounter will be real, for it provokes a 'shock of recognition' - a spontaneous and unpredictable reaction to a new perception of reality. Toeing the line socially leads to self-censorship and emotional containment; a limited social interaction. Says one student, who had commented on the difficulty of the seemingly simple task of greeting: 'afterwards you experience a lightness, a relief'. This is the relief that comes from shedding the mantle of social expectation and finding authentic expression.

'Being' as Catalyst for Spontaneity

Spolin describes spontaneity as 'the moment of personal freedom when we are faced with a reality and see it, explore it and act accordingly' (1963: 4). So it is through the journey into the self that Taylor seeks to discover the natural Child in each of her students, for it is there that 'intuition, creativity and spontaneous drive and enjoyment' reside (Berne: 1964: 25). With the beginnings of 'being', Taylor is nurturing spontaneity. Without spontaneity the body remains inert to the imagination's current. Like Boal who works the body towards discarding its socialised patterns of behaviour as a precondition to the breaking of regimented social thought and expectations (1979: 121), new realities and spontaneous expressions of truth are reliant on the sensitivity of the body to the reception and transmittance of its impulses. For the body to be receptive, a 'relaxed state' is necessary

(Saint-Denis: 1982: 150). The body and the mind cannot respond spontaneously without `being', for `being' implies acceptance as a means `to transcend the limitation of the familiar' (Spolin: 1963: 4). It is via spontaneity that the actor may depart `courageously [into] the area of the unknown, and release momentary genius within himself' (Ibid).

Because of the receptivity and spontaneity of the natural Child state, it is ideally

the creative state for the actor, when he is in actual performance The *adapted* Child is controlled and inhibited by the *influencing* Parent, while the *natural* Child is free of Parental restraint and is exploding with archeopsychic (archaic, instinctual, perverse) behaviour. (Wagner: 1969: 108)

This will ensure that the actor is always open and receptive to communication on stage, giving a freshness to the moment which is imperative for believability of character and situation.

Taylor zeroes into the freedom of children at play; through playing the students slide back into their instinctive childhood worlds. To play a game is to psychologically return to that world of unfettered exploration.

`Today we're going to play games,' she says to her first year students. `Childhood games from different language speakers.' She does a quick hands-up of the languages that are represented in the class.

`What Xhosa games have we got here? Or Afrikaans?' she inquires, half as a reminder to the majority of students that English games are not the only games that are played. The class quickly respond:

`Red Rover.'

`Piglets.'

`Go buy Omo.'

`Four Stations.'

The list seems endless, for every suggestion sparks another remembered game. And with the memories that the games themselves conjure up, the class begins to transform into a group of young, gaily

raucous children.

'A lot of games are an excuse for fighting,' laughs a student who has a painful memory of being hit by a belt in a popular Xhosa game. Taylor allows for the class to throw as many games into the air as possible.

'Now we must choose four games that we shall play this afternoon,' Taylor says. The class settles on the first, 'K.I.N.G. Spells King.'

'Does anyone have an objection to the game?' she asks. After ensuring that the game is understood by all, and after a quick demonstration by a few to settle some differences, the class lines up against the wall, with the exception of one student who stands with his back to the others, facing the opposite wall. There is an excited silence. And suddenly -

'K.I.N.G spells king,' the student explodes and turns disarmingly fast on the group as they rush towards him. His turn, all eyes and teeth, freezes them in their tracks. From his solitary position, he scans the mass of statues and then eyes out his victims. He creeps up on them softly and then in a myriad of giggles, squawks and dances he alternates between being oddly comical and gruesomely ferocious. One by one the statues crumble into helpless laughter, or stonily battle to shut out the bounding apparition.

Those that have given in to laughter or even sneaked a smile, playfully drag themselves back to the base line, groaning their reluctance. *There were times that I hoped I wouldn't be the one who would get caught so I laughed in order to be sent back to the safe line,* writes a student. The student returns to his wall. He babbles his chant and spins so quickly that many have been caught creeping. With arms waving in victory he sends them back, despite their protests. Those who were too quick for him, he torments, rapidly transforming into a selection of hilarious beasts and birds who preen and talk and go through various forms of ablution. He has to

think and work quickly to defend his space. Hilarity breaks out amongst a group of targeted students who are desperately trying to ignore this prancing monster and having failed, they slouch back to the base line, laughing amongst themselves.

With a hair's breadth between the closest student and his back, the tension mounts. She has proven oblivious to any of his routines, and now she is perilously close. As he turns his face to the wall and before he has even begun to chant, he is thwacked on the back. Laughter and screaming break out as he turns to chase the fleeing students, and all applaud with delight as he flings himself around a bolting girl. The play is repeated, and after a few more rounds, the students, puffing, decide to change the game.

This time the class settles on a Xhosa version of what many of the students know as 'Cat and Mouse.' They quickly divide up into small groups so that those students who know the accompanying song can teach it to those who don't. After a few minutes of singing, the class regroups. A cat is chosen who chooses a mouse. Everyone links hands and starts swinging their arms to-and-fro to the song. The mouse dodges in-between and under the swinging hands in a desperate attempt to flee the struggling cat. Time and time again the cat smacks into a barrier of linked hands which turn to steel against her. Every now and then the singing is broken by peals of laughter as the cat is prevented, by a whisker, from clawing the mouse. With vigorous energy, ingenious scheming and sheer determination the cat eventually traps her mouse and with a relish that is enjoyed by all, she sinks in her claws and purrs with delight. The mouse shrieks for help and dies a pathetic death. With each new round, dying mice are resurrected into cats and the song continues to be sung.

Then the game shifts into 'Poor, Poor Pussy.' The class huddles in, rules are quickly explained, and someone is thrown into the middle of the circle to play 'pussy-cat.' The pussy-cat trots around the circle with a wicked gleam in her eye and approaches her first victim. She mews

pitifully, and pleading, gazes fondly into her chosen's eye. She rubs herself lovingly against his stomach. The chosen, not thinking this an honour, and with a forced straight face pats the cat and says icily, 'Poor, poor pussy-cat.'

The class roar with laughter at the cat's sincerity, shaking with delight, but the chosen holds his ground and bites his lip. The pussy-cat who has waited with determination for the hint of a smile, turns away with a mew of disgust, again reducing the circle to helpless giggles, and walks straight towards her next victim under whose nose she screeches a loud and wounded meow. The laughter has not yet subsided and the student cannot so much as speak the words. *It shows my focus problem. I give up too easily. I spend so much time being hard on myself: for not concentrating; for making mistakes. How can I possibly be creative with such mental attitudes?* writes a student later.

The pussy cat shrieks with triumph and resumes her place in the circle. The failed stroker, the unfortunate chosen, becomes the cat in search of a victim.

Once again, the game comes to an end and they decide on 'Murders.' Taylor lets the game be played until the students are flagging from exhaustion and laughter. And then she gathers them around her and comments on the relaxed and smiling faces.

'Let's look at what we did today. What was that all about?'

The students respond enthusiastically:

'Letting go.'

'Concentration.'

'Going back to beginnings.'

'Seeing the similarity in the games children play.'

'Losing our inhibitions.'

'Release.'

'Actively participating because the focus was not on me.'

`Losing yourself.'

`Spontaneity.'

`Playing with the same freedom as children ...'

Taylor listens carefully to the students stream of words and then asks, `What is the connection between this and acting?'

`You're playing when you're acting,' remarks a student.

`I want you to remember that, when you leave some improvisation classes feeling awful' reminds Taylor. `Acting is playing and enjoying. Playing and enjoying is at the root of it.'

Then Taylor reiterates the ground rules to her class. `Whatever you do here is fine with me. There is no requirement, mark or judgement on it. There's no good or bad in it. It's just in it.'

There is an abundant use of games amongst improvisation practitioners (Boal, Johnstone, Barker, et al); but it is Spolin who writes most definitively on games and game-playing, decoding their function and structure in improvisation. For Spolin, at the heart of game-playing is involvement and problem solving, and it is for that reason that games are invaluable in the breakthrough towards spontaneous action.

Being as Engagement

Game playing induces engagement on two levels. Because playing a game involves participation, the player actively engages in the game's demands which are both physical and mental. This unity of mental and physical functioning achieves a high level of what Spolin describes as total involvement. The engagement is holistic. And because the emphasis in game-playing is not on the self but rather on achieving the objectives of the game, students find it easier to lose their inhibitions and respond as the game's needs demand. This is again seen in Over The Top storytelling where the students become so consumed by the story's focus that they will do what is needed to keep the story going. Through the experience of the game, the student loses awareness of the critical Parent and is free to be receptive to both the game and the other players, as well as to respond

spontaneously, openly and without censorship. The player and her reactions are no longer governed by the Parent, but rather by the environment. She is being disciplined by her senses. This is clearly seen in the awakening awareness of the student who describes her inability to play the game as a 'focus' problem. She cannot be spontaneously active in the game because she is so aware of the presence of the censoring Parent - of looking stupid or failing. By allowing the game - and discovering ways of achieving the game's goals - to become her focus, the player is forced to enter into the imaginative world of the game and allow that to concentrate her focus throughout the duration of the game. And in that focusing, the player no longer concentrates on herself, but rather on the game. It is this 'loss of self' which heightens awareness, for the focus becomes one of total engagement with the environment and other players as opposed to a restrictive focus on the self.

Giving Form to Spontaneity

The engagement in game-playing is facilitated by rules. Rules create constraints which channel, guide and inspire creativity and spontaneity. Without these rules, the game is both formless and functionless. Delgado describes it like this:

In these creative processes the river of the imagination ... flows through the banks of artistic form When the river is low, the dry banks expand; when the river is too full, the banks are flooded. Either extreme can be catastrophic; only the balance best serves the substance and the container. (1986: 4)

It is the rules and the consequent devices the player creates that inspires ingenuity and inventiveness in the player. The game poses a problem, and it is through the playing that the problem is solved. The rigid structure of games is the mold of discipline.

Spontaneity without discipline is the equivalent to Grotowski's lost confession, for without form a voice remains inarticulate and incapable of expressiveness (Kumiega: 1987: 136). Oddly, it was the discipline of spontaneity that improvisors found most valuable². Because playing has no right or wrong, it is non-judgmental. Creativity or problem-solving is a constant affirmation, 'a way of saying yes to your imagination, yes to your environment, yes to one another, yes to life itself' (Delgado: 1986: 4).

Where Spolin uses the rules of the game as the container and stimulator of spontaneity, Taylor allows those rules to be broken knowing that with a change of rules is a change of experience. For each exercise that Taylor sets, she devises the rules of the game within which the students play. Often she is not satisfied when the rules are disobeyed, but ultimately she knows that the choice is up to the students. She will remind the students of that choice when they talk or open their eyes in an exercise which demands that they don't, but when those rules are changed, there is no judgment. Usually they have been changed for a reason - a student can't bear the loneliness of silence or the claustrophobia of darkness - but rather than correcting the student, she emphasises the change of encounter that he has created.

Throughout the three years of training, Taylor reiterates that there is no right or wrong way of completing the exercises. This is symbolised by the absence of an improvisation year mark - students are committed to class solely for a DP requirement³. When disputes arise over one-upmanship both in 'I'm better than you are' competitiveness and 'I'm right and you are wrong' attitude, Taylor retorts 'Have you not heard that there are no rights and wrongs in this class? We need to release all this because no-one is going to get 10 and another 2.' In Taylor's view, improvisation is 'a slow process. It cannot be rushed' (June 1993). Therefore the students can only really achieve within an environment free of criticism. Thus there can be no judgement on the way the student chooses to play the game. Nor can there be judgement on the way the student chooses to fashion her own experience.

ii

The Tree of Growth

the self and the environment

Central to actor training is the discovery and mastery of the body as the instrument of theatre language. As Grotowski succinctly states, if 'this body restricts itself to demonstrating what it is - something that any average person can do - then it is not an obedient instrument capable of performing a spiritual act' (1975: 33). To permit a

theatrical encounter, the body has to eclipse its constancy. To break with its habitual behaviour patterns, Taylor sends her students out into the world beyond the classroom either on their own or in pairs, to wander, and always to absorb and observe, for it is through observation that the body internalises knowledge different from its own.

I have divided this section into three phases: in the first phase the students go out and observe. In the second phase they bring back objects that they find on their wanderings, and use them to build sculptures to reflect their feelings towards what they have witnessed. In the last phase they use their bodies to express what they have observed.

Seeing a New World

‘Gather around me,’ Taylor beckons to her class after she has ensured that everyone is focused and ready to proceed. ‘You’re going to need your shoes today. We are going outside.’ She indicates that people need partners and once the shuffling of their organisation has subsided, she continues.

Taylor sends the class out into the surrounds of Gardens. Within the pairs, one is blind. The other is to be her eyes and lead her. It is the leader's task to create opportunities for a pleasurable experience.

‘Neither of you have tongues,’ she adds almost as an afterthought, reminded by the almost instant talking that the students have broken into. ‘If you alter this for any reason, you will have a different experience.’ The students ask for clarification and it emerges that each student's experience will last for approximately forty minutes. ‘After that period,’ Taylor instructs, ‘come back into the room for the change-over because the first orientation is in the room.’

Taylor silently retires deep into her chair and watches as the class

prepare for their journey. One by one they start to move around the room awkwardly, some holding hands, others holding arms and yet others with arms around shoulders or waist. At first it is difficult to determine who is blind and who is leading, for the leaders are as hesitant as the blind are distrustful. But soon a mutual understanding grows as leaders learn to be the eyes of the blind and they begin the arduous task of transforming mistrustfulness into gratification.

There are two very different types of experience that are released in this exercise. There is the world as experienced by the blind person, and that by the leader. The blind person, robbed of vision and a consciousness of being seen, begins to travel in her imagination. She un.masks a certain freedom, learning to let go, to drop her outstretched arms and lose herself in the world as it washes over her. *I began to feel so free*, reflects a student. *I felt I could do anything. We stopped to listen to some music that was being performed and I had the urge to go up and conduct them.* She becomes acutely aware of the world she is passing through, for her senses, like radar, become openly receptive and excite her imagination. She begins to marvel at all the things she 'sees' and in this landscape she loses herself. *When I had my eyes closed I completely forgot about my cold* writes another. *But when I was doing the leading, I was so aware of my cold, of my sniffing, of my nose running.*

The leader's world is also alive, but where the blind is living in an imagined world, the leader's world is a highly conscious one. She is freshly attentive to the environment she has previously tended to bypass, deadened by mundanity. She becomes aware of steps (that instinctively and with ease she would normally stroll down) in order that her partner does not fall. Watching the leaders with their blind:

Some leaders are overly cautious in their consternation at the responsibility and do not wander far, instead finding detail in all that they see and touch. Others, with heads and backs bent double, gallop their partners off into the dark and unknown world of staircases, roads and

peaceful avenues.

'I felt so stressed about leading,' says a student after the experience, and I watching, had noticed how she had stumbled up the stairs, more off balance than her blind partner.

'When I was the leader time went so slowly. I think it was because I felt quite pressured,' says a student. And writes another, *When I was leading I found myself feeling anxious about how to give him a good time - what kind of things would be enjoyable. It was only after I had my eyes closed that I realised you didn't have to do anything for it to feel good.*

Because of the heightened awareness and excitement that is generated, Taylor spends a good deal of time reflecting on the class's perceptions, particularly when one student reports that she had overheard a passer-by saying with derision, 'You'd think they'd teach them something useful.'

'What do you think about that comment?' she asks the group.

It is clearly evident how useful the class finds the exercise. Most remark on the tingling sensation of their skin, of the brightness, of the odd looks of sympathy and empathy they received, of a break-through in trust.

This blindness that Taylor has made her students experience is creating an opportunity for them to drag the world out of its dullness and make it 'blaze up again' (Johnstone: 1979: 13). A new world, transformed by a vision of the senses, in which new details, new perceptions, new relationships are explored and discovered.

It is the following week. Taylor, to capitalise on the wonder that has been sparked and to heighten her students' developing acumen, sends them out again, this time alone.

'Go out. See everything, hear everything, experience everything. You are not to talk,' she states emphatically. 'That is very important. Spend part of the time sitting. At a point that you choose sit and let

everything come at you very fast: sound, sight, smell. Let it all rush at you. Then you come back and write it down - what you experienced at that moment. Set out a pen and paper ready for your return.'

The students found this exercise one of the most difficult. Taylor is asking them to drink in the world until they are saturated and then to bask in the overflow of their senses. Many confessed to denying themselves at that moment. *I became so anxious about experiencing everything that I refused to allow myself to relax - I should be having profound thoughts. I enjoyed wandering around and I think I had a few intense moments - I chose to look at things in a lot more detail, but I denied myself the time to muse and contemplate. And then I missed the moment.* Many also tried to control their experiences rather than just letting them happen. 'I went out looking for an intense moment' admits one student in discussion, 'and missed it because it didn't happen when it should have.' And writes another, *I went into Cranfords [a crammed and musty old second-hand bookshop] where I instantly felt at home and my mind relaxed. I knew I was in a special place and I felt I was back in Egypt in the tombs remembering how the dark walls were beautifully carved, but because of pitch darkness would never be seen. I felt I was witnessing that same kind of devotion. I suppose that was my moment, but I didn't choose for it to happen then.* 'I spent much time trying to make the moment rather than letting the moment be,' comments a student to the class. 'I couldn't just see an orange flicker. I kept experiencing myself saying, at the moment of seeing, "I have just seen an orange flicker"'⁴.

This kind of awareness is exhausting. To watch and engage in the world as it goes by requires more concentration than letting it spin, unheeded, eternally onwards.

A week passes by.

'You are going out for part of the day,' Taylor informs her class. 'I want you to find two small objects - not too small and not too large -,' she clarifies, 'but objects of meaning. They must interest you. You are going to work with your objects with a group, so choose your group now.' The

class divide into groups of four and space themselves about the room.

When the noise has died down, Taylor continues with the instructions.

‘Come back with your objects and return to your group. Show your objects to each other with insight - what it is that interests you.’

Taylor wants her students to go out, look and develop an affinity with the environment around them. Much like Way's exercises on sensory development (1967: 20), she wants them to peer and probe and respond feelingly to the smallest details that lie unnoticed, hidden in the gutter beneath passing feet. Students return with a tiny bit of broken plastic that blinked and glinted in the sun; a piece of shattered mirror reflecting its fractured world; a small flower that is in the prime of its bloom; a metal shard that has been beaten satiny-smooth by the rush-hour traffic; a dried stick containing a dozen little faces in its knots; a discarded hubcap made beautiful by its circle of eternity; an egg-shaped pebble. ‘It's amazing how much of what we brought back is rubbish,’ remarks a student who had labelled his sculpture ‘(G)rim View’.

Observation as Contact

With the whirlwind of our stressed day-to-day lives, we inevitably shut ourselves off from our surroundings. We don't see ourselves or our activities as part of the larger world, nor the world as part of us. Our environment becomes a backdrop, simply a familiar thoroughfare. Taylor, by making the students focus on their surroundings, teaches them to step outside themselves and their personal preoccupations. If one is not open to one's surroundings, responses become fixed patterns of behaviour unchanged by circumstance. No real contact takes place - we stare instead of see. Contact is the act of engagement. One cannot make contact if one cannot ‘see’, for if you cannot see, you cannot respond. Thus by sending her students out to observe, Taylor is using the environment not just as a backdrop to their lives, but as a well-spring of information for the actor in training.

Engagement as Loss of Self

Through observation, engagement is achieved. Engagement in the world requires effort -

the effort of giving oneself up. For Dillard (1974) it is this kind of observation and engagement which is the root of heightened presence; living in the here-and-now. Heightened awareness occurs when there is reciprocity between the observer and the observed. She describes her experience of watching a muskrat which must never know you are there to be seen.

I never knew I was there, either. For that forty minutes last night I was as purely sensitive and mute as a photographic plate; I received impressions, but I did not print out captions. My own self-awareness had disappeared And I have often noticed that even a few minutes of this self-forgetfulness is tremendously invigorating. (198)

Students' responses to these experiences show how separate our thought and feeling processes have become - the world split from our experience of it. One student writing about her experience of the moment describes Dillard's printed captions clearly: *If you can imagine it in black print - that is how I experienced it - in words, not in feeling.* And in reflection, 'I think that this was caused by some kind of anxiety - when I feel I have to produce, a block, in this case a denial of feelings, becomes wedged and I sit and watch and comment rather than being myself'. And another says later, 'It is easier to analyse and look back on the experience rather than just to experience it'.

In Grotowski's view, the actor's body must move towards what he terms non-existence. 'If the actor is conscious of his body, he cannot penetrate and reveal himself. The body must be freed from all resistance. It must virtually cease to exist' (1975: 36). The moment you try and explain how you are feeling, you become a duality and are once again aware of yourself, self-conscious. For Dillard, it is this self-consciousness that locks us in our consciousness. 'It is ironic that the one thing that all religions recognise as separating us from our creator - our very self-consciousness - is also the one thing that divides us from our fellow creatures', for the focus and hence the engagement has turned inwards (1974: 79). Thus total involvement in the here-and-now is about engaging totally in the world outside, paradoxically without an awareness of oneself.

Consciousness itself does not hinder living in the present ... it is only to a heightened awareness that the great door to the present opens at all.... *Self-consciousness*, however, does hinder the experience of the present. It is

the one instrument that unplugs all the rest the second I become aware of myself at any of these activities [smelling a leaf, drawing a tree] - looking over my shoulder, as it were - the tree vanishes, uprooted from the spot and flung out of sight as if it had never grown. And time, which had flowed down into the tree bearing new revelations like floating leaves at every moment, ceases. It dams, still, stagnates. (81)

But, 'loss of self' in engagement is not the same as what the students describe as 'losing oneself in the experience'. This distinction must be made clear. 'Loss of self' implies an heightened awareness of self integrated with a larger vision of the world. Losing oneself implies quite the opposite. Students who 'lose themselves' are those who have become so pre-occupied and involved with their own feelings that they are oblivious to the world around them. Where 'loss of self' is the coming together of the observer and the observed to perform as an informed unity, 'losing oneself' has a subject only, the student who is cut off from the larger framework, aware only of himself.

'Being' in Observation

It is this 'loss of self', attained through the act of observation and 'seeing', that a state of 'being' is achieved. Wheelwright describes 'The blessed state of being ... [as] the everyday world, or some aspect of it, seen and felt and contemplated with a new awareness' (1962: 156). As the world is seen anew, there is a freshness of contact that excites and invigorates, for this new vision is both energising and rejuvenating. The students frequently remark on the newly acquired energy during the reflection period, and subsequently display a resulting ease. Exhaustion is created from operating within a closed system where only one half of the brain (usually the left side) is allowed to develop and is therefore coerced into working over-time, unsupported or nourished by its natural partner, the much malnourished imagination. As the students embark on this journey outwards, they discover a wholeness of being - their imaginations are stimulated and reality becomes heightened. They discover that they are no longer operating in isolation, but exist within a wholly supportive environment which paradoxically exists within them.

Finding the New World in Ourselves

Let us return to Taylor watching as the students share with the rest of their group the objects that they have selected on their travels. She observes their intensity and when she feels there is a lapse in the chatter or the silent showing, she calls for their attention.

‘Without speaking,’ Taylor continues, ‘you are going to build a sculpture or picture with all the objects in your group. Do not stop until everyone in the group agrees on the picture.’ When the groups have settled on their sculpture, Taylor wanders in amongst the students and tells them to give their sculpture a name. There is a sudden explosion of noise. It eventually dies down.

‘Now, one by one, place yourselves into the sculpture,’ Taylor instructs after the groups have completed building. ‘See, each time if the name applies. Then you are going to activate the sculpture.’ Slowly each body becomes an extension of their own creations. There is much experimenting with ways of becoming a part. Taylor watches and when the class is quiet she tells them to ‘put what you have created into motion.’ The sculptures begin to move rhythmically, in many cases capturing the essence of their sculpture. When Taylor feels that each group is prepared to stop and watch each other, she ends the exercise.

‘Okay, let’s have a look at your group,’ she motions to a cluster in the far corner. The rest of the class form a semi-circle around them. To the onlookers who are viewing just the sculpture made out of the objects, Taylor asks, ‘What would you call it?’

‘Satellite.’

‘Hangover on Sunday.’

‘The Iron Cross.’

‘Exhibition.’

The names flood over the sculpture. During the naming, Taylor

looks both amused and intrigued and this is echoed in her repetition of the titles given. When the names begin to dwindle, Taylor asks the group, 'Was it anything like your own titles?'

The group members voice their own names:

'Flying Degradation.'

'Colonising Mars.'

'Death Cross.'

'The Dark Cloud.'

'Were the titles similar?' Taylor asks the class and there is comment on the similarities. After a brief discussion she then asks the group to place themselves into the statue and to put it into motion. The group starts to waver and unbalance. There is a motion which resonates with many of the titles. Taylor asks for more titles, and after observations and a general agreement on 'Shelter' the students disentangle themselves and the class moves onto the next group.

With another class Taylor uses a similar method but with different stimuli. She begins the lesson by reminding the students that they have been working with impulses from the outside.

'Today, go out and listen,' she tells them. 'Identify four sounds and uncover the rhythm. Go and find four different rhythms to bring back. Listen to the rhythm and find the movement that goes with it,' she carefully instructs. There is some confusion between sound and rhythm and she clarifies through rephrasing, focusing their attention on the rhythm that inhabits the sound. 'You can recreate the sound, but I want you to focus on recreating the rhythm,' she explains. 'Get the rhythm accurate.' And again a reminder, 'I don't want you to talk because you then focus on what people are saying. Concentrate on the rhythm.'

The class wander outside. They have forty minutes to hear the

world around them, to soak up the sounds and to harbour the rhythms in their bodies.

When the class returns, they gather into working groups and spread themselves throughout the room.

'I want you to share the four experiences rhythmically with your group,' she says to the clusters who are watching her intensely. 'Then I want you to choose one that is particularly exciting from the group that you will feed back into the whole class.' And once again as a reminder to this specific class who find it difficult to keep silent, 'Don't talk. You will ruin the listening experience.'

The groups huddle together and partake of one another's rhythms. Again she listens for the sounds of completion, and when she determines a conclusive lull, she gathers the class around her.

At this point Taylor is standing at the crossroads of her lesson. She considers her options and takes the class's needs into consideration when choosing her path.

With one particular class she explains to the groups that they are now going to activate their chosen rhythm. 'Find different ways of doing it - of expressing that rhythm with sound and movement.'

The class disperses again, and as they work what were once sounds begin to emerge in a physical form.

The groups gather to watch each other's work. The first group begins and through the form of hands and bodies moving vigorously, yet slowly, they envelop the class in a thick air which seeps peacefully amongst them. When they bring their movement to an end, Taylor asks the class three questions:

'What did it make you feel? What was the mood? Did the feelings have something to do with the rhythms?' The class speak about the calmness that over-took them and how it was created, and when they have

to pin-point the sound that was the source of the rhythm, for most students there is no doubt that it is the whale music, heard down in the whale-well at the Natural History Museum in the Gardens.

In most of the groups the movements generate feelings that are recognisable and identifiable with their sources. The class are delighted by the relationship of rhythm with emotion and Taylor stresses the importance of sound and rhythm used by actors to evoke the senses.

With another class, Taylor takes another route. The group members, after having shared all of the sounds that they collected, pool them.

'Now, I want you to bring them all together in an improvisation about this city,' says Taylor, 'through the use of sound, rhythm and movement. Build it up together out of what you have experienced.'

They end their class with a discussion around the various ways of watching. Taylor wants them to look into things, to penetrate with their gaze that they may discover the different components that make up that which they are watching or hearing.

So, when Taylor sends them out for the last time, she assigns a task which demands that her students penetrate beneath the seen surfaces. They are going on an excursion to observe growth.

'Think about it,' she says frankly. 'Think of growth. A seed in the ground becomes a tree. A child is a foetus in the womb and grows. When you are out there look at 'growth'. Imagine the growth of that thing. You need to store your feelings and experiences. Come back after an hour. Don't talk.'

The students leave the room.

After an hour they return, many with substantially more energy than when they had first arrived.

'Okay. Find a partner,' Taylor says. 'Describe in detail your experience - what you observed, what you imagined, what was exciting or astonishing. One person talk, then the other, and then discuss. Don't start by discussing.'

There is an excitement as the students begin. She leaves them until she can begin to see that their discussions are drawing to a close.

'Has everyone finished?' she queries, and on account of the silent response she receives, she leaves the class for a few more minutes to finish off their discoveries.

One student writes, *When we went out to wander around the gardens I was terribly thirsty and felt dehydrated and shrivelled. I went and bought a drink, and while I was drinking I was imagining and feeling how with liquid things come to life, swell, become abundant and grow. I had never thought of drinking like that before. I could feel my insides beginning to become vital again.*

'I suddenly became very aware of the sun on my skin,' says a student rapidly, 'and thought "what a pity that we just get sunburnt. What would happen if we could photosynthesise like plants."'

'I thought about the pain of growth, the dependency,' says one.

And a student remarks with excitement about her visions, 'I felt everything had become transparent, like I was able to see through everything. Inside trees I saw this incredible network of liquid moving up and down and I was wondering how the tree could be so still with so much happening inside it.' One student said later, much later, years after having done a similar exercise, 'I've never quite seen leaves the same since.' And she had surprised herself when she continued, 'In fact it put me in such communion with them that I've even thought of taking up botany.'

Observation and the Imagination

Taylor sees these exercises as inspiring creativity. The imagination is stimulated through

the act of observation, which becomes an engagement of the whole being. Thus 'being' does not just imply unity with one's environment. When one is functioning in a total unity of time, there seems to be no distinction between the imagination and reality. To 'see' is to penetrate the surface, to look beyond and 'discover the components,' which is what Taylor urges her students to do. Through engaging, the seeing becomes an imaginative response. This is what Wheelwright describes as the 'responsive-imaginative' act (1962: 154). The imagination is sparked by response and the response is fed from the imagination.

If 'the environment permits it, anyone can learn whatever he chooses to learn, and if the individual permits it, the environment will teach him everything it has to teach' writes Spolin (1963: 3). It is this reciprocal exchange which informs the training actor. Taylor sends the students out to search and investigate their world, to learn from their locality. And in the exchange, the students locate that world within themselves. They walk out into the world with their ears and enter the improvisation room with the sounds embedded in their bodies; they see vast systems of energy in trees and find that same network existing within themselves. *The memory that I held most close to me, writes a student in reflection on watching growth, was that of a young oak growing next to an old oak - how the young oak had to be tied up to keep it standing straight, but how it had so much energy as if it were moving all the time - terribly flexible - and the old oak stood firm and strong. It could stand up on its own, up dead straight, but also incredibly vital. I wondered where I was in my life in terms of the two oaks.* Because reciprocity is an awareness that man gives to the land and that the land gives to man, there is a developing understanding that Nature and the self are not independent. Thus it is that the students bound back into the improvisation room with an energy and zest that is buried and born deep beneath us.

Expressing the New World

The students are invigorated. Taylor, to capitalise on this irrepressible energy, prepares them for the next stage of the exercise.

`I want you to find a space and lie in it - I want you to imagine that you are a seed physically and in your mind. Feel safe in the soil, think about the life that is going to be when you start growing. Imagine what you are going to be. Keep your eyes closed. You can't see anything.'

Once Taylor feels that the students have become engaged and are prepared for growth, she continues.

`Somewhere in the clouds it begins to rain. You hear something.' In the silence the pressure of accumulating clouds mount.

And then with relief, `Feel the warm damp rain and respond to it. It's the beginning of something.' Bit by bit she conjures a changeable landscape, all the time observing. `Think of what you are doing, struggling to grow up out of the soil and into the air. Experience the moment you start to crack the soil above with the shoot you are sending up. In a moment you will get through the cracks and there you are in the air and the sun.'

`Know what kind of plant you are,' she reminds the students as she watches them worm their way out of the ground, struggling with the effort of growth. `Feel the sun. When you want to feel the wind: if it's strong feel it, if it's gentle, feel it.' Taylor gives the students time to let the senses bristle.

`Feel the rain, feel the dryness,' she continues. `Feel the rain that saves you from the dryness. When you want to, experience them.' The soil starts to wrench and tear and heave as the life beneath its surface swells, and searches for the sun. Soon the room is as dense and as lush as a forest filled with an encyclopaedia of plants. Some are large and sprawling. The oaks grow thick and strong and uncompromisingly upwards, their branches standing inflexibly straight. The thin creepers and stringy runner-beans grow and search for support, and when finding none, collapse. There are others which are small and delicate, covered in

beautifully coloured flowers. One seed swells with water, but the dryness cracks and shrivels its skin and the seed remains hidden beneath the earth.

At times the forest is still and silent, a faint rustling breeze teasing the leaves. Now and again, a wind rushes through whipping the branches and hammering the trunks.

‘Move on towards the end of your life now,’ intones Taylor, her voice drifting through the forest like a lost breath of air. ‘You’ve grown and grown,’ she observes, ‘now move on.’ And it is as though the climate has changed. Where there was energy and life, twigs snap and whole trees crash to the ground. Plants frazzle and wither and die. Some plants are resisting the end, but eventually the forest floor is strewn with debris.

‘When you are ready, come and join me.’ The students gradually come to life again and prop themselves up partially to form a circle, Taylor included. When all have joined the group she speaks into the relaxed silence.

‘Okay. Anyone want to say anything?’

‘It was really beautiful,’ a voice answers whimsically and there is a humming of agreement. There is a silence of pure enjoyment.

‘It was very relaxing,’ someone says eventually.

People slowly begin to talk.

‘I found it quite difficult. I was a bean and needed to be attached,’ said the runner-bean who had remained frustratedly limp and downhung throughout.

‘Do you want to know what other people were?’ Taylor inquires, and there is a general nod of yesses. Quickly each person says what plant they were.

‘I couldn’t grow,’ said the student who had remained a seed.

‘Yes, I saw that. How did you feel?’ asks Taylor.

‘I felt so warm and secure. I didn’t want to grow out of it.’

‘That’s alright,’ Taylor reassures. ‘It gave you a different

experience, that's all.'

'I felt the incredible energy of what growth is. I just wanted to move,' replied a student in amazement.

'It's a hell of an effort to grow,' blurts another. 'Isn't there a way of transforming this form of energy into energy for cars?'

'I struggled to grow. There were weeds strangling me and I kept thinking of the education I'm absorbing and I'm struggling to grow' says one thoughtfully.

'What are those weeds?' Taylor asks him.

'The weeds?' He ponders for a while, and then with illumination, 'They're friends from location.'

'I really got into being a rotting log,' says another. 'Somehow rotting felt like growth too, but only backwards.'

There is a quiet reflective silence. And she ends by asking, 'How many of you do gardening?'

There is a lot of excitement and satisfaction after this lesson, and it is one that almost all Taylor's students, past and present, remember. It has been an intense period of accumulation and storage of sensory stimuli, and through a physical expression of growth the new information is felt and internalised. What they saw when they crushed a leaf and watched its life-juices run down their hand, they felt vibrating in the ends of their fingers as they grew towards the sun; the flow of energy made their spines lengthen in search of the sky. They had observed, and now discovered and expressed the tree of life within them. It is this new information that becomes the actor's inventory for expressiveness.

A week later, Taylor is facing the same students. She has asked them to share their memories.

'I would like you to talk to each other about your own process of remembering from your earliest recollections,' Taylor states to the students who are scattered in pairs over the rough wooden floor.

The class, half facing their partners, incline their heads towards Taylor to listen to her instructions.

'Tell your partner anything and everything. As much as possible, as early as possible. I want you to actively hear the other. Don't talk at the same time. Actively listen,' she repeats.

Heads drop towards heads and they quietly begin their reminiscences.

'Go back as far as you can,' Taylor breaks into the nostalgia. 'Push each other back into your memories,' she urges and then listens and watches while weaving between remembrances.

'Try and find an earlier recollection than the earliest one you have already covered.' Taylor is not content if the students do not challenge themselves. After a while, she interrupts, this time more softly.

'Now, talk about the most painful things in your life.' There is a brief halt in the chatter as the students listen to the instruction, and then they resume.

And later, 'What was the most significant thing that happened to you to make you who you are today?'

They spend most of the lesson sharing memories.

'We were both flooded with memories,' rejoices one student, after Taylor quietly and amusedly inquired about the exercise.

'It was great!'

'Fantastic!' exclaim students.

'Wonderful to look back on things that we thought were so serious,' laughs another.

'We were reminded of things through what each other said. We also discovered that often we became confused between a real memory and memories that were stirred up by photographs and stories.'

'At first it was just fragments and then it became more and more,' comments a student.

'We also found that as we got older, much of what we found painful was very similar. And the feelings of growing up were similar ... although our experiences were different, there was a common bond that connected us together despite leading completely separate lives,' remarks a student who looks thoughtfully across the circle to the person she had shared her memories with. They both smile.

Later, in another lesson, she reminds these students of their various growth processes, both as trees and through memories. Drawing from those experiences, the students will now embark on their own life's journey, beginning after its conception. As with the forest, Taylor describes their situation. She breaks their stages of growth with periods of sleep.

'First you are a baby in the womb.' Taylor's voice is quiet and smooth. 'A curled foetus. You are wrapped in a beautiful fluid that makes you feel safe. You can move in that fluid and all the while you are there you are growing. Experience yourself growing.'

The bodies in the room, curled tight, slowly begin to roll and fluidly extend, their limbs light and buoyant. Arms stretch blindly, but always curl in again, contained by the elastic membrane. *All I was aware of was my heart beat ... I was a formless little mass of life pumping away.*

Taylor watches the gentle explorations before she continues.

'You are growing towards being born ... you are growing stronger... you can't see anything yet, your eyes are not open ... as you get stronger there's a beginning of a will in you to get out ... the water keeps you safe and supported ... the force in you to get out is getting stronger. It is the force to be born.'

And finally she adds, 'You can choose that moment.'

There is great exclamation about the birth.

'It was all very happy until the waters broke,' exclaimed a student

later in reflection. 'I found myself being pushed out. The amount of energy and pain involved was enormous and I began to feel very reluctant about being born. It hurt my body particularly my head.'

'What struck me most about the outside world was the dryness and emptiness of the space,' another said, amazed at how much his perception of the world had changed.

'It's a shock! ... you look for food ... it's one of the first things you do,' adds a third.

But this is only said afterwards. At the time all that is heard is a gasp for air, a few howls of terror and relief, and giggling. Taylor reminds the students to draw their focus in onto themselves. And then she reiterates, 'Everyone is a baby here. You understand as a baby, hear as a baby hears,' as the giggling breaks into laughter. Finally, to aid their focus, she sends them all to sleep. She keeps the babies asleep until she is satisfied that the class has settled. When she feels they have regained their concentration, she wakes them gently with her voice.

'Soon you are going to wake up. When you wake up you are beginning to crawl.' To prevent hesitancy, she confirms, 'I'll tell you when to wake up,' and when she does, she guides them, 'You are beginning to crawl.'

'You're getting stronger and you can crawl better,' she informs the students as she watches them begin to focus on their hands, the floor and finally on other babies' faces. One baby begins to cry in a corner. Taylor moves towards him. She sits nearby and comforts him with a hand on his shoulder. When she feels that the babies have explored sufficiently their growing awareness, she croons them back to sleep.

'And rest,' she advises them.

Again, through the silence, she wakes them telling them that when they wake up they are beginning to walk. The students start lifting themselves off the floor, very bottom heavy and unbalanced. Once up,

they teeter, testing their legs. Most drop straight back down again and emit wails of despair and frustration. A few even become red-faced, threatening tantrums, and Taylor, to appease them, diverts their attention.

`You have the beginning of words, two words,' she says quickly to the toddlers. Up to this point there have only been soft gurglings and a few howls. Generally the children have been quite introvert and content and physical in the exploration of their bodies. With the introduction of words, the room begins to explode with chatter as the outside world is discovered and more easily expressed.

She again shifts the awareness of their surroundings when she wakes them up as ten and eleven year olds. The children start playing games and interacting with each other, and then they are faced with the inevitable trauma of puberty when she next wakes them as fifteen year olds.

`This is when adolescents are concerned with sexuality in a particular way, when girls are girls and boys are boys. It is a difficult period. Don't just rush into it. It's very different to the last time,' she says to the group of mooching teen-agers, while pushing the students to concentrate and find the truth in what they are doing. She is reluctant to give them too many guidelines. She insists that it is important that they discover where they are going or where they are not going.

When the students grow for the last time, they are to leave what they know behind.

`Sit where you are,' she says to the group. `I want you to think about this person that you are at fifteen. What is this person going to be like at forty? In a minute you are going to stand up and be that person at forty. It's beyond the age that you are now. When you feel ready begin. BUT, start by yourself,' she warns. `Don't immediately talk to someone. Give yourself time and give other people time.'

In the reflective discussion afterwards, when everyone has returned

to their present ages, students comment on the difficulty of the lesson, and the frustrations of certain age-groups.

'I found it quite traumatic, growing up. I was happy before birth.'

'Yes, being forty was liberating,' agreed another. *I felt as though through the teens it was a chance to change my life and see how it could have been. I felt incapable of taking up that challenge. I wonder how possible it is to change oneself. I know that in these classes this is not demanded or expected - rather accepting oneself the way one is - but it seemed like such a chance.*

Reciprocity as Presence

Reciprocity is an awareness of and a response to a relative world. The students enter into a relationship with their surroundings. This interchange is a move away from a one dimensional view of the world in which we exist alone and in isolation. The painted backdrop becomes a part of ourselves, a landscape within which we travel and which moulds our journey. The student who sees the two oak trees finds her own life written in the pattern of their growth; the student who drinks the water discovers the properties of its nourishment. This reciprocity is the essence of presence. Wheelwright writes:

A person's sense of presence is likely to be most strongly marked and most incontestably evident in his relationship, at certain heightened moments, with another person. This is as it should be, for an individual sinks into a deadening egoism ... unless he occasionally exercises and stretches his ability to realise another person as in independent presence ... To know someone as a presence ... is to meet him with an open, listening, responsive attitude ... (1962: 154-155)

Chaikin echoes this view of presence. He describes it as "the visceral confrontation with the reality that one is living now and at some other time no longer living" and thus a sharing of mortality (Shank: 1982: 39). Presence is a heightened sense of identification.

Without this metaphoric interplay between reality and imagination - the merging of the imaginary and real to develop a growing interpenetrative relationship with the world - actors exist within an unsupportive system and appear dead inside it. They do not fulfil the present for they are distinct from the world and unresponsive to it. They act in

isolation: one dimensional characters in a one dimensional world.

iii

Building Bridges in the Dark

the self and society

Improvisation, like theatre, is a social activity thus significant to an actor's training is the understanding that the actor does not function alone, but is part of a social unit. Taylor spends many of her early lessons in group exploration: finding ways of bridging the gaps between individuals so that they may support each other and endeavour to neither work in isolation, nor compete, but begin 'working with the idea of the total picture and the individual's small but significant place' in it (Pather: 1991: 91).

'Close your eyes,' Taylor tells as the group after they have focused and settled in a place in the room. 'Today we're going to work in the dark.'

To orientate the students before they close their eyes for the entire period she asks them to open their eyes 'and look around the room. Take in everything that is in the room. Look,' she says with amusement, and 'When you feel ready to close your eyes, close them.'

Taylor always enjoys this exercise.

The students close their eyes. When she perceives a look of frustration on someone's face, she adds, 'If you want to say something, just raise your hand and I'll come to you,' and when confusions have been clarified, she continues.

'I want you to turn three times around,' she instructs the class. 'Now walk to your right. Now walk to your left,' she commands to muddle them, and watches as arms move out wildly and the group start probing their darkness. 'Now walk straight,' and when the group is well and truly disorientated, she asks them to 'Discover the room for yourself.'

The students move slowly. Some stretch out their arms with heads

retreating, while others create shields with their hands. They giggle nervously as they bump into objects or into each other, but Taylor leaves them to explore in silence.

'Don't take me as an anchor because I could move,' she says with a wicked glint in her eye to a student whom she feels is not engaged in exploration. Softly and with a surprising lightness of foot she trots off into another corner of the room.

After a while her voice from far off pierces their darkness, 'Go to your most comfortable spot in the room. Where you like it best.' There is a slow shuffle of bodies and then a peacefulness as they settle behind curtains and pillars, or simply in the middle of the room. When everyone has relaxed into their chosen spot, she resumes.

'Go to the place in the room which you like least.'

As students become more confident in the darkness, movement speeds up, but Taylor does not want them to rush, rather to be true to their impulses.

'Give yourself time to find out,' she guides them. 'You're looking for the place you like least in the room.' And again, Taylor has to reiterate her rules, 'Do not open your eyes' and 'Do not talk', for many students feel threatened, afraid and lonely throughout the duration of the exercise.

Afterwards students reflect:

'It was so nice to come into contact with someone,' says one.

'There was such a temptation to talk - it was too long not to talk,' says another.

'I wanted to obey the rules, but when somebody wanted to know who I was, I felt guilty not helping them if they were desperate,' says a third.

'I think some people took this exercise as an excuse for feeling each other,' said one rather angry student who had spoken in admonishment during the exercise. And there is a chorus of yesses as

many agree.

'It's one thing to feel in order to analyse. It's another just to grope.'

'People just grabbed you and pulled, regardless of whether you wanted to go with them,' added another.

But back to the present where the students still have their eyes closed and are trapped in the darkness of the place they like least.

'Go back to the place you like most' Taylor instructs and there is a visible sigh of relief as they step out and leave the discomfort behind.

After this orientation, Taylor will select what is appropriate for this group. If she feels the class are still struggling with the darkness, she will draw them together as a group.

'Now carefully come to the centre of the room, and make a circle shoulder to shoulder on your stomachs, heads facing inwards.' There is a lot of shuffling and jolting as the students try to organise the circle, eyes still closed. Finally, when they feel in the right place, they lower themselves gently onto their stomachs.

Taylor waits and looks at the haphazard arrangement. 'If you're missing a shoulder you need to get closer.' There is a hesitation, then a shuffling and once again they settle with an air of achievement.

'You know if one of your shoulders is not touching another,' she says surprised. 'Do something about it.' Talking starts to break out amongst the students, but very little movement, and she reminds them yet again of the rules. 'I'm waiting for all the shoulders to be joined. Do this without talking. There are still shoulders that aren't touching. You must do something. You know if your shoulder isn't touching.'

It is easy, as a sighted person, to become frustrated watching the students unable to achieve the task. It appears as if the blindness of closed eyes has incapacitated the group. Despite their darkness, for privileged observers their faces are illuminating: their feelings and attitudes shining

out. It really is an exercise about awareness.

Finally the hesitation which had spread amongst the group dissolves with desperation, and large gaps diminish to form a perfect circle. Taylor does not speak or indicate that the task is complete. She allows the awareness of its completion to filter through the group. Then after a weighty pause, she continues.

'I want you to stretch your arms out in front of you. Keep your eyes closed. Keep not talking.' Quite suddenly there is a stockpile of hands wriggling in the middle, and grunts as hands thud onto each other. But once again they settle with achievement.

'In a moment you are going to find another two hands. Not a pair of hands. You're going to move forward with your hands -' and before she has had a chance to clarify her instructions, there is a scrabble forwards.

This kind of panic is common to the darkness work. Many students express their fear of being the last person to achieve or being left out and feeling foolish. Because they cannot see, they cannot assess where they are in relation to the other students, and so they rush, disregarding other people.

Taylor emphasises slowness and caution. When all are satisfied that they have a different hand in each of their own, she instructs them:

'Slowly, very slowly, stand up still holding hands. Slowly!' she cries, her voice cutting through the scrabbling and talking that has broken out. And when they have calmed down she encourages them to remember the rules. When the last person has managed to squeeze themselves into the crushed heap of crouching bodies, tangled by their web of hands, she speaks:

'Now without talking, without opening your eyes, I want you to find your circle.' There is a gleam in her eyes as she watches. She has not done this exercise for years, and remembers its demands and hilarious

confusion. Students, in an endless variety of positions, crawl under and climb over legs, arms and shoulders. They twist and turn, are pulled and pushed, split and nearly strangled, until the web miraculously untangles and vanishes.

Taylor leaves them standing in a circle, still with hands held, creating a confusion by her silence. 'Can you improve on it?' she asks smilingly, and then ventures, 'When you're satisfied with your circle, stand still. Stretch it so that it's a circle.' When the arms are taut she lets them open their eyes. When the students do, there is much chattering and laughter, and 'I thought it was you'. To round off the class Taylor instructs them to close their eyes once again. She leads the somnabulists vocally around the room. As she skips silently to different parts of the room uttering, 'Walk towards me. Stop. Walk towards me. Stop. Turn around three times,' the students flock in wide arcs and turn stumblingly to halt. Once the students are completely disorientated, she instructs them:

'Find your favourite place in the room,' and as they grope and laugh, she says with a flash of humour in her voice, 'Do you know where it is?' Not many do. But when they reach their target, they stand assuredly.

For Taylor, this darkness work is fascinating. Because of the lack of sight, students behave as though they cannot be seen, and because they are having to rely so much on their senses, attitudes toward the group become increasingly pronounced. 'You can tell a lot about people in these exercises,' she says while the students work. 'It is very revealing: the students who don't care about others, those that are cautious, those that are caring and those that let themselves be bullied.'

Still working with the darkness of closed eyes, Taylor calls out for volunteers. She fetches two who have raised hands and in hushed tones, instructs them to build a simple, strong and durable bridge with their

bodies anywhere in the room. She watches, helps with the finishing touches, and when the bridge is ready, she addresses the rest of the class who are sitting in darkness and facing the walls of the room.

'There is a bridge somewhere in the room,' she tells them. 'This bridge is made out of two people's bodies. Your task is to find them. When you find the bridge, pass underneath it and make the identical bridge on the other side.' And to clarify the task, she adds 'You must find the people, discover what the bridge is like, go through the bridge and make the same bridge on the other side.'

She gives them the signal to start and then sits back and watches, scanning the faces, the bodies, the interactions, and if necessity arises she will help. There may be an odd person searching for a non-existent partner, or someone lost in a far-off part of the room, but mostly she sits during the scrabbling. *I found myself to be quite scared of this exercise for a number of reasons, writes a student. People are going to bump into my face and I feel immobile; I'm going to be the only person who has not found the bridge and I'm going to look like an idiot; I don't like people touching me and pushing me around and I feel so alone. When the exercise started, most of my fears came into being. People were in a mad rush, pushing, giggling, slapping each other and the whole thing turned into chaos. Often I half opened my eyes to try and find some order in my life, but then I felt guilty as though I had just cheated.*

Slowly the bridge becomes jammed by the pushing mass of thronging people, and at times appears in danger of crumbling, with the pain of being squashed and squeezed written on its many faces. But as it lengthens its passing traffic dwindles and it becomes sturdier. There are some travellers who insist on boring an entrance through one of the walls, while there are others who join at right angles, unable to distinguish the bridge's axis. Sections of the bridge are incomplete, walls only half built. As the structure begins to develop some kind of shape and stillness

envelops the room, Taylor moves towards the original bridge and whispers to them to remove themselves from the greater structure and reform elsewhere in the room.

'Open your eyes now everybody,' she says. And as they do there is a lot of laughter.

'Look at the original. Now look at your own.' Through the exclamation at chaos, Taylor insists that the students observe how far their bridge is from the original.

And as the exercise is repeated - a new bridge in a new part of the room - greater accuracy is achieved.

Discovering the 'I' via Ensemble

In these improvisational exercises, the students participate in building the picture together. Like Boal's game, 'Glass Cobra' - strength lies in unity (1992: 108) - building the bridge explores the relationship of the individual to the group. There is no bridge unless everyone creates it. It is people who make the bridge: if it is built with care and consideration, the bridge is strong and the people are powerful; if it is not, the bridge is neither durable nor usable and the people are weakened by their individuality. When the class open their eyes and face the quality of their bridge they are witness to their social reality.

Taylor's improvisation class thus becomes a microcosm of our multi-cultural South African society where differences in social realities are vast. The class consists of a white majority who have been educated in a competitive and emphatically individualising environment and who have a highly developed sense of 'self'. The minority who are black students have a greater sense of community or group, and a rather deflated concept of 'self'. The former find it difficult to give themselves up to the group, whereas the latter value group identity over individuality. In discussion afterwards, the effects of the exercise are pronounced. There is frequently a lot of anger amongst members of the group. 'What kept me going was the thought that if I didn't want to be bumped I was sure nobody else wanted to be bumped either,' said a student, and others

agree, taking the opportunity to describe exactly how much they resent being in a crowd of people who will pursue any course of action to win. Writes a student of the sequel exercise (Appendix A), *I happened to find one of the statues first and I began to feel it, quite carefully. Then someone else found it and pushed me out of the way. The only thing I could do was to get out of the way and wait for someone else to find me to make the statue.* What this exercise is beginning to teach them is that the goal cannot be reached alone. For Pather, this is the 'politics of improvisation' exactly because the improvisation floor is 'a shared meeting ground' (1991: 91). Writes Miller in discussion with Shapiro:

A salient paradox of direct political action is that, in its immediacy it tends to diminish individual talents. Perhaps that's where the prospect of sacrifice begins. (1988: 54)

Improvisation, because of its immediacy, is political. Students of different cultural heritages come together with different values and different backgrounds to build a bridge together. But for the bridge to be built, the individual needs to sacrifice himself to the group. Writes Chaikin:

Ensemble asserts the way that people are alike. We live and die separate ... but there is a point where we are completely interlocked, a point where we are brought together, all of us, by our participation in nature, where we are brought together ... by our participation in something larger than each of us. (Pasolli: 1970: 23)

In order to create a group expression, there has to be a keen awareness of others. The student watches the picture and works out ways for contributing. His awareness is on the group and his role in it. As the student contributes through action, he becomes aware not only of how he as an individual responds to situations but also how his actions affect the group. Saint-Denis, in his teaching of improvisation and the principles of ensemble stresses that:

The actor must simultaneously preserve his individuality and maintain his responsibility to the group as a whole. He contributes individually to the ensemble without imposing himself. In this way is achieved the creation of a *group* expression. (1982: 165)

Being part of a group induces a greater sense of personal freedom because focus is diverted away from the individual. Chaikin, in his work on ensemble, worked towards a receptiveness which subsumed 'the impulses of individual performers into a single, shared response' (Blumenthal: 1984: 73). The aim of many of his exercises is 'to become so receptive to the impulse of the group that everybody [is] following and no one leading' (74). This receptiveness, conversely, heightens the student's own sense of individuality. It is through the group that the individual is discovered, and paradoxically, as the individual becomes more assured he can offer himself more freely to the group. Writes a student in relation to a lesson on light (Appendix B), *the focus allowed total relaxation to sweep through us. When we lifted our hands, [we] felt an immediate contact - a heat - so that when we moved, we really moved as one and there were times when exactly the same part of our body started moving together. The contact became very intense, but very playful and through that relaxed focus, actually allowed a whole range of emotions to pour out freely and to respond. So difficult to describe that oneness, that heat, magnetic pull, which makes you move together and so open to response - action and reaction.* Paradoxically, the sense of losing oneself to a partner or group touches the participants on a very personal level, having a far greater impact than pure self-involvement. Thus the improvisation floor becomes a 'place to celebrate our differences while helping us to understand that we share the same roots' (Pather: 1991: 91).

When next students do group work, it is done in 'Over The Top' storytelling.

'Do you all understand the term OTT?' Taylor enquires of the class who are sitting in a circle.

'No limits, except for your imagination,' volunteers one.

Taylor nods, smiling, and then adds, 'We are going to tell stories which are acted out in the circle. The story is not only told by one person. If anyone thinks that the story needs something you jump in. So tell the story, keep it going and act it out very, very big,' she explains to the class.'

There is a look of hesitation amongst the group and so Taylor

moves into the circle and quickly demonstrates the beginnings of a story, transforming into a huge giant with 'his very, very small friend' she tells, guiding a student into the circle.

The class nod in laughter.

'The storyteller can drop out if they feel they are running dry,' she explains to them. 'Someone else can take over.'

When it appears that all is understood, an enthusiastic student begins. There is a moment's hesitation and the story stops almost as abruptly as it started. The rules of the game are once more clarified, and after a few hiccups, the story begins to soar. Before long all the students are involved in a continually shifting story that leaps from kings and his bodyguards to hips-wagging ladies-of-the-night, to cockroaches planning a revolt, to the film set of 'Dances with Wolves', to a stray bullet in a forest, to head-skinning Indians, to a man holding a gun to the head of one holding a gun to the head of one holding a gun to the head of one, to a total blow-up and angels in heaven

Three quarters of an hour later with the same story in progress, the students collapse in exhaustion.

'What was that story about?' Taylor asks the exhausted but beaming students.

'Power. Sexism,' exclaims a student hotly.

'From which side?' questions another indignantly, defensively.

'Who asked for the autographs?' suggests Taylor.

'When they chose bodyguards they only chose men,' retorted the same student.

'You chose yourself and got kicked out, didn't you?' Taylor says to the first student.

They then begin to discuss the nature of the storytelling.

'Someone started off as the storyteller, but after a period there were no more, and we all still knew what was going on,' says a student.

Another agrees, 'Yes, like there was chaos, but we all knew what was happening.'

Taylor then begins to talk about transformation and how useful it is for actors to be able to do that. 'It was wonderful how the ladies in the sex-show became the bone-throwers, and as one of you changed, you all did without hesitation,' she says.

And after a brief comment or two, they begin another.

Imagination and Transformation

Students find this exercise to be one of the most exhilarating and freeing that Taylor does with them. Says a student after someone made a request to do it again, 'This is the kind of exercise that we should have done earlier.' Because imaginations run wild the students find the freedom to transform from one being to another. Much like a free-flow of ideas, scenes transmute effortlessly and characters follow suit. Nothing is or remains constant. As often as scenes change, so will characters, making possible the impetus for endless metamorphosis. Anything under the sun is possible.

Because the emphasis is on the story, students are able to shift the focus off themselves. This they find overwhelmingly liberating. And because their imaginations are so active, there is an extraordinarily high level of engagement. 'When everyone was involved, everybody felt so much more relaxed,' said a student explaining the ease with which the story moved and the characters emerged. This is affirmed by another student who put it a different way. 'Because many people are engaged, people feel less self-conscious.'

Says a student in the reflection period, 'It helps in getting rid of ourselves. I get rid of S- and S- is someone else.' Thus students find themselves doing the most bizarre and outrageous things without thinking twice.

Working Together

Because the entire group engages in communal storytelling, and because the focus shifts amongst the students, no one person dominates. The class functions much like a Greek chorus from which leading figures emerge, and into which they dissolve. There is a

sharing of stories, and enjoyment in one another's imaginative wiles.

This acceptance of group ideas is a general aim for much of the work Taylor does with the first year students, and it is a skill which she sees the need to nurture. For example, only a few weeks earlier she was watching the students building statues out of found objects. In the simple task of group co-ordination only one group began to build the sculpture after everyone in the group had returned. One group had finished the sculpture completely before the last person arrived. This disregard for, or unawareness of group consensus is reiterated as the students place themselves into their statues, for although they have arrived at a group title, each person echoes their original, personally selected title in their choice of movement.

'You can see what people are doing individually and how their titles reflect that. Look at "Washed Up" and "Decadence"' Taylor points out to the class as they watch a group in action.

Taylor is surprised that the students did not experience any conflict during this exercise, and she persists in addressing this issue.

'I want you in your groups to discuss "was there a hidden conflict?" Ask yourselves if you were afraid of conflict. You all seem terribly comfortable with each other.' The groups huddle together and consult. When Taylor feels that they are ready, she calls them to come together.

'The issue of conflict. Where did you go with that?' she probes.

'Compromise. Is it a synonym for avoidance?' asks a student.

'As a group we all felt confused. The main conflict seemed to be within the exercise rather than with each other,' says another.

'We didn't come up against a lot of conflict in the exercise.'

'I think you're very comfortable as a class,' says Taylor. I don't think you want to move over the threshold,' she challenges.

'I don't think we are a very competitive class,' says a quiet student.

The class begin to bicker almost as though they are being provoked.

'Why do you think I'm concerned about conflict?'

There is a pause amongst the students.

'I'm wondering why there is so little conflict?' Taylor again presses. 'I would like each of you to take this issue of conflict into your journals. I have a strong belief that conflict is creative.'

The students speak about respecting each other, understanding one another from different perspectives. One student describes it in terms of balancing and bouncing balls.

'Deep within us there are strong desires. Now that could be potentially explosive,' says Taylor. 'I'm sure not all twenty-six of you agree on everything. Conflict can be creative. It is bad to deny or avoid it,' and she continues to ensure that the class understand that it is important to be aware of conflict and resolve it rather than let it ride and emerge in destructive ways.

For Taylor conflict is vital for creativity, particularly because theatre is social. Without conflict, she believes there is no risk-taking in the work.

'Being' and Presence

As an observer to these lessons the work has been very vivid - the students were more dramatic, more absorbingly gripping and watchable than I had ever seen them when acting on stage in acting projects. When this was mentioned to a student (A), her observation was, 'It's because we were being ourselves.' Thus 'being' is an affirmation of the whole person, her thoughts, feelings and imagination.

Saint-Denis in his discussion on improvisation states that the oscillation between the subjective and objective is essential for the development in awareness of the student's own 'inner chemistry' (1982: 146). Improvisation is a time for the students to discover

the power of their imaginative capabilities and how it affects their reality and their actions. By participating in a common imagination, anything is possible, and it is exactly that which Dillard describes as the door which opens up on the present, as a move from a particular concrete reality to eternity - a vision that burns brightly (Dillard: 1974: 80). Morgan and Saxton (1987) describe this as the overlapping of the two frames of drama - the expressive frame and the meaning frame. Because the students are fired by the chemistry of their imagination and acting upon it, they are constantly in the process of making meaning for themselves. The full impact of the drama affects them as they are engaged in it and as changes and shifts occur constantly, so the drama is active, fluid and transformative. It is this vacillation between making meaning and expression - the meeting of an internal reality and external reality - that is at the root of presence.

Many students lose this sense of presence when working with texts. Because the drama is 'prescriptive', they disengage and are therefore not a part of the constantly occurring shifts. They begin to act the particular, the subjective, and the drama becomes caught in a time outside of the present, possibly caught in the past of which they are not a part. Thus the student becomes divorced from the chemistry of the imagination and is unable to make meaning. He loses the presence of his fellow actors in the situation, acting in an ego-centric bubble which seems to float in a void. The world he thus creates has little meaning and therefore no reality. There is no real change, he is not present and therefore the drama is dead.

Hence, it is working in the frame of the metaphor that

[the student] will find the relationship between the reality of his own inner life, both intellectual and emotional, and its physical expression, the means through which he can convey this reality to others. (Saint-Denis: 1982: 187)

Because the metaphor is a combining process between the imaginative and the real and a constant interplay between the two, the student can begin to understand the dynamic shifts in perception that occur within the drama, enabling him to glimpse his part in an universal reality of multi-dimensional worlds. It is this journey into the simultaneous discovery of the universe in ourselves (a journey into our inner meaning) which catalyses

the converse discovery of finding ourselves in the universe (ourselves in a new context, a new world). This is essential for acting, for that is the art of communication and making meaning.

Interestingly it is in Over The Top Storytelling that the students begin to discover this power and its liberating effect. Taylor responds, 'You found it freeing. You need to go deeper to free the real stuff.'

Notes

- 1 - This is the focus that is referred to in the Preamble
- 2- Theodore Flicker, a member of Second City, in conversation with Landesman describes discipline as being the major learning that improvisational theatre taught him (Landesman: 1974: 75).
- 3 - Duly Performed. The loss of a DP results in a failure to pass the year.
- 4 - This student wrote in her journal on returning from her wanderings:

*I said 'I saw a yellow flicker
instant orange
Yellow plastic,' I said I saw
'flies towards me.'
Not blue sky, but B.L.U.E
Thinking, car stops
I see man biting his nails
Wind whips my fringe across my eyes
Pulse beats hot
in time across my thighs
Moving
Forward
Black space - too black from wind
Spinning planets of flying objects
Hurl against me - 'OW!'
I say that is sore
Distracted by the thinking
I am immovable, as black fumes Belch, yet
Alone
Things move past me
Fast
But I am light, low
Immovable
Alone*

Chapter 4

Transformations

You need to enter the world of yourself to enter the world of the actor.
(Taylor: February 1992)

Using 'being' and acceptance as the foundation, Taylor begins the process of accessing emotion for the development of character. The lessons in this chapter are not specific to any year of study. Rather, I have grouped them together - spanning the three years of actor training - for the commonality of their aims. For Taylor, the groundwork of characterisation is the emotional self: to 'be a feeling actor it is necessary to be a feeling person, to be in touch with feelings and accept them, before it is possible to be in touch with the character's feelings' (1984: 73).

i

Bottling the Bees

accessing the emotional self

Educating the emotions frequently constitutes a sizeable portion of any book or manual on drama work. The role and methods of emotional training, whether in actor training or classroom teaching, has raised extensive debate amongst practitioners. Taylor believes that truth for acting is achieved through emotions that are authentic expressions of the 'self:

The ability to experience with your emotion and with your feeling is very basic to my belief in what an actor really can do. If you're cut off from all your feeling you're like a business man - cut off from feeling. (November 1993)

Taylor sees emotional training as bringing actors into closer contact with their own emotional range and with 'their emotional possibility ... with their own possibility for examination, their own possibility for the exploitation of their own emotions' (Ibid).

Harrop (1992) places the argument around the difference between 'feeling' and

`unfeeling' (`emotional' and `technical') actors in an historical context. This debate began in the early 1800's between Garrick, an actor who used gesture to `stimulate the audiences emotional response, and find within himself the feeling equivalent to sustain it', and Diderot who argued that `an actor's feelings were irrelevant to the passion conveyed by the gesture. There is no sense of any pursuit of personal authenticity' (35). In the late 1800's, Coquelin stated that `whether emotionally engaged or disengaged, masked or unmasked, an actor does not renounce selfhood, but uses it to give creative dynamics to the role' (36). It was only in the 1900's that a particular method of working was recorded. Stanislavski systematised the acting process with his focus not so much on the outward gestures of acting as on the inner process involved. This was directly influenced by Freud and the development of psychology. His stress on the inner emotional process and `human motivation' was merely a reflection of the new notion of the human `psyche' fostered by the romantic period.

Romanticism, based then upon the subjectivity of feeling rather than upon classical objectivity of form has, as a necessary concomitant, the desire to allow the feelings of the individual to be expressed, to free him or her from oppressive if restrictive forms of nature. Thus, the free expression of the desires and feelings of the individual becomes the essential dynamic of human action. (37)

It was this movement, Harrop argues, that brought about a period of realism in the arts.

The detailed depiction, both in terms of environment and psychological drive, of the individual leading an everyday life in society became the concern of the drama. (Ibid)

Real life came to the stage and Stanislavski's system became the way for actors to access this new style. The method flourished in America between the 1930's and 1950's, gathering an almost religious fervor among film actors. Because of the accessibility of film and television, Realism became the most widely known and accepted style of acting. Strasberg, propagating `honesty' and `be yourself', became the ruling Method, drawn from only the first of Stanislavski's books The Actor Prepares. (Building a character and Creating a Role were not published in America until much later.)

Taylor takes her students through three different phases in their emotional training. The first includes the generation of emotions through the use of imaginary contexts to introduce the actor to his emotional possibilities. The second phase is the examination of personal emotions and the third is learning the use of those emotions as an actor playing a character. These three phases of emotional memory training do not necessarily follow in chronological order in her teaching.

Finding the Bees to Bottle

After Taylor has taken the class through a focus¹, she instructs them:

'Stand up and close your eyes. Feel yourself by yourself and give yourself space from other people.' When the class has spread themselves openly around the room and settled into the darkness of their shut eyes, Taylor begins.

'Imagine that you are in a room,' she says, her voice soothing, transporting each to his own private place. 'Beside you is a pot of green paint and a brush. Dip your brush into the paint and paint whatever you want.' Slowly the students begin to wander tentatively around their own rooms, and when they can 'see' their paint-pot, they pick up their brushes and dip them into the coloured paint.

Taylor watches carefully.

'Keep your eyes closed,' she guides a student who has opened his eyes and watches for reassurance. And, 'Be by yourself in this room,' she warns to another, who has decided to paint a student that he found in his space. 'If you want anyone there imagine them.'

My pot had bright, vivid green (like the green after rain) paint in it, writes a student. I first painted scribbles on the wall, then I painted the floor, my feet and legs, my hands - I made handprints, with one on my chest. I then discovered a horse - a bit like a rocking horse. Although it

was alive it didn't move. I painted the horse green, in detail. I moved around him carefully, knew exactly where he was, how he was standing. When I had painted my horse, I squatted on the ground and felt very peaceful. It was no longer a room, but almost a field, although I was still surrounded by squiggles.

Taylor wanders from room to room, watching. 'When you have finished painting what you want to paint,' she says quietly, 'lie down, sit down, stand or do whatever you want to do. Keep your eyes closed and experience the room. In fact imagine that your eyes are open, seeing the room.' She lets the students sit in their rooms for a few seconds. And then she moves again, speaking as she goes.

'I'm going to come round and tell me in a word what you feel in this room.' As she moves into each room, she bends silently down to its occupant and touches their shoulder to warn them of her presence. They speak their words quietly to her:

'Peaceful.'

'Calm,' says another.

'Creative.'

'Clinical.'

'Clean.'

'Surrealist.'

'Safe.'

'Alone.'

And for each person there is a different feeling, a different mood.

Once she has been through all the rooms, she continues.

'Sit up, keeping your feeling,' she instructs. 'I want you to let this colour show you a rhythm. How does this feeling become a rhythm? When you have got that rhythm going in your body, you can move around your room if you want to, in any way. Take it into all of your limbs now.' The class begins to vibrate. Writes a student, *I found myself moving*

quickly with slow, upward moments of suspension - nothing I had experienced before.

When Taylor feels that the students have explored their movement as fully as possible, she tells them to keep the feeling and stop the movement.

'Do you feel the same?' she asks the class who are now still, but isolated in their darkness. 'Raise your hand,' she asks for confirmation and waits for a response. Once she is sure that all the students who have felt the same have responded, she repeats her question to those who feel that they've changed. And then, she continues.

'Open the door of the room you were in and walk out.' *When we were told that, writes a student, I could not find the door. There was no door, like I had been conned by the peacefulness of the green and now I was trapped. The room and everything in it was all an illusion. But then I thought, 'if it is all an illusion, I can create my own door.'*

'Find another door handle to another room,' Taylor continues as she walks around the room. 'Open the door and go in. This time you find a spray-can in the room. It is a red spray can. Spray everything that you want to spray.

I didn't want to paint at all, writes a student afterwards, but I ended up making such a mess all over the walls that I had to paint over it. I ended up in an almost completely red room except for a circle around me which I had left open. I had a red bicycle and a red chair. I sat on the red chair. I felt cold and numb. But I kept feeling that I should be hot.

When Taylor feels that all the students have completed painting their rooms, she instructs the students to 'Stand, lie or sit in your room and be in it and experience it.' She waits a while and then asks, 'What do you feel?' And again she wanders and bends and touches to let the students tell her what they are feeling and once again there is a gamut of emotions.

'Imagine that there is music playing in the room' she says. 'What

do you hear?'

'Rap,' laughs a student later. 'Real head-banging stuff.'

'Turn the music off. Experience the colour again.' And then Taylor asks them to find the rhythm of the colour, 'to let the colour tell you the rhythm and experience the rhythm in your body.' *My rhythm was that of a heart-beat. But it was quick and painful, one like a heart beating in fear. And then I realised that was the reason why I was cold and numb - from fear.*

Taylor stops them. She gives the class their last colour.

'In front of you is a magic ball on the floor,' she intones. 'This ball has got in it another colour so as you rub it, it's going to change the colour of your room to any colour you want. Choose the colour the ball is going to make your room. I don't know how it spreads its colour,' she says whimsically. 'Find out. And in the ball too is the magic of furnishing. If you are not satisfied with what you've made, the magic ball can change it. If you are satisfied, stay with it and experience it.'

It was a wonderful relief to get the magic ball, writes the same student. I rubbed it and it got smaller and smaller and when I rolled it across the floor, my room was flooded with a midnight blue - like the night sky at full moon. It was filled with light. The room was long and thin, and at the end was an old Victorian bath - someone was bathing in it, and when the head appeared, it kept pulling faces at me, rolling its eyes, trying to make me laugh. I discovered that I was lying, very relaxed and sensual, waiting. My skin was translucent white. I had no clothes on. I did not want food and drink, she writes in response to Taylor's question of what they would eat. Even the thought of what I might want didn't tempt me. The room kept expanding as it started to stretch up into the universe towards light. It was peaceful and calming. I rolled a lot, but mainly I waited. When the room expanded - its walls opening up like a box unfolding - I stepped out into the universe. I was going out alone.

To end the session, Taylor pairs the class off to share their experiences with each other. She instructs them first to describe the whole experience of one of the rooms in detail, and then to choose specific moments. She insists that the students don't interrupt each other and don't discuss.

Taylor uses variations on this exercise. She might say:

Walk into a room. In the room is a bed, a door, and a window with a pair of curtains. When you enter into the room everything in that room, including the clothes that you are wearing are a yellow. Walk around the room. Experience the room. What does it make you feel? What do you do? (student's notes: 1991)

Taylor finds the use of visualisation exercises useful as a method for students to access facets of their emotions. Because of the vivid associations that colour excites, by taking them through different colour experiences she is giving them the opportunity to explore these associations imaginatively. The student discovers the difference between red and green, how each colour has its own rhythms, sounds, objects and emotional states.

Or she might use different textures as imaginary starting points. Taylor describes this lesson:

'I would start off with becoming a rock,' she says. 'Or I could do it the other way round. Be a person looking at a rock. So it went between the two. You become a rock. What do you feel? So everybody should articulate what they feel. I don't have to hear it all, but I tended to walk around and they would say, "I feel strong." "Strong." "Dunno." "Dunno." I would just repeat what they said. And I would go around the whole class. Sometimes I would say, "Say it altogether - everybody say what they feel." There's a kind of safety in that. And that would depend on the class. And then I would say, "And be pushed. There's somebody pushing you. What do you feel?" Or sometimes I would go directly from being a rock to a person pushing the rock, "Become a rock. Become a person looking at the same rock and pushing it. What do you feel?" (to the person doing the pushing). "I feel frustrated", "angry" were some of the feelings that came up, or "impotent".... "Now you are the rock again and you are being pushed. What do you feel?" "Powerful." So the process is backwards and forwards, backwards,' she gestures with her hands to explain the process of the two opposite feelings. 'That's a very powerful exercise. That on its own is very powerful. But then I would move on. I would go through the same process with balloons, feathers, steel, running water, water, fire. So there are a whole gamut of emotions in which you would process your way through. People are exhausted at the end of it.

(November 1993)

Taylor feels this set of exercises to be her most successful. Each imaginary situation - each texture and colour - becomes a new sensory context for the discovery of different feelings. The imagination is vital for emotional exploration because, based on the hypothetical premise of 'if', it gives licence to explore. It is not real. Because our emotions are specific to our lives the 'individual emotional experience, by its limits, actually leads to the restriction of the sphere of [the actors] creative genius, and does not allow him to play parts dissimilar to those of his psychic harmony' (Stanislavski in Cole: 1947: 26). Taylor provides different imaginative contexts for the students. They become a rock, a feather, wind. Each of these is an unfamiliar sensory experience which arouses inherently different qualities, both physically and emotionally. The student exploring each, moves imaginatively through the elements to discover a range of emotional possibilities. The more inventive the actor's imagination is, the richer in resources the actor feels himself to be, and the greater his ability to transform. Whereas if the imagination is unstimulated, the actor can only ever play a character by making general statements from her known self.

Entering the Imagination through Emotion

The entry point into the imagination is important here. One can either enter the imaginary through the realm of feeling, or through action. The student who enters the exercise from an emotional base does not discover the feelings within her, but chooses an emotion to play in advance. Because she is working with the emotional quality that she brings to the exercise, the emotion becomes the focus of what she does. All that emotion can do is grow, and the student's primary concern becomes 'is she feeling enough': is the emotion big enough. Everything that the student does is as a consequence of the emotion. The emotion governs the action and remains fairly constant. The student's focus turns inwards onto her feelings. The context for the exercise is no longer the imaginary, but the emotion itself. The hypothetical premise of 'if' is forgotten. There is a loss of awareness of the surrounds, and thus the student is impervious to contact with others as well as a change of emotion. Students may be overwhelmed by their own real emotion, no longer

existing within the imaginary context.

Entering the Imaginary through Action

If the imaginary is entered with a strong focus on action, rather than the constant sustaining of emotion, the student discovers the fluid and inconstant nature of emotional specificity. Says Stanislavski,

One must not suddenly begin to operate on emotion; one must put oneself in motion in the direction of artistic imagination, but imagination ... disturbs our aberrant memory, and, luring from the hidden recesses beyond the boundaries of its sense of harmony whatever elements there may be of proved emotions, organizes them afresh in sympathy with those that have arisen in our imagery. (Quoted in Cole: 1947: 26)

On the other hand, because we can explore and change our actions more readily, the student, through the specificity of action in the imaginary world begins to uncover specific emotions. As she transforms her body to fit her image of 'rock' and as she explores the quality of movement that arises out of the physicality of rock, so the emotions slowly rise in her. But because her focus is not on the emotions that she is feeling, but on what she is doing in the imaginary world, and how her body is responding, so do her emotions shift. And because both her actions and the imaginary situation are therefore shifting, she begins to understand that feelings are constantly transforming.

Although these exercises are physical, for Taylor states 'become a rock, wind, fire' and the students do work physically, the nub of the lessons have become the quality of feeling and emotion that is generated: action simply being its consequence. Thus, because the focus shifts away from the imaginary into the emotional, the students encounter their own emotions internally without the external activity to convey those feelings. They become internally very active with physical manifestation merely a by product. Yet, for Grotowski, an actor cannot work if he is internally active, for then the search is an internal one - a quest to discover one's own emotions and experiences (1975: 205). Acting, he says, is about being internally passive and externally active. Although Taylor's exercise is aimed only at experiencing a range of emotions, if there is no emphasis on physical exploration and a keen understanding of how the body acts as a

result of those emotions, they remain internalised and unformed and do not serve the student in the craft of acting.

Loss of Relationship between the Real and Imaginary

Taylor wants the students to find solutions within the imaginary situation. Problem-solving, she believes, is a part of the imaginative process. She describes an exercise she takes them through:

"Walking in sand, walking in water, walking in mud. And then let the mud come higher and higher and deal with it until it's up here," Taylor indicates with her hand under her chin. "And find a way out of it, because you know when mud gets up to your chin, you're just about to go into it! Some people died in the mud. That's a really tough one. They couldn't actually make the step out of the mud - find a branch in the air they could hang onto." (November 1993)

Because the emotion that this exercise generates is so strong, there are students who cannot maintain the imaginary context and so become hysterical and are unable to cope. The distinction between the real and the imaginary has blurred and the context of the imaginary is forgotten because the feelings are so real. Hence students 'die in the mud'. It is not because these students are unable to think imaginatively or creatively. It is simply because the emotion has become the focus and context of the exercise. In an attempt to show that they are capable of feeling, the emotion becomes overwhelmingly overpowering, rendering some helpless. Recalls a student (H) of a lesson:

We had to form two communities in the class ... and then the communities had to have a war, a symbolic war, but it got completely out of hand ... one of the actors started pinching me and grabbing me ... we had to form a group, be a very strong group, and then the other community had to break it down, I don't remember what the exercise was for ... because I'm physically small they all went for me and I had ten actors mauling me, I mean it was - and [Taylor] couldn't stop it soon enough; and I eventually managed to get to the door and ran, and ran out of the building and across the car park and she screams at me for running out - you couldn't run out of the class in an improvisation class and I said, "but you didn't stop what was happening - it became physically violent."

And another (E) describes a fellow student who, despite Taylor's warning that 'you cannot drown' in the exercise of sinking into mud, 'became hysterical and we had to stop

the class.' Under this kind of pressure the students fail to work effectively on the imaginative and the symbolic level because their concern is with 'real feelings'.

When feeling becomes the context, there are some students who lose their critical self: their reason becomes swamped by emotion. For Boal, this 'reason-emotion' process is integral to the experience. He states emphatically:

Emotion in itself, disordered and chaotic, is worth nothing. The important thing about emotion is what it signifies. We cannot talk about emotion without reason or, conversely, about reason without emotion; the former is chaos, the latter pure abstraction. (1992: 48)

Those students who have lost themselves in their own emotion experience a chaos which is overpowering. Once they feel that they are unable to cope with their own feelings they lose confidence, no longer able to trust themselves.

In some of these exercises, Taylor does not work within the imaginary world at all. She describes part of a lesson:

"One person, in partners, have your feet glued to the ground. You can't move them. The other person insults the one with the glued feet. Then you swop over." People take revenge on the one they've been working with. (November 1993)

These exercises become extremely personal, with no imaginary boundary at all - they aim simply to generate emotions within oneself. This can lead to an emphasis placed on the value of real emotions, rather than stimulating emotional responses using the imagination. Students feel the need to search for real life experiences as the storehouse of emotions and there may be some students who feel since their lives haven't been exotic or even wacky enough, they cannot be good actors. One student (C) recalled a time when the issue of abuse came up in an improvisation class; but because nothing had ever happened to her, she felt judged by her lack of experience. 'I thought that if nothing terrible had happened to me I wouldn't be a good actor. But improvisation isn't life. And neither is acting. Acting does not need to be traumatic.'

Emotion and Behaviour

In classes which concentrate on emotional work some students assume that Taylor wants to see big emotion and because she does not make a distinction between different types of behaviour in the class, those students who make the biggest noise are noticed by the rest of the students against whom they compare themselves. Ventured one student (H):

I think there was a lot of pressure coming from the teacher in that there was an expectation of what was a good student and what was a bad student. And the students that could express emotion and emote were considered the good students and those were the students who were getting the parts and those were the students getting the high marks ... if you were emoting you were [seen to be] dealing with your emotional stuff which is actually crap.

Some students divorce themselves from such behaviour and label it exhibitionism. They are quite skeptical about its relation to acting skills. 'At times when I stand back from the class and watch, all I see is hamming - and that passes for big emotion' (G). In spite of disdain for those who act 'big emotion' in the class, there are other students who become extraordinarily engaged and reach emotional levels from which, at times, they feel quite incapable of emerging. What is common to all these divergent perceptions is that many of the students see improvisation as 'the exploration of emotion' (G) and feel that the attaining of 'big emotion' is the aim of improvisation class. And yet some feel that the whole group being out of control, or engaged in 'big emotion' is potentially dangerous. Says a student (G), 'It creates group hysteria. You feel forced to get a big emotion. What I don't like is that the individual experience tends to get lost.'

Releasing the Bees

'In order to be free, the actor needs to feel himself rich, rich in resources' writes Saint-Denis (1982: 84), but for Taylor this hidden potential frequently cannot be released because of emotional 'blocks' that stand in the way. So Taylor works with the students to discover emotional release.

During the students' second and third years, Taylor is highly aware of the fears that often grip student actors; fear of personal and social expectations; fear of

performance; fear of vulnerability. Fear removes the student's awareness from the present moment and places consciousness in the future - a time zone from which they cannot act. Taylor calls these fears 'blocks', a term which has considerable weight in the drama school, much used by students and staff.

'I want to start with something that is a release exercise and then work towards a building up of big emotions. Don't go behind the curtains during this exercise. Don't go in the aisles,' she cautions the students. The space is small and she is concerned that students might hurt themselves.

'The first thing I am going to ask you to do is - in your space - express your feelings in terms of sound. Try and keep your eyes closed and don't move out of your space.' After the students have spread themselves around the room, checking the workability of their space, she continues.

'I want you to get into what you feel. Follow my instructions which will be few, but important.' The students close their eyes and sit quietly.

'When you begin to feel where you are at, I want you to express in sound - now this is only for yourself - and I want you to extend this sound no matter how big or small it is, take it to its limit.'

'What do you do if you feel nothing?' asks a student.

'You can never feel nothing,' she replies. He continues to probe:

'If your head is sore and you want to scream.'

'That is what you feel!'

When the student settles down, Taylor continues.

'Do not stop the sound. There must never not be sound. When you open your eyes, you can extend it into movement.' And to reassure them, she says, 'Nobody is hearing or listening specifically to you. When you are ready, begin.'

The students shift into comfortable positions on the floor, isolated

in the space. Locked into their own darkness, sounds slowly start drifting through and around them. Taylor sits quietly watching, carefully listening for connected sound. Then slowly she rises and steps silently amongst them, moving towards those she feels are dealing with masked emotions or those who are lying or sitting still. In her opinion these are the students who are struggling with their inability to release, and she bends down to talk to them, to encourage them. The noise in the room grows, becomes like the isolating ear-rush frequency of a train passing in the subway: there is enough sound for each person to express their true feelings without being heard. Taylor moves constantly amongst the students, helping, giving further instructions. As she passes them, they gradually extend their sound into movement. Students remain on their own, some lying on the floor, others sitting against the wall, and yet others rocking, pounding, screaming into the spaces between their bodies and the floor. The sound and movement accumulates in the room until, quite suddenly, there is a natural change. As each person extends to a pitch of expression, it is as though the students pass over the peak and release floods their bodies and voices, dying into a gentle and soothing hum.

‘Anybody who is through, deep breathing!’ Taylor speaks into the hum. ‘That’s for anybody who is ready,’ she quickly adds, not wanting to cut short any student’s process.

Students lie quietly, breathing deeply, some singing very softly. One student is weeping uncontrollably. Taylor moves to him and helps him to feel the deep breathing, to release his diaphragm, to force the release. And then as the hum dies down to a contented quietness, Taylor speaks.

‘You can do whatever you want to do, with anyone else in the room. Just stay in this room.’ And to those students who start moving around and towards each other, she adds, ‘Try and feel the release in your body, express it through your body in whatever you choose to do.’

In the exhaustion generated by many rough passages, several students start standing up and singing. Others talk quietly, some with their arms around each other. A student moves to where Taylor is still trying to coax a diaphragm to relax. She shows her what to do. And as the need to express the release dies away, Taylor calls through the class:

‘Anybody who is ready to be with me, be with me.’ In the discussion, after Taylor has described the lesson as having been a release exercise, students talk.

‘Mavis, do you think that at some time in your life you can be content?’ asks a student who, although fully engaged in the exercise, found that her release had been less anxiety-ridden than most. ‘Does it mean that you are not in touch with your emotions?’

‘We don’t have to spend our lives being manic,’ Taylor replies.

‘There was one kind of core emotion which I released and then I felt very still. I catalysed the emotion again by sound and changed it through a different physicality,’ articulates a student.

Says another, ‘I’m not bottling things as much as I used to, so when it’s released it’s not as overwhelming as it used to be.’

Another student comments on the inability to find release on her own. Taylor explains why.

‘You are in a forest, one of the trees. When you’re on your own, it is too public.’

Other students discuss their thoughts on expressing emotion privately:

‘I wonder if I’m on my own, how much I’m indulging myself,’ says one.

‘When you cry on your own, you feel sorry for yourself,’ says another. Taylor responds, talking about the fear of indulging as a fear which needs to be examined.

‘Sometimes I start crying for a reason, but then I make up a subtext

to keep crying because I feel like I haven't finished crying,' says another.

'Mostly I turn my tension into a joke. This exercise was good for me, it provided a very needed release. So often I avoid it by ridicule,' says the first student.

There is a silence of agreement.

'Anything else,' Taylor asks into the contemplation; and when the silence remains unfilled, she questions, 'What is your final feeling?'

'I'm feeling a lot of contentment now,' says a student calmly. 'I feel I dealt with it in a very positive way.'

'Absolute peace,' say two students in unison. And then one continues, 'I started off happy - but - absolute peace.'

Again there is a quietness.

'Were there rough passages?' she asks.

'Yes!' says a student emphatically. 'But -' and he laughs, 'I have a problem with analysis. I want to analyse things. Today I didn't analyse!'

'What?' Taylor says, feigning surprise. 'Well done! That's a big step.'

'I feel like I ought to have made more noise,' says a student.

'For whom?' asks Taylor.

'For Mavis,' she replies, and laughs.

Before the class gets ready to pack up, Taylor drops her last question, 'Is there anything you would like to share with anyone else?'

'If you want to go into something, maybe it is better to find another entry,' a student says.

'When you're feeling angry, you might express it through laughter,' says another student who continues, 'It is useful for actors to think about how characters express anger. People develop masks to hide emotions for whatever reasons.'

This exercise is a means of releasing emotion for the actor. Although Taylor had wanted

to work towards 'big emotions', the students had taken longer than she anticipated to find release. She had sensed that the class needed release more than they needed to build tension towards character, which is what she had planned.

Taylor is using voice and movement to create release from the fears of expectation. Many of the students had expressed an anxiety about their work load which was preventing them from engaging. Although she is working with defining the emotion first, she is working towards transformation of that emotion through voice and movement.

The Actor and Emotional 'Blocks'

What inspired Taylor was Grotowski's principle that the 'process of getting self knowledge gives strength to one's work' (1975: 200). The stronger the sense of 'self', the awareness of personal weaknesses and strengths, the more connected the actor is with the work. Taylor gives an example:

If a student is homosexual, but doesn't know it and he is playing a homosexual character, he will be blocking emotionally. He will not be able to relate or connect with the character. This usually comes out in exercises I do on sexuality. (November 1993)

Harrop places this notion of 'freeing' the actor of restraints historically within the development of Realism.

The argument ran: if I am to be 'real' to play freely and honestly, what have I to draw on but my own experience, my emotional memories, my particular storehouse of human responses? (1992: 40)

Thus, for the actor to be 'real' he needs to freely respond to his own emotional experiences and impulses. But, if these are blocked from awareness for any particular reason, the actor cannot use them and is thus unable to act from his personal impulses. Part of Taylor's aim in teaching improvisation is to reach the honesty and vulnerability of self-knowledge. She concentrates upon finding methods for the students to transcend those obstacles or 'blocks' which prevent them from being truthful on stage. Thus, improvisation becomes a search for the actor's honesty and vulnerability so that he may act from a place of truth.

Yet there is a paradox in which perhaps unwittingly both Taylor and the students find themselves. Because Taylor's presence in the classroom is forceful in her silent and keen scrutiny, and because of the importance that she places upon acting with emotional freedom, students, in their concern to do well, feel the constant need to please her. Taylor is aware of this desire and is watchful for students who turn out of the experience to see if she is observing (November 1993). Although throughout the students' training she encourages students to focus on the work for themselves and not to worry about her, there are those students who are anxious to be good students, to do it right, and who look to her for affirmation. Remarks one student (C), 'I discovered a lot of release and discovery within myself as an actor once I stopped doing the exercises for Mavis, and started doing them for myself. But that only happened in my third year.'

Students who are able to utilise the exercises to their own advantage tend to be those students who are constantly making connections between what they discover in the improvisation class and acting: that the exercises are not just for personal development, but are to be applied to themselves as performers. But there is another contradiction here. Because of the emotional intensity of much of the improvisation classes, there are many students who are unable to make this connection, seeing their work as so personal that it has no bearing on performance. Although Taylor does ask the students, particularly in their first year, what they see the connections to be between the exercises and acting, in the next two years she relates what they do with her directly to their acting. Yet what she teaches is experienced so personally and intensely, that there are students who believe that that is what acting is - a personal emotional journey, regardless of character, fellow actors, the meaning of the play or even communication. Because the students are always acting as themselves in these exercises, more emphasis is placed on truth than on belief. Hence the common comment from students when described for example as giving a performance that did not move the audience, 'but *I* was feeling it.'

The above exercise is to assist students to release tensions which create an obstacle to their creative responses of the moment: an exercise for releasing them into the present. In her teaching notes, Taylor has the following exercise to rid students of anxiety and fear of the future: the fear of performance - that which is still to be done - which too

prevents being in the moment.

Stand and imagine your fear in relation to performance; think of all the occasions when it has happened to you and when it does happen to you; feel it; sit down and keep the feeling; imagine steel cables that bind you; imagine and objectify the cause of fear outside and all around; find a way out of the steel bands. (Taylor's notes: undated)

A student (I) in discussion describes part of the same lesson.

With an image for that fear, take it inside you and let it build up inside you until you are filled with it. Then take a balloon and blow it up, filling it with that which fills you. You blow up that balloon until there is none of that fear inside you anymore. Then you tie up the balloon and let it float away. I imagined bees, an insect that I find very scary. I bottled the bees in the balloon. I still do the exercise before I go on stage. I find it very useful.

To end the exercise Taylor writes, 'let it go, breathing ten times before you do' (notes: undated).

As with her exercise on colour, this too is a visualisation exercise. The students visualise and objectify their fears. Because they have imagined it, given it a name, they have the power and the control to rid themselves of it. Because it requires concentration, it is also a process of calming and relaxing the mind and body to allow for an openness and receptivity to surrounding stimuli - opening the channels for response and reaction.

It is the beginning of the year, and the first session that Taylor has with the second year class:

A special focus. Sit in a circle, hold hands and: think about what you want; think about each other, and when thinking about your neighbour squeeze their hand; think about each other's good qualities. Think about what you want to get out of improvisation this year, for your development - where you want to develop; what colour is this? Turn this colour into a physical/vocal action; imagine, after having achieved this, turn into an animal form that expresses the quality you want; express this with body and sound; go into human form now; what is different with the body you entered with and the body after the exercise? How is it different? Look at the body and where it is blocked. Find a bit of body that is blocked; try to free this part - accompany it with sound; ask someone to help you and then release; return to help that person; how does this link to emotional blocks - can we see the connection? Experience the block - feel and understand what's happened to the body. Feel its limitation; examine the limitations in your body; return to the free body again and note differences in body; think of FREE ME. (Taylor's notes: 20 February 1991)

Although Taylor is working towards a freeing process, rather than working with the strengths of the student and what needs to be encouraged to develop and grow, the tendency in the above lesson plan is to dwell on the student's problems and see them as weaknesses - that which is preventing them from acting - rather than teaching them to capitalise on the complexity of their thoughts and feelings and discover ways of turning them into strengths. Many students feel that they fail in these exercises, that they cannot cope and their confidence becomes eroded. A student (H), defining 'blocks' as necessary 'defence' mechanisms, explains her perception of the process:

A lot of the exercises ... were those kind of exercises where you broke down certain defences. What psychologists do, their approach, is that they respect peoples' defences ... people have defences even if they are negative ones for reasons, because what is behind that defence is enormous pain or chaos ... so by knocking them down prematurely you are actually debilitating the person's coping capacity. What a psychologist would do is work with the individual gently, rather building up the ego structure so that the person can let go naturally of those defences and that they let go as they develop and mature and are ready to. So I felt her exercises concentrated on bashing down the defence rather than building up the confidence.

Boal, in his work on fears and defences, uses role-reversal technique, that the participant may reach understanding. When dealing with overtly emotional exercises, 'the participants must play the character or thing which frightened them, not themselves being frightened' he states, reasoning that 'by playing the subject that I was afraid of, I gain a better understanding of my childish fear (which may still live on inside me)' (1992: 158-159).

Given the viewpoint that self-knowledge is essential to allow the actor to work from a firmly centered base, Morris makes the distinction between self-penetration and self-affirmation/acceptance. The former says 'I have problems', thereby overemphasising weaknesses; the latter says 'I'm okay' and facilitates discovery from a position of strength. To work free of resistances involves accepting your problems. We recognise our weaknesses, own them and cast them aside for a while. But this does not mean we delve into them and 'blow them up.' By acknowledging their presence and accepting them,

they no longer become haunting, but shelved, still within sight. For many of the students the direct entry into personal problem areas heightens their resistance through an increasing self-consciousness. Says a student (A) emphatically, 'You don't lose your blocks by placing emphasis on them. You lose them when your emphasis is placed onto something else'. They are not obstacles to confront; and perhaps the conquering of them happens obliquely when the focus has been diverted. Recalls a student (H):

We had to visualise our emotional block, a psychological block that was blocking our acting, as a physical form - as a wall or a stone. Then we had to knock it down physically - this is all done with our eyes closed. We then had to move either with another person or on your own into a nice free space - fish under the water or something - which in itself -. I don't know, maybe it was a particular day. That one I found very disturbing.... It wasn't saying to us, "how are you feeling today and what do you feel **you** need from today?" It was like "today is an exercise in blocking - knocking down a wall" and maybe on that particular day I didn't need my wall knocked down.

Although Taylor is working to free the actor from social constraints - constraints which hamper transformation through flexibility and communication, when a student's coping mechanism is weakened the 'block' becomes insurmountable. However it seems Taylor believes that the imaginative spark can only be freed through the eradication of 'blocks':

"Take your block and make it into something. Know what you feel about this block. So, make your connection with this block. But it's not here now in you. It is out here." And then finally, "End up dealing with it." Some people never could. (November 1993)

Two students (F & A) in discussion about the limitless possibilities of the imagination comment on Taylor's method of eradicating 'blocks'. Describing as 'files' what the previous student (H) referred to as 'defence mechanisms', they explain:

'She makes an issue out of the files.... She goes in with dynamite,' says one. 'Her way is to put dynamite into the mouth. That's not the way to deal with blocks.'

'She should go in more obliquely,' says the other. 'We all have the potential of being anything. She should explore that.'

But when questioned, Taylor emphasised that students need to learn to 'blow up' their

obstacles.

Deal with it. Put a bomb underneath it. Explode it. Or, to physicalise that in your imagination. Maybe it's a stone, your block. And it won't move ... so, put a stick of dynamite under it. Blow it up. Or turn it into a feather and blow it away. (November 1993)

To sum up, the reason that many students find this process of eradicating 'blocks' disturbing is threefold. As has already been mentioned, the problems are so personal and because the emphasis is not within the imaginary world, they are unable to deal with the real in an imaginary way. Secondly, as one student has explained, the issue or defence is being dealt with regardless of how the individual is feeling. The 'block' is being dealt with outside of its context. Thirdly, for students a head-on collision with a weakness is painful and demanding.

Wagner describes Heathcote's process of entering emotional terrain as 'edging in'. It is an oblique method of negotiating the beginning of a drama which acknowledges personal starting points. Yet even Heathcote has been accused of manipulating learning, for ultimately the power lies within the teacher who decides what the students need to learn. Although Taylor is adamant that the choice is up to the student as to whether he wants to engage in the experience or not, many of the students feel pressurised to give Taylor the permission to control their learning. Because other students have given their permission, not to do so would be to admit failure.

A state of acceptance and confidence in one's strengths is imperative for effective acting. Weakness created by an inability to cope prevents the student from taking action. The concept of 'being' is founded on self-acceptance for its objectives are based on the affirmation of working with what one has. An over-awareness of 'blocks' is an over-emphasis of one's obstacles: trying to work with what one has not got. The former makes for free acting and a confidence for taking risks. The latter, for self-conscious acting. Paradoxically the process of 'stripping down' needs to be a process of building up.

Freeing 'Blocks' through Action

Grotowski's process of 'stripping down' is accomplished through physical and vocal

exercises. He demands that his actors, through the use of physical exercises, work themselves to the extreme. Many fears are physical, he believes, based on the notion of 'I can't do that'. By building up physical awareness and strength, the actor begins to take physical risks that before were unthought of. He calls his exercises 'psycho-physical' because they work on the somatic principle that the body and mind are linked. By intense work on a physical level, he forces the actor to transcend mental and emotional barriers. And because all the exercises involve and focus on contact, a response to the exterior environment, they force actors to transcend emotional barriers which they may have of interpersonal confrontation. A student (A) explains her experience and understanding of finding release through movement:

I have overcome blocks without even knowing they exist, through movement. Through the [process of] starting a movement and letting the movement come to its logical conclusion, I have found more freedom The body responds to space and the stimuli around it. The head is not controlling, but it is aware. [It] is not cut off from the body - the two are operating together, but in different capacities. The head is not censoring. There is awareness of the body responding to its own rhythms, there just is no censoring.

Emotion is released through action, for action contains emotion in motion, it is the process of signalling. Boal describes the theatre act as not the watching of emotion, but rather the watching of an action driven by that emotion. By searching for emotion, the quest for 'the truth' has become dominant and the students, by becoming obsessed with personal truth, end up working within a psychological realism that is entirely different from the act of creating a reality. The former indulges personalised truth, the latter creates art. The concept of creating reality involves flexibility, belief, transformation and the imagination. Psychological 'realism', because the actor is working from his known self and his experiences, suggests rigidity and limitation. Because so much emphasis is placed on the actor and his own emotions, he may become both unable and unwilling to transform himself beyond the range of his own experiences.

Reflection on Experience through Form

Although Taylor works within the metaphoric frame, she does not always successfully

make this apparent to the students. One student (D) when asked what she thought Taylor was teaching replied, 'I had no idea. She never made it clear to us - maybe that was her whole thrust'. The learning then remains within the personal experience of the student and does not extend into a universal context. By drawing awareness to the frame which contextualises the experience, students can learn to transform the experience through its manipulation. The exercise of building bridges in the dark is clearly metaphoric for our society, and the issues that it raises can be applied to broader social structures. Yet Taylor does not provide this kind of contextual metaphoric substructure. Some students make these connections in their journals, but the emphasis in journal writing is usually a personal reflection upon how it affected 'me'.

The overriding impression is that for many students, Taylor provides the experiences, but not the frames for contextualising that experience in order to understand and contain the emotional fall-out. And without emotional containment or form, the students are unable to reflect on thus fully gain from what they have experienced. They are left only with experience: unmoulded, unshaped and therefore untransformable. Form provides inbuilt reflection on an experience. By not providing a form for reflection Taylor is short circuiting the growth potential of the experience which ends at the end of the lesson, and the students simply have to write up 'what you learnt about yourself today'.

In Dewey's view (1938), the criteria for experience in education are 'continuity' and 'interaction'. The experience has to transform into the next experience in order for it to have any growth potential otherwise emotions are aroused with no safe channel for expression other than a private consultation which Taylor does occasionally offer to a student whom she considers may find it helpful to talk about what happened in the classroom. However an extension of the exercise using the form to mould emotions, may facilitate greater understanding for the bulk of the students in the class. This is the power of improvisation: not merely to create experiences, but to create experiences which are able to be transformed through reflective devices. Part of this process is symbolisation - the exploration of the commonality through experience.

Central to both Boal's and Stanislavsky's theses on emotional memory is

`transference': the transfer of a similar experience (not necessarily identical) through memory recall in order to create a character. Boal, in his footnote on transference does distinguish his use of the word, and states that although there are similarities with its psychoanalytical usage, it is essentially different, the difference marked by `a deliberate, voluntary process, as opposed to the involuntary nature of transferences recorded in psychoanalytical case histories' (1992: 46).

But an intense emotion memory exercise, or for that matter, any emotion exercise, can be dangerous unless one afterwards `rationalises' what has happened. Actors discover things when they take the risk of experiencing emotions ... Which doesn't mean to say that we should dismiss emotion exercises; on the contrary, they must be done, but with the aim of `understanding' the experience, not simply feeling it. (47)

It is the expression of emotion through form which facilitates the understanding and finally the communication of that emotion. And by manipulating form, the endless possibilities of expression are discovered.

Theatre Form or Therapy

Taylor describes much of her work as therapeutic (November 1993). She uses many visualisation or right-brain exercises to examine emotions. For example one imagines that bees are blown into a balloon or the flower representing your hopes is crushed. Emotion is aroused within this imaginative act, however there is no externalised expression. For Stanislavski (1949), external action is important for the expression of internal action. Taylor is using internal action possibly with therapeutic intentions, but where therapy is an individual process, even when it occurs in a group, the focus of both the group and the therapist is singular. Similar methods such as visualisation, role-play and role-reversal are common to therapy, but only one person is `worked on' at a time and the therapist will continue to work with that person until resolution or enlightenment occurs - the moment of logical conclusion and change. Even Morris in his work on `being' stresses the importance of an individual working in front of a group, and this is evident in the work of Moreno and his Theatre of Spontaneity as well as in the work of the Gestalt therapists. Because Taylor is working with a whole group in which every

individual is involved in the exercise, no objectification can occur. The students do not watch each other, and thus there is little understanding of the form within which they are working and how it can be used for the expression of meaning and understanding which is necessary for change.

In interviews I found students frequently angered by the emotional disturbances they experienced in Taylor's exercises which they feel should have been reserved for the therapy room, but by coming to improvisation that choice had been taken away from them. Some question why many of the classes had to be done at all. Others consider it invaluable to their skill in acting. Says a student (C):

I was lucky. I had experienced other forms of improvisation before I came to drama school so I knew that Mavis's way was not the only way. Other people didn't know that. It also meant that I was free to take from the lessons what I wanted. Now, when I look back at my years at drama school, I remember Improvisation.

For those students who had not been exposed to other forms of improvisation, the methods and principles that Taylor applied were seen to be the only approach, and without knowledge of the structure that was being taught, students handed the responsibility for their learning over to her. For students to take risks, they need to be confident that the structures within which they are working will support them. Furthermore if they understand those structures they then have the power to manipulate the structures to provide themselves with a safety net. Marowitz is careful to point out that if when dealing with personal and emotional issues, the structures of the medium are hidden, the student has no visible form through which to reflect and evaluate her expression, and ultimately has to rely on the teacher for affirmation. Thus it is the dramatic form which is essential for exploration. Writes Grotowski:

the more we become absorbed in what is hidden inside us, in the excess, in the exposure, in the self-penetration, the more rigid must be the external discipline; that is to say the form, the artificiality, the ideogram, the sign. Here lies the whole principle of expressiveness. (1975: 39)

The more rigid the structures, the safer it becomes for a student to take risks. The

dramatic medium, because of its structure and its elements, contains inherently therapeutic qualities. Taylor teaches the therapeutic content rather than the manipulation of form. Because the improvisational form is about transformation, change will occur if its structural elements are understood and exploited.

Seeing the Bees through the Bottle

When studying a text, Taylor may use as her entry the examination of the emotional life of the character. She has asked her students to bring a text that they would like to explore. With all the students around her, each with a pen and paper, Taylor begins:

'I'd like you to stay inside for this piece. You may be able to move outside for the second half, but I would prefer it if you remained here for now.' This is usually an indication to the students that they are going to explore emotion.

'The first task is to have your text in front of you; read it through as though you're reading it fresh. I want you to strip from your mind what you know, so that when I ask you what the core emotion of the character is - do you know what I mean by the core emotion?'

A student replies, 'The emotion that makes the character do or say what he does.' The class give examples of core emotions: joy, fear, humiliation, anger, passion, lust, bitterness, loneliness, hatred, ambition, feeling of emptiness. Taylor continues:

'All one's actions are related to those core emotions,' she explains. 'It might be a good exercise before you look at that, to look at yourself. Now two people might not be motivated to act in the same way. So perhaps it might be a ten minute core emotion study of yourself.'

After she has told the class to put down their pens and paper, she continues.

'Find for yourself - now I'm not going to ask what it is because it is

very private and you probably won't want anyone to know,' she says and adds, 'unless you want to speak about it.' The class laughs. After the laughter has died down, she leaves the class with the instruction that it should take five to ten minutes. After some tittering, the class is deeply silent. Some are finding it difficult.

When Taylor returns, she talks into the silence. 'Okay, are you ready for the next part. Did you find it easy or difficult?'

'The more questions I ask myself, the less I come up with anything,' says a student.

'That's okay. Questioning is the beginning. It's alright,' she replies and then moves the lesson on. 'Look at this text and don't think about what is motivating this text. Read it freshly and now see what this text is telling you. You might need to clear out of your mind what you've done and know. See the words as though for the first time. Discover what the core emotion is.'

There are students who are struggling. 'Is 'confident' an emotion?' asks one.

'No, it's an expression of an emotion,' Taylor replies. She calls all those who have completed that section of the task over to her. 'I want you now to think about an insect or an animal that seems to express this core emotion.' After they have been given the instruction, they move away into various parts of the room to start working. Taylor calls out to the rest, 'Let's have those people who are struggling with their core emotion. Let's find out what the problems are.' The students talk out their enquiries, and by Taylor repeating what they ask her, they find their own answers. Once all the students are clear, she continues.

'This insect or animal - I want you to assume the characteristics of that insect as though it were expressing that core emotion. It's as if the insect is pure core emotion. The insect is not a person, it is a vehicle for exploring that core emotion. Use this insect or animal as the vehicle for

the expression of this core emotion. So become that insect and be motivated by that core emotion.'

She leaves the students as the air thickens with insects and the room becomes a hive of activity. There is a threatening hornet which is flying, watching, waiting, its sting ready for attack and defence. A cockroach scuttles along the side of the walls and disappears into darkness. A dungbeetle collects, hoards, and rolls belongings around the room. Suddenly there is a collision between two creatures, and the snail's shell is crushed. They part quickly. Taylor watches.

'When you're sure of that insect, you can interact with other insects or animals.' And once again, when she feels that the students have adequately explored their insect, she calls them over to her.

'Now what did it teach you about that emotion?'

A student replies, 'About how dynamic it is.'

Another, 'you don't always feel that emotion, but you're reacting off other things and it is usually contradictory to where you're at.'

Taylor responds, 'So the process of being vulnerable is showing how you are?'

'I was a snail. When I was crushed, I felt as though my whole world had been crushed,' said a student. The class swop a few of their experiences, and then Taylor brings them back together again.

'Now I want you to become that core emotion without the benefit of the insect. Just sit and become that raw, vulnerable emotion that you don't show anybody. Don't talk to anybody. Don't touch anybody,' she warns. 'Sit first. When you're ready to move, then move. You can react off sound and sight.'

Again the class sits, trying to fill their bodies and minds with the emotion that they felt as the insects. The students comment later and so does Taylor that this was a very still period, with most students reclining against the wall. At this point in the exercise Taylor is most watchful. She

counts the students, making sure that no-one has disappeared; a sign that someone is in trouble. Today she recounts to ensure that she wasn't mistaken. A student is missing. She searches, moving slowly around the room. And then she disappears behind the piano where the cockroach was last seen scuttling. Muffled sobs are heard through the silence.

Those students who are beginning to move are nonetheless caught up in the stillness of the feeling. Their movement quality is very different. Afterwards a student says emphatically, 'A core emotion is static.' But Taylor continues to nudge the students out of their stasis.

'Summon up a bit of adrenalin to do this.' The class remains still. She watches and when she feels it is time to move on, she breaks the silence.

'Right, are you ready to move on?' There appears to be some hesitation amongst a few who remain against the wall. Others move towards her.

'The next task is to take the characteristics, the physicality that you found in the insect and use it to find a character. Use the characteristics of the insect in a human form. You can use a line of your text. You are expressing the core emotion.' And then again she warns those who begin to start moving, 'If you get involved with those four people (referring to those who are still engaged in the previous exercise), then you know what you are getting involved in - the pure emotion.'

The room fills with characters. They move frenetically, quite differently from the stillness of the core-emotion. They use the floor, pushing against the walls and pounding the boards. Characters start meeting and for the first time we see the emotion in action. The lines of dialogue get thrown out at others against walls, to the sky. There appears vast freedom. Yet oddly, what is lacking is any tension in the relationships. After a while Taylor calls out 'Freeze!' When all are motionless, she guides. 'Just check your body. Is it your body or is it

really that insect's body. When you have answered that question, you can continue.' The students do a quick shift of point of concentration, drawing their awareness over their body, and when they have made alterations, they move on.

After time has passed, she calls out, 'Okay, great! Come here,' and she ends the exercise.

When all have seated around her she asks, 'Questions?'

'I discovered how my character would deal with other people,' says one student.

'I discovered that my core emotion was socially unacceptable and I didn't know how to deal with it in a room full of people without destroying everyone and everything,' says another who had been the hornet and ready to sting. 'And that's the position my character is in.'

Taylor comments that usually this kind of person ends up destroying herself, and then adds, 'We usually learn about characters through what other people say about them. It is your job to go beneath that otherwise you end up working in cliches.'

'I found it difficult to access core emotion. I found that the only way I could do it was through movement,' says a student a bit later.

Taylor, in response, warns the class that what they are trying to do is to move away from their own bodies. 'This is just another way in. You need to learn more ways in. These characters were core emotion,' she emphasises. 'Characters cover these up. That's why it makes the work of psychologists so damned difficult - to access the core emotion.' And then she suggests that, as actors, they should become the psychologists of their characters.

The Concept of Core Emotion

This lesson raises many issues concerning the role of emotion in the training of actors.

Taylor defines 'core emotion' as the emotion which motivates all actions.

What is the core-emotion of this character? What motivates this person in life: is it jealousy, is it need for power, is it paranoia? What is the basic impetus for this character and focus on that and become that - let that inform every kind of action, every kind of statement. (Taylor, quoted from above lesson)

Yet, 'core emotion' implies a central emotional inertia, for if it is 'core', it is unchanging. This belies the rapidly active and transformative nature of emotions. What drives one to action one day, might not motivate one the next. People are too complex to be pinned down to one emotional state, rather a person is a web of intricately woven feelings. Without going into a psychological examination of the human psyche, it is evident that emotions arise out of external/internal encounters.

The Relationship between Actor's and Character's Emotion.

Taylor teaches that there is a direct relationship between the internal reality of an actor and that of a character. In the above lesson she asks the students to examine their personal emotions. She stresses that this is a private exercise. Yet, when she returns, she does not pursue any teaching activity pertaining to these particular emotions and the students are therefore left with the feelings that they have accessed neither expressed nor examined. Taylor argues that self-understanding is important for an actor, yet in this process of self-examination she does not equip the students to reach any real understanding. If there is no resolution to this personal exploration, the intense emotional disturbance can merely act to destabilise the student.

This focus on the actor's inner process and emotional being for the purposes of acting and characterisation is described as a fallacy by Marowitz. He writes sardonically that the greatest flaw in such a process

is the equation between the actor's and the character's psyche. It is part of the accepted ideology ... to believe that the basis for any character-building is the actor's personal mode of behaviour ... In one sense, this is unassailable. The actor has only himself at his disposal. He can work only with *his* emotions, *his* temperament, *his* store of memories. Should he fail to work with himself, he is in danger of imitating or faking But if the character he is portraying contains an intensity of feeling beyond his emotional scope, he must of necessity transcend his personal limitations; he must fill out the contours of those characters more imaginatively conceived than himself. (1978: 13-14)

If the primary emphasis is placed upon the realisation of authentic *feeling*, then the imagination's ability to engender emotions is negated. Many young actors whose life experiences are more limited than the character's expressed emotion feel jeopardised by such an emphasis. Young students have expressed in interviews that they feel pressurised to broaden their own emotional experiences. Life experiences are accelerated in the name of art to possibly detrimental effect.

Grotowski spells out the dangers of personal emotional investment:

Through fixed impulses and reactions, through a score of fixed details, seek what is personal and intimate. Here one of the great dangers is that you do not act in true accord with the others. In this case, when you are concentrating on the personal element as on a kind of treasure, if you are looking for the richness of your emotions, the result will be a kind of narcissism. If you want to have emotions at all costs, if you want to have a rich 'psyche', that is if you artificially stimulate the internal process, you will only imitate emotions. It is a lie towards the others and towards yourself. (1975: 191)

This emphasis on the actor's inner process and emotions 'overprizes individuality' (Marowitz: 1978: 14) and may lead to actors becoming overly obsessed with themselves and their emotions. This is not to gainsay the importance of self-knowledge and the affirmation of personal emotions. Rather, the actor should be confident enough to move away from personal feeling when embarking on characterisation, with the knowledge that there is a stable base to return to. If personal emotion becomes the core from which the actor works, it imposes on the portrayal of a character an emotional state which is irrelevant to the context of the play. Furthermore, if the actor is asked to approach the play from what he thinks is the core emotion without any understanding of the text, he is approaching it solely from what he is already familiar with. He imposes his selfhood onto the character and then can never move beyond his own emotions because he has approached the text from limited experience. In this way the student ends up presenting the character in mundane clichés. This has become the common complaint about Method actors: they 'always play themselves'. The essence of acting is lost. The students are simply 'being', serving neither the character nor the meaning of the play.

Emotion is Action in Context

Although Taylor is working from a text, she is teaching the students to enter the text from an identification of the 'core emotion'. The students struggle to uncover the core emotion because they have not examined and determined the action, when emotion is a consequence of the action imbedded in the context and meaning of the play. This leads to the imposition of abstract emotion which becomes the starting point for the actor, and a false premise. The actor presents a character in isolation from the play as a whole, and his meaning becomes an individual pursuit for emotional integrity.

What information the text does give is to be found in the action: both in momentary situations and in the play as a whole. Situation is the catalyst for a character's expression of emotion and emotion is perceived through the character's actions. By physically exploring the action and situation the character's presented emotion will reveal itself.

Stanislavski in Building a Character, explains the importance of beginning through action:

remember for all time, that when you begin to study each role you should first gather all the materials that have any bearing on it, and supplement them with more and more imagination, until you have achieved such a similarity to life that it is easy to believe in what you are doing. In the beginning forget about your feelings. When the inner conditions are prepared, and right, feelings will come to the surface of their own accord. (1949: 50)

This is based on an understanding and 'recognition of the Gestalt nature of the human psychophysiology: mind and body are interrelated not separate entities ... and the body's feelings are stored in muscle memory' (Harrop: 1992: 55). This relationship was clearly demonstrated by Grotowski who developed and used his psycho-physical exercises to access and channel emotions into articulate and powerfully emotive gestures. Exploring the detailed and distinct physicality of the character gives rise to a quality of emotion that is beyond the actor, for the search has not been internalised and personal.

However, although Stanislavski began to move away from the 'character's inner psychological process, towards the more concrete idea of the playing of physical actions:

a move from feeling back towards physical sign' (54), the disparity of approach between action and emotion has become a trans-Atlantic dispute. Marowitz, distinctly British, caustically compares the English to the American trained actor. Unlike the Americans, the English actor 'does not preoccupy himself with emotional theories, he just acts, and if he is lucky ... the emotion takes care of itself' (1978: 16). Chaikin points out that if the character were a live person he 'would be doing the opposite [of getting involved in his inner most feelings] - that is, trying to relieve himself of his unhappiness, and to respond to the circumstances around him' (Blumenthal: 1984: 54). By responding to action, the actor would discover both the intricacies of the character's emotional expression as well as express it from a vantage point quite separate from his own.

Emotion is a Relationship

Much of the work on emotion and the search for core emotion remains a personal study. The students, behind closed eyes, experience the emotion in isolation. The actor may choose to make external contact, but Taylor does stress the personal nature of the exercise - to access and feel the emotion individually. For Chaikin, emotional recall

encourages (indeed perhaps requires) the actor to become totally self-involved, "completely locked out of any ensemble experience" and unconnected with the material except as it intersects with the actor's own emotions. For Chaikin, with his deep belief that the actor should be concerned with the larger testimony of the theatre work, this sort of total self-concern is unacceptable. (Blumenthal: 1977: 120)

Although Taylor, in the earlier exercises does use imaginative situations (lessons on rock, mud and water) as a sounding board for the actors to rebound off, the actors explore these situations on their own. These exercises are not, as she explains, 'communal at all' (November: 1993).

Sometimes you find a student suddenly, particularly in a thing like fire, leap into doing a fire with somebody else. But it is essentially what you feel in relation to that moment and then the turn around So the only community in it is that you are understanding feeling from two sides, but it is not through another person, it is through yourself. (Ibid)

For Grotowski, if an actor works alone, he works only for himself:

he observes his emotions, looks for the richness of his psychic states ... this is the shortest way to hypocrisy and hysteria ... there is always the pressure to pump up great emotions within oneself. But emotions do not depend upon our will. We begin to imitate emotions within ourselves, and that is pure hypocrisy. Then the actor looks for something concrete in himself and the easiest thing is hysteria. He hides within hysterical reactions: formless improvisations with wild gestures and screams. This, too, is narcissism. (1975: 202)

It is the situation and the relationship that gives form to the emotion, and which provides the catalyst for the emotion to transform, for 'there are no impulses or reactions without contact' (186). It is through contact - listening and answering - that emotion is shaped and its diversity of response explored. Hence it is in the 'core emotion' lesson that the students do not listen to each other, do not respond, do not adapt and change, for they are listening to no impulse other than their own. The result is that the emotion, although made explicit, remains one-dimensional both in its expression and intensity.

Grotowski describes the final paradox:

[The] principle is that the actor, in order to fulfil himself, must not work for himself. Through penetrating his relationship with others - studying the elements of contact - the actor will discover what is in him. He must give himself totally. (201-202)

Giving Form to Emotion

The creative process consists, however, in not only revealing ourselves, but in structuring what is revealed ... our first obligation in art is to express ourselves through our own most personal motives. (200)

Creativity is the expression of emotion. It is the release of emotion, through form, whatever the field of art. It is the channeling of emotion through form, which in itself, generates emotion (Ross: 1978). But because the imaginary world has become so subsidiary, the students generate emotion without learning how to structure it through gesture. Because the emotions remain unshaped, emotional training remains an exercise in the exploration of personal emotions. Even if this exploration is for therapeutic reasons, then likewise, it is through the structuring of emotion that the transformation and understanding of the emotion is achieved. 'Blocks' are freed through understanding and

change. A student needs to see and understand for a change to occur or a 'block' to dissolve, and structure provides this vision.

Writes Grotowski:

The actor who accomplishes an act of self-penetration is setting out on a journey which is recorded through various sound and gesture reflexes, formulating a sort of invitation to the spectator. But these signs must be articulated.... Undisciplined self-penetration is no liberation, but is perceived as a form of biological chaos. (1975: 38-39)

The lack of form in emotional investigation leads to 'emotional uncontainment' (Levin: 1991). The emotion remains overwhelming and unchanging. It is the discovery and manipulation of form which gives the emotion expression. Marowitz, again with sharp tongue, takes great pleasure in testing the validity of 'the inner truth theory':

There are hundreds of instances of turned-on actors splitting themselves with inner intensity communicating nothing to an audience but effort and intention. It is equally true that an actor who is almost totally turned-off but going through the right motions in the right context can powerfully affect an audience The Method's test for truthfulness is the intensity and authenticity of his personal feeling. The Artaudian actor knows that unless that feeling has been shaped into a communicative image, it is a passionate letter without postage. (1978: 20)

The craft of acting lies in the skill of communication. Through the manipulation of form to enhance and intensify expression, the private experience transforms beyond the personal to a powerful symbol that draws the audience into a shared meeting. By neither shaping the experience nor transcending the individual experience, the power to communicate is lost. Theatre is a meeting ground. It is the rigorous search for structures: images, symbols and gesture that are laden with emotion which makes this meeting ground possible.

The Animal in Us All

The Self and Character

This section might appear to be devoid of critical analysis and commentary, the reason being that much of what has been said in the previous sections is applicable to some of the lessons that follow.

Taylor is working with the first year students. She is introducing them to character work. Until now they have been encouraged to participate as themselves in the class, but now they will become someone else.

‘Today we’re going to have some fun,’ Taylor tells the class as they seat themselves in a circle, each with a pen and paper.

‘We are going to divide the body into seven different parts,’ she explains. ‘First there is the head and face.’ The students start writing. ‘Second is the neck, shoulders and arms. Third are the hands. Fourth, the chest and body, fifth the legs, sixth, the feet and lastly the voice.’ She watches the group as they continue writing.

‘Should I run through that again?’ she asks to make sure that all the students have got the different sections. Problems are cleared up, and Taylor continues.

‘On your piece of paper you are going to write a line describing first the head and face of a character. When you have finished, you fold the paper over so that no-one can see it and then you pass it on to the person on your right. When you receive the sheet of paper, you describe the next part of the body, fold it over and pass on,’ she continues, describing the child’s game so commonly played. Once all the students understand the instructions fully, and after some clarifications, the students begin.

There is much pausing and thinking, giggling, furious scribbling

and passing on of the paper, as the students engage deeply in the exercise amused by their own images. When the students have all completed the various sections of the body and passed the papers on for the last time, each unrolls the sheet that she has received.

`Read it,' Taylor instructs, `and don't share it with anybody,' she adds as the students start laughing sporadically, reading their descriptions.

A student unfolds and reads to herself: *He has got a small head with a small face and a sharp chin and big mouth and nose. He is smiling.*

He has a thin pimply turkey neck with huge spots which burst when he turns his head. And massive shoulders which stretch out about a foot to either side. His arms are skinny and broken and hang crookedly on either side of his body.

About his hands, *very delicate - for writing and beckoning.*

The body is quite simply *curved* and his *legs are the most stunning part of his person. The knees are one big cellulite waste area and the thighs, strong and muscular. Tattoos of racehorses and flower vases are on the inside thigh. The ankles are swollen with a mysterious pus, causing large aqua-marine sores.*

The feet are the first pair I've smelt that have no offending odour. They are not well-shaped however.

And finally, the voice is *thin and reedy, with a tendency to tremble and quiver. It definitely has a thick, nasal twang.*

Once the laughter has died down and all the students have read their papers, Taylor asks the students to each become their character.

`When you have found the body, you can find the voice and speak,' she says.

The room quietly turns into a circus of deformed people: shrinking arms, backs bending and curving, feet changing shape and faces defining expressions. The students explore their characters physically, isolating and exploring each section of the body. And once bodies have been

detailed, voices begin to emerge, extraordinary voices rising and falling in odd patterns.

Taylor watches and then calls out 'Freeze!' In the frozenness she continues, 'Reread your paper and see if your body is doing it all.'

The students, still holding their new bodies, shuffle their papers around and compare their characters to the original description. There is some re-adjusting, creating a new awareness of a body part that was forgotten.

When Taylor feels that the students are ready, she continues.

'Find a friend and have a discussion with that friend.'

The characters start moving again, brushing past each other, stopping and greeting. Meetings don't last long in many cases.

'My character is too odd to feel comfortable with others,' said a student afterwards. 'He felt so lonely, embarrassed of himself. I would imagine that he lives on his own, a recluse.' Many agree.

Taylor calls out 'Freeze!' for a second time when she feels that most students have gone as far as they can. Then, 'Change your paper with somebody. Find first the body. Let the voice come later.'

The students undergo radical changes again. Taylor lets them explore these new characters for a while before she ends the session and calls the class back into the circle.

Taylor, by using combined imaginations to create characters, is defying the logic of normality. The students, bits of paper in hand, are presented with outrageous characters whose each appendage seems to be part of a larger incongruity: tiny hands on the end of large muscled arms; a long thin neck joining a bulging face to a flabby chest.

'It felt so strange, almost that all parts of the body were at odds with each other,' said a student later in reflection.

'Yes, but strange how you can combine seemingly impossible

features and still find a reason for it,' elaborates another.

'The sheet of paper is riddled with contradictions. But you realise, that when you come to a real person, they are riddled with contradictions too,' says another student.

Physicality and the Imagination

By collaging the body to find the physicality of each limb, the resulting contradictions fire the imagination. The students walk around the room, they sit and stand, all the time discovering the shape of their legs and how that makes them walk, the neck and how it moves the head and perhaps the eyes, the chest and how it affects the back. And as the body changes so the student begins to think imaginatively of the reasons for the shape of the body. *With these tattoos on my legs I imagined that my character spent all his time at the race-course. He was too odd to be accepted into normal society. At the race-course he would disappear into the crowd. The rest of the time he would sit in his dingy bed-sitter counting his money,* writes one student. This attention to detail (down to the lips) created by the exaggerated and diametric physicality envelops each character in a web of belief. Part of the gem of this exercise is that stereotypes are broken forcing upon the students-in-character the need for astute observation.

In their next lesson Taylor, still working with the exaggerated characters, begins the process of honing these qualities down to discover the 'real' person. Where last week the class was filled with freaks, today there are signs of ordinary people.

'Settle on one of the characters from last lesson,' she informs the class who still have their character collages at hand. 'Turn that into a more normal person. You will need to sit and think. If somebody has a body like this, what is it in their personality that might cause them to be like this. Try out the qualities for yourself. Do it and find out what your body says about it. Don't use voice this time. Just work on your own. Don't only think about it. Put the body into action.'

The students, scattered around the room, sit quietly for a while, and then they start to get up and move, slowly at first. Taylor watches. When she feels that some of the extraordinary qualities might have been lost, she calls out 'Freeze!' and returns them to exaggeration.

'When you feel that you have reassessed your character,' she says, 'normalise it.' Much action begins in the room, characters going about some part of their daily routine.

I was very aware of other people as I walked down the street. I feel an outcast. I live in New York, in a squalid apartment. I have only a bed with a red blanket. As I saw people, all I could think about was how much happier other people were - happier than myself. I thought everyone was looking at me. I felt so self-conscious - they were looking at my thighs, my ankles. I repulse people. I felt so depressed that I had to go to the tote. Money means everything to me. When I'm home alone all I do is add and subtract figures, sums of money. It is what my hands are meant to do, writes the same student.

Again Taylor freezes the characters and speaks into their thoughts. 'Is everybody clear on what the body is telling you? Find a partner and describe that character. Do it one at a time. You may ask a question to clarify something, but don't comment or start describing for the other person. You are not describing the body, but the person: what the person is, how the person reacts, how the person feels,' she tells the students.

They begin to gravitate towards partners, and a low rumble of voices begins. When the students have shared their characters, and added to them through the telling, Taylor separates the partners.

'Now move around the room in the experience of that character,' she instructs. 'Move around in two moods: first quite sad, then quite happy.' And when the students have explored those two emotional states, she stops the exercise and gathers the students around her. In the reflection, students comment:

'It's interesting how things like size, physical fitness make one have particular feelings about yourself and your relation with other people,' says a student.

'You can determine the behaviour of the character through the body,' agrees another.

'As you took on the physical aspects the emotional being of the character got stronger,' a third adds. Unusual characters have been created, and through their physical being, remarkable lives have materialised.

'This exercise always produces physical characters,' comments Taylor, 'because it forces the actor to rethink and mould their physical being.' And although it is often zany, it produces characters of action.

Entering Character through Physicality

This exercise produces highly imaginative results. Taylor is working from the students' and characters' physicality. Because characters' bodies are so utterly different from the students' own, students are forced into a new way of thinking and new manner of action. There were students who remarked on doing things that they could never have imagined even thinking before. The resulting body transformation catalyses extreme flights of fancy and brings a deeper level of detail to the student's work. Chaikin emphasises the importance of entering character from the physical:

the actor's real entrance into a role comes more often from a somatic than a psychological impulse. [Chaikin] has explored ways to work with shapes and rhythms of actions and feelings. While a person's emotional memory contains only the experience of one individual ... Chaikin feels that "all of one's past - historical and evolutionary - is contained in the body." And somatic impulses are direct, uninterpreted. (Blumenthal: 1987: 54-55)

For this reason, the actor's body has to be highly sensitised. Work prior to characterisation is about putting the actor in touch with her physicality. Essential to that sensitisation of the body is an awareness of rhythm, for although physicality is the beginning of characterisation, it is the rhythm of movement that releases and forms

emotion through action.

For Taylor the move away from personal rhythms and the adoption of new ones is possibly one of the most difficult aspects of characterisation. She believes that because rhythms are so internal they are difficult to transform. Thus the lesson to follow is one that she does not only with the first years but will repeat again when the students are in third year if she feels that they do not fully understand and utilise the concept of rhythm. In the following version she is working with the final year students.

With the class in partners, she gives her instructions:

'You are going to walk, talk, sit, go outside if you want to - observe your partner in detail,' she says to the group. 'Okay. Stand up. Walk with your partner, each in your own rhythm. Observe the other's rhythm. Don't accommodate. Observe. Observe,' she says ardently. 'Don't accommodate. Don't focus on anything else. Just on your partner.'

The students get ready to go outside. A student starts putting on his shoes. He looks up at his partner. 'Have you started observing me?' he questions mockingly.

His partner stares. 'I won't tell you when I do.'

And then they all move outside. As the students begin to observe, it becomes apparent that they are operating within a split focus. Although they are focusing on their partners they are aware that they too are the subject of scrutiny. However, the more they focus on their partners and lose themselves in their observation, the more relaxed they become, losing the self-consciousness of being watched.

After the period of simultaneous observation, Taylor stops them.

'Now what you can do is, one of you stop and let the other walk around you,' she explains. 'Then stop and alternate when you've seen enough. You can follow on if you want to, follow behind and imitate.' The observed begin to walk in circles around the observer. After a period of time, they swop over.

'Can you now become each other?' she asks them, and they fall into the gait of their partners.

'Now swop over and become each other walking together,' she instructs.

Taylor describes this exercise as elementary. 'It is quite simple really,' she says quietly during the lesson, but the levels of possibility are expansive.

With the first years she spends time with the observation. Continuing to observe, the students enter into dialogue with their partners.

Taylor stops the talking, advising, 'Just continue what you were doing.' And as a reminder, 'Are you still observing? Do you remember what topic you were talking about? I now want you to keep talking on that topic, but from the body of your partner.' The class resume their conversations, but there is a sudden switch and immediate laughter - the laughter of recognition - breaks out.

'In your discussion, do not discuss what the other person is doing,' she reminds those that start 'aiy-aiying' their partners, disagreeing with the vision in front of them and trying to correct their partner's imitation.

'You can attempt the kind of conversation that this person would have, you can attempt the voice' says Taylor breaking into the conversations to help them explore further, 'Don't only sit on the floor, folks! Move around.' She comments quietly on the detail and lack of exaggeration that she is seeing.

With the final year students, Taylor extends the exercise, moving it beyond mere observation:

After they have become each other, Taylor gathers the group around her.

‘Now let’s look at one after the other,’ she says and one by one the students walk across the space. Again ‘Ai! Ai!’ they cry in shock of recognition as they see themselves, indignant about some parodies. There is much guessing and plenty of laughter and pleasure.

‘So why do we have a problem changing characters?’ Taylor asks of the students who have been successful in their transformations.

‘External rhythms are easier to find than internal rhythms,’ says a student.

‘What are the difficulties when becoming another character?’ Taylor presses. The students talk about rhythm. Taylor reminds them that observation is a way. ‘You must do more observation.’ A student suggests taking a gesture and exaggerating it to find the emotion. Taylor replies that it ‘is a good way, a good exercise,’ but she wants to move the class on.

‘Take a partner. This time exaggerate yourself. Not just in walking, but sitting, turning around, what you would do in conversation. But don’t talk. You can have an internal dialogue, but don’t talk.’ As the students start working, she has to remind them, ‘Don’t make it natural. Exaggerate. Send yourself up.’ She urges the class to work quickly.

Once she feels that all the students have reached a certain level of exaggeration, she instructs, ‘Now, I want you to discuss with your partner what exactly it is that constitutes the rhythm. Look at what the rhythm is. What makes rhythm? We almost all walk more or less the same. Tempo is the same. What then makes the rhythm different? What constitutes the rhythm of each?’

While the groups discuss, she walks between them, listening carefully, repeating to pairs, ‘Look at where the shifts in the rhythm are.’ And when she thinks that most have answered that question, she calls them back to her.

‘Now I want you to turn the rhythm into sound. I want you to make a whole description of the rhythm through sound,’ she explains. A student

asks if she can move, but Taylor is emphatic that she wants sound only. 'Not with gesture, with sound only,' she repeats for clarification. She gives the students a short time to explore the rhythm vocally and again when she senses that each student is clear on their vocal pattern, she continues.

'Now take the rhythm and the walk with the sound of your partner. Everything together, simultaneously.' Taylor is taking it to this extreme for she believes that the students need to change every part of themselves. She gives the students time for the rhythm to emerge in all areas of their body.

'Okay. Have you assimilated your partner?' she asks the group. 'Could you be your partner for the rest of the afternoon?'

'Not when I vote,' laughs a student, it being the 17th of March 1992, Referendum Day.

And through the laughter, Taylor responds 'And tomorrow too! That's what it takes to find something different from yourself.'

'I feel embarrassed being a character outside of the rehearsal room,' comments a student.

'But who knows who you are anyway,' says Taylor smiling quizzically.

There is brief discussion and then she stops it short. 'For the rest of the time I want you to go back into your character, being your partner by yourself. I want you to find out what those movements relate to internally. I want you to find out, by doing, what you feel. I'm going to leave you alone, not talk for the rest of the lesson. I don't want you to talk either. So you're building on what you found out. Now find out what those internal feelings are. Start with the walk and you'll begin to find it. Those feelings might be different. They might be the same. Don't be confused.'

The class has been working individually, but slowly the students

start gathering in bunches until finally they have dropped into a huge circle on the floor. Taylor wonders why they have done that. And then laughs as she watches the growing awareness of the actors realising their dual existence. First they seek 'themselves' out - the student acting as them - and then as characters, they start seeking out their friends, exploring the relationships that they as students observe their fellow classmates in. For a few minutes you are conned, just watching. Students have transformed into others. The transformation is electric. The students feel it, and enjoy the humour of the situation. Then, as they begin to wander away, Taylor ends the lesson.

As the students gather around her again, one asks, 'Who am I?' There is laughter. But in the discussion it becomes apparent that the exercise has provoked questioning. Students explain how odd it felt to play someone who was in the room.

'I was feeling the way H- looked,' says one.

'By taking on somebody's name - what kind of knowledge do you have of that person? Your knowledge of that person is so limited,' says another.

And they end the session by discussing the phenomena of double questioning - watching someone else being you saying 'No, that's not the way I do it.' And then, 'Why do I do that?'

Rhythm and Breath as the Impulse for Character

Taylor is teaching the students to express through rhythm the shape and dynamic which communicates character. Both written and spoken language instilled by schooling have become the dominant forms of communication and as a result the students have a tendency to lapse into vocal discussion. Taylor wants the voice to come last, for once they talk they lose their physicality. Rather than exploring the voice, she wants the students to find vocal patterns which express the rhythms of the character, for it is in vocal, not verbal rhythms that emotion is discovered.

Taylor uses changes in breathing rhythms as a means to explore character. Students have found this useful in order to enter into role. Although it is a technical exercise, a student (C) described it as being extraordinarily insightful in the development of character. 'We tried out different breathing patterns and then developed different characters from each type of breath'. Breath, being the root of all action, is at the heart of characterisation, and because it determines action and the way a character moves, it informs the actor of the character's emotional state. And from the breath and the stimulation of feeling, it will determine the nature of the character's speech in form and content.

However, for Taylor, this examination of rhythm also develops understanding and tolerance. By imitating each other, students begin to access the emotional complexities of their partners. 'Yes, it is frightening,' she says in an aside while the students work. By imitating, 'You are beginning to experience their real emotions - what they're hiding as well, but ultimately it builds up a tolerance for each other.'

To increase characterisational possibilities through alternative physical and rhythmic impulses, Taylor uses animal observation as stimulation. Again this forms the basis for lessons that she will repeat throughout the three years of study. She asks the first year class to think of an animal, any animal, that they have observed in any detail, or which they find funny or amusing. Then she instructs:

'In a space, by yourself, not related to any other animal - I stress that - I want you to create with your body and sound, that animal,' she says. The class sit thoughtfully for a while and to urge them on she continues, 'When you're ready, start becoming that creature.'

Many of the students sit quietly for a while, contemplating what animal to become. A student, who is struggling, approaches Taylor.

'I don't want to do a monkey because it's easy for me. But I don't know what else to do!'

'Let yourself think,' soothes Taylor. And then when his brow eases up, she encourages, 'It's good to reject what comes easily to you.'

Slowly, out of the stillness, the students extend some limbs and shorten others in the process of metamorphosis. Where the lesson began in a classroom, there is the sudden feeling of being in a zoo.

For students who are doing this exercise for the first time, Taylor will spend a good portion of the lesson in the exploration of the animal physicality. She takes them through an entire 'day' to discover the daily rhythm of the animal to give them time to find the detail of the body and movement.

When all the animals have taken full shape and discovered their bodies, Taylor speaks softly so that her voice does not intrude.

'Keep what you've got and listen. Don't go out of your body. I want you to go through a day in the life of this animal. I want you to sleep and then, when you wake, to go outside.' Again she stresses no contact. 'The room is a place for contact.' She locates a waterhole in the room, and then 'I want you to go to sleep - night.' She repeats her instructions clearly, for she has never before let the students go outside in this exercise, and she wants to be cautious. 'I want the animals to get the feeling of open space,' she says quietly as the animals begin to wake.

With the sun that Taylor rises there is a stretching and a sniffing of the air. The common thought of 'food' and the alertness of the animals' senses brings to the student actors an aliveness of perception which has not been evident previously. They wander outside (the students leave the room) and the reality of the environment - the sun, the air and the shrubbery - heightens many of their animal qualities. A sloth hangs under a bush and a squirrel forages under a tree in amongst real squirrels. The air is full of the dangers of predatory watching. As the sun beats down, the heat drives the animals into the shade and they lazily move towards the waterhole in the room. As one animal scampers towards the water, a lion pounces to kill. There is little chance for escape and with a whimper the

squirrel dies. Other animals circle the lion, sniffing the blood, but the lion, keen and protective, snarls viciously and drags the carcass off.

'It's towards the middle of the day,' feeds in Taylor, making the sun beat down harder. Lethargy overcomes the animals. A giraffe sways as its spindly legs splay, allowing the long neck to lower the lips nudgingly to the water's edge. Taylor wanders towards the now well-picked carcass. She wonders if the student will accept his lot of being dead. The carcass has been a central point of focus, but Taylor decides to resurrect him which startles the lion. Taylor says quietly on her return, 'He really was very dead!' Then Taylor lowers the sun and brings a breeze. Animals awaken and some begin to play. For Taylor this exercise brings release. 'Taking on the physicality and attitude of an animal finds another rhythm and energy in the body.'

And then she sets the sun, taking the animals back into the night. She laughs quietly, 'It would be different if we had a night animal!' but she hasn't observed any and the room is quite still.

Suddenly there is a lone cry in the night from a monkey.

'That was very real, wasn't it?' she says, reacting instinctively to the sound and she gets up to wander through the sleeping bodies.

'Alright, relax,' she says, gently waking the students by bringing the exercise to an end. As they sit up she keeps them silently thoughtful about the physical and vocal qualities they explored.

With the second and third year students who have done this exercise before, she moves quickly through the animal exploration, not dwelling on the daily cycle. She is keen to push them through to spend more time with their human counterparts.

After they have explored the animal, Taylor says, 'Now find that in exaggerated human terms. Work by yourself. Do not approach anyone else. I want you to find the characteristics of the creatures you found - the

nature, personality, physicality.' She gives them fifteen minutes. She is careful to see that the animals translate. There is an extraordinary physicality amongst the characters. The bodies immediately loosen up and project precise characteristics.

'Okay,' Taylor says, bringing the characters to stillness, 'keep what you've got. You can interact with each other now. You can cut the exaggeration into more of what you might call normality of this person.'

The toned down characters are still well defined as they begin to move, but contain a strength that has not appeared before. Although interactions begin, when Taylor feels that some students are getting stuck, she calls out, 'Freeze!' The vulture is still sitting on the side, swearing at passers by and beating the air with a stick. 'You've got your character in a particular relationship to what you've discovered,' she says quietly. 'Now take your character further - out of what you have discovered. Look for the other dimensions. Look for other things about this character.' She cautions the students not to lose the fundamental part of the character. 'Think about what made the character like that. And use that for finding out something else about the character.'

The class becomes quieter, and when they begin again, she urges them still to move out of the one dimensionality of the character.

'Freeze!' she calls out again. For some students there has been no progression. She decides to go into a new area, something that she has been thinking about, wanting to try out.

'I want you, in character, to find someone you feel you can talk to - that might be quite difficult for some of you - find someone you feel you can talk to,' she repeats, 'and then when you've got that person, tell them the intimate details about yourself. There's no fear in telling for whatever reason.' And to those who have sunk to the floor, 'If you sit, sit in character.'

Taylor is happy with what she is witnessing. 'It takes them to a

new dimension which is what I was hoping for.' She checks on the type of information that is being told - families, intimacies. And when enough time has passed, she breaks and calls them over.

There is a fair amount of relief expressed when the exercise comes to an end, for concentration is extreme and the physicality and rhythms demanding. She begins the reflection with each person saying what animal they were. There is laughter when it is discovered that two lions, a panther and a vulture managed to make a meal out of a mouse.

'How did you think you translated from an animal to a human?' Taylor asks.

'I was a lion,' says a student. 'I felt I was obviously a lion and I got irritated when another lion attacked me. I kept saying 'Can't you see I'm a lion?' Then when I translated into a person I thought I was obviously male. And I couldn't understand why people only saw me as female.'

'Some people retained their danger from the animals. The giraffe maintained a very 'nose-in-the-air' attitude,' comments Taylor.

'As an eagle I had a feeling of power. I could cause a lot of fear in the little creatures below and I could fly. But when I translated it into a human, I couldn't get that feeling of power. I kept having to stand on chairs,' a student explains.

'I feel so humiliated,' says another. 'When I was an animal I felt powerful, but when I became a human, my status dropped drastically. No-one would come near me. There's no such homo-phobia in the animal kingdom.'

'Was it difficult to tell your partner about yourself?' asks Taylor.

'You needed people to react off. They brought out new dimensions in yourself,' responds a student.

And another adds, 'As an ape, I focused on the physicality. When we were interacting with the people I found I became the victim of the lion. It just came to me. I didn't know what I wanted to say. It just came

to me. I found the connections.'

And the students talk about the freedom of animals, and the frustration of not having the same as humans. Taylor concludes, 'Animals in nature are not like human beings. They're very rhythmic - a rhythm of the outside world which is unlike the jagged rhythm of the city.'

Most of these exercises produce somewhat heightened characters. Once these characters have been developed and created, Taylor takes the students through exercises that relate them to 'normal' or more realistic characters. She will send them out in the environment to find people who have similar bodily characteristics, or rhythms. When they come back with the reality of these characters she takes the students through 'a day in the life of' that character that they may discover what the characters do in their own private space.

'Somewhere in the room, build a house,' she explains to the first year class. 'I want you to come home, from a job, work - anything - and go to bed doing everything that character would do before going to sleep. Then you're going to sleep. Then you're going to wake up and go to work, doing everything that you would do before you go.'

Once Taylor has completed her instructions, the students immediately set about house construction with anything that is available in the room for a shelter.

'I want you to think imaginatively - run through your head all the features you know about this character - emotional, physical and imaginative,' she adds once there is quietness in the room. 'And I don't want you to talk,' she says decisively. After the quietness of preparation has sunk in, the characters start their evening by returning.

Taylor points out while the students work:

This period is a private period, one which few characters ever have. Night routines give away a lot of secrets. It forces the actors in an unpressured

situation to explore the intimate nature of the character.

She gives very little instruction to the students as they work, each alone in her private space. She does not want them to come into contact with any of the other characters. 'Actors fall into talking so easily,' she says in discussion. 'It is as though it indicates good acting.'

There is a lot of activity in each home. One character pumps iron solitarily while others sleep, another is in an endless telephone conversation. Then for some it is time to rise. In the waking hours, and the move beyond the home, characters come into contact and talking begins. Taylor does not want the students to be limited or bound by not talking.

'I release you from no talking,' she says. But immediately characters stop their action and only talk.

She watches carefully, noting that much of the detailed physical work is getting lost in the verbal racket. And yet there is no real communication happening, actors simply try out their wit. Feeling that the exercise is beginning to deteriorate, Taylor calls out 'Freeze!'

There is silence.

'In character I want you to build a square out of the chairs here,' she instructs. She gets up from her chair, her physical change reflecting the change of mood and scenario that she wants to create. The characters, she feels, have explored as much as they can within that scene and they need new stimulus.

'I'll be conventional and do a scene of stuck in the lift,' she says smiling to herself.

Once the characters have built the square of chairs, she speaks to them. 'You are all in a shop,' she says. 'Why are you in this shopping centre?' The question sinks in silently.

‘This is the lift,’ she indicates with her hand to the square of chairs. Taylor gets into the lift as doorman. ‘First floor. Going up,’ she says, her face deadpan. A few students step in. The lift doors close and there is silence in the lift. Taylor and the characters stare straight ahead.

‘Second floor!’ There is some confusion as to whether the lift is going up or down, but finally the lift doors close.

‘Third floor,’ she calls out again as the lift slowly travels up, from floor to floor.

Taylor is prolonging the journey. When all the students have travelled in the lift, she freezes them. ‘There is a fire in the shopping centre. The only escape is the lift.’

All the students rush for the lift. It is crowded. The space is too small. ‘Oh dear!’ Taylor remarks, bovine. ‘The lift door is stuck.’

There is a silence and then the lift erupts - hysteria, panic and silence. Some characters faint or swoon, others start immediate plans of action, while still others immediately try to calm others down. There is a group of students who eventually manage to get out of the top of the lift. They take it upon themselves to rescue everyone. One student never says a word. He stands close to the button panel. ‘I discovered,’ he said later, ‘I made a link between what I had been doing earlier and being in the lift. I should have been able to fix lifts.’ Quietly he undoes the panel and pushes, prods, screws and unscrews. As the last person is carried out of the lift, he pushes the button and the lift doors open. Looking around, he walks out.

In reflection afterwards many students commented on how difficult it was to respond as the character would.

‘Is that an acting problem?’ Taylor asks them.

‘No, it’s a listening problem,’ a student says.

‘But that is an acting problem,’ reminds Taylor. And, in response to her question about the exercise’s relation to acting, students comment:

'We should take every character to bed. We must think of all the detail,' says one.

'You take a character into unknown territory and still have to be that character,' concludes another.

There are different types of unknown situations for further character exploration which Taylor uses. From questions such as:

What is your class structure? What age are you? Do you have a Mother, Father, brothers, sisters, step-father/mother etc? Are you in one of the above? (Taylor's notes: undated)

Taylor delves histories, explores value systems and beliefs. The students think about these questions in silence. Once she thinks that the characters have confronted these issues, she moves them into different scenarios.

Meet a person for the first time; meet your family group in a situation; your mother is to marry a different class person - the two families meet; your sister is pregnant by a black person - the two families meet; your brother is convicted of stealing from the neighbours - the two families meet. (Ibid)

Today, the unknown situation is a corner shop, a soup kitchen and a street.

She asks of the characters, 'Is there any character here who would not go to or work in a shop or soup kitchen or be in the street in relation to that?' There seems to be no problem, but she adds, 'There can be some street sellers as well.'

The students physically set up the shop, street and kitchen and move it around until there is general agreement. They place themselves in relation to the scene, some selling offal, others onions, fruit and newspapers. When there is quiet, she speaks.

'Go back and find the character. Go over your getting up ritual in your mind to find your characters.' In the quietness of the mental waking

up, she drops further questions that she wants the characters to think about.

'Think about what gives me pain.' There is a deep pause of thought.

'What is the thing that makes me happy?' The silence continues.

'What is the thing that makes me unhappy? What is the thing that makes me fearful?' she asks quietly. Then, when she feels that the students have entered deeply into the thought of the character, she asks, 'Why do you pass by here? Or go to the shop?' bringing them back to the present scene. 'When you have thought through all of that you go out and get going to wherever you are going,' she continues, preparing the students for action.

The students slowly enter the scene until there is a fair amount of bustle and business. The street sellers are calling their wares and the soup kitchen gets steadily fuller. After the day's business, Taylor brings dusk. 'At some point it's getting late. You pack up and go home.' The street begins to empty; the only person left being the lone newspaper seller, who finally sells his last newspaper and begins his journey home.

'At home you receive some news that is bad and also some other kind of news,' says Taylor, her voice creeping into their private space. 'You hear two pieces of news,' she clarifies, leading the students towards dealing with conflicting feelings. Now she watches like a hawk, seeking out those people who have gone silent and into themselves. 'Usually if people are expressing themselves aloud it's alright,' she comments. 'If they are holding it, then it is, or can be a problem.'

For those who she believes are in trouble, she will gently approach and place a hand on their shoulder, waiting for a reaction of some kind, urging them to let go. It would appear that many of the students have plummeted emotionally. Gone is the light bustle of the day. Taylor carefully brings the scene to an end. She guides them, 'Be careful with yourself for a while, giving care to ourselves, loving yourself. Not your character, yourself.' And when a calmness begins to settle, she continues.

'In your groups, sit back to back and breathe deeply together. Breathe as if it is one person breathing. Breathe strongly. Breathe in some loving for yourself. Drop your shoulders,' she says watching closely. 'Breathe in healing breath for strength. Feel sunny skies above you. The sun is pouring down - winter's over. When you have that image or feeling strongly, come and join me.'

For reflection each student gives just one word to express how they are feeling. Taylor asks them to ask themselves about the character in relation to the feeling. 'Was it the character or did it become you?'

Actor's or Character's Emotion

Although Taylor is teaching the students to begin their character work from the exploration of a physical image, because the emphasis moves towards the reality and the emotional life of the character, sadly many students forget the physically creative points of entry. When asked how they enter a character in a text, it is common to hear them say that their approach is through determining the emotional state of the character (B).

Taylor feels that it is necessary to take the character beyond what is described in the text. By moving the character into other unknown situations, the students will discover more about that character - find its truth and reality. For Harrop these kind of questions, or the creating of biographies, tends to remove the actor out of the present action of the play. It can:

weigh the actor down with all manner of irrelevancies and lead to spending performance time filling out the 'life' of the character rather than energetically pursuing the character's action as given in the script. (1992: 41)

Although these are methods that Taylor is teaching the students to use for their own rehearsal process, for some the reality of the character becomes an obsession. The action or situation of the play are considered mere 'externals,' and their focus is primarily concerned with finding the 'inner truth' and 'inner action' of the character. Even the meaning of the play itself can become irrelevant.

Again this raises the question of the context in which the students work. The characters which the students create and explore have been conceived by the students within the context of an exercise: in essence, they have no purpose, they have no play. They are characters created in isolation and hence they exist outside of a relationship. In an attempt to give the character meaning, the actor uses herself, and thus she imbues the character with what is, in reality, her own emotion, her own values and ultimately her own meaning. The emotions that the actors start displaying, although prompted from beyond the imaginary framework, are neither the result of action, nor a response to contact within the imaginary. The reaction is their own, confusing the boundary of actor and character.

There is much controversy about the actor and his emotions in relation to character. Chaikin is highly critical of actors who use their emotion on stage.

Traditionally the actor summons his sadness, anger, or enthusiasm and pumps at it to sustain an involvement with himself which passes for concern with his material. The eyes of this actor are always secretly looking into his own head. He's like a singer being moved by his own voice. (Blumenthal: 1984: 54)

The result is an actor who acts in isolation, producing emotion to satisfy her own belief that she is 'acting well'. This is not to imply that an actor does not work from a place of belief. Belief is implicit in the art of acting, using as its hypothesis the imaginary 'if'.

Character as Expression of Emotion through Form

Because theatre is a social event, its meaning lies in its social function. It lies in the complex relationship between actors, characters, between the actor and his character and the audience. We create theatre to make meaning in society and in our lives. Thus in the actor's search he 'must give himself and not play for himself or for the spectator. His search must be directed from within himself to the outside, but not for the outside' (Grotowski: 1975: 203). And neither for the inside. What is generated internally must find form to communicate meaning.

Therefore, although Taylor does work with physical transformations, the emotional work that she does has had a tremendous impact on the students. Their

concern becomes creating the emotional state of the character without regard to the shape or form of that emotion. Feeling it is enough.

Chaikin believes:

A performer need not actually recreate the physical or emotional condition of the character But the actor must recreate the *form* that physically embodies and so communicates the character's way of being.
(Blumenthal: 1984: 55-56)

The recalling of an emotion is not enough. It must be captured in the detail of the action, for it is that which communicates the emotion and is felt by the spectator. It is for this reason that practitioners emphasise the importance of physicality by exploring the precision of action. It is also the key to sustaining performances, believes Chaikin, for once form which captures the emotional essence is found in the body, through recreating that form, the emotion will be communicated (Ibid).

But for many students of the department improvisation has become only 'one thing' - the exploration of emotion - and that is believed to be *the* only method. Because improvisation is seen as central to the training of actors, the search for emotional honesty and truth has become the singular approach to characterisation. Any other method is considered inferior. This over-emphasis on emotional realism has culminated in many students' poor understanding of style. By emphasising truth and personal emotional release, there are students who are unable to transcend themselves and present a character that not only serves a play, but exists within a reality that is not his own. A character is not a person. To view it otherwise 'is like picnicking on a landscape painting' (Schechner quoted in Harrop: 1982: 5). Thus, the need to develop a very solid imaginary world is vital. The more the student is able to explore the terrain of the imagination and strengthen his ability in belief through action, situation and physicality, the greater will be the audience's belief.

The Rhythm of the Blues, or the Blues is You in Me
the self and rhythm

Discovering alternate worlds with different visions and rhythms is at the heart of style. The vision of the playwright is embedded in language, rhythm and image which is a particular style. Many students have difficulty communicating the rhythm of this vision. The third years are studying Sam Shepard. Taylor wants to transport them into the Mid-West so that they can experience the vision and rhythm of the country, the people and way of life as a means to understand the language.

The students are scattered around the space. Taylor asks them to stretch, release and then to breathe deeply.

‘I’m going to turn on some music,’ she informs the class, ‘and I would like you just to move to the music and take in its mood.’ Slow, western music filters through the room, and the students start to sway to the lyrics of Bobby McGee, picking up on the slow, gyrating rhythmic movement of its languid and sultry mood. Some are dancing, others just sitting or tapping out its beat. The room begins to feel like a late night bar, where regardless of others, the inhabitants are caught in their own world of reminiscence. When the music ends, Taylor urges them to ‘keep the mood.’ When the music starts up again, it is a more upbeat barn dance type jig, and where the students had been alone earlier, they suddenly collide and dance together. There is still no talking, but plenty of physical contact. Again when it ends, Taylor reminds them to ‘keep what you’ve got.’ The next song is true country blues. Taylor begins to talk, her voice melting into the gently fading music.

‘Imagine you’re walking a long and lonely road on your own,’ she says, her voice trickling into the landscape. ‘It’s a long distance.’ There is a lengthy pause, as she leaves the students to discover the images vivid

and sensual. 'There is the faint sound of sheep way off in the distance, the sound of cattle.'

Again a weighty pause.

'In the distance are mountains,' - the music lilting and blue. 'Enter that world,' she entices, the world of spaces, empty and vast. Students who are walking have eyes stretching into eternity. The room becomes limitless space, each student creating an isolated vastness around them.

'Keep walking down the road. Use this music as a memory,' she almost sighs. 'You are carrying a memory.'

The music fades away like a memory and then changes quite suddenly. The students are still walking 'down that long road,' but the music changes the rhythm of their walk, much like the changing sensation and rhythm of a memory. The balladeer sings about the West and being on the road.

'Going down the road I was happy,' muses a student later, 'and then I started getting lonely and began to feel unpredictable. I wanted to stop. I didn't want to feel unpredictable today.'

'Keep your space,' intones Taylor. 'Sit down and be with the music.' The students slump into relaxed blues bodies, the head-hips, foot-shoulders beat of 'remembrance of things past' and lonely lives.

'Take this piece of music - you've got your text with you?' interjects Taylor. 'If you haven't, can you remember it?' she asks. And again, an urge to 'Keep the mood! Now I want you to run the text through your head using this as background music. Get the mood and rhythm into your piece. If you don't have the text, run the ideas through your head, taking into it the mood and the rhythm.' A new piece of music breaks into the space.

'Can you hear it without hearing the words?' she asks. 'Speak your words,' and as they do, the lilt in the bodies becomes heard through the voices.

‘Okay. Hello!’ she calls to draw their attention when the climax of the voices begins to peter out. ‘Keep what you’ve got and listen at the same time. I want you to put the book down and keep the essence of what you’ve read and engage the ideas with the rhythms you’ve listened to. Engage with someone else.’ The background music continues, but when it finally dies away, the space is filled with the musicality of the voices. The loneliness of the blues has pervaded all, and slowness and drawl is the main characteristic of interactions. Even the argument that breaks out in the corner of the room is languid in its aggression.

‘This is new to Shepard for the students,’ comments Taylor. ‘Usually he’s played frenetic and aggressive. But he’s not from the East. He’s from the West and things are slower there.’

The students are left for a quarter of an hour to explore dialogue and interaction that is dictated by the mood and music. Heat is beginning to build up, perhaps because worlds remain so apart. Taylor feels the mood and breaks it.

‘Okay, gather round.’ And when all are close, she continues. ‘I now want you, without music, to create one of the rhythms and fit your dialogue exactly to it - sticking strictly to the rhythm. Choose a partner and walk around. You’ll be better on your feet to keep the rhythm going.’

The students struggle, but as their feet catch the memory of the music, the language quickly follows. When she feels that all have achieved to a degree, she places a chair in the middle of the room around which she asks the students to make a circle. She gives her instructions:

‘I want you to move in a circle, each person having a chance to say their text. Imagine that in the centre is Sam Shepard and you are auditioning for his next piece. Face in the same direction. Keep moving.’

With Taylor in the centre, the circle winds its way around her. One by one students enter into the circle to ‘speak’ to ‘Sam’. The rhythm keeps them relaxed, and has become internalised. There is a definite rhythm in

their gestures and posture. When the last has returned to the circle, she draws it to a close.

In reflection students marvel at the way music draws you in.

'I found it exceptionally evocative of everything, the emotion. It fills in so much. It's so expressive of the different dynamics,' marvels a student.

'You must understand and remember that Shepard is coming from music. He is a musician. Music and words carry the same weight.'

They discuss different music for different plays.

'Tooth of Crime has a lot of rock in it,' says a student.

And in agreement, 'As a basis, you should know where the author comes from. Like jazz. There's no logic to the characters. Often you can't find the logic of why people do things.'

'Ja, like jamming. If each character is a musical instrument, there will only be a few times when all the characters come together,' perceives another.

'Before, in Tooth of Crime, I couldn't understand why a character kept repeating herself. Suddenly when I heard the music, I understood it - it made musical sense,' says a student.

And Taylor concludes, 'If you go with the rhythm of the writing and treat it as a song, you go on the right path and you can diverge. But diverge only as much as he will allow. You really must follow his music rhythm, even if mindlessly in the beginning.'

And after a fairly lengthy pause, a student suddenly bursts out, 'Yes, music is a distraction - a distraction for the characters. A distraction from their loneliness.'

Through the music, students discover the logic of the music, and how it dictates the action. Interestingly, Chaikin in many of his exercises works with actors jamming, for it teaches the actors to work off what others give. Like the melody, they create one piece of

music and therefore are the same. But because they are different instruments, they are free to interpret it differently, yet always complementing the whole.

Sometimes Taylor, after they have experienced the music and the language, asks the students to:

Consider your character. As your character, write a song in the Western music style. (Taylor's notes: undated)

Saint-Denis defines style as:

the perceptible form that is taken by reality in revealing to us its true and inner character. There is something secret about style. This perceptible or outward form holds a secret which we have got to penetrate if we are to perceive the essential reality which lies beneath it (1982: 136).

The exploration of style is the quest for alternative lives and modes of expression of the world. Every style depicts a different vision of the world. Taylor introduces the students to Shepard's style through music, for embedded in the music is the pace of living, the rhythm of thought and feeling and the quality of movement. It is through the music that the imagination unfolds the way of the play's world. The imagination is crucial for the development and understanding of style, for it is through the transformative structure of the imagination that alternate realities can be created.

Taylor does not work much with style. Although she teaches a lesson on Chekhov, from which she uses posture as the way to discover the life imbedded in the style, her work in this area is limited. Despite her own acute understanding and manipulation of style, which she uses to great effect in the productions she directs, it is not a priority in her improvisation classes.

Style and the Imagination

Because so much of what Taylor teaches involves the penetration of their own inner truth and emotions, students understanding of style appears at times to be weak. By overemphasising the inner life of the individual, the actor can appear unwilling to transcend her own life and personal vision to recreate another's reality through their use

of style. Students in interview express their beliefs that improvisation trains them for 'realistic' acting. This emphasises the style of the actor - how he expresses his reality - rather than his flexibility in exploring other's styles and realities. His 'realistic' acting is thus an expression of his personal emotion. Emotional examination validates the individual vision of the world. The actor turns to his own life for resource, reducing acting to a slice of life. The students fail to understand that the art of theatre is the art of the imagination with its ability to create and express alternate realities through alternate styles. Writes Marowitz conclusively:

Any theory that persuades an actor that the sincerity of his feelings and the truthfulness of his actions are all that is required in the creation of art misunderstands aesthetics. (1978: 14)

Transformation and Style

The transformational properties of the imagination are central to Chaikin, for he believes transformation 'takes the actor out of himself ... to break ... the dependence on psychological motivation and logical transition' (Pasolli: 1970: 21). It creates the opportunity to be 'anything, whatever can be imagined' and thus bounds away from the 'real' and its limitations, to the imaginary and its endless possibilities. This forges the link between style and life; that is, that style reflects and communicates a way of living. Transformation breaks the 'real', thus in acting terms it breaks the logical motivation of the real and explores the illogicality of the imagination, enhancing a freedom of expression. By exploring different styles we break from what we know, and express the unfamiliar. By experimenting we make it familiar, giving us the vision of an alternate reality.

Thus it is the imagination that is vital in the creation and transformation of reality, the transformation of symbols which serve to bind present realities. With the transformation of symbols, new lives with new meanings are created. As Carey writes:

Granny Catchprice had made her life, invented it. When it was not what she wanted, she changed it...
There was no poultry farm, she made one ... out of her head, where there had been nothing previously.... Little Harry Van Der Hoose - she tore up his birth certificate in front of him. He watched her with his mouth so wide open you could pop a tennis ball inside.

`Now,' she said. `What are you?' (1991: 228)

This is reiterated by Boal who works towards breaking socialised muscular activity in order to liberate the mind. Once the body can transform, there is a discovery of the new. In the quest for the truthfulness of emotion, the `concentration on inner process and the generation of personal emotion only serves to enhance realism' (Harrop: 1982: vii). Theatre is reduced to `known quantities and identifiable types' (Marowitz: 1978: 17). If the search in improvisation becomes the search for inner truth and feeling, what is being encouraged is `an inward-looking, border-narrowing, rather than a horizon-widening outlook?' (Ibid). Style is an adopted language that is fostered by the imagination and its potential to break from accepted meaning. It is born through contextual shifts that create new symbols with new meanings, for style is the expression of meaning. Style is not an expression of emotional authenticity. For the actor the challenge lies in adopting the language of the style and expressing it with a belief that communicates the `reality' presented.

Notes

- 1 - the class move around the room, with each individual holding eye contact with another, momentarily before finding another's eyes. When each person has a feeling of oneness with the group, she continues.

Part III

To a Child at the Piano

Play the tune again; but this time
with more regard for the movements at the source of it,
and less attention to time. Time falls
curiously in the course of it.

Play the tune again; not watching
your fingering, but forgetting, letting flow
the sound till it surrounds you. Do not count
or even think. Let go.

Play the tune again; but try to be
nobody, nothing, as though the pace
of the sound were your heart beating, as though
the music were your face.

Play the tune again. It should be easier
to think less every time of the notes, of the measure.
It is all an arrangement of silence. Be silent, and then
play it for your pleasure.

Play the tune again; and this time, when it ends, do not
ask me what I think. Feel what is happening
strangely in the room as the sound glooms over
you, me, everything.

Now,
play the tune again.

Alastair Reid

Chapter 5

Metaphor as Dramatic Frame

**"The Lord whose oracle is at Delphi," says Heraclitus, "neither speaks nor conceals, he gives signs"
(Wheelwright: 1962: 128)**

I discussed improvisation in Part I and examined the elements that allow for an improvised experience to move beyond our limited concept of reality. In Part II, I examined Taylor's use of improvisation in the training of actors, focusing specifically on the concept of 'self' as the foundation for acting. This chapter expands upon the potential possibilities that can arise when the concept of metaphor as a dramatic frame is utilised. Through a discussion of the metaphoric process, I will examine the role it plays in the making of meaning. I have divided the metaphoric process into five elements which represent phases that the metaphor operates in, facilitating the movement from an individual experience to one of objective reality and understanding. These elements are: the imaginative language of the metaphor; its quality of unity; its process of symbolisation; its inherent metamorphosis; and finally, its ability to create an alternative reality.

Metaphor as Imaginative Language

Where the language of the imagination is infinite in its possibilities it is also highly imaginative - constantly drawing from and using itself to create another reality. Because improvising within the imaginary evokes an alternative reality, that reality because of its imaginative language re-evokes the imagination, which in turn creates a new reality ad infinitum, thus forming a cycle of endless possibility. This imaginative process has been defined by Wheelwright as the 'outreaching' and 'combining' qualities central to the language of the metaphor (1962: 72) and as the 'expressive' and the 'meaning' frame by Morgan and Saxton who define them as the two frames of the drama (1987: 21). Ross (1978) too describes this process, expressing it as 'giving form to feeling', for the articulation of feeling generates new feelings which need to find expression. The metaphor reaches beyond the known and combines with the unknown to

create a new reality. It is thus an ongoing process and therefore allows meaning to be continuously constructed. This constant motion through the juxtaposition and synthesis of the 'inner world of meaning' and 'the outer world of expressive action' (Morgan & Saxton: 1987: 21) is what constitutes the power of the metaphoric frame and makes it ^{useful} to drama educationalists¹. Because it is imaginative, drawing from the imagination to invoke the real, it produces a duplicity that contains both the real (the actual) and the imaginary simultaneously. This regenerative language is both rejuvenating and accumulative.

Metaphor as Unity

In our education we are taught the difference between: 'What Is ... ?' and 'What If ... ?' and linguistic categories are provided for these distinctions. Eagleton ascribes this schism to deconstructive thinking, creating the 'belief that reality and our experience of it, are discontinuous with each other' (quoted in Grundberg: 1990: 4). By conforming to our education, we conform to a language specific to the reality of 'What Is'. However, according to Delgado, 'all knowledge cannot be expressed in words, yet our education is based almost exclusively on its written or spoken forms' (1986: 8). In an attempt to explain what we mean, we resort to the language of 'What Is', which undercuts the language of feeling. Our thought becomes harnessed by the linear language of defining, and our verbally dominant left-brain takes precedence over the neglected right-brain 'where interrelationship is what matters' (Wagner: 1976: 166). The language of 'What If' remains ill-educated, almost forgotten, and we are left with a feeling of inadequacy, unable to express our true thoughts. Meaning appears to be elusive. However, where our language has become cool-ly classificatory, Wheelwright describes original language as residing within the metaphor.

Early man, unlike ourselves, did not dichotomise his world into a law-abiding physical universe on the one hand and a confused over-flow of subjective ideas on the other. Nature and self, reality and fancy, for him were radically interpenetrative and coalescent. (1962: 134)

The mind did not distinguish between the intellect and the emotions, and so language was

a simple act, one which expressed an inter-relative existence of reaching out into the greater world and combining that which we discovered with our own small lives. But as we have become more and more divided, and our lives splintered into diverse categories of experience, each with a language of its own, our experience is polarised: there is little communication between the self and nature, reality and fancy, mind and body, spirit and matter, subject and object, the observer and the observed. Our language dooms us, 'either to fragmentation ... or to partial frustration and vagueness' (130).

Because ancient natural metaphors have become embodied in and transmuted through language, they present a unified idea rooted in an emotive, whole understanding. Thus the power of metaphoric language resides in the connection of the two spheres of the disjointed brain in an electric 'shock of recognition' (74), creating a flash of understanding - what Wagner describes as 'metaphoric knowing', Heathcote as 'heightened awareness' and Delgado as 'double-awareness' - reducing the seemingly complex to the ingenuously simple.

Metaphor as Symbolisation

The metaphoric image consists of numerous elements which combine to constitute the whole. Within the metaphor, each of these elements is representative of a different facet of the whole and is therefore integral to the meaning of the whole. Thus the metaphor is a process of symbolisation, for each element within the metaphoric image is symbolic, and through their functioning and interaction they add depth and meaning to the larger symbolic whole. To work in the metaphor is to live those elements, and through experiencing their meaning and weight, discovering them as symbols. For Bolton (1984), symbolisation - what Heathcote describes as 'dropping to the universal' - is central to drama, for it is when meaning transcends the personal and isolated vision of the world, and plunges us into a context in which we discover what is common to us.

Symbols arise out of that moment of shocked recognition when the elements within the metaphor transcend their functionality and become laden with meaning. Students working in the drama, begin in the imaginary world of 'as if'. Through working in that world, they begin to generate meaning and as it accrues it needs to be channelled

through form. As the right form is discovered, it becomes a symbol. Bolton argues that symbolisation occurs when the child feels that 'it is actually happening ... living through an event of heightened significance. He will feel real and perhaps intense emotion; he will think on his feet in action, making decisions and solving problems' (47). Because 'in a symbol there is concealment and yet revelation ... silence and speech acting together' (Carlyle quoted in Wheelwright: 1962: 96), this interdependence of thought and feeling brings about the transgression of the 'self' to produce a symbol. The explanatory mode of the 'as if' transforms into the 'becoming' mode, a powerful expression of meaning which 'eludes full speech' (102). Meaning arises out of the action of becoming. It is 'created from an oscillation between some feature or features of the actual present and the memory bank of feelings, which ... are both personal and universal' (Bolton: 1978: 46).

Because a symbol is in the process of emerging, not only does it generate 'a collective meaning [but] also gives time and opportunity for the participant to endow that symbol with his individual meaning' (Morgan & Saxton: 1987: 5). Writes Wheelwright: Despite

great diversity among human societies and their ways of thinking and responding, there are certain natural similarities too, both in men's physical and in their basic psychical make-up. (1962: 112)

It is the new image which through its unity expresses a new reality. Once understanding ferments in the image, there occurs a vision of a new reality broader than our individual experience. Because the metaphor shifts the scene imaginatively - like a scene change - similar emotions are experienced within a different setting. Thus the individual, by working within a metaphor, is allowed to transcend the personal experience, and extend into a wider emotional context. Once the symbol has been glimpsed or emotionally understood, it becomes 'absorbed into our imaginative experience' (102). Thus it is through the process of symbolisation that meaning is made and new realities created.

Metaphor is Metamorphosis

Inherent within a metaphor is movement. Because the metaphor combines the context of

the real within an imaginary setting, it implies motion - the movement from one image to another. It is through this activity that the new is conceived and hence the transmutation of meaning.

Wheelwright ascribes the metaphor's potential to catalyse a change of form to its 'double imaginative act of outreaching and combining' (72). The metaphor reaches out into the unknown and combines with the familiar, amid a single act. The known is animated into the unknown.

This movement is enhanced further by the fact that a metaphor expresses both the real and the imaginary concurrently, and thus defies a linear time construct. Within the process of perceptual change, there is a time when the two states occur simultaneously. Between the image that we saw and the image we are about to see there is a meeting where the two are indistinguishable - they are both, yet they are one. When this 'jump' in meaning transpires, there is a sudden shock of recognition, a 'gestalt', a change in perception - what was the rabbit is now the duck². A new reality has been given form to, a new meaning has been discovered. And in this 'gestalt', because of the simultaneity of images and of meanings, we are offered a glimpse of a larger universe comprising multiple realities. Metamorphosis is the metaphoric process. It is the motion which gives birth to the new.

Metaphor as Reality

A metaphor, by its very structure, does not present one reality, but rather presents coexistent realities, offering the glimpse of a plural universe which 'is neither object nor subject, neither matter nor mind' (166). But the 'languages of wholeness may be ... puzzling. We sense what they mean and then the meaning eludes us' (Briggs & Peat: 1984: 293). Through our definitive use of language and hence of thought, we have succeeded in fragmenting our reality into boxes, reducing it to a lateral construct. It determines a particular reality. With the glimpse of a world that is multi-layered, we have not the language to define its meaning and possess it in thought. Yet, the meaning is felt, if not elusively, for the fleeting images that tunnel through time remain. Yet paradoxically, Gribbin writes, 'Nothing is real unless it is observed' (1984: 3). Much like

Schrodinger's cat, we only know what we observe and while the rest is hidden from our eyes, it exists only in a state of indetermination (Ibid). But it is our powers of observation which have become limited. We cease to see the world, complacent in our knowledge that it is there. We no longer talk nor think metaphorically. It has become just another linguistic structure. There is a 'Crisis of the Real' (Grundberg: 1990). Through an acutely developed awareness of the most particular, reality becomes heightened. Wheelwright believes that a metaphor heightens presence. It creates 'a vague but powerful sense of *presence* lurking within or amidst or behind everyday objects' (1962: 129). Objects are not just seen for what they are, but become a powerful life force which shapes, if we will, our experiences of the world. Our world is removed from its slack and indistinct state.

Through the use of metaphor in education, we are teaching an expanding universe of multiple realities. For acting, this discovery of new perceptions is crucial, for what is the art of acting other than creating and presenting other's realities. If the world remains unobserved and reality remains determined, as an actor he will only ever be able to present his own world vision.

Practitioners adhere to the this principle of dual reality emphasising that it is the essence of art. Dual reality is best seen in the relationship between actor and acting. Wagner, referring to Berne's terms of Child and Parent, distinguishes two types of behaviour that reflect the unconscious and the conscious. For Wagner (1969) the actor cannot just exist in the natural Child state while acting, for to do so would be a denial of his present emotional being. He must accept the presence of both the Child and the Parent, understanding the roles that both play, thus free to disregard the presence of either one at a given moment. The actor will therefore function in what Stanislavski describes as the mode of 'double awareness' - the actor (Parent) watching the actor-as-character (Child) at work. Delgado describes this process as being in and out of control at the same time, the principle of learning to act with both sides of the brain. He describes it as:

this balance between the two hemispheres which creates the double awareness. It is this balance which permits actors the simultaneous experience of emotional release and emotional control. (1986: x)

Chaikin, Brecht and Boal encourage the actor never to forget that first and foremost she is an actor. Central to their work are observation exercises that heighten actors' awareness of their dual existence, for the act of observation forces reflection not only on what is done, but **why** it is done and the impact that it has on other characters. This reflection heightens a sense of duality. She must see the dual space around her - both believe in the imaginary situation that her character is in as well as the space of the theatre which she-as-actor is in. This also constitutes Brecht's principle of 'alienation' described in his poem 'Showing has to be Shown' in which the actor must always present herself in the presentation of the character (Willet & Manheim: 1976: 341). Chaikin argues that Method acting trains the actor to present only the character. Because they are encouraged to work from themselves there is no duality and hence they present the 'real'. Stanislavsky writes emphatically:

An actor is split into two parts when he is acting. You recall how Thomas Salvini put it: "An actor lives, weeps, laughs on the stage, but as he weeps and laughs he observes his own tears and mirth. It is this double existence, this balance between life and acting that makes for art." (1949: 143)

The actor does not lose herself - the frame of the imaginary still exists. The paradox of course is that this duality exists simultaneously - the actor is working with both concurrently. There is no distinction between the two, because both states exist. When students discover this principle, this double awareness, it has enormous impact. Because they are simultaneously aware of the imaginary frame in which they act - what a student (G) describes as the 'uncontrolling of the unconscious' - as well as an heightened awareness and regard for themselves as actor - what another student (A) describes as 'being in control' - they discover the liberation of expression, reflecting a reality rich in meaning that echoes beyond their own to vibrate the deeper structures that are identified in all.

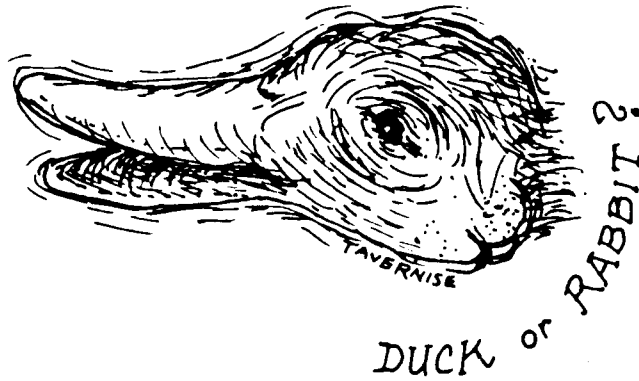
Thus, if acting is about creating realities, actor training is about opening up the doors of reality - creating the opportunities for accessing and experiencing as many realities as possible. This reinforces the notion that reality is not finite, but an

'irreducible pluralism' (Wheelwright: 1962: 171).

Notes

1 - It is on the metaphor that Heathcote's 'Brotherhoods' is based and which is her avenue for endless resources.

2 -



(Briggs & Peat: 1984: 24)

Chapter 6

Archetype as Dramatic Structure

The search for ourselves in the universe is the search for the universe in us.

In our dreams, in our loves, on our journeys, we are addressed by images. They are inviting us to enter more deeply into our lives, to allow our stories to unfold.

(Welch: 1982: 7)

The previous chapter explores the educative potential of using the metaphor as a framing device. In this chapter I will be looking at the structure of drama. I have called this structure the archetype because it is structure which elevates the experience of the drama, acting as a catalyst for the transcendence of a personal experience into a universal or objective one. Universal does not simply encompass what we as fellow beings have in common. It also encompasses the infinity of space and time, for universal implies simultaneity - no beginnings, nor ends. This chapter examines the principles that operate when considering the dramatic structure as an archetype.

Once again, the Oxford defines 'archetype' as 'primordial mental image inherited by all; recurrent symbol or motif' (Seventh Edition: 1985). Archetypes are images that we have been born with, that stretch back through psychic evolution representing similar states, emotions or occurrences to each and every one of us.

Being of the generation of a Cartesian education which has split the mind from the body, the tendency is to categorise the world into what is seen and what is experienced (Chapter 3). Because of the status attached to the the rational mind, reality is described as rational and linear. This schism appears, too, between spirit and matter, fracturing the conscious from the unconscious. Daily and material needs take preference over emotional or spiritual existence. Thus, when images which rise from the unconscious present themselves, because they do not conspire to the formula of the rational, they appear mysterious and inexplicable. Their 'language' is not understood. The less attention is given to emotional needs, the less readable they become, making the unconscious, when it makes itself known, both perplexing and threatening. For Jung and other psycho-analysts, an attempt at reclaiming the history and meaning of archetypal

images is imperative for until we do, our lives will remain fractured. Archetype, because of its inherited meaning, is described by Jung 'as the universal structures of the human mind' (Haine: 1985: 187). I would like to explore Haine's parallel of the archetype to the structure of drama - drama is made up of a series of constantly moving images - to determine how it is that through the archetype as structure we access more universal understandings - the universe in us, as well as 'participants in an ultimate system that has neither beginning nor end' (Singer: 1979: 11).

Image work provides access to the unconscious. It is a way in to that unknown and often dark territory, becoming a catalyst for the release of meaning. Within the process of working with images there are certain elements that occur aiding an understanding of how the archetype functions structurally. These elements that define the process are: the archetypal image as language of the psyche; the archetype presents images of simultaneity; it invites a living out of the image; imaging or the movement from one image to another; and lastly, the archetypal image as presenting a self-reflexive universe.

The Archetypal Image as Language of the Psyche

With such a dominant sense as sight, the vision of life consists of moving images. But the world is not only experienced through the eye. Just as contact with the world stimulates the other senses - hands, ears, tongues and noses - so too is the world experienced emotionally. Like sight, the other senses stimulate imagery. Thus the world is constructed in images. They are imbued with personal attitudes and feelings to what is seen and experienced. It is for this reason that Welch describes images as a 'natural language for the psyche' (1982: 7).

But, because of an inability to fully define or comprehend human understanding, or because so much of it is ungraspable, 'we constantly use symbolic terms to represent concepts that we cannot define or fully understand' (Jung: 1964: 21). But, too often these images remain puzzling for what has been lost is the ability to decipher them. Thus, although they occur in personal day to day living, without the skill to acknowledge and understand them, they lodge themselves in the unconscious and present themselves in

sleep. Jung, in his analysis of dreams discusses the importance of images. Welch, like Jung, believes that what has been forgotten is the ability to read their specific language, thus the language of dreams (the language of the psyche) has become inexplicable and mysterious. It is the unconscious making itself known to the conscious, and when it reveals itself, it 'appears not as a rational thought but as a symbolic image' (Jung: 1964: 23). Within that symbolic image is locked all the knowledge that the senses have experienced but unable to know or express consciously. As a result they are disregarded, for lack of understanding renders them trivial or meaningless. But for Jung, they are explicit markers to an individual's life. If they can be unravelled and read, they will illuminate both a personal understanding as well as of the surrounding world.

Just as images carry the weight of memories and experiences, so too do they have histories. The unconscious psyche evolves through space and time, carrying with it its language of images. But, if we exist in different times simultaneously, because there is a split between the conscious and the unconscious, when an image appears in the unconscious, it speaks of a different time - lurking in an unknown past or a portent of an unknown future. 'Our psyche is part of nature, and its enigma is limitless' (23), as defineless as our ever increasing universe, for as the unconscious is part of a larger whole, these images are a part of that. Thus archetypal images are a deep structure for they transcend space and time.

The Archetypal Image as Simultaneity

Education, constructed linguistically within the boundaries of a 'nothing but' attitude, excludes a vision or a language of emotions. But, the language of the emotions is different, and it is a language which is neither taught, nor made conscious. Because of this bias in education

we have lost touch with a rhythm [sic] of life which accepts these actions ... and have thus lost touch with a vital part of ourselves.... We have moved further and further from the creative world of the imagination ... where it is possible to accept our own emotions and our own creativity.... What about the survival of the core of our being, of the soul, of the spirit?
(Taylor:1992)

Despite this denial, emotions exist, and due to their lack of acceptance are often beyond the grasp of language. We define the world as a conscious and linear place, but it is not only the consciousness that is witness to it. Ever present and watching, is the unconscious, and while we speak a language of specificity, we are constructing images of multiplicity. Thus when these images make themselves known, they appear unreal or irrelevant for their inexplicability is beyond the grasp of conformed thought.

Yet we think and feel, and although we may have been taught to see them as different constructs, feeling and thinking occur simultaneously. Sight, thought and emotion form the complex web of interaction that creates the image. Because of this complex image construct, when we see an image it creates a disturbance to our equilibrium for it presents many layers of information simultaneously. It is thus that Haine describes the archetype as a triggering mechanism that unifies the duality of the 'as if' thinking and the 'nothing but' attitude, presenting them simultaneously. It is the resulting feeling of imbalance which provokes the search for meaning. Haine notes that working with archetypal images 'elicit(s) an unusual quality of emotion, commitment, and thought' (1985: 187). When working with an image, the participant grapples on two levels: finding the form of the image and uncovering its structure, for it is therein that its meaning lies. Because of the simultaneity of the image, the participant will respond on two levels simultaneously: experiencing both her thought and her feelings. The image 'leads us away from [the hierarchy of sequence and skill] since it presents information simultaneously rather than sequentially' (Hillman quoted Haine: 189). And because of its inherent lateralness, an image is neither fixed nor determined in our linear construction of life. It is both thought and feeling, both the unconscious and the conscious, both past and future.

Living the Archetypal Image

Just as our consciousness is made up of images, so is our unconscious. These images appear to us and, like a photograph, present to us a moment caught in time. They tell a story, but the story lies buried and unknown. To uncover the story, the image needs to live. We need to enter into the image, engage with it and explore its structure. That is the

process of 'living' the image, and it is in that process, that the heart of the story appears, that the archetype emerges and meaning is made. For Welch, understanding and realisation can only occur by entering into the images that speak to us.

I must tell the story if it is to become my story. In the telling of my experiences through the images and words related to those experiences I begin to own the experiences and allow them to shape me. In telling my story I appropriate the person I am becoming as a result of that story (1982: 26)

When images appear or make themselves known to us, they are an attempt to communicate an aspect of ourselves which is presently unconscious. Because they only ever exist in a context (Singer: 1979: 9), we have shaped them, albeit unconsciously presenting a true reflection of the matrix of our existence. By working through image, because of its simultaneity and non-verbal nature, the individual plummets to the heart of the story and releases rapidly into archetypal imagery. Boal, because of this structure uses image work extensively to 'see' the hearts and monsters of the oppressed, and he marvelled at the similarity in imagery that occurred (1992: 168-170). Through this type of image work, archetypes quickly emerge, revealing a deep structure, for 'either present in the environment or produced by the imagination, [they] express deeper levels of the self' (Welch: 1982: 9). By living them, what Boal refers to as 'dynamising', the images reveal their true natures, are understood and owned, no longer appearing destructive. This is reiterated by Miller when talking about psychoanalysis:

in confronting these archetypes you remove the fuse from them as archetypes. What makes them detonate in the depths of the mind is the fact that they are not known about. Once you know about them they cease to detonate. (1968: 10)

It is for this process that Stevens reasons that 'archetypes drive toward realization in all areas of life' (quoted in Haine: 1985: 187), for they reveal the structures existing within us as well as those of which we are a part. And because they are planted so deep in our psyches, the exploration of them produces a psyche reaction.

The importance of living images is expressed by both Hillman - 'archetype

manifests through image and can be known only through involvement in imaginal experience' (quoted in Haine: 188) and Bolton - by living the image functionally, it will 'gradually accrue symbolic meanings' (Davis & Lawrence: 1986: 150). Just as Gestalt Therapy explores the 'imageness' (to use a Heathcoteian term) of an image to understand what its meaning is, it is through the exploration of the imageness that the deep structure is discovered. Because image work is concerned with 'the use of the image to release the hidden side of the story, that is, to act as a point of entry for a possible experience of archetype' (Haine: 189), by living the image of a bridge functionally, we will begin to explore the quality of 'bridgeness'. Slowly, through this living, as meaning gathers, we enter into the heart of the story where the bridge begins to take on a deeper meaning, it begins to become symbolic and hence the meaning of the image begins to transcend its original and possibly personal meaning. For Heathcote and Bolton that is where the learning occurs. This move towards the symbolic through the living of the image is the beginning of a unity - being able to see the world through emotional images - or rather understand their unity of experience and world.

Thus, images are not to be read literally, but rather read as a 'way of seeing'. They open up possibilities, for the image is a structure which is ladder-like, facilitating the descent into different and deeper levels of meaning. It is through the living of the image that realization occurs, for it is through the living of the image which allows release into and emergence of the archetype, the deeper structure which governs the universe.

Archetypal Imaging

By entering into the 'labyrinth of the image' and letting its journey unfold, one suddenly finds that the image one entered into is not the same as the one you discover yourself in now (Haine: 1985). Haine attributes this change to the archetypal image's 'shape-shifting propensity' (190). This imaginal movement is crucial to our understanding of reality and meaning. Because, as Haine writes:

the image itself leads us into and out of other images, and this movement gives meaning ... [we] experience imaginal movement ... not by imposing it but, rather, by deepening and elaborating the image in which we find

ourselves. (190-191)

By engaging in the image it will reveal itself and change, for an image is not static - it either explicitly moves or has built in motion through the dynamics that it presents. It is this motion which enables the image to constantly transform. As the meaning becomes apparent through living the image, so the image changes shape to create new images with new meanings.

An image represents a way of seeing, thus imaginal movement is also concerned with 'the way the archetype has imaged itself' (190). How the image comes to us, and how it transmutes is part of the structuring process that occurs when feeling is transformed through form. Thus an understanding of how the image is changing is an illustration of the deeper structures of feeling and how through form they are changed to recreate new meanings. Through an understanding of structures we can begin to explore and manipulate those structures that govern our lives: personally, socially as well as the deeper structures that govern the universe.

The Archetypal Image as a Self-Reflexive Universe

Through the discovery of common patterns or structures that occur universally the concept of 'self' shifts dramatically. Writes Wheelwright:

[The 'I' consists] largely of images, visual, auditory, motor and structural. Such images are always particular in their existence, but in their intent they are more than particular, for they point and limit and enquire indefinitely beyond. Thus the first kind of coalescence between self and not-self, involves a second kind between particular and universal. (1962: 167)

As we examine the particular of the self so we lose the self in the universal, much as we look into a grain of sand and see a world. Paradoxically we cannot see the universal without the particular. Although it is through the particular that we discover the universal, we should not be able to distinguish between the two. It is our education and its emphasis on language which has taught us to be definitive, to categorise our thoughts and to mark the differences. But what the 'Looking Glass Universe' theories propose is that there are no edges to our universe, and in many ways no definitions, for definitions

are finite, worlds with edges (Briggs & Peat: 1984). Thus for Welch, by teaching through the particular of non-verbal images we are teaching a wholeness of self. Wheelwright echoes this:

a particular exists ... by participation ... in the universal reality that is its main significance, and conversely the universal reality permeates all particular things to different degrees. (1962: 168)

This implies a relationship between the particular and the universal, the self in relation to the others. Because education has been too much about our differences, we have lost all sense of universal. We have forgotten the deep structures that lie within us all. Education must facilitate a move beyond the `self' as particular, for if it does not we fall into the trap of teaching the notion that the `self' is unique. The `self' remains isolated, its only relation being one of opposition.

But what science is hinting at is that `wholeness may be infused in every part and particle of our lives ... such recognition could transform human consciousness itself' (Briggs & Peat: 1984: 294). These ideas of wholeness are not new. We have divided our selves from others, our experience from the world. They are merely `new expressions of an ancient insight and of a more ancient longing' (Ibid) and one which immediately comes into conflict with our modern and separatist vision of ourselves and the world - separateness whose roots lie in owning and controlling.

Yet

Ultimately, the universe is one. There is no difference between creator, creation, and the creative process. The subject-object dichotomy is dissolved in this world view. It is the *interactive process* that is important. (Singer: 1979: 12)

Thus the paradox of teaching self-knowledge should be that it is not about teaching unique individuality, but rather through that individuality discovering the deeper structure which moves us beyond the isolated self and puts us in touch with the collective unconscious where the self and the universe are one. We should no longer be in control of the music, but let it control us. It is through this self-reflexive universe that by

discovering ourselves in the universe we are discovering the universe in us.

In Conclusion

The ideas discussed in this Part are conceptual but suggest that the actor improvising within the metaphor becomes the archetype-maker. With reference to the elements of improvisation that are laid out in Chapter Two there is the suggestion that: by working within the frame of the imaginary, imaginative language emerges that facilitates expression of the language of the psyche. Because the language of improvisation is immediate, combined with the metaphor's unique quality of uniting the imagination and the real, students in improvisation work simultaneously with thought and emotion, with the conscious and the unconscious. Improvisation provides an experience that involves the 'living' of the archetypal image through which meaning is made and symbols arise that transcend personal meaning. Reflection encourages a change of meaning thereby stimulating metamorphosis and the resulting 'imaging' or change of story. And finally this shift from one image to another leads to transformation, producing a new reality that reflects deeper structures that are mirrored both in the self and the wider context of the universe. This is the knowledge of 'self', a small but complex being whose structures resonate infinitely throughout all existence.

Conclusion

If reality is largely fluid and half-paradoxical, steel nets are not the best instrument for taking samples of it.

(Wheelwright: 1962: 128).

The defining of reality is always difficult. It slips through our ever ready fingers that try desperately to grasp it at every opportunity. Once caught, we find that we are again empty handed with no evidence to what we momentarily had - other than the bright light of having seen something new: the new taste in the mouth, the colours etched behind the eyes, a vision of a new path to travel whose door opens in the back of the mind. All we have left is the quaint feeling of the freedom to travel, our only passport the belief that the path, temporarily glimpsed, is still there.

Yet the question of reality is central to improvisation and the training of actors, for acting is the creation of different realities and it is the commonly held perceptions of reality which this dramatic technique challenges. In the historical overview it was discussed how improvisation was rediscovered as a method of working to challenge social structures and create a visionary theatre. Because 'freedom shows itself when individuals come together in a particular way, when they are authentically present to one another' (Greene: 1988: 9), the language of improvisation facilitated an alteration not only in personal relationships but ultimately in the development of alternate structures. Society, by its very structure however, inhibits freedom, for capitalism thrives on the desires of the conscious ego - it fosters demands for material acquisition - forging a split between the conscious and the unconscious. 'Thus freedom, because it implies a conscious decision ... is not entwined with natural rights ... it lies ahead - to be achieved' (Greene: 1988: 9). The imagination with its language of immediacy will never be encouraged to become part of a structure that is designed to maintain hegemony. And so education that seeks to foster the imagination can only ever remain marginalised.

Yet, if actor-training is to forge the way for new theatre (Taylor: November 1992), and the role of theatre in society is to be visionary, actors must be trained in methods that challenge the accepted notion of reality. Because improvisation is the process of transformation from life into art - it is neither 'living' nor art, but is the process of finding

or making meaning - it has always been closely linked to education and the transformation of perceptions, attitudes and worlds. Because it is structures that need to be challenged, it is structures that need to be taught.

In both Chapter Three and Four we see that Taylor's concern with the individual is great. Her work is structured to encourage an affirmation of student's individual feelings and facilitate the release of social and personal expectations. She places emphasis on the imaginative process of improvisation, skilfully giving space and time for the students to explore and grow. She gently encourages students to take risks and enter personally unknown areas and she teaches students a range of methods to approach and texture characterisation. Taylor is a master at structuring for the release of volatile and evocative personal imagery and emotions which as Haine (1985) points out produce extraordinary levels of engagement, hence the 'deep silence' that I often refer to. She unbridles an energy from the unconscious that for many students is unexpected and revelatory and remains with them as a strongly etched memory.

However, it is suggested this can only ever be part of a process. For Grotowski, the liberation of the unconscious, while recognising its validity, 'must be linked to consciousness and structure' (Kumiega: 1987: 133). This is asserted by Wheelwright who describes metaphor as a structural system

that, by virtue of its form, asserts the reality of an object. Form is here, as elsewhere, a system of mutually interrelating qualities which has effected a unity of its elements into a harmonious whole. This whole is the object which metaphor asserts. (Wheelwright: 1962: 83)

The question of structure is raised specifically in Chapter Four with regard to characterisation and theatrical language. It is argued that it is the structure which makes visible the misty vapours of a reality opening it up for understanding and change. Through the examination and controlling of structure, reality is altered and the objectivity of the experience is explored. For the students of acting this is essential, particularly in the areas of characterisation and style. Acting is removed out of the realm of the subjective into a deeper level of meaning and identification. Without this plummet into

objective meaning created by the dissemination of dramatic consciousness, the language of a subjective 'reality' is advocated and tends to remain uncompromising.

The exploration of emotion and the particular use of structure raised the question of the therapeutic content of improvisation and its relation to acting. At the heart of both improvisation and therapy is spontaneity. The question that is then raised is whether one needs to teach that which is intrinsic to improvisation's structure. Through structure and the metaphoric frame it is suggested that students or improvisers are constantly having to re-adjust themselves to the constantly novel situation, and that they are therefore challenged by forever needing to 'liberate themselves from the script'. This lack of structure could pinpoint the reason for some students' reservation. What they do is governed by the structures. Few learn to grasp the structures and manipulate them to shape their learning through understanding. Improvisations that are successful for students, are when they become aware of the frames that they have unconsciously set up, and through awareness, begin playing into them and exploiting them - that the understanding of form allows them to extend themselves.

Not only does improvisation teach individuals to explore and express their storehouse of infinite possibilities, but it defies 'reality as ultimate' (Wheelwright: 1962: 170). The imagination, hand-in-hand with the metaphor, creates different perspectives that serves to educate students from a place of belief, motion and interdependency. It is inferred that this leads to authenticity in acting rather than truth, for truth is finite and fixed, located within the personal realm. Belief, intrinsic to the imagination, implies a multiple reality that extends beyond the personal. It harnesses change and possibility to create a tension between the real and the imaginary.

Recognising the value of Taylor's teaching: her dedication, mastery and command as a teacher, the clarity and concern of her objectives and the vast impact of her work, this thesis attempts to investigate and interpret some of the concepts that drive her work as a teacher of acting. More broadly, it probes the educative potential for teaching improvisation and the type of learning it inspires. By defining what is specific to improvisation and discerning the metaphoric and archetypal processes that are implicit to its structure, the notion of 'reality' and its governing structures are exposed and

interrogated. It is suggested that acting is the ability to ply this frame and use it to fashion experiences and perceptions. With this skill and awareness, actors would discover a flexibility both emotionally and physically that could serve to be visionary.

Appendix A

Statues

After the group has built a bridge for the second time and passed through it, the students once again move to the edge of the room and turn blindly to face the wall.

Taylor calls out, this time for four volunteers. She goes to fetch those that have raised their hands and brings them into the centre of the room. Whispering, she instructs them to, in pairs, build two statues anywhere in the room. While the volunteers choose a spot in the room, Taylor walks around the room's perimeters 'rhubarbing' to distract the attention of the rest of the class. Once the statues have turned to stone, she repeats to the class:

'There are two statues in the room. With eyes closed, I want you to find one of them. When you find one,' she explains, 'feel it for detail. Once you think you know exactly what that statue looks like, find someone to make it with you. Is that clear? Keep your eyes closed until I tell you.'

When the statues are in position and she has warned them to hold still, she releases the class from the walls. The journey begins.

Taylor watches from her chair. Occasionally she will speak into their darkness, 'Are you looking to be exact? Look to be exact.' And again, 'No talking!' Once the room has all turned to stone, she calls for the statues to open their eyes and compare themselves with the original.

Appendix B

Looking at Light

Taylor takes her students through an exercise which begins with them focusing on each other's eyes. A student who recorded this session in her journal, divided the lesson into three sections:

A

- i) With a partner, focus on each other's eyes.
- ii) Keeping eye focus, feel hand contact and then mirror movements first.
- iii) Stand and then move, still keeping eye contact.
- iv) Move further away and around the room, keeping eye contact constant.
- v) Still moving around, turn away but return to your partner's eye contact.
- vi) Make eye contact with others, returning to your partner's eyes.
- vii) Make contact with others.

B

- i) Keeping eye focus, raise your arms. The focus should remove the discomfort, allowing you to keep your arms raised effortlessly.
- ii) Now imagine you have a bright beam of light rushing through your body and up your arms and out of your fingers. Explore that light. What happens when it comes into contact with other people's light? What colour is it?
- iii) Now the light comes out of your toes. You can make it move from your hands to your feet. How does the quality of this light differ?
- iv) The light comes out of your elbows and knees.
- v) The light comes out of the top of your head.

C

Improvise a short scene using the essence of the above.

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Recorded Lessons and Lesson Resource Material

A selection of lessons that span the three years of Improvisation for the Performer's Diploma training have been used. The lessons documented in this thesis have come from varying different sources:

- Performer One lessons documented and recorded by **Elizabeth Mills** in 1991.
- Performer One, Two and Three lessons recorded by the **author** in 1992 and which contain comment by Taylor during the lessons.
- **Taylor's** private files including lesson planning notes, recordings and reflections, which span her many years of teaching at the University.
- **Students'** journals containing personal reflection on their classes.

Interviews and Discussions

Student A	(1990-1992)	22 November 1992
Student B	(1991-1993)	3 March 1993
Student C	(1983-1986)	13 October 1993
Student D	(1990-1993)	3 April 1993
Student E	(1983-1985)	26 July 1993
Student F	(1988-1990)	22 November 1992
Student G	(1991-1993)	9 December 1992
Student H	(1989-1991)	28 October 1993
Student I	(1990-1992)	5 October 1992
Taylor, M	(Staff planning session)	6 November 1992
	(Interview)	10 March 1992
	(Interview)	8 June 1993
	(Interview)	22 October 1993
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