The University of Sydney

Copyright in relation to this thesis*

Under the Copyright Act 1968 (several provision of which are referred to below), this thesis must be used only under the normal conditions of scholarly fair dealing for the purposes of research, criticism or review. In particular no results or conclusions should be extracted from it, nor should it be copied or closely paraphrased in whole or in part without the written consent of the author. Proper written acknowledgement should be made for any assistance obtained from this thesis.

Under Section 35(2) of the Copyright Act 1968 the author of a literary, dramatic, musical or artistic work is the owner of any copyright subsisting in the work. By virtue of Section 32(1) copyright 'subsists in an original literary, dramatic, musical or artistic work that is unpublished' and of which the author was an Australian citizen, an Australian protected person or a person resident in Australia.

The Act, by Section 36(1) provides: 'Subject to this Act, the copyright in a literary, dramatic, musical or artistic work is infringed by a person who, not being the owner of the copyright and without the licence of the owner of the copyright, does in Australia, or authorises the doing in Australia of, any act comprised in the copyright'.

Section 31(1)(a)(i) provides that copyright includes the exclusive right to 'reproduce the work in a material form'. Thus, copyright is infringed by a person who, not being the owner of the copyright, reproduces or authorises the reproduction of a work, or of more than a reasonable part of the work, in a material form, unless the reproduction is a 'fair dealing' with the work 'for the purpose of research or study' as further defined in Sections 40 and 41 of the Act.

Section 51(2) provides that "Where a manuscript, or a copy, of a thesis or other similar literary work that has not been published is kept in a library of a university or other similar institution or in an archives, the copyright in the thesis or other work is not infringed by the making of a copy of the thesis or other work by or on behalf of the officer in charge of the library or archives if the copy is supplied to a person who satisfies an authorized officer of the library or archives that he requires the copy for the purpose of research or study'.

*‘Thesis’ includes ‘treatise’, dissertation’ and other similar productions.
FORMING (IN) VULNERABLE BODIES:

Intercorporeal Experiences
in Actor Training in Australia

Mark Seton

A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Performance Studies
University of Sydney
April 2004
Abstract

The desire, for teachers and students alike, is to do whatever it takes to shape or be shaped towards practices that will be recognised and experienced as affective and professional acting – the ‘It’ factor that actors and their ‘audiences’ experience. They presuppose requisite, yet arbitrary forms of, givenness, agency and disposition towards each other. What signifies affectivity in training, and subsequently, in performance is the sensed and/or recognised experience of vulnerability. Students and teachers converse in the metaphorical and analogical language of ‘It’ – quasi-mystical qualities of flow, energy, connection, and spirit manifesting in and moving between vulnerable bodies. Students of acting and their ‘audiences’ – teachers and fellow students – form each other in recognisable ways, while, at the same time, they radically misrecognise much of what they are doing to and with each other.

Drawing upon my self-reflexive participation in three sites of actor formation – Ensemble Studios, RE:ACTOR Acting Services and the Sydney auditions for the School of Drama, Victorian College of the Arts – I offer an ethnographic, phenomenological, and genealogical analysis. I track, by applying Foucault’s archaeological and genealogical models of analysis, how each site reproduces misrecognitions through ways of speaking, recognising/legitimising and producing experiences that are understood as constituting vulnerability. I argue that the term intercorporeal be introduced as a means of building an alternative account of what is going on in these contexts, without the need to attribute such experiences to particular objects such as ‘talent’ or having ‘It’.

In producing an ongoing awareness of the powerful interplay between actors, as performing bodies, and audiences, as witnessing bodies, I propose three important responses between students and teachers: Conversation – performing meaning-making and knowledge creation together through the valuing of conversations, formal and informal; Experience – honouring a diversity of embodied dispositions through phenomenological practices in training and performance; and Embodiment – becoming mutually response-able in the formation and sustainability of vulnerable bodies. The challenge I leave with teachers, students, scholars, practitioners and all stakeholders in the field of performance is that we continue to participate creatively, interactively, with trust and courage in our common, yet divergent, vulnerability. Innovative and valuable meanings will emerge out of our performing intercorporeally towards each other.
Acknowledgements

I wish to express my deepest thanks to the following people and organisations:

The Department of Performance Studies at the University of Sydney for offering an Australian Postgraduate Award thus providing the financial assistance that made this research possible;

Dr Ian Maxwell and Rev Dr John Capper for their supportive oversight and critical rigour throughout the process as my supervisor and associate supervisor, respectively;

Jaclin, Michael, Andrew, Jenny, Glen, Paul, Kate, Yana, Stuart, Julie-Anne, Laura, Amanda, Lowell, Tim and Russell as colleagues and friends in the Department and School;

Dr Gay McAuley and Dr Paul Dwyer, for challenging insights in the early stages of the formation of this thesis;

Zika Nester (Ensemble Studios), John Mildren (RE:ACTOR Acting Services), Lindy Davies and Richard Murphet (School of Drama, Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne), for permission to participate in their programs of training;

Cynthia-Wynton Henry, Phil Porter, Rod Pattenden, Trish Watts and the InterPlay Australia community, for their support and contributions to many of the critical insights developed through the course of research;

Victoria Spence, for her friendship and kindred spirit that contributed significantly to many of the conversations out of which this thesis has 'emerged';

and to my wife, Patricia, for her love, discernment, encouragement, support and belief in my ability to do this important research.
# Table of Contents

**INTRODUCTION**

- Formation, Recognition and Misrecognition  
  - Forming accounts of actor training in Australia  
  - Training, education or formation?  
  - Recognising what can be known  
  - Misrecognising what can be known  

**Participation in sites of actor formation:**

- An ethnographic, phenomenological and genealogical analysis  

**Prelude to a site of actor formation**

- A context of actor training experienced  

**Forming (in) vulnerability through recognition and misrecognition**

**Overview of the thesis**

**CHAPTER ONE**

- Talking about 'It': Framing actor formation experiences as talent and skills  
  - Recognising givenness, agency and disposition in training  
  - 'Cultural' formation of 'natural' bodies through training  
  - Recognising intangible experiences of performance  
  - Acknowledging social dimensions of performance  
  - Educational institutions and market forces  

**Territorialising intangible experiences**

**Misrecognising experience through categorisation and emobodiment**

- Mistaking names for objects  
- Mistaking concepts for objects  
- Mistaking actions for dispositions  

**An intercorporeality that disorientates and potentially 'deterritorialises'**

**Tracking ways of speaking, recognising/legitimising and producing experiences:**

- Foucault's archaeological and genealogical analyses  

**Conclusion**

**CHAPTER TWO**

- Interpreting actor formation through phenomenological and genealogical methods  
  - Embodiment and givenness  
  - Ontological givenness as self-contained, self-sufficient and self-determining  
  - "Indeterminate constancy" of bodies  
  - "Saturated intensity" between bodies
CHAPTER THREE

SURVEYING DISCOURSES OF INTERACTION AND INTERCORPOREALITY

IN ACTOR TRAINING SCHOLARSHIP

REVIEWING ACTOR TRAINING SCHOLARSHIP

- Frameworks for the re-territorialisation of actor training

GIVENNESS OF ACTORS AND AUDIENCES

- The human body as “mechanical instrument”
- The human body as possessed or possessing
- Training to perform for, or in spite of, the audience
- The actor’s body/mind as a site of deceit or presence

DRAMATURGICAL AGENCY OF ACTORS AND AUDIENCES

- The intercorporeal between actors and audiences:
  - Scientific and supernatural accounts
- Acting as communication between others
- Acting as transforming others
- Contemporary performance and actor-audience interaction

DISPOSITION OF ACTORS AND AUDIENCES

- Vital dispositions
- Authentic dispositions
- Aesthetic dispositions
- Vulnerable dispositions

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER FOUR

EMBODYING AN ETHNOGRAPHIC METHOD IN SITES OF ACTOR FORMATION

RESEARCH METHOD AND GEERTZ

RESEARCH METHOD AND STEWART

RESEARCH METHOD AND BOURDIEU
Inscribing participation in the sitting of actor training

‘Sheer beginnings’ with the Ensemble Studios
  - Orientation Day, Ensemble Studios: February 5, 2000
  - Siting the Ensemble Studios

‘Sheer beginnings’ with RE:ACTOR Acting Services
  - Orientation Evening, RE:ACTOR Monologue Audition Course, June 1, 2000
  - Siting RE:ACTOR Acting Services

‘Sheer beginnings’ with the Sydney auditions for the School of Drama, Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne
  - Sydney Auditions: November 24, 2000
  - Siting the School of Drama, Victorian College of the Arts
  - Reflections on the first day of auditions

Conclusion

Chapter Six

Offering a genealogical account of sites of actor formation

Returning to the ‘living present’ of social contexts

Speaking the intercorporeal in actor formation
  - “I’d rather leave that alone”: Ensemble Studios
  - “Take a risk, get over it!”: RE:ACTOR Acting Services
  - “Listen to your body, be affected by the words”: School of Drama, VCA
  - Review: Articulating the intercorporeal
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognising/ Legitimising the Intercorporeal in Actor Formation</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- &quot;Find the 'moment' before&quot;: RE:ACTOR Acting Services</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- &quot;(I'm not sure if it's just) surface or something in her ...&quot;: School of Drama, VCA</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- &quot;I'll know who's done it ...&quot;: Ensemble Studios</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Review: Experiencing the intercorporeal</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producing the Intercorporeal in Actor Formation</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Embodied formation at the Ensemble Studios</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Embodied formation at RE:ACTOR Acting Services</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Embodied formation at the School of Drama, VCA Auditions</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Review: Producing the intercorporeal and the vulnerable</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embodying and Negotiating Power Relations and Interdependencies</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epiologue</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is spoken and who may speak</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is known, recognised and who may be known and recognised</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is embodied and who is produced in / between</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formation, Misrecognition and Vulnerability</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercorporeality and the Vulnerability of Performing and Witnessing Bodies</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Conversation: Performing meaning-making and knowledge creation together</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Experience: Honouring a diversity of embodied dispositions</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through phenomenological practices</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Embodiment: Becoming response-able in the formation and sustainability of vulnerable bodies</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books and Journals</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports, Handbooks, Programs, Brochures, Newspapers, Web Sites</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

December 4, 1995 – the occasion of the third annual Philip Parsons Memorial Lecture on the Performing Arts in Sydney, Australia (Brisbane 2003). The Australian actor, John Derum, entitled his lecture “Live Theatre ... or Condemned to Die?” to address his concerns about an apparent determination (within the performing arts industry) to diminish the contribution and status of actors in theatre. John has performed and directed for theatre companies and for television since 1963. He has also been a union activist and founded the lobby group Actors’ Forum. During his address, he drew particular attention to what he understood to be the unique value of acting as an art form. I will quote from the address at length as it contextualises particular performance values of communication that circulate in the industry:

The art of acting is the art of communicating to people. If whatever is presented to a group of people is not communicated but merely exhibited, the theatrical experience will be shallow. But if that group of people (who could number a dozen or a thousand) leave the theatre moved, affected, amused, distressed, angry, then a communication, a theatrical experience, has taken place. The same can be said, indeed, for a film or video experience. How does it happen? How do actors communicate to audiences?

- By saying things – by pretending to be other people and saying things (or, of course, singing things) written by someone else, to tell us things about themselves and other people, that they wish to reveal or hide
By *doing* things – while pretending to be other people, doing things (or dancing things) that tell us something about them, that they may or may not want to reveal.

And how else?

If you’ve ever been moved by a performance, if you have a favourite actor, a favourite performance, then you’ll recognise that the saying and the doing are far from describing the totality of that experience. The bit that is missing is like the gulf between gymnastics and dance, between scales and Chopin, between typing and poetry.

What is that extra bit? All sorts of expressions are used to describe this ability or facility in the actor to communicate this intangible to audiences – ‘star quality’, ‘instinct’ or even ‘It’. (49-50; italics in original)

‘It’, with a capital I.

My study takes as its object of investigation precisely this “intangible” quality of experience between actors and audiences.

The following statements are drawn from my experience of participation in three institutional sites through which predominantly young adults are seeking careers as actors.

... *if you can affect one person in an audience, you’ve done your job... actors have that power in front of people... one by one, you actors become the force that civilises people*

*Zika Nester, Ensemble Studios, 2000.*
... the only thing that stops you is fear – so take a risk, get over it – get over the fear of foolishness or failure ...
John Mildren, RE:ACTOR Acting Services, 2000

... you need focus, concentration, rigour, breath, centre of the moment and letting it happen to you ... the language working on you ... be willing to let anything happen ...
Lindy Davies, School of Drama, Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), 2000

As statements taken out of context, these may be variously interpreted as expectations, requests or demands. Yet the intentional desire, for teachers and students alike, is to do whatever it takes to shape or be shaped towards particular practices that will be recognised and experienced as affective and professional acting – what actors and their ‘audiences’ experience as ‘It’. This shaping of professional practice is an ethical activity involving relations of power between teachers and potential students of acting. As such, the various shaping practices that I will describe throughout this thesis may be understood either, as somehow regrettable but necessary, or, as being frankly problematic. Such judgements depend on whose interests – actors, agents, directors, producers, critics, audiences, academics, acting teachers, student actors, and so on – are at stake.

In this thesis, I propose that students of acting and their significant ‘audiences’ – their teachers and fellow students – profoundly form each other and are formed by each other, through their embodied interactions, within the institutional processes of actor training. Furthermore, students and teachers presuppose, requisite yet arbitrary forms of givenness, agency and disposition towards each other. These three forms become manifest through practice in the classroom and in public performance. I use the term givenness to refer to how actors presuppose themselves as self-contained, self-sufficient and self-governing rational agents. Their presumed agency enables them to convey, transfer or exchange ideas, intentions and emotions with audiences, which are understood as other self-contained, self-determining entities. Their concurrent dispositions
are understood as the habitual reproduction of techniques that produce affective aesthetic and social meanings for these audiences.

However, for student and teacher, what signifies affectivity in training, and subsequently, in performance practice is the sensed and/or recognised experience of vulnerability. This is frequently articulated in the metaphorical and analogical language of flow, energy, connection, and of spirit manifesting in and moving between bodies. Consequently, presupposed forms of self-sufficient givenness, agency and disposition, on the one hand, and interactive embodied, vulnerable manifestations, on the other hand, intertwine to produce further complex, embodied and interdependent relationships. Such relationships develop between newly-formed actors and their subsequent paying audiences within the cultural context or field of the performing arts.

Therefore, in this thesis, I will argue that teachers and students, through their conversations and their actions in institutional contexts of training, form each other in recognisable ways, while, at the same time, they radically misrecognise much of what they are doing to and with each other. Following Clifford Geertz’s advocacy of “thick description”, a concept attributed originally to Gilbert Ryle (1973: 6), I offer an interpretive analysis of my experiences in institutional contexts that I have identified as, rather than training or education, actor formation – through recognition and misrecognition.

Formation, recognition and misrecognition

Before outlining the principle features of my analysis, I will elaborate briefly on how the key terms, formation, recognition and misrecognition will be crucial to an understanding of the structure of the thesis. Yet before elaborating on these terms, I wish to draw attention to how scholars in Australia have tended to chronologically locate actor teaching or formation in Australia as an account of unproblematic ‘development’. 
Forming (in) Vulnerable Bodies

Forming accounts of actor training in Australia

There has been little scholarly literature addressing the presuppositions undergirding the formation and development of artistically and economically recognisable and sustainable acting practices in Australia. Rather, scholars, in accounts of how actors have developed skills in Australia, have uncritically accepted the category divide between 'training' and 'education', and its polarising of actors as either employable 'talent' or autonomous 'artists'.

The encyclopedic Currency Companion to Theatre in Australia (1995) is the only publication to offer a historical, social and political context for the emergence of regional and national places of training. Even within this volume, there is no specific entry offering an authoritative account of the emergence of actor training. However, a cross-referencing of entries on "Acting", "Amateur Theatre", "Universities" and specific institutions, such as the National Institute for the Dramatic Arts (NIDA) and VCA, both elucidates and complicates histories of what is judged significant in terms of purported causes and effects in the development of training in Australia.

In the entry on "Acting", the four contributors suggest a certain periodising - "Naturalism Ascendant", "Acting in the television age", "Café culture in Melbourne" - that shapes interpretations of why things are how they are (1995: 17-23). Richard Fotheringham offers an account of the early days of Australian theatre characterised by the burgeoning of private schools that trained amateur and aspiring 'professional' alike (1995: 18-19). Alan Ashbolt writes of the subsequent ascendancy of Naturalism, as the dominant style of acting, evolving through the significant waves of immigration from England and Europe and the emergence of radio and cinema as new mediums of dramatic performance (1995: 19-20). Katherine Brisbane and Nick Enright then trace the emergence of national identity and economic independence in Australia that invoked national and vocational training institutions, specifically, the National Institute for the Dramatic Arts (NIDA). They also argue that rapid technological change, through the introduction of radio and television, impacted on employment and
altered perceptions of what skills were requisite for professional engagement as actors. Yet they suggest that, in subsequent years, the political counter-culture and re-emergence of community theatre, also induced alternative models of training such as the Victorian College of the Arts. Such alternative institutions embraced the critical imperatives of education preparing performers to contribute their skills to community development that was understood as a diametric counterpoint to training for employment in an industry (1995: 20-23).

However, private and Government vocational institutions have not been the only institutions to contribute to the development of Australian actors. Robert Jordan, in a separate entry in The Companion, “Universities”, argues that university students’ amateur dramatic groups also made a significant and long-standing contribution to the emergence of locally ‘trained’ Australian actors beginning with the founding of the Sydney University Dramatic Society in 1889 (1995: 619). According to Jordan, the amateur theatre movement “was virtually the only source of high-culture theatre Australians had from the 1930s until the 1950s, since the professional stage was almost entirely given over to boulevard entertainment” (619). Throughout Australia, certain universities offered workshop, rehearsal and performance spaces, funding, educational support and cultural capital to the acting profession. However, even up to the late 1950s and early 1960s, they were hesitant to incorporate training on campus, as they were uneasy about setting up drama studies as an academic discipline (620). This latter reluctance may be interpreted as evidence of an unrecognised yet dynamically powerful bifurcation in the field between training and education, in which, as Fotheringham argued in 1998, theatre in higher education is divided between purported ‘doers’ (championed by the Australian Theatre Training Conference – ATTC) and ‘thinkers’ (championed by the Australasian Drama Studies Association – ADSA; see below).

These demarcations of ‘doers’ and ‘thinkers’, and ‘talent’ and ‘artists’, are implicated in Melbourne theatre director and actor, David Kendall’s (1984) critical commentary on institutional contexts for actor training in Australia. In his essay published in Meanjin, a quarterly journal of the University of
Melbourne, Kendall argues that the initial steps towards the formal provision of special institutions as something that could only be justified once it was believed that local professional repertory theatre could be economically sustained. However he acknowledges that there have been many other possible entrances into actor training, such as part-time private schools, amateur and university theatre groups, and the studio approach. Such alternative opportunities, he observes, were usually inspired by charismatic and entrepreneurial individuals (158).

Kendall’s primary issue is with the apparent preoccupation of institutions to prepare actors to meet industry expectations. He shares David George’s (Associate Professor, Department of English, Murdoch University) concern that

[a] modern Australian actor should not be so determined by pragmatic and professional concerns that he/she remains ignorant of the theory and function, the purpose, of the whole business: the role of the actor and the theatre in modern Australia, what they are performing for and where and why they are performing at all. (George in Kendall 1984: 158)

Kendall expresses the hope that drama schools should not only train people for a profession, but also teach actors how to work by themselves in an ongoing, productive way once they have graduated (158, 159). Nonetheless, his recognition of the legitimising power of institutions is borne out in his observation that “If you want to start as a working actor ... your chances are better if you have graduated from one of the larger schools” (158). Kendall acknowledges that the field of actor training is a place of contestation that is sustained by the diversity of institutions aspiring to apparently polarised values in training and education.
This sense of contestation is also explicit in Richard Fotheringham’s survey 1998, *Boundary riders and claim jumpers: the Australian theatre industry*. Fotheringham’s premise is that a significant feature of official culture in nation states had been the attempt “to preserve declining nineteenth century art forms by offering various kinds of assistance that placed those arts at least partially outside the laws of the marketplace” (20). Such government assistance is framed in terms of preservation of certain values purportedly embodied in those same art forms. There is the appeal to the assumed superiority of high-art forms, to their potential educational or *civilising* role, to their alleged ability to provide universal cultural experiences, and, while paradoxically resisting the globalisation of culture, to their representing and promulgating national icons and differences (*ibid*).

Fotheringham identifies four types of agency that sustain such theatre-making: state and federal government grant programs, building programs by state and local governments, festival organisations at state and local levels and performance training institutions comprising tertiary institutions, departments and centres, alongside commercial training colleges. Fotheringham positions the work of these institutions along a spectrum of classification stretching between formal training and less-narrowly-focussed education. He argues that this results in each institution having its own particular relationship to the broader industry in terms of reciprocity of cultural capital, a term he borrows from Bourdieu (24).

Fotheringham’s reading of Bourdieu is, however, hamstrung by a certain misunderstanding of Bourdieu’s use of ‘field’ as a metaphor for cultural activity. For Fotheringham, Bourdieu’s ‘field’ denotes “a degree of commonality and coherence which justifies such a geographical cliché” (22). Such a reading is at odds with other scholars who interpret Bourdieu’s use of ‘field’ as that suggesting social forces rather than geographical spatiality, and a contested rather than a coherent community (Webb, Schirato, Danaher 2002: 21-22). Bourdieu, himself, proposes that all educational institutions participate, as particular sites or positions of struggle for capital (economic, cultural, scientific,
Forming (in) Vulnerable Bodies

religious) in particular fields. In this way, he regards each field, including artistic and intellectual fields, is "a field of forces, but it is also a field of struggles tending to transform or conserve this field of forces" (1993: 30) (emphasis in original). Fotheringham's misunderstanding is unfortunate: what he describes in his article seems rather an exemplary instance of the struggle of rivals within the field (as Bourdieu would understand it), with each decrying the boundaries and subsequent claims of others (25).

Further, in spite of his attempts to locate institutions along a spectrum, Fotheringham himself acknowledges a stark polarisation in the field, where the interests of those engaged in 'training' are represented by one organisation, the ATTC, while those engaged in education are represented by ADSA. Both organisations run conferences, yet, as Fotheringham observed at the time of his writing, there was absolutely no overlap of personnel (26). Fotheringham concludes that "[t]his visible yet uncrossed wall between 'education' and 'training' runs not just between institutions but within them, affecting what is taught and how it is taught" (ibid).

In a more recent article entitled Mapping Training/Mapping Performance: Current trends in Australian actor training (2001), Barry O'Connor proposes that current training can be mapped into a private sector (where single ideologies prevail, such as Lecoq and Strasberg) and a three-tiered public sector of conservatories, university drama departments and technical colleges (which offer more eclectic and generalist programs) (47).

O'Connor's investigation emerges from a single question: "should the actor be a replicator of established culture or an innovator of new cultural forms?" (50). In response, he advocates that the actor should be empowered by skills that "enable self-direction and self-correction, thus ultimately affording the actor the status of an autonomous creator" (55). Subsequently, he offers a discussion of three teaching methods currently operating in Australia that each seek to place the actor "in charge of the creative process" (59). O'Connor concludes that the benefit of purportedly empowering the actor to "map his or her own creativity"
will spin-off into remapping future performance making (ibid). This, O'Connor believes, will bring about a breaking of the industry's influence on actor training (ibid).

However, although he gives accounts of both the discourses and practices that circulate in specific acting schools, O'Connor does not offer a critical reflection on how each teaching practice shapes the bodily dispositions of students and teachers. Instead, he 're-presents' each method as a collection of concepts and practices that appear to offer the student actor, as artist, a degree of autonomy. In each school, the students who demonstrate, through their embodied and apparently 'natural' experiences, that they can perform well through such training affirm a particular logic of practice. There is no questioning of this logic. O'Connor's account of three divergent schools is useful, but effectively at one remove from the actual places and bodies of teachers and students – bodies that seek to form or be in-formed by, each other into legitimate, professional actors that the industry will recognise and employ.

*Training, education or formation?*

Each scholar that I have cited above argues from unproblematised assumptions about what actually constitutes training and education. Yet there has been a growing debate about whether the terms 'training' and 'education' are synonymous or have divergent outcomes. In a 1995 issue of *The Vocational Aspect of Education*, Peter McKenzie argued that it was necessary to maintain a distinction between, in the first instance, learning that is undertaken, with specific roles, skills and tasks as its outcome, and, secondly, learning that would "enable people to question those ends if necessary and to propose, or entertain, others" (1995: 41). Both modes of learning, however, presume an autonomous, conscious self who (or which) appropriates skills and judgements independently of social context and *formation*. This, in turn, may be an assumption worth interrogating in the light of an emerging literature, bridging the complexity sciences, organisational theory, psychology, education and
sociology (see Newman and Holzman 1997; Stacey, Griffin and Shaw 2000; Stacey 2001; Streatfield 2001; Griffin 2002; Fonseca 2002; Shaw 2002).

Through the empirical experiences and reflective understanding of these practitioners in education and management, learning and knowledge creation come about through perpetual yet indeterminate (i.e. not totally controllable or predictable) interactions in the "living present" of social contexts between distinct yet interdependent bodies (Stacey 2001: 216, 217). Ralph Stacey, in his account of the organisation of communicative action, proposes that meaningful themes or 'knowings' arise "between people, while always, at the same time, being experienced in individual bodies as fluctuations, marked or subtle, in the feeling rhythms of those bodies" (2001: 141). In this account, bodies reciprocally form each other as they are, in turn, formed by each other, through various interactions, using "tools and cultural artifacts [sic]' . Stacey suggests that what is captured in artefacts, such as written records, "can only become knowledge when people use them as tools in their processes of gesturing and responding to each other" (96). Therefore any "explicit, procedural or narrative knowledge" should only be regarded as functional resources (rather than objective realities) that people use "in the thematic patterning of experience" (144).

Furthermore, he cautions that the notion of themes organising the experience of being together doesn’t lead to all interacting bodies sharing the same theme. Individuals respond differently, out of their unique bodily dispositions, to the emerging themes. Nothing is being shared as each body uniquely resonates around common themes to do with being together. Stacey concludes that they are not "sharing knowledge" but are really just responding and interacting with each other in meaningful ways (141). As Newman and Holzman similarly argue, there is no "aboutness", that is, objective knowledge that exists, in itself, about some thing; there are only activities, interacting with that thing, through which knowing provisionally occurs (1997: 78). Therefore, throughout this thesis, I will be proposing an interpretation of learning and knowledge creation practices as activities that are formational of bodies interacting with each other.
Recognising what can be known

People attempt to establish the 'aboutness' of knowledge in their interactions with each other. Through social and, in particular, institutional relations of power, some groups of individuals, in determining what 'knowledges' are produced and recognised as normal and legitimate, exert constraint over other groups of individuals. Stacey understands any distinctive group of people in the following terms:

[B]iological individuals relating to each other in the medium of symbols, thereby forming, while simultaneously being formed by, figurations of power relations between them, and between their group or organization and others in a community. (2001: 165)

He argues that, given the high degree of inherent interconnection between individuals in terms of place, available resources, and a multiplicity of social memberships, each group seek to determine its boundaries of identity through difference. One way is to define group identity in terms of relationships and practices that are collectively considered to be legitimate (167). In The Archaeology of Knowledge, Michel Foucault argues that various epistemes, as legitimised ways of knowing, have been the products of certain organising principles that relate things to one another, within a temporal and geographical context (1972: 211-212). In Danaher, Schirato and Webb's account of Foucault's thought, organising systems of knowledge or knowing work or speak themselves through the production of "discursive formations" or "orders of discourse" (2000: 21). Furthermore, in Madness and Civilisation, Foucault offers an account of the "production of madness" which designates madness is, how it is described and what is done about it (22). In applying this genealogical approach, it can be argued that this experience determined as 'madness', is concurrently articulated, recognised/legitimised and produced. Likewise, in the field of acting,
recognition concurrently sustains and reproduces the 'identity' of stakeholders in the industry, through the enabling-constraining power of the field. In Chapters Three and Six, I will offer analyses, through the application of Foucault's archaeological and genealogical approaches, to demonstrate how recognition functions (concurrently with articulation and production), in actor 'training' scholarship and institutional sites of actor formation.

*Misrecognising what can be known*

Before a more detailed discussion in the first two chapters, I will offer a brief account of misrecognition in two ways – one sociological perspective proffered by Pierre Bourdieu and one phenomenological perspective proffered by Drew Leder. Bourdieu's sociological perspective offers a means of interpreting how people variously recognise and misrecognise their social interactions as 'natural' or 'normal'. Leder's phenomenological perspective suggests that embodiment, itself, is subject to and predicated upon perceptual recognitions and attendant misrecognitions.

Bourdieu argues that symbolic struggles for the classification of property and properties (in the case of acting, qualities of givenness, agency and disposition) are grounded in a fundamental misrecognition: "an alienated cognition that looks at the world through categories the world imposes, and apprehends the social world as a natural world" (1990: 140-141). Such a cognition generates an "illusio": an investment in a set of values. The practical sense or 'feel for the game' that, for example, teachers and students experience through their "quasi-bodily involvement in the world" (66) is a product of the encounter between their "durable, transposable dispositions", Bourdieu's *habitus* (53), and the field of "cultural production" in which they are engaged. For Bourdieu, illusio is the way in which particular understandings of the world and one's place in the world become doxa (i.e. presuppositions of the game). This becomes the logic by which one lives and which comes, in any given field, to be regarded as natural. Any such illusio will constitute a misrecognition of what Bourdieu understands
as the ‘real’ or ‘social physics’ of the dynamics of the social world, and of the constitution of agency within that world (66). Thus, as I seek to draw attention to significant misrecognitions, I will anticipate strong reactions from those stakeholders in the field who perceive that their activities and identities are being placed under interrogation.

Drew Leder, in The Absent Body (1990), draws attention to the phenomenological experience of the null-point. These are points in which the lived body perceives, through a sensory apparatus, only while remaining unaware of the sensory apparatus itself. The eye, in seeing, cannot see itself seeing. Leder concludes that “insofar as I perceive through an organ, it necessarily recedes from the perceptual field it discloses” (14). Therefore, to say that one cannot “see the seeing” is to acknowledge what Michael Polanyi refers to as a “from-to” structure in utilising the body to attend from it to an external world. Polanyi writes that “[e]verytime we make sense of the world, we rely on our tacit knowledge of impacts made by the world on our body and the complex responses of our body to these impacts” (Polanyi in Leder 1990: 16). Leder develops this idea to argue that it is only because people experience the body that it functions as a null-point in the perceptual field. This leads to what Leder (borrowing from an analogy to physics) terms an “uncertainty principle” of embodiment. In the case of quantum physics, the position and momentum of a particle necessarily alter, through any attempt to measure them, as the interaction alters prior status of the phenomena. There remains an inevitable uncertainty. Analogously, Leder proposes that “in thematising a part of the body we necessarily change its phenomenological status” (17). In the context of acting, other bodies, perceiving a performance, interpolate their interpretations into the experience of the observed performer. Therefore, those who recognise particular qualities in a performance will inevitably misrecognise other qualities that recede, in the same moment of recognition.

Furthermore, Leder argues that the body, as an interdependent and interactive ‘system of systems’, not only “stands out” as it engages intentionally and perceptually with the world, but that it also necessarily recedes (meaning to
Forming (in) Vulnerable Bodies

"go or fall back") into unexperienceable depths (36-48). That is, sensations may only be accessed and understood indirectly or ambiguously due to the different sensors that are available to feedback the status of any particular internal organ or other visceral function. In the same way that surface organs such as eyes, ears and skin are forgotten in the moment of their structural role, so too, the viscera recede as the ground for such functions. This lack of conscious awareness and control of such aspects of the self has led to the postulation of an "unconscious". However, Leder argues that paradoxes arise when this notion is reified and mentalised as if it were a separate consciousness, split and hidden from the first (53-56).

Merleau-Ponty offers an account of such experiences of a supposed bodily unconscious through the notion of "flesh". Flesh is a kind of circuit, a "coiling over of the visible upon the visible" that belongs neither to the subject nor to the world (140). Rather, it is understood as a primal "element" out of which the subject and the world are generated in mutual relation (139). Using the lived body as an example, Merleau-Ponty utilises the instance of one hand touching the other to demonstrate how the body can, simultaneously, play the role of perceiver and perceived. Yet, there is always a necessary divergence that stops the body as subject and object quite merging. This experience produces an identity-in-difference. The lived body is necessarily chiasmatic as a perceiver/perceived (Leder 1990: 63). Leder proposes a supplementary visceral dimension as a necessary corrective to Merleau-Ponty’s giving primacy to perception. It is visceral body that sustains the body as a sensory intertwining, "not just of perceiver and perceived but of different ways of perceiving" (62; italics in original).

There is what Leder calls a "vertical synergy", additional to and complementary to the "lateral, transversal synergy" of perceptual powers through hands and eyes (65). Leder proposes, as a metaphoric term for viscerality, "blood" as a supplement to Merleau-Ponty’s ontological notion of "flesh". In advocating the
"perceptual communion of the flesh", Leder argues for a way of acknowledging the sustenance that is intrinsic to the body’s “blood” relation with the world (66). For example, the inanimate and calcified world supports the body from within in the form of bone. In these and other ways, Leder proposes that the world is “installed within me, not just encountered from without“ (ibid). It is this recognition of the visceral that necessitates a revision of all the chiasmatic relations contained within Merleau-Ponty’s notions of flesh. Leder argues that, in each case of a perceptual chiasmatic relationship (between body and world, self and other, and within the body itself), there also operates a visceral chiasm that supplements the perceptual relationship (68).

Leder concludes that the lived body profoundly challenges the stance of separateness or givenness, as an exclusive ontological state, when it is realised as, simultaneously, “flesh” and “blood” (ibid). It is not “I” as a conscious and self-defining entity that either solely generates or sustains any emergent sense of self or cumulative and contradictory selves. Rather the subject is an expression or product of a wider context of social and natural powers, at the same time, as “[e]ach breath speaks of my dependence on the whole” (ibid).

In subsequent chapters, I will draw special attention to misrecognitions that, in sociological understanding, are requisite and arbitrary, and that, in phenomenological understanding are inevitable. In their pursuit of ‘It’, actors must inevitably and systematically misrecognise their own experiences. In the next chapter, I will argue that the fundamental problem informing this misrecognition are the limits of language circulating in the field with which to account for those experiences. Hence, in the context of actor formation, I will argue that teachers and students will often misrecognise those experiences of ‘It’ that they seek.
Participation in sites of actor formation: An ethnographic, phenomenological and genealogical analysis

Drawing upon my participation in sites of actor formation, I offer an ethnographic, phenomenological, and genealogical analysis as one way of “sorting out the structures of signification ... and determining their social ground and import” (Geertz 1973: 9). The objective of this particular analysis is not to impose a definitive meaning for all that transpires in a social context. Rather Geertz proposes that ethnographic description is intended to specifically interpret, with microscopic scrutiny, the flow of social interaction as it has been ‘fixed’ subsequent to actual field experience (20). Further, Bourdieu advocates that any social analysis must also take account of the “theorist’s subjective relation to the social world and the objective (social) relation presupposed by this subjective relation” (1990: 29). Therefore, in offering a narrative to “create meaning by bringing things into relation, by making connections” (Shaw 2002: 27), I will incorporate an analysis of my own experiences and critical reflections in the field of actor formation that makes this thesis possible.

The formation of the argument of this thesis has emerged from my participation in, rather than participant observation of, what I understand as three institutionally (rather than informally) constructed sites of actor training – the Ensemble Studios, RE:ACTOR Acting Services and the School of Drama, Victorian College of the Arts (VCA). The Ensemble Studio is a private school of actor training in Sydney, Australia. It was founded by Hayes Gordon, an American actor, who immigrated to Australia and introduced Meisner’s model of Method acting into the country. RE:ACTOR Acting Services was established in Sydney by a group of graduates from the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA) to provide various ‘entry points’ into the performance industry. Its tutors provide programs in acting for the camera and a special audition program to help aspiring actors gain entry into Australia’s premier Government-funded acting schools. The School of Drama, Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) is one such Government-funded school, based in Melbourne, Victoria. Principle staff of the School hold auditions in each State every year
during which potential students are introduced to the unique system of training offered at VCA.

Each site, while having institutional longevity, is 're-constructed' through the influx of each new group of participants. Bourdieu's application of the concept of habitus within institutions is that, at the same time, the habitus is produced by and produces individual and collective practices (1990: 54). Therefore, the subsequent accounts of my participation and interpretation of individual and collective practices have shaped and been shaped by the sites themselves as they emerge out of such 're-constructions'. Before outlining the key themes and structure of the thesis by which I propose to make sense of these arbitrary reconstructions, I offer a prelude to one of the three sites.

**Prelude to a site of actor formation**

A *prelude* is mostly associated with the idea of a preliminary performance or condition that precedes and introduces a work, often, in the case of a musical work, establishing its pitch or mood (Brown 1993: 2334). Thus, the following, taken from my participation in one site of actor formation, is offered as a foretaste of the concerns of this thesis.
A context of actor training experienced...¹

In a semi-lit thrust stage theatre in Sydney, 25 new students, including myself, are seated across two audience sections that look down on a more brightly-lit performing space. The Registrar of the Ensemble Studios, Zika Nester, sits alone in the centre of the third audience section facing the expectant students. She is also semi-lit and waits until all the students are settled. This is my second theory class with this group of students of the Ensemble Studio acting course for 2000. The morning starts with what is known at the Ensemble as “Kaffe Klutch”, in which we are invited to express our thoughts and experiences since our last classes. A tentative atmosphere pervades the space as each student ‘tests’ how Zika will react to what they choose to share.

[I have already indicated to the group that I am participating in the course as part of my research into places of actor formation. They are aware that I am taking copious notes of everything that occurs and that is said in the classes].

A more mature student [most students are in their early to mid twenties] comments:

“... being an older person ... (allowing myself) to be vulnerable, to play ... it’s scary to allow myself to be a student again ...”

Zika, picking up on the student’s concern with vulnerability, responds with a case study:

“There was an 85 year old man who always wanted to be an actor ... he said, ‘Now all my children and grandchildren are grown up, I’ve decided to do something for myself ...

¹ In accounts taken from my research, any comments in parentheses (...) are interpolations to identify what I perceived was the tacit context of the speaker’s remarks. Any comments in square brackets [...] are interpolations to assist the reader as to the circumstances surrounding the events recorded.
he formed his own Greek theatre company in Melbourne ... he was more enthusiastic than the younger actors in the class ... Margaret Rutherford started at 55 years of age ... Monty Woolley started at 50 years of age ... you need to be vulnerable – to be open, to respond, to be flexible ... you need the heart of a dove, and the hide of a rhino.”

In response, another student shares that she “battles with her inhibitions” about performing.

Zika responds:

“Don’t be judgemental of yourself – it inhibits your work – it (performance) just works or doesn’t work ... If you don’t have the guts to make a fool of yourself, you don’t belong here...you have to jump in with both feet ... I devoutly wish that everyone of you will ‘fall flat on your face’—no broken bones, nothing really happens to you, you just dust yourself off ... You only learn by making mistakes ... although, sometimes it’s good to have reinforcement (of your ability) ... But it doesn’t hurt to fail and is sometimes very good ... the safety offered, through the internal Ensemble Studio student productions, ensures a safe place for everyone, unless we know you’re not going to make a fool of yourself, and then we allow a semi-public performance for family and friends ... I urge directors to stretch people, rather than resort to clichéd type-casting ... that is, put them in possible unsuitable roles.”

Zika then proceeds to tell us another story from the history of the Ensemble Studios – this time it is about a final year female student who was cast by a guest director in an elderly role.

At the conclusion of this story, a student asks:

“Didn’t it shatter her self-confidence?”
Zika replies:

"No, she gained respect ... because she had shown vulnerability. She grew up out of the perfectionist she had been, as she went for different things ... she started to enjoy herself ... she stopped worrying about being 'right' or 'good' ... enjoyment is contagious; the audience enjoys the actors enjoying their performance ... if they act like it's a job or they worry, (then) it's not good for them or for the audience ... vulnerability is a liberating thing ... we try to make you as vulnerable as possible over the three years (you study here)."

Another student asks:

"What does it involve to make us vulnerable, if we don't make the step ourselves in the course?"

Zika replies:

"It's not physical, it's mental, it's anguish – I'd rather not have to do it."

[I (and possibly others) deduce that Zika is referring to some technique or exercise that she has an individual, or class do, that purportedly provides this "liberating vulnerability." However, this student is clearly curious about Zika's reluctance to give a straightforward response]

The student questions Zika again:

"What is it?"

Zika:

"I can't tell you."
The student becomes more insistent:

"Can’t you tell us ... please?"

Zika:

"No, not at all – you can’t find out, because this year’s class [the Third Year Ensemble Studio class in 2000] may need it ..."

The student tries once more:

"Wouldn’t it help to do it anyway?"

Zika replies:

"This course is predicated on seduction – not rape – to encourage you to want to open up, to drop defences, to open up, to become vulnerable ... in this culture we can’t do certain techniques to impose vulnerability ... you would leave the class ... It’s a pity, in time, you would be ready for doing it ..."

The student tries yet again:

"It can be cathartic – I’m dying with curiosity – what is it?"

[I feel it is evident to most people in the class that Zika is not going to tell us, in spite of this student’s almost nagging persistence. Zika, though, doesn’t cut her short. Although she never reveals the technique in question, she does shift the focus to describe contexts in which such techniques might be used to develop a student’s vulnerability]

Zika replies:

"They do it in America ... I like it, I like it ... In Japan, you strip completely at the beginning of your course at the Tojo school ... 68 classes have gone through the
Ensemble, but only one class was very inhibited ... someone said 'why don't we take our clothes off? – seven said OK, the rest said no ...

[And now Zika makes a subtle shift, leading the conversation – or her monologue – onto the vulnerability associated with sexual explicitness ... (see above)]

... it would not be bad to do this idea ... look at today's films and the frequency of nudity ... each one of you will need to sign a clause with your agent about your willingness to go nude ...

After a brief sidetrack into the students' attitudes to sex and nudity in theatre and film, Zika again changes the direction of the conversation and invites students to share whether they have seen any movies recently upon which they would like to comment. The questions of how we might be made vulnerable, however, and how Zika would judge if and when this was necessary, would only reappear, during another “Kaffe Klutch” session, five weeks later. On this latter occasion, she speaks of the “confronting part of the course” and advises students that “those who want to study acting to hide – you should leave now, you have to be prepared to be emotionally naked on stage. You’ll still get work (if you aren’t willing to do this) but you won’t do work that is more interesting.”

The themes of vulnerability, seduction, rape and nakedness recurred several times over the ten weeks that I participated in this course to the extent that they pervaded the whole Ensemble project for me. A few weeks into the course, during a coffee break, I asked a female student if this kind of metaphorical language troubled her in any way. She showed surprise at my concern, assuring me that “whatever it takes to make me an actor – I’m willing to persevere – if it helps me perform better, I’m prepared to do it – you’ve got to be fully committed ...”
Forming (in) vulnerability through recognition and misrecognition

It would appear, paradoxically, that vulnerability (and invulnerability) are two qualities, located in the givenness of the actor, that are considered requisite to secure a successful, professional career. While Zika advocated the vulnerable "heart of a dove", she also advised students to develop the invulnerable "hide of a rhinoceros". Margrit Shildrick (2002) notes that, in many social contexts, vulnerability is predominantly characterised as a negative attribute, suggesting a failure of self-protection that opens the self to harm. Such an attribution of negative value, is predicated upon what Shildrick glosses as the Western notion of the autonomous and bounded self as that which needs protecting. Her particular project addresses the ontological, epistemological and ethical consequences of viewing what she refers to as "monstrous bodies", such as conjoined twins, that are regarded as unable to comply with normative categories of self and non-self. The security offered by these categories is undone by the existence of such 'abnormalities'. She proposes that notions of vulnerability, as with notions of the monstrous, are frequently projected onto 'others' for fear of such experiences undermining "the security of closure and self-sufficiency" (1). Shildrick argues that a rethinking of the nature of embodiment is required:

Where normative embodiment has hitherto seemed to guarantee individual autonomous selfhood, what is monstrous in all its forms - hybrid creatures, conjoined twins, human clones, cyborg embodiment and others - disrupts the notions of separation and distinction that underlie such claims. (2)

It is precisely such disruptions of the doxa of separation, containment and distinction that I want to argue expose misrecognitions of how human bodies exist and function. Alternatively, Shildrick suggests, if we consider vulnerability as an inevitable and unavoidable condition of all people, rather than as an
aberration to be controlled and contained, then what may be at stake is “the permeability of the boundaries that guarantee the normatively embodied self” (1). Thus, Zika’s external/internal ontology of “hide” and “heart” may require revision as, paradoxically, a more permeable and fluid continuum of surfaces and depths.

Also evident in the Prelude is the question of how such a vulnerable/invulnerable disposition is to be known, in the first instance, by the student and recognised, in the second instance, by the teacher. In turn, other stakeholders in the field – casting agents, directors, and ultimately, audiences – also expect to recognise this quality, and to do so in the mode of an apprehension of something ‘real’ or ‘natural’. However, as Bourdieu proposes, such practical beliefs in a particular social field are not a “state of mind”, but states of the body (1990: 68). ‘Natural’ manifestations of respect for the established social order of a field are really evidence of a “bodily hexis” as “political mythology realised, em-bodied, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby feeling and thinking” (69; italics in original). As I will demonstrate, through my experiences at the Ensemble and two other sites, there is the expectation that such “durable, transposable dispositions”, or habitus (53), are predicated upon vulnerability as a willingness to affect and be affected by the other, whether the other be an artefact (such as a text), another actor or, most desirably, an audience. This willingness – “whatever it takes” (as the female Ensemble Studios student declared) – to be or become vulnerable constitutes their value as integral to their cultural capital in the marketplace.

**Overview of the thesis**

This thesis, then, will offer an analysis of the processes by which teachers and students, in formational contexts, negotiate with each other recognitions and misrecognitions of vulnerability, connection and flow. How is it that they enable and constrain variations in their interactions in the same moment? How does
that impact on the formation of embodied practices that are sustainable (in the sense of renewable)?

In Chapter One, I introduce a detailed reflection on the core concerns of recognition, misrecognition and the corporeal dynamics of the field of actor training. From conversations drawn from my fieldwork, I will identify a discourse about embodied interactions between actor and audience to argue for a certain doxa, or set of presuppositions informing that world. I will suggest that this doxa can be seen as comprising three *modes of being*, each taken for granted in each of the sites under investigation – givenness, agency and disposition. Applying Foucault’s archaeological and genealogical models of analysis, I will track how each site reproduces misrecognition through ways of speaking, recognising/legitimising and producing experiences that are understood as constituting ‘vulnerability’, and thereby accorded a positive value.

I will also consider the means by which certain terms are regarded as problems to be negotiated in the training context; in particular, I will argue that talk about ‘spirit’ and ‘spirituality’ are marginalised, while terms such as ‘energy’ and ‘flow’ abound. I will propose that such tensions are symptomatic of key misrecognition informing the scene. In fact, a system of misrecognition informing the scene grounds the experience of actors in training in a subject-predicate logic, in which discrete individuals are endowed with desirable (or not desirable) attributes, such as ‘talent’ and ‘charisma’. I will conclude by arguing that the term *intercorporeal* be introduced as a means of building an alternative account of what is going on in these contexts, without the need to attribute such experiences to particular objects such as ‘talent’ or having ‘It’.

In Chapter Two, I will propose phenomenological and genealogical *trackings* in order to critique the doxa of ‘talent’ circulating in the field of actor training. I will argue that if we are to rethink the ontological grounds of the relationship between students and teachers, so as to produce an understanding of actor formation as a process of constant and intentionally informed embodiment, we will also need to reconsider pedagogic theory and that body of theory’s
understanding of agency and desire. Given that the desire to classify and judge tends to produce a conformist identity, I argue that teachers and students concurrently enable and constrain each other through the exercise of power and resistance. I outline Foucault's genealogical approach to analyse ways of speaking, recognising/legitimising and producing certain modes of vulnerability and attendant intercorporeal experiences as a means of tracking the dynamics of power and resistance between teachers and students.

In Chapter Three, I will apply Foucault’s archaeological method to an analysis of the key texts addressing actor training in Western culture. Through this analysis, I will demonstrate how Foucault’s epistemic triumvirate – disciplines, commentaries and authors – have, in the context of actor training, propagated the ontological misrecognitions I have identified in Chapter Two as informing the sites of actor formation. I will argue that these diverse yet interdependent epistemes contribute much to the reproductive dynamics of sites of cultural production.

In Chapter Four, I outline the ethnographic method by which I approached these sites. Through a consideration of the different research methods of Geertz, Stewart and Bourdieu, I will demonstrate how I systematically, practically and critically approached the task of research. In particular, I will discuss how Stewart's concerns for veracity, objectivity and perspicacity are addressed in my research practice through prolonged fieldwork, effective relationships in each site, careful tracking of the research process and a reflexive acknowledgement of the primary frame of exploration.

In Chapter Five, I present a 'thick' description of my 'sheer' and emergent 'beginnings' in each site, with a particular focus on the theatrical agency proffered by each institution. As I endeavour to 'site' each set of experiences, my emerging interpretation and/or awareness of what may be 'at stake' in terms of the illusio of agency will factor more significantly as I move from one site onto the next. My experience and responsiveness to each site in-forms how I consequently recognise and misrecognise each subsequent site.
In Chapter Six, I will offer genealogical analyses of particular events in specific sites of actor formation. I will, through an account of my own interactions within the worlds of these sites, demonstrate how the teachers and students – in each institution – engaged in specific ways of speaking, recognising/legitimising and producing, in bodies, the requisite dispositions of vulnerability and intercorporeal experiences.

In the Epilogue, I will review the main tenets of this thesis and make proposals as to areas for further research, reflection and interaction.
CHAPTER ONE:

Talking about 'It':

Framing actor formation experiences as talent and skills

"It", then, is the sine qua non for the actor; without it, the actor is nothing. In this chapter, I want to set the scene for the ethnographic work that will follow by identifying a certain dis-ease informing actor training, betrayed in a recent study commissioned by the Australian National Training Authority. This study attempted to effectively translate the kind of talk to which John Derum referred, and which I have started to introduce as pervading sites of actor training, into pedagogic principles. The dis-ease stems from the difficulty performance practitioners (including teachers and students) find with using language, and, more significantly, certain cultural assumptions, to account for certain experiences in acting.

In this chapter, I will argue that the discourse informing, framing and pervading actor training is predicated upon assumptions about the autonomy of the individual. I will argue that such discourse both misrecognises the intercorporeal nature of theatre practice, and the experience of actors in training, and that it does so systematically. The institutionalisation of such discourse, however, creates a situation whereby, in order to accumulate the requisite cultural capital to sustain a practice, an actor in training must adopt, or embody, a habitus consistent with that misrecognition, as Bourdieu would argue. The logic of misrecognition is thereby perpetuated. While, as Bourdieu suggests, any investment in a field will involve a systematic misrecognition of the arbitrariness of that investment, I will argue that the kind of misrecognitions that I identify in discourses on acting are ethically problematic, and also are, somewhat more prosaically, at odds with the practice they attempt to describe.
First, from conversations drawn from my fieldwork, I will identify a discourse about embodied interactions between actors and their ‘audiences’ to argue for a certain doxa, or set of presuppositions informing that world. I will suggest that this doxa can be seen as comprising three *modes of being* – givenness, agency and disposition – functioning in terms of presuppositions active in each of the sites under investigation. This ‘taken for grantedness’ is demonstrated in a recent study of the performing arts in Australia in which various stakeholders in the field can be seen as engaged in an endeavour to recognise, as simultaneously tangible and intangible (i.e. in its contemporary sense, eluding precise measure), the ‘talent’ of performers (CREATE Australia 2003). Second, I will interpret such attempts at the recognition of these intangible experiences in terms of Deleuze and Guattari’s logic of the perception of difference, and in particular their use of the concepts of *territorializations* and *contractions*. Third, I will argue that these territorializations/contractions, produced reciprocally by language and by processes of embodiment, result in ‘requisite misrecognitions’ and perceptual misjudgements: names and concepts for experiences are mistaken for discrete objects; actions experienced *between* bodies are mistaken for dispositions *of* bodies. Finally, I will introduce tools that I will apply in subsequent chapters for the de-territorialising of recognitions and tracking of misrecognitions: the notion of intercorporeality and the practices of archaeological and genealogical analysis.

**Recognising givenness, agency and disposition in training**

In the Introduction I drew attention to the discourse on vulnerability pervading sites of actor formation. I also noted a number of key terms deployed in those sites to describe, metaphorically, the kinds of experiences and the qualities of exchanges understood as constituting, or evidencing, vulnerability: terms such as ‘energy’ and ‘connection’. For example, during a RE:ACTOR Master Class, Helen Dallimore advised the class to always “direct your energy” towards the student performing his or her monologue. During one Call-back audition, Lindy side-coached an auditionee: “What do you see? – You need to experience that in
order to say the words ... (it’s) not about how you say it but finding a connection to say it.”

This metaphorical language is richly evocative of dynamic qualities of engagement or interaction between bodies, and yet, paradoxically, these qualities are assumed or understood by the teachers as being desirable conditions or ideal states of autonomous, self-contained bodies for successful acting. Such interactive experiences may function either between actors and other stakeholders who recognise their inter-actional disposition (audiences, agents, casting directors, directors, crews, fellow actors) or between actors and cultural artefacts such as texts or other mediating technologies such as cameras and microphones. These dynamics of interaction tend to be framed or categorised in three ways:

1. Some terms invoke an ontology of self-contained, self-sufficient givenness (not to be confused with the phenomenological sense of givenness of the world as it is lived (Garner 1994: 226)) – after a VCA audition, Richard referred to the quality of an auditionee as “not feelings, ‘It’s there’” – or ownership – in which stakeholders refer to an actor ‘having’ energy, charisma, ki, qi, prana, spirit, passion, emotion or sex appeal. For example, during one VCA audition evaluation, Richard remarked that one auditionee was “‘caught’, but there’s something in him”.

2. Some of these terms also infer a dramaturgical agency through actions (though these are not necessarily conscious) of exchange, transaction or transformation – actor and actor, or actor and audience experience an ‘exchange’ of power, a ‘transference’ of knowledge and feeling, a ‘sharing’ of flow or connection. For example, in a RE: ACTOR Master Class, Blair Cutting instructed students to “try to ‘see’ what you are describing (in your audition piece) so that the audience ‘sees’ it through you”.

3. Above all, stakeholders in the cultural field recognise, validate, or legitimise actors’ formed, habituated and regulated set of dispositions (as their performative
embodiment) in terms of vulnerability, vitality, aesthetic beauty or authenticity. It should also be considered that these stakeholders, especially audiences, are also ‘invested’ in and pre-‘disposed’ towards particular, habitual judgements of what constitutes ‘good’ acting. For example, during another VCA audition evaluation (which I discuss in more detail in Chapter Five), Richard remarks enthusiastically upon witnessing a performance that “she’s just ‘there’ ... she lets herself get taken”.

While many of the terms circulating in these sites – energy, connection, charisma – may allude to ‘natural’ (in the sense of biologically normative) embodied experiences within individual bodies, it becomes evident in sites of actor formation that such experiences are produced or emerge between people or with cultural objects. This does not negate the significance or power of such phenomena for those actively participating in encounters of performance. Although such experiences may have intangible qualities they are experiences that are ‘recognised’ and spoken of with desire and appreciation by stakeholders. It thus becomes important to consider how to account for the social dynamics that produce various experiences and concurrent discourses associated with embodiment in contexts of learning and performance. But before tracking various recognitions and misrecognitions, it is also necessary to consider how the cultural/social and the biological/natural may be understood to intertwine in the context of learning skills and aptitudes

‘Cultural’ formation of ‘natural’ bodies through training

From a phenomenological perspective, each unique body shapes or forms experience as it is formed by experience:

There is not a word, not a form of behavior which does not owe something to purely biological being – and which at the same time does not elude the simplicity of animal life, and cause forms of vital behavior to deviate from their pre-ordained direction,
through a sort of leakage and through a genius for ambiguity which might serve to define human beings. (Merleau-Ponty in Casey 1998: 207)

In order to open out what might be understood by "lived" or intercorporeal presence – the experience produced between bodies – Edward Casey (1998) argues that the body mediates between the self and that which is other as "the mediatrix of every social scene" (212). In a similar dynamic, various schemas are at stake in the learning and relearning of bodily skills. These schemas exist between the generality of others and the specificity of a particular body. The form that is learnt may be instituted by others, but it must be instigated in and by a specific body, thus "e-ducating" this body (Casey’s footnote for this hyphenation notes the intention to indicate that this is more than imitation). This learnt form is consequently brought back out, physically and publicly, through the per-forming of it, in the sense of forming it through bodily practice (ibid).

Nature and culture, suggests Casey, meet in the lived body "in the insistent and subtle way that right- and left-handedness infiltrate and influence an entire metaphoricity and symbology in a given culture" (1998: 215). He gives the example of corporeal schemata of skilled actions such as swimming in which the natural and cultural are always already conjoined. Nothing is entirely natural or entirely cultural in that one swims with a biological body but as taught by others (212). Therefore, Casey suggests that skilled bodies (as culturally informed) can be considered "quasi-technical" (213). Similarly, Bourdieu refers to a person’s ‘practical sense’ as "a quasi-bodily involvement in the world which presupposes no representation either of the body or of the world" (Bourdieu 1990: 66). Casey proposes that skills represent the circumstances "when bodily capabilities and proclivities lend themselves to manipulation and training: when, as Foucault would say, the "intelligible body" becomes the "useful body"" (1998: 215).
Therefore, in the context of bodily skills and dispositions, how might we begin to think and talk about the interactional or interpersonal qualities of vulnerability and their ‘usefulness’? The VCA School of Drama teacher, Richard Murphet remarked of one auditionee, “there’s something in him” and of another, “she’s just ‘there’”. Such accounts of the efficacy of performance are spoken about using rich metaphorical language – terms used, either in teaching practices or in actor training literature (which I will examine in Chapter Three), such as energy, flow, connection or spirit. In turn, some of these metaphors, as I will argue, are misrecognised as things in themselves: objects or attributes of a person. These then become the stakes within this particular field of cultural production, as essential manifestations of a vulnerability that functions, in sites of training and performance, as a valued disposition, and requisitely, a misrecognition.

Actor training institutions construct various *formational* practices to analyse, discipline and ‘channel’ what is subsequently identified as the talent of potential actors for manifesting vulnerability. A recent study by the Australian National Training Authority of the performing arts illustrates how the recognition and promotion of ‘talent’ as an individual ability is highly regarded, even though stakeholders, in defining the performing arts in this study, paradoxically acknowledge the primary significance and requirements of social inter-action.

*Recognising intangible experiences of performance*

In the *Performing Arts Scoping Study* (2003), commissioned by the Australian National Training Authority (through CREATE [Culture Research Education and Training Enterprise] Australia), various stakeholders were asked to define [the] performing arts. Listed below are definitions put forward by some respondents:
In a general sense, the performing arts is [sic] an industry centered [sic] around the communication of ideas, with a focus on human performance and interaction with an audience. This clearly distinguishes it from object-based art forms such as the visual arts.

Performing arts is the context whereby creative people present "something" to an audience, where an audience experiences a creative exchange.

Performing arts [occurs] when skilled and crafted artists present various forms and fusions of creative expression in a performance to fee paying individuals as audience, spectators or onlookers. Performance [is] a three dimensional representation whereby artists/entertainers seek to engage and stimulate the audience, spectators or onlookers by evoking emotions through use of multiplicity of sensory and cognitive provocations ...

The performing arts are seen as being art made for public performance, which has a reliance upon an audience. It covers both the actual performers and any individuals who contribute to the creation of the art form. (CREATE Australia 2003:12)

In these definitions there is an expectation that the performing arts industry requires social interaction for its efficacy. Yet these attempts to define the performing arts as a collaborative and unified field also misrecognise that, as Bourdieu puts it, that "... the definition of the writer (or artist, etc.) is an issue at
stake in struggles in every literary (or artistic, etc.) field” (1993: 42). In spite of appearances, the performing arts, using Bourdieu’s analysis, is a site of struggles over who determines the dominant understanding of necessary activities, abilities and aptitudes (ibid). This determination has significant impact on what is perceived and recognised as necessary for training or formation. In particular, the Scoping study draws attention to the distinction between tangible and less tangible evidences of ability, in terms of what it refers to as ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ skills.

Stakeholders in the Scoping study believed that while competency standards might be developed for ‘hard’ skills, such as production and technical skills, it would difficult to establish standards for the teaching and assessment of vision and creativity in performance. Furthermore, some in the industry proposed that there are characteristics of a performer that are intrinsic and therefore cannot easily be learnt or assessed. Still others believed that certain “building block skills” could be taught and assessed and that these would assist the development of other “more elusive skills”. In the national forums held during this study, researchers argued that judgements on aesthetic performance are always based on criteria whether they are implicit or explicit, while forum facilitators suggested that standards could assist in describing these more explicitly (15). Even within the rubric of a competency-based market-response model of training, a kind of excess or intangible experience or encounter between performers and other stakeholders is acknowledged as part of what contributes to valued performance.

Acknowledging social dimensions of performance

Common to each definition by stakeholders in the Scoping Study, both within and without the institutions, was an awareness of what might be understood as inherent social dimensions of performance. The definitions variously referred to the performing arts in the context of “interaction with an audience”, “where an audience experiences a creative exchange”, “artists/entertainers seek to engage
and stimulate the audience, spectators or onlookers” and “reliance upon an audience”. As a corollary, stakeholders were asked to list “fundamental skills, knowledge and abilities for Performers” which included particular social skills:

- ability to build audience relationships
- ability to brainstorm creative ideas
- ability to work in a team
- ability to communicate effectively (14).

Throughout the study it was acknowledged that actors (as one particular type of performer) need skills of dexterity, articulation, imagination, interpretation, awareness, empathy, and, increasingly, administrative and entrepreneurial skills to survive as an autonomous practitioner – as well as the particular social skills identified above. The assumption is of a tool-box of skills that the individual may acquire. Yet I would argue that not all these skills, once accumulated, can be said to be inherent to, or to be attributes of, the individual body of the person training as an actor. They are not part of a body’s givenness. Various physical regimes of training may be put in place to shape and alter the disposition of the body so some of the purportedly technical skills may be understood, ontologically, as being owned by the body. The development of social skills, on the other hand, requires the habitual disposition and participation of all the stakeholders in a performance process.

The difficulty that people have is that these experiences and apparent skills are so elusive, and concomitantly, difficult to talk about. There are many gaps, aporias and indeterminacies. Very little seems concrete. However, there is a moment when all this is rendered unambiguous, concrete and very real. It is when acting bodies perform for other expectant bodies. In other words, the actor and audience resolve all this in the moment, through a massive, synthetic, forgetful embodiment. Moreover, this is not simply a matter of an isolated agent ‘solving’ an acting problem, etc. Rather, the practices that constitute the synthesis of these various bits and pieces of skills and dispositions are
fundamentally and irreducibly, *inter*-actional. That is, they operate across and between people, or more explicitly, between bodies, rather than residing in or emanating exclusively from only one stakeholder, the actor.

Emerging from this analysis, then, I want to propose that what are commonly understood as skills of social inter-action and inter-dependency are, in fact, skills that may not be 'owned by' purportedly autonomous bodies. Social inter-action is concurrently a disposition and a practice, rather than a competency that is ever mastered and owned. Skills in social engagement (as particular dispositions) may be ingredients to the interaction between agents. The outcome, however, is a product of 'becoming'-in-between rather than of self-sufficient givenness or a transactional agency, fixed by predetermined roles. In addition, any professional recognition or assessment of such an emergent disposition must be founded upon a discernment, not of ownership of a skill, but rather of willingness towards inter-action. Douglas Griffin, in his discussion of the emergence of leadership in social contexts, argues that roles emerge in interaction with each other in that "there is no question of an individual choosing a mask, or role by and for him-herself" (2002: 195). Therefore, as 'leaders' in the cultural field, teachers, directors, or casting agents need to become aware of how their processes of judgement or assessment, of a young actor's inter-actional practice, are shaped by their own particular dispositions and practices towards such inter-action.

It should come as no surprise that a great deal of discursive energy and practical formation within schools of training is directed towards the management and shaping of such intangibles. Within and across sites of actor formation there are diverse discourses that attribute terms such as power, communion, flow, spirit, and connection to the intangible qualities of interactions between actors and their 'audiences'. Joseph R. Roach's account of the 'science' of acting notes how, implicit with such discourses, there are paradigm shifts in the material sciences that appear to validate the peculiar powers of the actor in practice (Roach 1993). Practitioners such as Stanislavsky, Artaud and Grotowski, and their 'successors', including Strasberg, Hagen, Meisner, Morris, Merlin, Wangh and Olsen,
through their texts, have offered exclusive interpretations and supplementary practices in order to manifest and manipulate these phenomena (Stanislavski 1937; Artaud 1958; Grotowski 1969; Strasberg 1987; Hagen 1973; Meisner and Longwell 1987; Morris 2000; Merlin 2001; Wangh 2000; Olsen 1989). Scholars such as Hornby, Carnicke, Meyer-Dinkgräfe, Milling, Ley, Zarrilli and Hodge have accounted for such practices and experiences with reference to anthropological, sociological and psychoanalytical paradigms (Hornby 1992; Carnicke 1998; Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001; Milling and Ley 2001; Zarrilli 1995; Hodge 2000).

There are also institutional and social infrastructures that affirm and exploit these discourses as symbolic capital. This is achieved through the promotion of purported objects such as 'gift', 'talent', 'charisma', 'sex-appeal' and 'having it'. Actors are interviewed about the 'magic' of their experiences with other actors and audiences. Various media outlets identify and promote 'talent' in terms of giftedness and charisma—how the actor affects the audience.

*Educational institutions and market forces*

If, as I have suggested, the misrecognition of the actor (as an autonomous agent) is implicit to a dominant discourse in the field of acting, we might expect that such an ontology of ownership and givenness also functions to locate talent in particular individuals (rather than as a potentiality of all human agents). Likewise, talent is not something that has always been an essential quality or characteristic for those intending to work as actors, nor is it a universal premise or prerequisite for other cultural contexts of performance training and practice. However, aspiring performers do desire to learn how dramaturgically to engage an audience for a multitude of idiosyncratic motivations—artistic, cultural, social, economic and personal.

The acting practitioners that I cited earlier, in their practices and texts, place a high value on the actor's ability to 'embody a role', to 'connect with a text', to
'flow in performance' and 'commune' with an audience. Yet, due to geographical, political, historical and economic factors, these teachers cannot physically be present to all their aspiring students and must 'pass on' their practices in written form and through the establishment of 'schools'. Bourdieu argues that any skills or abilities may only be preserved "in their incorporated state", when a society lacks both the literacy to preserve and accumulate such resources in an objectified form and an educational system to pass on particular aptitudes and dispositions required to reappropriate such skills. However, he argues that such cultural competence may be preserved for subsequent generations by detaching cultural resources, perceived as being owned by specific persons, and "monopolising the instruments for the appropriation of those resources (writing, reading, and other decoding techniques)" (1994: 181). The emergence of much theorising and writing concerning acting craft, and the burgeoning of acting 'schools' in Western economies, especially over the last century, enables such acting competencies to be more effectively reproduced.

Bourdieu conceptualises such competencies as capital in that they can maintain or enhance social standing as a "social relation of power" (Swartz 1997: 73). He argues that cultural competence in any particular form cannot be positioned as "cultural capital" until it is introduced into "the objective relations between the system of economic production and the system producing the producers ..." (Bourdieu 1994:181). Thus, he proposes that, through the establishment of educational institutions, as systems "producing the producers" in a society, it becomes possible to relate to all qualification holders by a single standard thereby establishing a single market for all cultural abilities. This aids unimpeded circulation of cultural capital by minimalising the 'fixing' of specific capital becoming, literally, incorporated in individual persons (although he recognises the value of the "charismatic ideology of the irreplaceable person") (1994: 181).

Each practitioner who develops a practice of competencies also operates from within a particular dramaturgical framework, bringing with that framework assumptions as to how and why theatre should function in a particular cultural
context. Therefore there is not only diversity in the ways of developing competencies but there is diversity of motivations as to why and how these competencies should be developed. However, the attributes that produce and sustain an actor’s charismatic status, as an intangible experience in the culture, prove difficult for institutions and the wider market to identify and manage.

Nevertheless, it should not be expected that the institutionalisation of actor training in Western cultures is somehow immune from the logics of ownership and commodification of competencies that become synonymous with ‘talent’. Bourdieu proposes that the educational system plays a decisive role in “the generalised imposition of the legitimate mode of consumption” (1993: 37). He suggests that cultural capital may exist in three different states: embodied, objectified and institutionalised.

Embodied states refer to the collection of cultivated dispositions internalised by individuals through processes of socialisation. These processes help the individual to learn how to recognise what is valuable and understandable within a particular field of concern (Swartz 1997: 76). The second state is that of objectification in which, for example, works of art or, in the case under examination, bodies of artists require specialised cultural abilities to be legitimately utilised. The third state in which cultural capital exists is in its institutional credential system. Bourdieu notes that educational credentials have increasingly become necessary for gaining access to desirable positions in the job market. In fact he argues that the key to growth in the autonomy of culture from economic and political power is through institutionalisation and the expansion of education (Swartz 1997: 76-77). Socially recognised and valued works of art, according to Bourdieu, require both spectators capable of knowing these as such, and artistic activity that can produce such works (1993: 37). Similarly, cultural capital is attributed both to successful graduates and to untrained ‘raw talent’ in this field of conflicts “between rival principles of legitimacy” (43).
In the field of acting, stakeholders attempt to account for and grasp at embodied experiences that are recognised as signifiers of ‘talent’. The contested struggle to ‘capture’ such experiences becomes evident in the diversity of terms variously used – presence, flow, energy, connection, spirit. However, it would be a misrecognition if we presume that any particular term would come to represent the essence of the experience, excluding all other terms. Each term emerges from a particular perception and judgement of experience as intangibly yet substantially different.

Territorialising intangible experiences

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari offer their account of the perception of difference, through experience, in terms of movement:

Perception can grasp movement only as the displacement of a moving body or the development of a form. Movements, becomings, in other words, pure relations of speed and slowness, pure affects, are below and above the threshold of perception ... It is the plane of organization and development, the plane of transcendence, that renders perceptible without itself being perceived, without being capable of being perceived. But on the other plane, the plane of immanence or consistency, the principle of composition itself must be perceived, cannot but be perceived at the same time as that which it composes or renders. (1987: 281)

For Deleuze and Guattari, embodied experiences are constantly ‘captured’, territorialised or ‘slowed down’ into what they call contractions, in order that those experiences may be perceived and recognised. Deleuze and Guattari
propose that “a territory has two noticeable effects: a reorganization of functions and a regrouping of forces” (1987: 320; italics in original). In a critical overview of Deleuze’s writings, Claire Colebrook notes how he uses different terminologies to describe such activity so that he, too, does not “subdue difference by explaining its emergence from a single point” (2002: 35). Thus, language, bodies, desires, historical and social forces all “intersect and constantly mutate, in such a way that what we are cannot be traced back to a single point of origin or intention” (xliii). As a consequence of ‘territorialising’ or imposing on any experiences specific classifications, contractions or ‘names’, each linguistic articulation asserts a kind of legitimacy to claims to knowledge and understanding of those embodied flows. Further, Deleuze links embodied experiences of habit and contemplation to the practice of contraction to reinforce how bodies simultaneously shape particular experiences, even as they are formed by those experiences:

It is simultaneously through contraction that we are habits, but through contemplation we contract. We are contemplations, we are imaginations, we are generalities, claims and satisfactions. The phenomenon of claiming is nothing but the contracting contemplation through which we affirm our right and our expectation in regard to that which we contract, along with our self-satisfaction in so far as we contemplate. (1994: 74; emphasis mine)

The use of language becomes one of the embodied habits by which different experiences are ‘contracted’. However, exclusively determined ‘contractions’ of experience are often mistaken for experience itself.
Misrecognising experience through categorisation and embodiment

Language, as a tool of categorisation/territorialisation, frequently proves to be an elusive way to get close to experiences readily perceived and produced through various modes of embodiment. The process of naming may be mistaken for the thing itself, or rather, there may be an assumption that because there is a name, there must be a thing that is being named. For example, this confusion is evident in references to ‘spirit’ and ‘energy’, in An Actor Prepares (Stanislavski 1937: 193-222), that attempt to locate experiences in particular contractions as though they were phenomenal objects. These experiences may be a product of social and embodied interaction rather than purportedly separate and autonomous objects.

Spirit is one ‘contraction’ that has been attributed to certain clusters of experience associated with performance. According to the historical account of the New Shorter Oxford Dictionary – spirit – is derived from the Latin spiritus. Spiritus has been associated with life-giving breath, the immaterial, the supernatural, the rational and even the emotional faculties of anger, hostility, lack of humility, undue zeal, courage and assertiveness (Brown 1993: 2989). Yet in various discourses and texts, as I will demonstrate, the contraction – spirit – has become the phenomenal object, spirit. This is not to suggest that the experiences for which this contraction is used are not significant or substantial, but rather that it cannot be assumed that the experiences and the particular contraction are conclusively equivalent or complete. This possible confusion is evident in Sharon M. Carnicke’s attempt to reinstate a ‘spiritual’ account of Stanislavsky’s System.

Mistaking names for objects

In Stanislavsky in Focus (1998), Carnicke argues that Stanislavsky’s references to the philosophy of Yoga have been reinterpreted and reconfigured through what
might be understood as different epistemes. Her attempt to ‘set the record straight’, as it were, argues that

Stanislavsky drew from two sources – Ribot’s psychology and Yoga’s physicalised spirituality – to understand and express the content of dramatic art – emotion and human spirit. However, the Method actively embraced one source, imbibing Stanislavsky’s behaviourist psychology and imbuing it with a therapeutic mindset, while rejecting the other as completely as the Soviet censors had … His interest in Yoga was erased from both Western and Eastern lore. (145)

Carnicke notes that the Soviets objected to any mention of the spirit and soul and criticised Hindu philosophy as “idealistic” despite its claimed grounding in the biological world. According to her research, the word prana (understood as referring to life energy) from Yoga practice, which appears in Stanislavsky’s first drafts and the 1935 version sent to the USA, was completely deleted from the 1938 Russian edition (144). She also observes that in a different time and culture, in the USA, Strasberg wrote that Stanislavsky was “unfortunately [underlined in original] influenced by some of his previous interest in Hindu philosophy” (145). Furthermore, Strasberg privileged the discipline and discourse of psychology – while excluding Yoga – from his Encyclopedia Britannica account of the sources of Stanislavsky’s System (ibid). While Carnicke does Stanislavsky a service by drawing attention to significant censorship and misrecognition by other stakeholders, she fails to acknowledge her own ‘stake’ in re-asserting a particular ‘objectification’ of such intangible experiences.

Rather than attempting to reassert any particular ‘contraction’ of the intangible experiences between actors and their audiences, I will offer an interrogation of the ways in which language (as a social tool) is co-opted by certain stakeholders,
through relations of power. That particular terms are reified and mistaken for objects simultaneously produces and reflects the relations of power between various stakeholders. As the ‘territorialising’ or ‘contracting’ experience tends to reify and objectify, by contrast, the de-territorialising strategies of Deleuze and Guattari are attempts to destabilise the privileging of power, authority and control through the overturning and questioning of dominant meanings, presuppositions and expectations (Fox 1999: 134-135).

It is not just particular terms that may be mistakenly treated as definitive objects. Disciplines or systems of knowledge, as ways of providing rational accounts of certain experiences within and between bodies, may also produce categorisations that may be mistaken for objects of knowledge. Foucault argues that knowledges are, themselves, confirmed as real and legitimate, through relations of power:

If the question of ideology may be asked of science, it is in so far as science, without being identified with knowledge, but without effacing or excluding it, is localised in it, structures certain of its objects, systematizes certain of its enunciations, formalizes certain of its concepts and strategies. (1972: 204)

Those stakeholders, who exercise particular power, in the same moment, determine what constitutes knowledge, though knowledge does not exist in itself as an object.

Mistaking concepts for objects

Fred Newman and Lois Holzman, in The End of Knowing: A New Developmental Way of Learning (1997), point to the recurring paradox that human beings, simultaneously, invoke and evoke assumed agreed-upon categorisations for the
things they do and experience in the world, understanding those categories as natural categories. Newman and Holzman note that one of the fundamental epistemological tenets of ‘natural’ and social sciences insists that there must be something it is “about” (105). However, there is no scientific method (in the sense of traditional epistemologies) for the study of human-social phenomena that does not alter the nature of those phenomena in the very act of investigation (106). It is this concept of aboutness, Newman and Holzman argue, that persuades us to look for ways to appropriate knowledge as a thing to be categorised and manipulated. By contrast, they propose a non-epistemological activity of “performing knowing” as a practice, rather than an application, of method:

[...] the radical acceptance of there being nothing social (-cultural-historical) independent of our creating it; there is nothing “natural” about how we participate with each other, nothing at a sufficient distance for us to “study”. There is only what we create ... the performance of conversation. (107-108)

In the activity of knowing, the practice of method simultaneously creates the knowing and the tools by which that knowing can be experienced as known (78-79). Newman and Holzman observe that their own knowing of/through this practice continues in indeterminate ways through what they describe (at the time of writing) as the “improvisational performance of developmental learning” (126).

Stacey, likewise, addresses the implications of regarding knowledge as an object in the so-called “knowledge economy” of contemporary practices of knowledge management and exchange (a term that I have earlier noted circulates in the field of acting). This dominant belief of ‘exchange’, Stacey argues, is evident in many institutions’ understanding in which
learning and knowledge creation are basically a process of transmission between individuals in which data is converted to information through the medium of knowledge, which may be explicit but, far more importantly, may be tacit. The transmission of knowledge between people is a process of conversion between tacit and explicit forms based on mimicry in tacit-tacit transfers, group dialogue and discussion in metaphorical and analogical language in tacit-explicit transfers, formalization and codification in explicit-explicit transfers, and internalization in explicit-tacit transfers. Knowledge is understood to move in this way through the interplay of individual and group/organizational/social levels. (2001: 19)

Stacey proposes an alternative way of thinking about learning and knowledge creation that is not mistakenly premised on knowledge as an object to be appropriated, stored and exchanged. He draws, primarily, on a new interpretation of George Herbert Mead’s theories of mind, self and society, synthesised with analogical insights from the complexity sciences (particularly the writings of Nobel-winning chemist, Ilya Prigogine). On this account, knowledge is not something that can be stored but instead perpetually emerges, indeterminately, out of the interaction of the individual and the social (69). These are interactions principally between human bodies in the medium of various symbols (understood as gestures ‘thrown together’ with responses, which together constitute a meaning) (101-102). Stacey proposes that individuals and groups can be better understood in terms of “complex responsive processes of relating” (98). It is in these responsive, bodily interactions of relating that knowledge is continuously reproduced and transformed, rather than stored and shared. Stacey reiterates:
Knowledge, therefore, is not an "it" but a process of action. Action is undertaken in the living present and is, therefore, ephemeral ... Reified symbols can be expressed in the forms of marks and so stored as artifacts. However, these artifacts are not knowledge. They are tools that people use in their bodily communication with each other in which meaning and knowledge arise. (116)

Further, Stacey argues that such human interaction is also a process of changing relations of power in which the social can be thought of "as continuously replicating patterns of themes and variations that organise the experience of being together ... always a bodily experience" (140-141). His premise - that humans are fundamentally social animals - leads him to an understanding that, in a sophisticated way, distinct human bodies engage in joint action in order to survive and develop. This requires continuous communicative interaction between them (146). It is through acting and interacting, together, that meanings are produced and reproduced. Yet, those responsible for practices of training and assessment frequently disregard or exclude the significance of the social contexts in which performers make meaning together. Teachers and other assessors judge 'talent' as exclusive to the body and disposition of the individual performer, paradoxically, misrecognising the meaning-making that is being produced between them through their inter-actions together.

Mistaking actions for dispositions

Teachers, directors and agents look to recognise direct or indirect evidence of communicative interaction as a disposition or aptitude of independent agents. For example, in the Scoping study's Western Australia submission to the question of suitability of an industry training package and national competency standards is an agreement by stakeholders that
[there] is an element of being a performer that cannot be described and that is the talent or the "unknown" which makes a performer a good performer (italics in original). Whether you can then describe a performer who doesn’t have this "je ne sais pas quoi" as competent is debateable as this is what makes a performer able to satisfy audience requirements. (Appendix 10: 6)

This submission also noted that "no matter what kind of training, there will always be graduates who are more suited to particular roles and/or who have more innate talent (or star appeal, or zip, or thang etc)" (Appendix 10: 8).

Robert Cohen (1998) has identified talent as the sine qua non of a performer. According to him, almost everyone says: "[T]alent: I can’t define it, but I know it when I see it" (12). However, he expands on this by attributing several qualities to the notion of talent. These qualities “make a person communicate (project) a compelling personality, without simply pushing themselves on us” (ibid). Metaphors for talent include “magnetism”, “electricity” and stage “presence”. These are further developed with reference to a second quality of “a two-way exchange” with an audience (ibid). This is not simply something within the actor, Cohen suggests, but rather an ability to interact with an audience, in terms of give and take. He alternately uses the metaphor of magnetism and electricity “(think of it as ‘alternating current’)” to describe the ability to draw others, to inspire and “to lead them with your words, your body and your eyes” (ibid). This dynamic is also described in terms of establishing rapport and the ability to “set up mutual vibrations, both intellectually and emotionally” (ibid). Cohen stresses the importance of being able to enter into mutual feedback with other actors, as well as the audience (ibid). In addition to these two primary interpersonal skills, Cohen identifies the physical and intellectual versatility of the actor. However, he makes the curious note that “a person who is genuinely talented need not be able to sing on key, but can probably ‘sell’ a song if called
upon to do so” (14). Sex appeal, in his opinion, also factors in assessment of potential as “it is clear that an audience sensually intrigued is an audience already on its way to admiring and relishing a performance” (ibid).

In these industry discourses and practices, we can begin to identify what is at stake for the person who wishes to train as a professional actor. Talent is something that, according to Cohen and industry stakeholders, is ‘recognised’ rather than defined. Yet, I will argue that if it is also understood as a particular set of social and phenomenological experiences that may be described as *intercorporeal* – between bodies – it seems inappropriate to refer to talent as being the inherent property of some bodies but not others. At best, we might say that some bodies are more practised in or disposed towards intercorporeal activity than others are. Those who encounter such interactions feel compelled to speak of such experiences even if words fail in establishing a coherent or legitimate social discourse. Instead, these divergent experiences and their correlate interpretations are one and the same as those experiences of the body, as pleasurable, painful or ephemeral, explicated by Leder in *The Absent Body* (1990). Leder directs our attention to extant habits of speech and understanding that render logics of corporeality as counter-intuitive, strange, and even unthinkable.

Yet, in another discipline, considerable steps have been taken to displace a habitual misrecognition of the self as autonomous and self-contained. Debates in the discipline of counselling, for example, have turned on practices premised on the training of analysts and counsellors to ‘acquire’ the requisite skills to ‘cure’ or ‘empower’ those who come to them for help. However, after a significant meeting with Buber, the psychoanalyst, Hans Trüb, left his prior practice of the dialectical psychology of Jung for Buber’s dialogical anthropology (Friedman 1992: 83). He began to approach his practice as a process of interaction, trust and mutual vulnerability between two human beings, rather than through the roles of therapist and patient:

51
The patient is now lost to us at a blow as an object of treatment, and that which remains to be done proceeds from a fundamentally new point of departure. For now the problem lies between us. The situation from now on is an obviously dialogical one (Trüb in Friedman 1991: 504)

Similarly, in William Wilmot’s (1980) account of dyadic communication as transactional, he argues that in such a relationship, two factors are significant: firstly, both parties are trying to attach meaning to the transaction and, secondly, both are affected, as much by what they are intending, as they are affected by the response of the other (11). Trainers using different models of interpersonal skills identify four broad aims that require a social environment for practical and effective learning of social ‘habits’. In such training programs, people need to:

1. Increase awareness (learn more about themselves, their impact on others, and others’ impact on them)
2. Develop more choices in handling relationships
3. Experiment in trying some of these new choices
4. Make decisions about what ‘works’ and makes sense (Fraser 1982: viii).

From this discipline, we can see how, in Bourdieu’s terms, there has been a more reflexive engagement to identify and articulate what is at stake for all participants in this social practice.

I have argued that what is at stake, in sites of actor formation, is how communicative interactions are variously – experienced, misrecognised – and produced – between student actors and their various audiences (teachers, agents, directors, the public, critics, etc.). As a first step towards the deterritorialisation of the doxa or presuppositions of the field – givenness,
agency, disposition – I offer an account of intercorporeality that proposes how difference simultaneously awakens and disturbs the capacity to recognise and misrecognise social interactions between bodies.

An intercorporeality that disorientates and potentially ‘deterritorialises’

Rosalyn Diprose addresses the affective dimension of interpersonal relations in *Corporeal Generosity: On giving with Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas* (2002). She argues that affectivity is the domain of relationships of power between people in that “affecting and being affected will be viewed as the basis of the production and transformation of the corporeal self through others” (75). Central to her argument is the inherent ambiguity of what constitutes perception and sensibility in embodied experience or corporeality, as explicated in the writings of Merleau-Ponty. Perception and subjectivity are equivalent in that the perceiving body is already thrown into the perceived world, which includes other perceiving-perceived bodies (173). For Merleau-Ponty, “subject” and “object”, “culture” and “nature” are expressed together through the perceiving body as sensibility such that “our perception is cultural-historic” (1968: 253). Diprose takes this to imply that perception is political in that many judgements and decisions of the social world inhabit and shape the perceptions of individual bodies:

[...] this intercorporeal field is also the “space” of affectivity and perception, of sensibility. I perceive and feel, because I am perceived and felt by the world of the other, because I am given in my corporeal difference to a common physical and social world of other beings who see me and touch me. (102)

It is intercorporeal difference and inter-action that Merleau-Ponty believes animates perception and sensibility. Shared gestures and language that provide
a common cultural background may be built up through what Merleau-Ponty refers to as "cultural sedimentation" (1973: 141). However, he proposes that accompanying this is also an excess, an intercorporeal disturbance that evokes a potential for the transformation of meaning and ways of being:

If the other person is really another, at a certain stage I must be surprised, disoriented. If we are to meet not just through what we have in common but in what is different between us [this] presupposes a transformation of myself and of the other as well. (1973: 142)

From this observation, Diprose concludes that each event of intercorporeal experience, as a potential crisis of meaning – a disorientation – animates either openings to new meanings or closure towards dominant ‘cultural sedimentation’ (183). In this way, intercorporeality, as a practice of social bodies, deterritorialises as it also reterritorialises experiential differences in perception and judgement into either existing or new categories of meaning-making.

Therefore, I propose to use the term intercorporeality to deterritorialise those experiential qualities of empathy, energy, connection, communitas, or interaction between actor and actor, actor and audience, and in the context of learning, between student and teacher. I also want to stress that such intercorporeal experiences do not necessitate that human agents are consciously present to each other, or that the audience, in every case, is that of a paying audience seeing a public performance. The practices and discourses concerning intercorporeality that circulate in actor formation may also equip the actor for work in radio, or television, or interactive DVD or film. The audience that actor may perform for may be paying spectators, but it may also be a casting director, an agent, a film crew, or a director and fellow actors. Similarly a teacher may interact, intercorporeally, with students via interactive tools such as the Internet.
What makes every interaction corporeally and ethically significant is that in every instance there are bodies interacting with bodies by which meaning-making emerges. What I believe circulates in the sites of actor formation that I have studied is the simultaneous shaping of, and the misrecognition of particular experiences of interporeality, as located in a willingness to affect and be affected by the other. Thus, the focus of my research attends to relationships of power and knowledge creation through interactions – in terms of recognitions, misrecognitions and formations – between students and teachers in these sites. What is needed is a means of tracking how certain discursive misrecognitions and concomitant behaviours, evident in givenness, agency and disposition, territorialise the experiences and meaning-making conversations of acting students and their teachers.

**Tracking ways of speaking, recognising/legitimising and producing experiences: Foucault’s archaeological and genealogical analyses**

In considering a method to track how recognitions and misrecognitions of interporeoreal experiences continue to circulate in sites of actor formation, I have adopted the analytical approaches of ‘archaeology’ and ‘genealogy’ as developed and practised by Michel Foucault. Thus, in Chapter Five, I will apply archaeological analysis to the predominant discourses circulating in the field, while in Chapter Six, I will adopt a genealogical analysis of specific events that occurred in each site of actor formation.

Lois McNay judges Foucault’s *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* as attempts to reveal a “dependence on a deepseated set of discursive regularities which, in any era, determine what it is possible to think, say and experience” (McNay 1994: 48). Foucault applies archaeological analysis with the hope of contributing to the eventual dislocation (in Deleuzian language, deterritorialisation) of the structural rules that govern discursive formations (McNay 1994: 48-49):
In attempting to uncover the deepest strata of Western culture, I am restoring our silent and apparently immobile soil its rifts, its instability, its flaws; and it is the same ground that is once more stirring under our feet. (Foucault 1970: xxiv)

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault argues that epistemes or 'knowledges' are sustained by three major factors – disciplines, commentaries and authors. In the following section I propose how these factors may be traced in relation to knowledge and recognition of vulnerability within the field of acting.

First, the metaphors I have highlighted – energy, flow, spirit, etc – for intercorporeal experiences associated with vulnerability have been variously embraced, reconfigured or marginalised by disciplines including science, psychology, theology, theatre and performance studies. Performance training institutions, that appropriate the authority of these disciplines, and the performance industries, that employ its practitioners, both participate in and maintain the circulation of particular forms of discourse. As institutional agents, they can be seen to thus legitimise certain discourses that advocate variously energy, flow, spirit or having talent – the 'It' or 'x' factor.

Second, as Foucault argued for madness, if someone's behaviour or ability to perform is subjected to evaluation, judgement, or, in the case of drama schools, auditioning, educational institutions may both produce and consult various commentaries or texts defining, or seeking to endorse particular definitions of a good performance. Similarly audiences that are habitually disposed to certain styles and dispositions of actors will recognise those performances that constitute, within the context of those styles and dispositions, a good performance. Such knowing will also be legitimised for the performers themselves in ongoing learning encounters with practitioner-teachers. Further, if performers wish to become recognised as practitioners of certain performance
disciplines they must negotiate various institutional, and simultaneously, interpersonal hurdles that continually test their ‘fit’ with the discourses, logics and ways of thinking of the disciplines. I will argue that the performance disciplines share, in their commentaries, a set of presuppositions and assumptions about human agency, and the relationship of that agency to a number of key, albeit ill-defined concepts (or, in the Deleuzian language I will use, contractions) including those of energy, flow and spirit.

Finally, I will demonstrate that what is accepted as legitimate disciplinary knowledge depends on, and is organised around the names that have become associated with the disciplines – the names of both authors and practitioners. Certain performance experiences, and the observations of those experiences, are explained in terms of the language of ‘experts’ endowed with cultural capital. I will track that knowledge about those experiences – indeed, the possibility for any knowledge about those experiences – is predicated upon the claims of knowing made by such authorities: tellingly, as Zarrilli (1995) has observed, upon the metaphorical language they use, and upon the classificatory systems to which their names lend legitimacy. Specifically, I will show that the contractions I have identified as ‘energy’, ‘flow’, ‘spirit’ or simply ‘having it’, endorsed by authoritative names, operate epistemologically and pedagogically to construct students’ knowledge of their own embodied experiences. I will argue that such a knowledge can constitute a misrecognition of those experiences.

However, while an archaeological approach may prove effective in tracing the innovations, comparisons, contradictions and transformations of discourses circulating in the field (Foucault 1972: 155), I take heed of Foucault’s own reservations of its application to social events. Foucault suggests in the conclusion of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that an archaeological approach may do no more than articulate in a less imprecise way “the analysis of social formations and epistemological descriptions” (1972: 229). Karlis Racevskis, in his discussion of Foucault’s archaeology, suggests it best serves to trace and reveal what he calls ‘the archive’ as
that specific discursive configuration which permits discourse to arise, to exist and to function within the framework of social relations and practices, within modes of institutionalised application and cultural usage. (1983: 77)

Alternatively, it is in his later writings that Foucault poses the notion, derived from Nietzsche, of genealogy or the philosophy of the event which traces the uneven and haphazard processes of dispersion, accumulation and overlapping of knowledges that are constitutive of the event (McNay 1994: 89). Foucault believes that the genealogist “must be able to recognise the events of history, its jolts, its surprises, its unsteady victories and unpalatable defeats – the basis of all beginnings, atavisms, and heredities” (1984a: 80). Kusch notes, in his discussion of Foucault’s archaeological and genealogical studies, that Lévi-Strauss draws a distinction between the particular and the universal ‘event’. Lévi-Strauss regards singular historical events, with all their peculiarities, as of lesser value than “invariant mental structures qua universals” (1991: 169). However, Kusch believes that Foucault wishes to reassert the primacy of the singular historical event because “the history which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning” (171). Therefore, according to Foucault, a ‘genealogy of the event’

is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations – or conversely the complete reversals – the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents. (1984a: 81)
A genealogical approach to analysis tracks how it is *requisite* that 'objects of study', such as human subjects, continue to be misrecognised and reterritorialised in events, through language, knowledge/power and the body. The body is at the centre of this struggle between different formations or circulations of power in that

the body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. (Foucault 1984a: 83)

Ralph D. Stacey, in *Complex Responsive Processes in Organizations: Learning and Knowledge Creation*, offers a similar analysis of power relations in his study of learning and knowledge creation in organizations and institutions. He argues that it is the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion that simultaneously produces emergent collaboration and innovation, and concurrently, "sterile repetition, disruption and destruction" (2001: 148, 149). In particular, he observes that any sense of exclusion must be felt as very threatening since communicative interaction is experienced as essential for the continued reproduction and potential transformation of the embodied subject. Therefore, he suggests that the themes of action that are triggered by such anxiety may produce re-patternings of inclusion and exclusion, and therefore necessitate shifts in relations of power (149).

Further, Stacey stresses that the inclusion/exclusion dynamic is not an aspect of power relations that humans could somehow decide to relinquish. He points to the process of categorising (in Deleuze's terms, territorialising) an experience as indicative of the bodily way in which experience is perceived in diverse ways that are patterned and recognised as meaningful (2001: 153). Experience is
polarised into similarity and difference, inclusion and exclusion, while the paradox of simultaneous similarity and difference within and between the categories is lost sight of (or is misrecognised) (154). Wittgenstein, in his *Philosophical Investigations*, illustrates how each action of aspect recognition, formation or pattern-making produces necessary presuppositions and attendant misrecognitions. In his example of the ‘duck’/’rabbit’ drawing (derived from Jastrow), the ‘ears’ of the rabbit are necessarily categorised as the ‘beak’ of the duck, in the same moment that the duck is formed and recognised as such (1958b: 194). Furthermore, if a person, looking at the drawing, had never seen and been told how to recognise either animal, they would not be able to recognise it as either a duck or rabbit.

Therefore, in any attempt to categorise a particular experience there is always misrecognition at the same moment that there is territorialisation of the experience, through a social tool such as language. A genealogical analysis, in the spirit of both Nietzsche and Foucault, may trace the processes in which certain associations of inclusion/exclusion between cultural forms and relations of power become requisite and are thereby reproduced as well as resisted.

**Conclusion**

In sites of actor formation, dispositions of vulnerability and experiences of intercorporeality are significant components of what is at stake in the ‘game’ in which actors and their teachers are engaged – Bourdieu’s *illusio*. Particular understandings of the world and the place of human bodies become the presuppositions or *doxa* that sustain these illusio. I have identified three modes of being – givenness, agency and disposition – as elements of the doxa that circulate in the field of acting. Through recognitions, misrecognitions and formations of givenness, agency and disposition, the field is reproduced as natural and normal. Using Foucault, I have proposed that, by applying archaeological and genealogical analyses, one may track the discourses and
'events' of embodied practices that tend to reproduce the struggles for cultural capital inherent in the field.

A component of the struggle is reproduced through the misrecognition or mistaking of names and concepts for objects. In particular, conversations that construe experiences of spirit – as an object – are constrained and marginalised, while other terms, such as energy and flow, are 'enabled' in sites of training. As a consequence of this encounter, I have argued that the term – intercorporeal – be introduced into the 'game' as a way to account for the intangible experiences that circulate alongside vulnerability as affectivity. This has the advantage of not predicking such experiences upon metaphysical constructs; that is, it obviates the need to attribute such experiences to putative objects such as talent or 'having' it. I have suggested that other fields, such as that of psychotherapy, for example, have reflected upon their particular presuppositions and misrecognitions. As a consequence, some practitioners in that field have altered their practices to incorporate new conversations that include accounts of the intangible connection between counsellor and client as potentially intercorporeal, and entailing a mutual vulnerability.

In the next chapter, I will offer what I have characterised, following Deleuze, as a *deterritorialisation* of each of these core presuppositions – givenness, agency and disposition – that are reproduced in the field of acting. Out of the play between phenomenological and genealogical methods, I will then suggest emergent, interpretive strategies that function to track and thus re-territorialise the dynamics of givenness, agency and disposition as they function in specific sites of actor formation.
CHAPTER TWO:

Interpreting actor formation

through phenomenological and genealogical methods

If having 'It' or 'talent' is the illusio – what appears to be at stake – in the formation of actors, how might we track or trace the sustaining presuppositions or doxa in sites of actor formation? Bourdieu suggests that doxa is perpetuated in that
countless acts of recognition ... from belonging to the
field, and in which collective misrecognition is
ceaselessly generated, are both the precondition and
the product of the functioning of the field. (1990: 68;
emphasis mine)

For every aspect that is recognised, there are many other aspects that must be
misrecognised in the same moment. Any judgements of what may or may not
be recognised become very powerful and reproductive when it is in the interests
of a collective to perpetuate specific recognitions. Thus, not withstanding my
own critique above of the logics of “having talent”, having talent is a ‘sensible’
and ‘practical’ aspect of belonging to the field. Bourdieu suggests that for those
who feel they belong in the field, the world “is read with the whole body, in and
through movements and displacements which define the space of objects as
much as they are defined by it” (1990: 76). In this chapter, I propose alternative
readings, rather than solutions, that challenge the doxa circulating in the field of
actor training.

First, I will address three presuppositions of western post-Cartesianism that
constitute a particular ontological givenness that is pervasive in western culture
– human beings are self-contained, self-sufficient and self-determining. I will
challenge the taken-for-granted status of these claims through a phenomenological interpretation of the intertwining of bodily and social experiences. In the subsequent argument, a teacher’s or student’s givenness may now be interpreted, at the same time, as indeterminant (subject to both the interactivity and interdependency of their “cultural” and their “connatural” bodies) and as constant, rather than polarised in terms of their bodily presence and absence.

Second, such a shift in assumptions about givenness requires a reconsideration of the construction of agency. A key aspect of contemporary pedagogic theory predicates the significance of desire in the acquisition of knowledge and skill. Within the constraints of a self-contained givenness, such acquisition presupposes a transfer of knowledge from mind to mind, rather than an encounter or interaction between bodies. However, revisions in the givenness of teachers and students as indeterminant, yet constant, embodied selves require new understandings of the dynamics of desire in pedagogic practice. The embodied desire of both teachers and students can be interpreted as an agency that is creative, intentional and productive rather than an agency that must compensate for a lack of skill, knowledge or recognition. However, such intentional agency on the part of teachers and students towards each other manifests in particular circulations of power and resistance. Within regimes of knowledge/power, such a desire to know also fuels the desire to classify and judge. As a concomitant to be a knowing subject, there is resistance to being classified as such, as in a social context, knowing constitutes identity. I offer alternative possibilities of knowing and creating identity, where classifications and judgements are placed alongside a mutual re-negotiation of relations of power between desiring agents.

Third, in the light of this contingency of knowledge and subjectivity producing a dispositional habitus, I will require interpretive apparatus to address, in Chapter Six, relations of power and how they manifest between teachers and students. Therefore, I will outline key features of Foucault’s genealogical strategy as a tool for tracing the disposition of actor formation. In this way, I will
track how ways of speaking of, recognising/legitimising and producing bodies in practice have the tendency to reproduce themselves.

This chapter offers various phenomenological and genealogical tools to challenge, track and deconstruct the taken-for-grantedness of the doxa of the field of actor training. In each site of actor formation, it is the dominant presuppositions undergirding givenness, agency and disposition that sustain the illusio of talent as signified by the vulnerability/invulnerability of the student actor and as articulated in discourses of the intercorporeal.

**Embodiment and givenness**

**Ontological givenness as self-contained, self-sufficient and self-determining**

Drew Leder (1990) offers a phenomenological interpretation for how, in different temporal, cultural and political contexts, bodies are encouraged in the propagation of certain ontological presuppositions or givenness. These doxa are experienced as valid and therefore become features of the legitimate habitus of specific cultures or communities. However, Leder argues that there is both an embodied inevitability as well as a social contingency underlying any particular understanding of givenness prior to its subsequent legitimisation.

Leder notes that the body is a place of pains and pleasures, skills and habits such that the “indefinite multiplicity of the body’s employment allows for a wide variation in cultural interpretations of body” (150). He proposes the notion of a “phenomenological vector” as a means to account for the “structure of experience that makes possible and encourages the subject in certain practical or interpretive directions, while never mandating them as invariant” (150). This would account, for example, for the strong prevalence in Western ontological discourses of Cartesian dualism as a particular phenomenological vector. This vector is sustained, at the same time, through embodied experiences of
discomforts 'appearing' and 'disappearing' from consciousness and through cultural beliefs that privilege intellect (regarded as man's distinguishing feature) and distrust bodily desires (which are associated with woman's 'falleness'). Its subsequent legitimisation sustains its recognition as a particular ontology of being.

In this way, Leder suggests that while body's practices and self-interpretations are always already shaped by culture, concurrently, culture is shaped out of the intentionality of bodies (151). What is significant is that the vectors established by the lived-body, and the cultural context with which they intertwine, are mutually influential structures and can lead to a positive feedback loop. Leder believes this is where the outcome of a process is fed back into a system to augment rather than moderate its original direction of operation. An example of this can be seen in the concept of the immaterial intellect. Modes of bodily 'disappearance' such as the hiddenness of the brain may suggest a disembodied rationality. Yet once this model is accepted, usage and experienced are further transformed to add weight to this belief. Any alternative examples of embodied intelligence are not only ignored but are systematically underdeveloped so that the dominance of one interpretive vector can involve the repression of other possible vectors of meaning (152). Leder concludes that "our cultural belief in the disassociation of mind from body leads to an increase in dissociative practices; we are encouraged to abandon sensorimotor awareness for abstracted mathematical or linguistic forms" (153).

By way of contrast to the interpretive vector of Cartesian dualism, Leder offers an interpretive vector of Neo-Confucianism which he regards as complementary to the latter writing of Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and Invisible*. The body can be approached in a multiplicity of ways so that it can move towards separation or connection, it can support finitude or transcendence, or it can advocate either stability or change. Therefore, Leder's alternative interpretation of givenness is not derived from some purported 'proof', since he has already argued that bodily experience and cultural beliefs can sustain quite divergent
understandings of embodiment (160). Yet this does not mean that there are no better or worse interpretive structures as some may provide correctives to the practical and conceptual failures of prior systems (161).

The Neo-Confucianist philosopher, Wang Yang-Ming, proposes that all things form one body, very much like Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the enfolding and intertwining of the lived-body-in-the-world (Leder 1990: 156). Leder develops this notion of forming one body through three social and yet embodied practices: compassion for others, absorption towards the world and communion with all “being” (161). In particular, compassion refers to an experiencing-with, suggesting an entering into the experience of others through a process of empathic identification. Leder argues that this is not to be confused with a reduction to a set of judgments and behavioural dispositions. Such a reduction to purportedly known forms might be equated with recognition and the attempt to appropriate the experience of the other as already known in oneself. Instead it is, as Merleau-Ponty advocates, an intertwining of two intentionalities, touching while being touched without implying that all distinction is eradicated. On the contrary, in order to experience deep empathy for others it is necessary to retain a sense of their otherness. Thus, Merleau-Ponty’s notion of chiasm, as “a coiling circuit of connection between divergent terms”, actualises this sense of both ‘oneness’ and relatedness (162).

This practice of compassion is however a conscious, interpretive choice as much as it is a bodily habit. Unfamiliarity or wariness of such connecting or intrusive experiences through corporeal interconnection may act as discouragements to the development of such a disposition. What may seem to be at stake is the apparent prior and requisite status of bodies as self-governing and self-contained entities. While challenging concepts of ontological givenness as self-governing and self-sufficient, I still want to acknowledge the living uniqueness and continuity of bodies that allows them to flourish without total determination from other sources. What interpretive strategy could
simultaneously incorporate the continuity of individual uniqueness and the experience of change through intercorporeal encounters?

"Indeterminate constancy" of bodies

Carol Bigwood (1998) proposes such a paradigm of the body as an indeterminate constancy and her special focus is on Merleau-Ponty's prepersonal, noncultural, nonlinguistic body that accompanies and is intertwined with its cultural existence. She reviews Merleau-Ponty's claim that it is not intellectual judging that makes sentence possible but instead it is the silent, noncognitive, intimate bonding of the body with its environment. Therefore, proposes Bigwood, as living bodies, "we are not in full cognitive possession of determinate, sensed objects but are irretrievably immersed in an ever-changing and indeterminate context of relations" (106). The metaphysical dualism of passive matter and active spirit, or conscious subject and object-world is resolved by the insertion of bodily "sentience" as a third term. Although the body is primarily nonrational and nonlinguistic in its communications it is still full of meanings and schemata (ibid).

Bigwood's particular interest is in the body's noncognitive apprehension of immanent meanings in the field of sensations that unifies things without cognitive association or judgement – that is, without the need for recognition. Again drawing on Merleau-Ponty, Bigwood understands the body as being attuned to life in that it simultaneously discovers the meanings that clusters of relations have, and sees to it that they have meaning. In French, "meaning" is sens, which means "sense", "significance" and "direction", so that the understanding of "meaning" can broaden to include nonlinguistic and noncognitive meanings (106-107). Therefore, human existence is always indeterminate to varying degrees as the potently meaningless takes on meaning, and it is ambiguous because primary sensory meanings that are reached though coexistence with others and things always have several meanings (108).
In Bigwood's view the body is not a fixed given, untouched by the dominant representational system, yet its grounding in the world still consists of interconnections with the human and nonhuman, the cultural and the natural. This "nonpersonal" perceptual existence that underlies and intertwines with the personal cultural and intellectual existence is referred to by Merleau-Ponty as a "natural" body that provides the possibility of phenomenal presence (108). It is a nonpersonal body consisting of interdependent systems of anonymous functions that the conscious 'self' has little or no control over. However, the nonpersonal body is not a firm foundation, argues Bigwood, in the sense of a fixed metaphysical ground that certifies – that recognises certain forms as given – but it is a ground in the sense of an indeterminate constancy that can be easily repressed, ignored or forgotten.

This "connatural" body is neither empirically nor logically prior to the "cultural" body but is existentially a codeterminant of the body and can thus be at least distinguished abstractly from cultural determinants. (ibid)

Therefore, Bigwood proposes that we exist simultaneously in cultural and natural ways that are complexly intertwined. Gender, as Bigwood's specific example, is not "caused" by a fixed anatomical and biological functionalist structure of the sexual body. Yet at the same time it is "motivated" by ambiguous, natural-cultural structures of the body, so that there is a certain continuity in the connection of gender to the body (109). For Merleau-Ponty, everything in the human body is, at the same time, a "necessity" and a "contingency" because human existence is the perpetual transformation of contingency into necessity and the potential dissolution of necessity into contingency once again (ibid). Bigwood concludes that in everyday life, the body's sentience tends to be sufficiently "attuned" only towards "culturally
significant” presence and undervalues the nonhuman element that is also part of the thing’s presencing. Yet, she observes that

[...] when we linger in a forest or over a work of art, we glimpse this bare “that it is” of a thing, this aspect of the thing that holds itself aloof from us, transcending our experience of it (Heidegger 1977: 190) ... At such times we may be struck by wonder at this upsurge of existence beyond our control. (111)

Therefore, it is the indeterminate constancy of the body that necessarily misrecognises its world as a consequence of its variable attunement to what is regarded as socially and culturally valuable. The necessity of this misrecognition is indeterminate even though some aspect of the experiential encounter with the other will always be subject to a blind spot in perception. However, to account for this absence of experience as a void or lack of presence is also a misrecognition.

“Saturated intensity” between bodies

The notion of corporeal presence has been often problematised by its apparent correlate absence, yet as Anthony J. Steinbock (1999) argues, the experience of lack or absence as commonly understood may indicate a “uniquely saturated, ‘specific’ presence” that makes it inaccessible or unrecognised in the moment. He proposes that the concept of “saturated intensity” is implied in the phenomenological descriptions by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty as an intentionality characterised by surplus and a type of generative presence (179). Just as Deleuze regards desire as not a lack, but an extension of fullness, so Steinbock regards desiring consciousness as that which is “satiated and wants more on the basis of plenitude” (178). He identifies lived-body intentionality functioning as an “I can” rather than an “I think” in that bodily space is given
Forming (in) Vulnerable Bodies  Seton

towards a person in an intention to grasp without being given in an intention to know. The *I can* is the embodied ability to fulfil its intentionality, not as a sudden acquisition of fulfilment, but as a constant beckoning to perceive more that is given as available in a situation. In this way, the "intentional arc" of Merleau-Ponty becomes the "general power of putting ourselves in a situation" (183).

In actor training, this embodied ability to fulfil intentionality may be also interpreted as the desire to form, shape and condition a body to affect and be affected by others. This is quite different to a judgement that regards education as simply the transmission and acquisition of a set of skills and knowledges. As agents in institutional contexts, how do teachers and students, in their intentional embodiment, interact with each other in ways that the illusio of 'talent' is reproduced and consequently recognised?

Desire and agency

*Desire and the embodied formation of teacher and students*

The significance of desire for education has a long history, according to Sharon Todd (1997). The classical notion of learning has been deeply intertwined with the (unsaid) desire for knowledge. Knowledge holds the promise of fulfilment but only, Todd notes, for those who "like Plato's philosophers, place themselves in a position of 'feeling want'" (2). It seems that a recognition or belief in a lack, absence, or ignorance is deemed necessary to motivate any search for knowledge. But Todd argues that it may also be that the offer of education instils the very want, the very love, it proposes to satiate and so it "creates" desire as it offers the means for its gratification (*ibid*). She proposes that this impulse is evident in the erotic relations between teachers and students as embodied subjects.

70
In classical Greek education, the relation between love and knowledge is performed through a homoerotic and pederastic teacher-student economy – an economy in which the "teacher" is invested with the authority to "instil" desire, or at least the belief in the necessity for such desire (ibid). Todd cites Jane Gallop’s identification of pederasty as a useful paradigm for classic Western pedagogy in which

[a] greater man penetrates a lesser man with his knowledge. The student is an empty receptacle for the phallus; the teacher is the phallic fulness of knowledge ... This structure and its sexual dynamic are explicit in [the Marquis de] Sade. The student is an innocent, empty receptacle, lacking his own desires, having desires "introduced to him by the teacher". (Gallop in Todd 1997: 2)

Todd draws attention to how pedagogical theories and practices are involved in a "particular libidinal economy and social imagination" (op. cit). For example, Paulo Freire (1996) has critiqued the banking model of education that advocates that the teacher fills up the student with knowledge. The student who acquires the desires of the teacher, displays those knowledge/desires back to the teacher who nevertheless remains unaffected by the student’s own thinking, desires, and ways of knowing. It becomes a "necrophilic", "exercise in domination," where the "educator’s role is to regulate the way the world ‘enters into’ the students" (58, 57). Todd interprets Freire’s dialogic ‘production’ of knowledge as a shift, in terms of desire, "from the erotic framing of the teacher-student relationship as penetrative to a more lateral view of desire as an exchange of mutuality, of fluidity” (3). It is this latter model of embodied desire as productive, mutual, fluid and interdependent that may prove useful to subsequent phenomenological interpretations of sites of actor formation.
However, Todd observes that there is still an inherent tension in attempts to theorise desire for pedagogic ends. If, she asks, as Cornelius Castoriadis proposes, desire is not that which is unrepresented but is simply not representable, what does this say about attempts to “name” it, “communicate” it, “represent” it or at least “work” with some notion of it (6)? For Todd, attempts to theorise or write about desire reveal something of a penetrative impulse, to the classical position of love and knowledge that is purportedly founded in a recognition of lack. Yet, she notes, desire can also be understood in terms of productive, creative and sometimes violent aspects of social encounters.

Todd suggests that teachers and students are always far more than the sum of their schooling performances. The line between what is “learnt” in educational institutions and what is “learnt” outside cannot always be easily drawn. There is something more to pedagogy than the spoken word and likewise there is something about desire operating within, through, and between teaching and learning bodies (7). In this sense, we can not regard givenness, agency and disposition as abstracted or removed from their bodily outworkings and interpenetrations. Nor does this mean that the body should only be understood in terms of its sexualization. As David Shumway (1989) observes in his discussion of how schooling practices discipline the body:

The body for Foucault is not a euphemism for the sexual, and desexualizing (emphasis mine) is only one aspect of the way the body is constructed in schooling. The body is used by Foucault to indicate the fact that disciplinary controls are not merely memorised or accepted, but actually form the body itself. One could say that they are habits in the sense that they work without the conscious choice of an individual but are ingrained in the very posture and musculature of the body. (227)
Disciplinary control is fundamental to how institutions and their agents, the teachers, perceive and embody their function as those who directly engage with the desires and reservations of other agents, the students. It is the students who come to embody, throughout the course of their training, behaviours implicating vulnerability in order to be judged and recognised as competent actors.

However, it cannot be presumed that all these intentionalities or desirings between teachers and students go unchallenged as particular relationships of power. Many of the arguments for restructuring what are regarded as more 'appropriate' teacher-student relations of power and desire are premised upon an ontology of stable being or givenness rather than indeterminate becoming. Such an ontology suggests a correlative Lacanian interpretation of desire as 'lack' rather than desire as machinic framed by Deleuze as the "productive process of life that produces organisms and selves" (Colebrook 2002: xxii). Is the student desire of, and yet resistance to, the formation nurtured by teachers, an indication of naïveté and ignorance or a sign of inevitable struggle between autonomy and interdependency?

*Desire and resistance to formation*

Much of the literature in contemporary pedagogy regards student resistance to learning as a response due to a 'deficiency' within the student. According to Alexander Reid (2000), the identification of this purported psycho-emotional and/or material lack within the student becomes the premise that pedagogy will address (4). He argues that educational institutions tend to define students by their shortcomings through such "discourses of lack" (a lack of knowledge, experience, or maturity) (8). Students seek entry into educational institutions often with a perception that through the institution they will gain what they believe they lack. Even positive experiences within the institution are constructed upon acts of judgement as recognition for 'getting it right'. When students resist such judgements these are also interpreted as a lack of critical understanding or commitment to the task (*ibid*). Reid suggests that Deleuze and
Guattari's critique of psychoanalytic and capitalist practices asserts that the state processes of subjectification "turn upon the inculcation of a lack" (9). Whether the lack is symbolic (in Lacanian terms) or material (in Marxist terms), student action through resistance is still located as a reactionary force that is seen as something for a teacher to overcome. In Deleuzian terms, when students' actions are termed as resistance, their actions are recaptured within the machineries of state social production, and within the order of lack (26).

Resistance may produce a kind of embodied *mutation* as students either modify or are modified by training or formation offered or imposed. Mutation, as a *contraction*, may variously signify abnormality, distortion, disruption, the freak, the exotic, the fickle, the marginal, and the transgressive (Brown 1993: 1867-8). Thus the student resisting either change or conformity — *becomes* the 'difficult' actor, the 'blocking' actor, or the troublemaker, as teachers and fellow students seek to classify and thereby recognise these aberrations that disrupt the *illusio*. However, I would propose that just as desire may be interpreted as intentionality rather than as lack, so too, the resistance of students may be interpreted as productive of new possibilities and relationships, rather than as a reactionary force to be overcome.

*Engagement with formation alongside judgement of formation*

As I will illustrate in Chapter Six, much of the recognition by teachers appears premised in terms of what is seen. Yet, Kelly Oliver challenges this apparent exclusivity of sight in the process of recognition. In *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (2001), she notes that, ironically, vision has been traditionally separated from the other senses because it supposedly gives us privileged access to the invisible world (191). Vision enables us to make logical and verifiable judgements about the world.

Instead, she advocates a "recognition beyond recognition" as a tentative acknowledgement of the other's *presence* through connection and touch i.e.
agency negotiated with the other, rather than predetermined through a definitive and objectifying judgement of givenness (199). Oliver proposes a reconsideration of Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of how the thickness of flesh and permeability of skin make connections between bodies possible. The thickness of the flesh guarantees relations, while the skin ensures that we can distinguish our experience from another’s (ibid). It is precisely in this opening to each other, which is our difference and the distance between us, that relationships and communications take place. Rather than the alienating, objectifying or conflictual gaze that seems removed from the rest of the body, Oliver invites an openness and reduction of prejudice towards the world (201). As Merleau-Ponty observes: “The world is all around me, not in front of me ... I live in it from the inside; I am immersed in it” (Merleau-Ponty in Oliver 2001: 202).

Oliver also draws on Levinas’ valuing of the face-to-face encounter. Levinas privileges touch over vision. For him touch enables closeness whereas vision enables only distance. But he goes further to distinguish between touch as momentary and touch as caress. A caress is relationship and, notes Oliver, seeks the continuation of relationship, the future of relationship, even while it constitutes it (205). Levinas believes that all sensibility must be interpreted as touch first – the visible caresses the eye. Such a touch-based ethics, Oliver concludes, takes us beyond knowing or grasping the other through vision – the mind’s eye or the body’s eye – this is indeed a movement toward a relationship beyond recognition (206).

She proposes that often recognition seeks only itself and not the other. Recognition is not open to otherness, but only confirmation of itself and its judgements. By contrast, Levinas observes that

To communicate is indeed to open oneself, but the openness is not complete if it is on watch for recognition. It is complete, not in the opening to the spectacle of, or the recognition of the other, but in
becoming a responsibility for him”. (Levinas in Oliver 2001: 206)

So, to participate beyond recognition is take up responsibility and, for Levinas, responsibility is for the other’s response – it is response-ability. Oliver reflects: “I am responsible for the other, for the other’s response, and the other’s ability to respond. Subjectivity is an openness to the other” (206). But for difference to be recognised as irreducible, it must be recognised as beyond recognition. Oliver cites Irigaray’s observation that it is the “negative that enables me to go towards you” and understands this negative as exemplified in phrases such as “I cannot know you”, “I cannot be you” and “I will never master you” (209). These undetermined attitudes towards the other, Oliver concludes, allow an encounter with the other that is not prejudiced by presupposed recognitions (ibid).

Therefore, Oliver advocates a way of knowing-in-action, of recognising beyond recognition – a knowing of connection with the other which is still to be encountered, negotiated, and provisionally articulated. This way of knowing, I suspect, already operates alongside any consciously articulated and socially verifiable judgements or recognitions that can be measured, documented, or subjected to repetition. In Chapter Six, I will offer instances of how practitioner-teachers and students each appear to acknowledge this knowing-in-action alongside recognitions of anticipated forms or behaviours signifying vulnerability.

**Power and disposition**

Martin Kusch, in his reconstruction of Foucault’s genealogical critique (1991), notes that the characterisation of social power as getting someone to do, or abstain from doing, something is problematised by the ambiguity of what is ‘at stake’ for the supposed subject of power. It becomes difficult to determine how the subject would have acted or what the subject’s interest or investment was in the behaviour under differing social and cultural conditions (119). What external
Forming (in) Vulnerable Bodies

observers regard as manipulation by an institution, because of a perceived conflict of interests between teacher and student, may be experienced by both teacher and student as a valuable and necessary process of persuasion and encouragement towards new habits. In *The Subject and Power* Foucault proposes that "[t]he exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome" (1983: 221).

Furthermore, Foucault specifically identifies educational institutions as constituting regulated systems for "the adjustment of abilities, the resources of communication, and power relations ..." (1983: 218). This institution, as a type, is set apart by Foucault for its many dynamics of power:

The disposal of its space, the meticulous regulations which govern its internal life, the different activities that are organised there, the diverse persons who live there or meet one another, each with his own function, his well-defined character – all these things constitute a block of capacity-communication-power. The activity which ensures apprenticeship and the acquisition of aptitudes or types of behavior is developed there by means of a whole ensemble of regulated communications (lessons, questions and answers, orders, exhortations, coded signs of obedience, differentiation marks of the "value" of each person and of the levels of knowledge) and by the means of a whole series of power processes (enclosure, surveillance, reward and punishment, the Pyramidal hierarchy). (218-219)

It is the institution that Foucault regards as "a privileged point of observation" for an analysis of power relations, though this task is not without its challenges (1983: 222). Firstly, Foucault argues there is a risk in deciphering essentially
reproductive functions, in that there are mechanisms within the institution that function to ensure its preservation against being dismantled. Secondly, an analysis of power relations from the perspective of the institution can result in seeking an explanation of power dynamics within the culture so that power merely accounts itself to power. Thirdly, there is the risk of privileging explicit or tacit institutional regulations over and against the apparatus that appear to function as tools of coercion. Rather than study power relations from the standpoint of the institution, Foucault advocates the analysis of institutions from the standpoint of the power relations that circulate, simultaneously, within and beyond the specific institution (ibid).

It is important to acknowledge in this thesis that any outcomes of such analysis are not intended to discover an essential nature that will ground subsequent forms of thought and action. Christopher Falzon (1998) regards Foucault’s genealogical approach as a form of critical reflection upon the historical emergence and specificity of human beliefs and ways of acting (69). Accordingly, Foucault wishes to rediscover “the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of force, strategies and so on which at a given moment establish what counts as being self-evident, universal and necessary” (ibid). Such histories include those events of actor formation that I participated in during 2000. So how may we apply Foucault’s genealogical approach to the analysis of such events?

Michael Mahon (1992), in his evaluation of Foucault’s Nietzschean, genealogical approach towards various institutions (the asylum, the clinic, the prison), identifies three axes through which an interpretation is made of power relations: the truth axis, the power axis, and the subject axis (29). This is derived from Foucault’s own reflections on what constitutes his project of genealogy:

Three domains of genealogy are possible. First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, a historical ontology of
ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents. (1994: 262)

The truth axis: Ways of speaking of bodies in practice

The truth axis is particularly evident in Foucault’s analysis of the medical clinic in which the developing ‘technologies’ of visibility in clinical observation converge with the attribution of descriptive language for what can be seen and therefore spoken. As the phenomenal world of the body and disease becomes the “analogue of language, the complete unity of the visible and the expressible is rendered possible” (Mahon 1992: 50-51). Furthermore, the clinic also becomes a site of pedagogical significance as a place for both observation and teaching in that “all that is visible is expressible, and that it is wholly visible because it is wholly expressible” (Foucault 1973: 115; italics in original). Thus, a to-and-fro of observation and interrogation of the patient, combined with precise description and attribution of phenomena, through discourse, becomes the norm of the doctor and patient relationship (Mahon 1992: 51).

Usher and Edwards, in Postmodernism and Education (1994) argue that Foucault is not claiming a discourse is a state of true relations but rather that a discourse, in defining what can be said and thought, provides the means for statements to be assessed as true (90). One outcome of this is that discourses do more than establish objects of discussion but, according to Foucault, “[I]t is this more that renders them irreducible to the language (langue) and to speech. It is this ‘more’ that we must reveal and describe” (1972: 54; italics in original). Discursive practices are exclusionary, Usher and Edwards conclude, in that they author-ise certain people to speak and, in the same moment, silence others or make their voices less authoritative. Discourses are inevitable, but may cause harm when
some 'subjects' severely constrain the activity of other 'subjects' by exclusively enforcing them (1994: 90).

Through speech and through silence, power circulates. Silence is not the absence of speech, when viewed from a phenomenological perspective, but potentially the presence of that which is either unrecognised or non-representational. What is complex is that various social groups privilege certain phenomena by means of speech and other phenomena by means of silence. Silence is as powerful a manifestation of power as speech. What we may not speak of, or not know how to speak of, is as powerful as how we perceive we may speak. The phenomenology of speech incorporates a phenomenology of silence as its correlate. Other modes of expression or intentionality such as gesture, social class, gender also intermingle with the phenomenological interplay of speech and silence.

In the context of discourse analysis we may examine who may speak, who may not speak, who cannot speak, who may not be heard, who will be heard, what will be said or not said, where will speaking be legitimate and where will speaking be illegitimate. However, although discourse analysis brings to the researcher's attention what may have been taken for granted by those involved in the discourse, the practice may also make an assumption that what is being re-presented is also re-cognised and consequently either embraced or rejected by consciousness and consequent behaviour. A phenomenological interpretation makes this analysis practice even more complex and indeterminate. How much of what we hear, and by our behaviour appear to adhere to, is actually recognised and reflected upon by consciousness prior to consent? How much of what we hear, do we perceive as normal because it is what we are in the habit of hearing, and therefore bypasses consciousness, in much the way we ignore many of the sounds that our ears perceive as just background noise?

In Spurling's discussion of the phenomenology of speech (1977), she contrasts this approach with those analytical methods that function from either an
empiricist or rationalist premise. As empiricism can only regard speech as a series of physical sounds set alongside each other, there is no recognition of who sets these sounds in motion and with what intention. Although rationalism does allow words to have meaning, it is only because the word represents an external sign of internal thought and consciousness, which alone has meaning. However, Merleau-Ponty refutes both these positions "by simply saying that the word has a meaning" (Merleau-Ponty in Spurling 1977: 50).

Spurling proposes that meaning is embodied in words and in speech, in the same way that it is embodied in behaviour and perception. Therefore words actually express meaning in the way that the body expresses intentions by concurrently symbolising and realising them (50). Hence, the movement from silence to speech is not a movement from non-meaning to meaning. The silence is not a void but a promise or potentiality of speech that will emerge, in the same way that "a perceptual figure emerges from its vaguely apprehended ground" (51). Furthermore, speech itself is always incomplete and allusive in that every explicit signification makes references to a horizon of possible senses (51-52). Speech is one important manifestation of intersubjectivity and, thereby, intercorporeality. It is through speaking that human beings participate in a cultural object, language, which is publicly shared and negotiated. The 'rules' of linguistic meaning act as a guide to making meaning ascription consistent, orderly and predictable. However, a phenomenological account would claim that speech is rule-guided rather than rule-governed in order to recognise the contingent and innovative applications of speech.

In Garfinkel's contribution to ethnomethodology, he suggests that what are taken to be 'objective' features of speech and of social life in general, are only objective because they are expressed in 'objective' terms, as determined by their common and intersubjectively determined properties, and not by their unique or context-specific features. There is a social tendency to produce objectivity through speech in order to make experiences account-able (Spurling 1977: 65-66). A particular feature that is brought out by ethnomethodology is a phenomenon
in conversation known as *glossing*. Merleau-Ponty also refers to this phenomenon in ordinary talk:

> When I chat with a friend whom I know well, each of his remarks and each of mine contains, in addition to the meaning it carries for everyone else, a host of references to the main dimensions of his character and mine, without our needing to recall previous conversations with each other. (Merleau-Ponty in Spurling 1977: 68)

In this and in other instances, various experiences or knowledges are *glossed* in conversation. They are never made explicit but are the presupposed, taken for granted and unnoticed background of the conversation. Certain meanings and conceptual assumptions are implicitly taken for granted until further notice. However, which features or assumptions are taken-for-granted by any given speakers cannot be presupposed or laid down by the theorist. Rather all who are engaged in a conversation are involved to various degrees in interpretive work throughout the conversation, in order to decide what is being taken for granted by the others (or themselves) so that an intelligible background can be built up to sustain the conversation in progress. This interpretive work is, however, pre-reflectively carried out, and is part of *knowing how to speak*.

Therefore in order to engage in a phenomenological analysis of discourse, Spurling advocates it becomes necessary to place into doubt any constituted meanings and *common understandings* in order to identify the praxis and interpretive work carried out in each and every conversation (69). This is not to deny that there exist common understandings, assumptions and shared meanings, but their invocation is not enough to explain how speech occurs and how it is understood. Verbal interaction isn’t about just exchanging pre-constituted meanings or habitual expressions. The ongoing interpretive work of the participants must also be taken into account in order to observe which habitual expressions or common understandings are relevant to which context, what they entail, how they are followed, applied, invoked and enforced. Ways
of speaking together cannot be isolated from ways of doing things together (71-72).

In Wittgenstein's later writings, he proposes that words are not so much names as they are tools, functioning like chess pieces that have their own particular value in terms of the overall field of the game (Spurling 1977: 64). In different games, the pieces take on different values according to the context of the game, though each game is often given its meaning by the qualities and behaviours of the pieces that make up the game. There is a distinction between Merleau-Ponty's focus on the provisional nature of speech as a mode of innovative creativity and Wittgenstein's concept of language games as a mode of reproductive creativity. Each language-game embodies a different yet sustained form of life or perspective of the world (Spurling 1977: 64-65). The genealogical approach of Foucault exposes the constant re-construction of meaning in order to demonstrate how "that-which-is might no longer be that-which-is" (Falzon 1998: 69). Thus a genealogical approach, simultaneously, complements and supplements a phenomenological analysis.

The power axis: Ways of recognising/legitimising bodies in practice

The power axis encompasses the Foucauldian understanding of the positive functioning and circulation of power, and its interdependent relationship to knowledge. Mahon (1992) retraces three power techniques that Foucault identified in his study of the asylum. The first was the imposition of silence as a replacement for chains. This prohibition produced an effect of conformist demeanour. The second technique, referred to by Foucault as "recognition by mirror", positioned the madman in relation to those 'like' him. The person, seeing himself in the behaviour of others, recognised himself as objectively mad. The third technique included the perpetual judgement which unified the first two techniques and their effects (34-35). According to Foucault
[e]verything was organised so that the madman would recognise himself in a world of judgement that enveloped him on all sides; he must know that he is watched, judged, and condemned; from transgression to punishment, the connection must be evident, as a guilt recognised by all. (Foucault in Mahon 1992: 35)

Usher and Edwards propose that Modernity’s liberal-humanist paradigm that is dominant in Western industrialised countries accustoms people to regard activities associated with learning and knowledge creation as distinct from and counter-posed to power. Knowledge, whether seen as an object or an activity, is located as a disinterested search for the truth that is, concurrently, vulnerable to the distortion and corruption of power. It is therefore implied that truth and knowledge are only possible under conditions where power is not exercised. However, at the same time, knowledge is regarded as powerful because it is seen to represent the world as it really is. Knowledge, in so far as it is true, is considered to be powerful because it is supposedly the means to liberate oneself and others from the constraint and distortion of power. It is implied that power is always negative, oppressive and the source of coercion and illegitimate control (85).

Therefore, if power is transcended, individuals will be able to realise their inherent rationality and be able to express themselves freely and develop themselves fully (ibid). As a consequence, Usher and Edwards summarise this discourse of knowledge-power and truth in the following manner

[...] truth is the basis of emancipation and progress; truth is gained from knowledge which faithfully reflects and represents the ‘real’ world; that such knowledge is only possible in the absence of power ...

(85)
This means that anything that does not satisfy these conditions may be regarded as a falsehood, mere belief or ideological. Therefore all other forms of knowledge and truth are suppressed, ignored or marginalised because they do not have the status of truth (86). However, Foucault goes on to argue that truth is always already power and the most that can be done is to detach "the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time" (Foucault 1980: 3). In this way, Modernity's discourse on power, truth and knowledge is questioned by Foucault's notion of power-knowledge. Foucault argues that knowledge is always found in relation to its uses and therefore in relation to a form of power. At the same moment power requires knowledge of the objects over which it is to be exercised effectively (Usher and Edwards 1994: 86).

Consequently, the conditions of possibility for certain forms of knowledge and their legitimation as truth-claims are brought forth through power. Thus Foucault concludes that

power and knowledge directly imply one another:
that there is no power relation without the
correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor
any knowledge that does not presuppose and
constitute at the same time power relations. (1979:
27)

Usher and Edwards note that, in reformulating the relationship between power and knowledge, Foucault challenges the notion that power is simply oppressive (89). Foucault suggests that power should "be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression" (1979: 119). Power, through knowledge, brings forth active subjects who better 'understand' their own
subjectivity yet who in this very process subject themselves to forms of power. Usher and Edwards conclude that the individual is, simultaneously, an object of power and an instrument through which power is exercised (89). Foucault states that

[p]ower must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody’s hands ... they [individuals] are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power ... individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (1980: 98)

The acting teacher recognises the apparent presence or absence of ability (or talent) and reflects this back to the actor in order that the actor may recognise it as well. What can be known and recognised is concurrently legitimised by those who have been given authority in the institution to determine who has the talent to succeed. Acting students also believe they have ‘It’ (or alternatively can produce ‘It’) and seek out the teacher’s recognition and approval. Both teachers and students undergo and exercise the power that circulates between them. Kusch comments that since the particular institutional structures in question are the results of struggles for power, they are always partly unstable and constantly contested (176). Foucault speaks of this struggle as an ongoing “war” in which “for each move by one adversary, there is an answering one by the other” (1980: 57).

The subject axis: Ways of producing bodies in practice

The subject axis considers how we are consequently constituted as subjects or, more specifically, bodies who exercise or submit to relations of power (Foucault 1984b: 97). This production of the subject is more than just a reclassifying in
spoken discourse or a recognition and legitimisation of particular behaviours. Power relations make us what we are, so that we cannot define ourselves without understanding the mechanisms of power that materially, as well as intellectually and socially shape us (Kusch 1991: 134-135). Foucault proposes that

[...] we should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces [i.e. powers], energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc. (1980: 97)

Usher and Edwards observe that educational discourses that focus on the development of knowledge as an activity of the mind tend to displace the role of such practices in disciplining the body (91-92). For Foucault, it is the body that is the critical site for the exercise of modern disciplinary power. Foucault’s term, bio-power, designates “what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of the explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life” (1981: 143). When discipline is effective, power operates through persons rather than upon them. The changing of teaching practices to create a more apparently democratic or ‘user-friendly’ environment for learning does not do away with power. It just reconfigures and displaces power without making it more progressive. Everything is political and there is no power-less discourse (Usher and Edwards 1994: 91).

Many vocational teachers eschew notions of imparting knowledge solely as discrete information or discourses. Their articulated and embodied practice is often to privilege practical experience and action over formal knowledge and theoretical discourse. A certain authority and authenticity is attached to the practice of learning by doing, which is positioned as in opposition to thinking in some conscious, reflective manner. The learner is shaped into a practitioner as different to a knower (in some formal sense). Their epistemological experience is
Forming (in) Vulnerable Bodies

understood to be more embodied and habitualised without the loss of the capacity for intuitive improvisation. This practice of knowing-in-action (see Schön 1983) can be distinguished from other accounts of emerging knowledge (Newman and Holzman 1997; Stacey 2001) that I discussed in Chapter One.

Donald Schön, in The Reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action (1983), proposes an epistemological model to account for those teachings and learnings that occur between the professional practitioner and the practitioner-in-training that cannot be easily identified or analysed in spoken and textual discourses. He argues that a dominant view of professional knowledge has consisted of "instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique" (21). This would be consistent with Foucault's critique of discursive production in terms of disciplines, commentaries and names. In fact, Schön's model of reflective professional practice recognises the significance of the professional discipline, the practitioner's industrial context and the practitioner-in-training context as interdependently crucial to the production of what counts as performance. However, Schön proposes that much of the working practice of the professional depends on an unspoken or tacit knowing-in-action that can be better valued if it is reflected upon. The improvisational character of knowing-in-action may be equated with Bourdieu's habitus that similarly incorporates a flexibility "for the game". Schön argues that such knowing-in-action is passed on from practitioner to student by "thinking on your feet" and "learning by doing" (54).

However, what separates Schön's model from those of Newman and Holzman, and Stacey, is that Schön believes that an understanding of knowing-in-action coupled with a practice of reflection-in-action will enable practitioners to consciously observe and modify any subsequent knowledge acquisition. In particular, Stacey questions if it is helpful to frame knowledge as something that shifts between being tacit and explicit as this implies that some process of conversion is required for learning and the transfer of knowledge to occur (2001: 35). Furthermore, when these tacit or unconscious processes of thought are articulated, Stacey suggests that there is no hidden reality that is being exposed

88
but just a range of further gestures and responses to interactions with others. There is therefore nothing fundamentally special about attempting to speak of or interpret what is unconscious as it is just another emerging gesture into an as yet unknown future (208). Rather, Stacey advocates that what is more significant is the quality of the gestural offers of bodies that interact in the ongoing flow of relationship:

[W]hat is unconscious from a complex responsive process point of view is neither knowledge hidden entirely in individual heads, nor inherited wishes or fantasies that are defended against, but much of the patterning of interaction between people expressed primarily in the way they gesture in language and employ ideology to cover over their power relations and attempts to sustain them. More effective performance is then more effective participation in relating, which is continuing dialogue around emerging pattern, both those labeled conscious and those labeled unconscious (209-210)

I will be looking to trace the qualities of the gestural offers between actors and their various audiences, in the next chapter, before advocating, in the Epilogue of this thesis, for an ongoing conversation around such emerging patterns.

Conclusion

I have proposed various phenomenological and genealogical readings, rather than solutions, that invoke challenges in the doxa of talent circulating in the field of actor training. In particular, I have problematised the belief that teachers and students are self-contained, self-sufficient and self-determining human beings. If the givenness of teachers and students may variously be interpreted as
indeterminant, constant and intentional, this requires a reconsideration of pedagogic theory especially in relation to agency and desire.

Embodied desire may be understood as an agency that is creative, intentional and productive rather than an agency that must compensate for a lack of skill, knowledge or recognition. However, this latter understanding predominantly informs the circulation of power and resistance among teachers and students. In this context, the desire to classify and judge produces conforming identities, through the authority of the teacher and, simultaneously, aberrations, through the resistance of students. I have argued for an alternative manifestation of agency through which classifications and judgements are placed alongside a mutual negotiation of relations of power. Relations of power are sustained through the dispositional habitus of teachers and students and these may be tracked through how ways of speaking of, recognising/legitimising and producing bodies in practice have the tendency to reproduce themselves. In each site of actor formation, the dominant presuppositions undergirding givenness, agency and disposition sustain and continue to sustain what is at stake in actor formation. From this, I argue that teachers and students collaborate in the shaping of the embodied person as actor.

Throughout, I have suggested how insights from phenomenology and Foucault’s archaeological and genealogical approaches may be used to offer various re-territorialisations as the response of my experience as a participant in each site. In the next chapter, I shall draw specifically upon Foucault’s archaeological approach in my review of the discourses of embodied formation and interaction that have circulated in actor training scholarship. It is these discourses that teachers and students draw upon, in their meaning-making together, that sustain the illusio of givenness, agency and disposition that I have re-examined in this chapter.
CHAPTER THREE:

Surveying discourses of interaction and intercorporeality

in actor training scholarship

Re-viewing actor training scholarship

The kinds of problems I have raised in the last chapter, that arise through the lack of a sufficiently nuanced intercorporeal language, are not exclusively a feature of actor training in Australia. In considering how discourses of actor-audience interaction and intercorporeality have circulated more pervasively in Theatre scholarship, I have made a selection of literature addressing actor training and practice that may be regarded as 'academic', as distinct from 'popular' or 'practical' texts. I will draw attention to how these texts or commentaries address, determine and validate givenness, agency and disposition as actors and audiences interact with and intercorporeally encounter each other.

Arising from my field experience, I am interested in how each editor, author or contributor both recognises and misrecognises the actor-actor/actor-audience relationship/experience in the context of training and subsequent practice. I am not attempting to offer an all-encompassing analysis of performance training practices as that would be both naïve and totalising. However, I do make the observation that these commentaries on training tend to legitimise specific contexts for the actor and the audience.

Zarrilli (1995) argues that it is a failure to recognise and acknowledge the multiple and metaphorical languages of acting that is behind many assumptions in thinking and talking about it (8). He suggests that acting students who concede that all languages of acting are metaphorical can attempt to "translate the confusing language into terms that are more actable and thereby make choices which appear to the teacher as 'believable'" (10). Alternatively, they may
actively and openly problematise the language and the paradigm it assumes, and search for more appropriate alternatives (ibid). Zarrilli proposes several steps beyond this crisis. First, one should not mistake a discourse about acting as representative of that which the discourse attempts to account for, namely the practice of acting. Second, that if all languages of acting are necessarily inadequate and therefore provisional, then they all need to be constantly (re)considered in relation to context and the degree to which a language can help make sense of the complexities of the bodymind's relationship to action/acting. Third, Zarrilli hopes to celebrate the freedom of finding provisional language that best allows one to "actualise a particular paradigm of performance in a particular context for a particular purpose" (16).

The actor may be positioned alternately as the 'cornerstone' of the whole social practice of performance or as an important but replaceable 'cog' to be appropriately shaped and managed in the machinery of a notional industry of the performing arts. The audience is located variously as the privileged patron and voyeur or as the socially virginal bride to be seduced, civilised or transformed. It is my intention through this archaeological survey to draw attention to the diverse ways of articulating, through speech or writing, the recognised or possibly misrecognised conditions and dynamics of interaction between the actor and audience.

For contemporary actors, who are trained to perform in a wide variety of types of theatre and performance, Zarrilli argues that their perceptions and practices of acting become a "complex, ongoing set of intellectual and psychophysiological negotiations" (2). Every time actors perform, they implicitly enact diverse "theories" of acting. Each "theory" consists of assumptions about conventions and styles that guide performance, the structure of actions performed, the shape of such actions and their relationship to the audience. Furthermore, there are two culture-specific assumptions – the body-mind relationship (in terms of the idea of the 'self' and emotions/feelings), and the performance context (4). A footnote in the text is most pertinent, in relation to Bourdieu's habitus, when Zarrilli notes that "[...] these two sets of
assumptions often remain at the periphery of consciousness (if at all) since when one becomes enculturated into a system of practice it often feels natural” (322).

Zarrilli distinguishes between specific theories of acting, practices of acting and metatheories “reflecting more generally on the nature, practice, and phenomenon of acting” (4). Metatheories might be thought of, in the context of this thesis, as various dynamics of dramaturgical agency in which particular presuppositions are made about how and why a particular acting form, mode of expression or performance context for drama works for actor, audience and society.

Rather than examine each text in turn, I will discuss how the writers in each text contributes to three relational modes that are under contestation – givenness, dramaturgical agency, dispositional habitus – in which the interactions between actors and audiences are territorialised and necessarily misrecognised. I will attempt to excavate how accounts and articulations of intercorporeal experience are understood in relation to these three relational modes of actor and audience interactions. In introducing each relational mode I will outline how each functions in such interactions.

However, it should be recognised that the writers in each text judge the differences in each of these areas of contestation from particular re-territorialising frameworks. Therefore, it is not enough to simply recount the differences within each mode, without reflecting on what the writers consider at stake for those who participate in these modes – theatre practitioners and audiences.

*Frameworks for the re-territorialisation of actor training*

Zarrilli’s *Acting (Re)Considered* (1995) offers a cultural critique in that his intention appears to position the diversity of acting practices as a multiplicity of languages located in specific “historical, socio-cultural and aesthetic/dramaturgical circumstances” (4). The book title is drawn from the
understanding that moments of (re)consideration occur for theorist, teacher and student whenever their experienced perceptions of acting practice are altered (2). Moreover, Zarrilli suggests that these moments are simultaneously personal, socio-cultural and ideological and therefore incorporate both idiosyncratic as well as collective/social dimensions (3). He refers to Japanese Noh acting in which there is a set of cultural assumptions about the mind, the body and “the performer’s energy” that are particular to a place (71). Thus he argues it is not meaningful to refer to actor training as though it were one thing, distinct from each particular place or historical, social and cultural context. In each context, there is a cultural capital implicit in whatever training is appropriate and there are dramaturgical expectations of a particular practice of theatre. Zarrilli affirms Mel Gordon’s contribution on Meyerhold’s biomechanics as an example of how training systems are informed by political, intellectual, scientific and ideological frames within which a system of exercises and training develops (73). What appears to be at stake for Zarrilli in his edited collection is that those experiential moments in which perceptions of acting practice are altered leave their trace on the actor. He concludes that “reverberations of that encounter have the potential to affect not only one’s acting but also one’s understanding of ‘self’, society, ideology, politics, etc” (3). However, his primary focus on the practices of teachers and students does not open out to the concurrent practices of audiences as they engage with such reverberations.

*The Player’s Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (1993) by Joseph R. Roach offers, with deference to Foucault, an archaeological critique. In the Preface, Roach begins in a similar place to Zarrilli in addressing how each acting theorist’s “phraseology reveals the scientific source of his assumptions” (12). Roach subscribes to Kuhn’s interpretation of scientific history as a revolutionary process whereby longstanding theoretical networks or paradigms are replaced by incompatible new paradigms (13). He is attracted to Foucault’s episteme in that the history of knowledge is interpreted as a “succession of essentially isolated episodes, each internally dominated by a network of theories, interests, and problems, by a way of knowing the world” (59). However, his appropriation of Foucault is limited principally to a discussion of the hazards of gauging the
implications of eighteenth century scientific thought on theatrical practice and theory, by heeding "Michel Foucault's warning that our own 'pattern of knowledge' is simply 'not valid' for that period" (ibid). However, he has not incorporated Foucault's subsequent genealogical analysis that would acknowledge the necessary interdependence of power and knowledge in both discursive production and the discipline of the body. For Roach, what is at stake is the actor's embodied givenness in "its memory, its imagination, its capacity for sensation and reflection - that it can accommodate the diversified and even contradictory demands imposed upon it by the art of acting" (17).

Approaches to Acting: Past and Present (2001) by Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe offers a metaphysical critique. He makes a major separation between "Western" and "Non-Western" (India, Japan, China, Islamic countries) approaches to acting in terms of how each practice addresses consciousness. It is his belief that matters of consciousness need to be part of any fresh evaluation of the practice and effectiveness of acting, rather than the tendency to only evaluate performance using "normal ways of seeing" (178). The attainment of "pure consciousness" is suggested as the emerging objective of desirable performance training and practice for both actors and the audience, and Meyer-Dinkgräfe proposes that the Indian model of consciousness may be a good practice to adopt (ibid). What is at stake for Meyer-Dinkgräfe is a necessary restoring of the balance between intellectual and subjective consciousness in the givenness of actors, audiences and critics.

Modern Theories of Performance: From Stanislavski to Boal (2001) by Jane Milling and Graham Ley offers a literary and discursive critique. They question modernist tendencies in theatre scholarship to heroicise the theoretical practitioners of twentieth century theatre without a thorough examination of and reflection upon their written works (vi). Milling and Ley examine many recognised names of Western theatre though this becomes an assessment of these artists' writings, exclusive from their embodied practices as directors and performers.

95
Twentieth Century Actor Training (2000a) edited by Alison Hodge offers a predominantly pragmatic critique. She does stress that each system or approach to actor training functions from quite different assumptions about the nature and purpose of theatre, and the particular responsibilities of the actor within such a cultural practice (2). She argues that the common feature of most of these training practices is that they were initiated by theatre directors to assist the work of the actor, purportedly because the director "furthered the opportunity for a more objective examination of the actor's work" (ibid). Hodge uses the term cross fertilisation in her account of how various training practices have evolved through appropriation, collaboration or rejection of existing values and methods concerning the intentions of theatre. However, it becomes apparent that there are divergent intentions for theatre for the many names whose practice is summarised and assessed in this edited collection of twentieth century theatre practitioners.

Givenness of actors and audiences

Givenness refers to those beliefs and attitudes that advocate the self-sufficiency, or aseity, of each participant in the performance event. Actors are often understood to have both autonomy and aseity – they are self-governing and self-sufficient in their practice. Audiences exercise their similar autonomy and aseity when they regard their participation as that of spectators or voyeurs. There is the tendency to believe that the actor can 'be' an actor without an audience or that an audience is a natural state of affairs for a group of people gathered in one place to observe something. Metaphors of givenness are often framed in terms of ability, possession and ownership – an actor is said to have energy, charisma, ki, qi, prana, spirit, passion, emotion or sex appeal. Under the rubric of givenness nothing is offered or expected – actors 'act' and audiences 'watch and listen'.
Roach notes that as the words *mechanical* and *natural* became synonymous through the influence of thinkers such as Descartes, so too acting theories embraced various understandings of the human body as a mechanical instrument (60). It appears that the focus turns towards the actor as a practitioner in isolation from the audience. Actors either practise their *mechanical* discipline in front of a mirror or else consult ‘respectable’ images from the validated arts of sculpture and painting (67). Such images both validate acting as a legitimate ‘art’ and act as a guide to creating gestures that will convey meaning, it seems by recognition, rather than through the debateable aether which was believed to carry feeling from actor to audience.

Where Roach traces a new debate in this mechanical interpretation of the actor’s practice is between Hill and Lessing in their understanding of where the necessary transformation of the actor takes place – in the will/imagination or in the doing of actions that are regarded as associated with particular emotions. It is Lessing’s proposal of this second perspective that is initiated to account for the effect or lack thereof of the ultimate affect on the audience present in performance. As Lessing observes, not all actors have equal dexterity with their bodies yet they still seem to have an effect on the audience; other actors may have the technical dexterity and yet the audience doesn’t feel drawn to their practice (83). It isn’t enough just to have a dexterity of abilities or givenness as the actor.

_The human body as possessed or possessing_

Through his account Roach produces a recognition of how human agents, socially and individually, appropriate discourses from various disciplines to support their new understanding or technique for the cultural practice known as acting. He identifies three issues in nineteenth century biology as of special relevance to acting. The first is the new definition of emotion as involuntary
phenomena, proffered by evolutionary theory. The second issue is the growing belief of the organic inseparability of mind and body as a continuum rather than a duality. The third shift is the "discovery of the unconscious", according to Roach, which is believed to have a role in feeling and action (161-162). As Roach traces the writings of theatre practitioners who seek to appropriate these scientific 'advances', he also notes a significant resistance by theatre audiences and critics towards this legitimisation by science. Roach refers to how audiences desired to believe that the noted actor Edmund Kean had some "supernatural" ability (168). This frustrated Kean who is reported as expressing the hope that at least professional critics might have understood that his acting constituted a process. According to Roach, "daemon 'inspiration' reigned in the popular conception of theatrical genius, not to be put off by demurs of craftsmanship" (ibid). Similarly, Roach’s later account of Meyerhold, records his defence of the scientific legitimacy of Biomechanics, as he proposes a mathematical formula to account for the actor’s "dual consciousness" (203). Yet, this formula appears to exclude the audience as part of the equation. The actor either possesses abilities or is possessed by other powers, yet he remains self-sufficient even if he is not always self-governing, as in the case of possession.

*Training to perform for, or in spite of, the audience*

However, in Roach's recounting of Stanislavky's desire to keep a role 'fresh', there is an implicit awareness that an actor trains and prepares for performance i.e. for an audience (204). The 'life' Stanislavsky claims to re-instit in his acting practice is achieved by adjustments that are

 [...] subconscious, semiconscious, and conscious in origin. They are normal, natural, human adaptations that are carried to a point of becoming purely mechanical ... without sacrificing their quality of naturalness. Because they remain organic and human, they are the antithesis of the rubber stamp. (Stanislavsky in Roach 1993: 206)
Roach qualifies this statement with his own interpretation of theatre action as, paradoxically, both mechanical and organic, in that it is not "an adaptive adjustment designed to mediate between the organism and its environment; it is drained of its purposive content" (206). Yet, one must ask, does not the actor still have to mediate his or her relationship with an audience – isn’t this at least one necessary and lifelike purpose for the presence of the actor on stage?

Stanislavsky’s System is also the first collection of texts to come under Milling and Ley’s gaze, yet their assessment is limited to psychological and cultural ambiguities for the individual actor, ignoring other references to the actor’s social interactions in ensemble and with the audience. They do note, however, that the basic challenge that motivated Stanislavsky’s theoretical and practical work was the basic ‘problem’ of the actor, on stage, in front of an audience (177).

_The actor’s body/mind as a site of deceit or presence_

Milling and Ley are critical of Grotowski’s inconsistent application of his own refutation of the Cartesian split of mind and body. Grotowski offers accounts of performance practice in terms of ‘inner’ and ‘outer’, ‘mind’ and ‘body’, ‘attitude’ and ‘expression’. They also perceive, in his writing, a hangover of Catholicism in which his metaphors locate the body as a site of resistance, as an obstacle and as deceitful and concealing, as much as it is reactive and expressive in performance (129). The actor’s purported paradox is addressed in Grotowski’s discussion of Artaud in which he argues that Artaud learnt “the true lesson of sacred theatre” which is that spontaneity and discipline are mutually reinforcing practices (130).

Hodge draws special attention to the pervasive notion of the actor’s presence as an abstract term, and yet one that is frequently referred or appealed to in different contexts of actor training. She applies Barba’s analysis to presence as being fully _in the moment_ due to an actor’s concentration and control of energy.
However, she adds a further qualification of the term from her own performance and training experience. She proposes that actors can operate beyond the dualistic model of Diderot and "achieve a heightened state of presence that enables the actor to operate on several different levels of consciousness simultaneously" (2000a: 7).

David Krasner (2000), evaluating different mutations of the Method, identifies Strasberg's approach to acting presence as "psychological", insofar as the private self is used in public. Strasberg's special interest was in the ability of the actor to relax in front of an audience so there was no inhibiting social or self-consciousness. Strasberg's private moment exercises were intended "to aid actors in creating the ability to behave in a truly private fashion while being observed by an audience" (135). He notes by comparison that for Stella Adler "the whole aim of modern theatre is not to act, but to find the truth of the play within yourself and communicate that" (141). He categorises her approach as sociological in that the actors draw from the given circumstances of the play. Therefore, the reality of place, where a character is and why he or she is there, must contribute to the justification and motivation of the actor (142). The givenness of the actor, it seems, now gives way to the givenness of the character, yet another 'deceit' of the actor's body/mind split or continuum.

**Dramaturgical agency of actors and audiences**

Dramaturgical agency refers to the shift from autonomy and aseity to the awareness that actors and audiences actively position and influence each other. The discourses that begin to circulate now include metaphors that infer agency as transformation or exchange — experiences of flow, connection, electricity, spirit, energy, aura or power. However, before such metaphors can be evoked there emerges an awareness of performance as an essentially social construction requiring participants and witnesses.
Zarrilli locates theatre-making as a mode of socio-cultural practice that "helps to constitute, shape, and affect 'selves' as well as historical events and relationships" (2). He suggests that most "self-conscious" systems of training have evolved under some form of patronage. While this may free the actor from the necessity of responding to changeable public tastes, it simultaneously disciplines them towards a particular craft and style which may bring various benefits (pleasure, merit, social status) to its wealthy and/or politically powerful sponsors (71). Therefore, he concedes it is crucial that actor training recognises not only the actor but the teachers and audiences with whom he or she interacts:

For the actor, whatever the actions to be performed, these actions are the 'material' conditions of his or her work. By means of these material conditions not only are meanings created for, by, and with the spectators but also the actor's 'who am I' cannot be divorced from the 'who we are.' Individual and collective identities form a negotiable dialectic within the arena of performance practice. (21)

_The intercorporeal between actors and audiences: Scientific and supernatural accounts_

Roach acknowledges the importance of the audience's agency in making sense of what is being performed for their pleasure or enlightenment. The classic textual reasoning for the actor's gesture was that it actually produced a material effect from the actor to the witnessing audience, whether this effect was identified as pneuma, a vital spirit, or a radiating energy. Yet more recent accounts of the gestures and poses of earlier traditions of acting tend to assign its function to a semiotic rather than energetic effectiveness. Roach refers to this "tiresome debate over the relative formalism or naturalism of seventeenth-century acting style" as a failure to appreciate the links between acting, rhetoric and earlier understandings of physiology (30). It would seem from his research that the focus of every strategy, in whatever century or country, was to produce
an effective acting practice that would strategically and efficiently control the impact of performance on its intended audience. Any belief that the transformation of the actor would have its affect on the witnessing or potentially participating audience might be evident in descriptions of different techniques to first bring about the transformation of the actor as a distinct social agent.

Roach discusses attempts to reincorporate such vitalistic experiences between actors and audiences under “the doctrine of sensibility”. Earlier models based on hydraulics and spirits give way to analogies of electricity and acoustical vibrations. These new ideas, Roach observes, would appear to account for the wide variability in acting skills from player to player. The actor, Garrick, locates sensibility on a physical plane below conscious thought. He notes how alongside the conscious craft of the actor, sensibility plays its part in that

\[
\text{the greatest strokes of Genius, have been unknown to the Actor himself, ‘till Circumstances, and the warmth of the Scene has sprung the Mine as it were, as much to his own Surprize (sic), as that of the Audience – (Garrick in Roach 1993: 96)}
\]

Here the acting practitioner is most articulate about the qualitative effect he might desire in performing before an audience. Whatever philosophy or practice of preparation, it is in the context of encounter between actor and audience that the actor-audience experience is manifest.

When Sir John Hill wrote *The Actor* in 1755, he proposed that acting need to be studied as a science for the benefit of both performers “in their attempts to attain perfection in it” and their audiences (Hill in Roach 1993: 101). He does however, according to Roach, “flirt briefly with the ancient theory of spirits communicating from eye to eye” before using the metaphor of vibration to account for the physical transmission of passion from actor to audience. Thus a new account is given for the experience of energy between actor and audience.
that is no longer equated with, in Roach’s perspective, “pagan mysteries and celestial vapours” [102, 103].

Lewes introduces discharge and vibrations as new terms to describe the performances of actors such as Kean and Lemaître. Discharge is understood to refer to, according to Roach, “a dynamic liberation of energy in nervous tissue” while vibrations mean “the communication of a nervous impulse to adjacent tissue” (186). Once more, scientific accounts of physical phenomena are appropriated to address the experience of the actor in performance, though the previously acceptable term mechanical is now being used by Lewes in a more pejorative sense (188). However, it is also significant that Lewes recognises that the actor’s awareness of audience reaction is one of many simultaneous consciousnesses to be attended to during performance (190).

Yet Roach reiterates Kuhn’s paradigmatic proposal that a scientific revolution cannot occur unless there is both a failure to account for emerging data about phenomena and the possibility of another account as a substitute for the existing deficient account. He argues that it is Diderot who provides the new paradigm that will trigger a scientific revolution “by approaching acting as a craft rather than a sacred or diabolical mystery” (118). Roach’s positioning of Diderot’s contribution as ‘scientifically’ objective and pragmatic seems removed from his earlier application of Foucault’s archaeology as suspicious of self-legitimating discourse of any system of knowledge. Diderot was an advocate of the actor as scientist rather in prior comparisons with illusionists such as beggars, seducers, prostitutes and unbelieving priests who exist at the margins of society’s tolerance. Therefore the professional actor, like the scientist, exercises the skills of observation of nature, reflection and experimentation (138-139). The attitude of interaction between actor and audience is one of experimental methodology and control.

Roach concludes with an epilogue entitled The Vitalist Twilight in which he acknowledges that alongside the mainstream shift towards professional and scientifically sustained acting practices, the so-called vitalist current has
persevered. Roach attributes the persistence of such discourses to the unending quest for "natural expressiveness" which he appears to equate with the vitalist interpretation of spontaneity as inspired, unpremeditated or improvisational. Nevertheless, it is puzzling that Roach concludes this Epilogue by introducing another agenda in theatre practice that hasn’t been clearly positioned in any of his earlier chapters – the matter of actor training and performance as a practice leading to ‘revelation’ and ‘authenticity’ (226). Certainly, earlier chapters acknowledged a frequent desire for acting practices to enact or represent ‘true emotion’ even if it was in a fictional context. However, there is a big shift between desire to portray what is perceived as the ‘truth’ of a dramatic scene and an acting practice that anticipates exploring what it means to be human in the hope of some new revelation, truth or authenticity.

Roach argues that contemporary theatre vitalists use a scientific theory, the Uncertainty Principle, to challenge the self-produced stability of modernist discourses of acting as a determinable and mechanistic science. Yet, he proposes that this claim must also undermine emotional spontaneity. Here Roach grants that an act of public expression must alter the nature of the feeling expressed. Yet he doesn’t indicate why a scientifically crafted acting practice is likely to be more effective than a vitalistically motivated practice, when the “process of elaboration” results in “for better, or worse, a work of art” (226). There is only an acknowledgement that many actors may feel a sense of loss of “spirituality” (though Roach does not explicate his understanding of this term). Roach concludes that, since the eighteenth century, what has really defined this creative process of the actor preparing for and presenting performances as “art” has been science, through its branches of physiology and psychology, that regards the body (and implicitly, the mind) as a physical instrument (ibid).

*Acting as communication between others*

Meyer-Dinkgräfe uses the Greek term for actor, hypocrites, interpreted as ‘answerer’, as a test case for the essential social dimension of theatrical
performance (8). He argues that Greek staging and costuming was designed to accommodate the physical scale of the theatre spaces so that spectators can gain meaning from the theatrical experience (10-11). He acknowledges the social power of different narratives or stories and questions if Western theatre scholarship and criticism have been too quick to dismiss other narratives, both in the past of its own perceived heritage, and in the practices of other cultural communities (7). Therefore, in subsequent chapters of his text, there are constant indicators of the significance of the actor-audience relationship as a communicative project.

Significantly at odds with Roach’s account is Meyer-Dinkgräfe’s attention to the relationship not just between actor and audience, but also between actor and actor. He refers to Stanislavsky’s belief that spontaneity is not to be produced by looking inwards to some memory or desire, but rather sparked by intentionality towards the other actors that one is playing with (39-40). He goes on to argue that Diderot’s paradox shifts from that between actor and audience, to that within the actor (43). Meyer-Dinkgräfe does neglect to account for Stanislavsky’s other intention that even though communion is to be nurtured between actors in performance, it must also incorporate the audience as part of the artistic process (46). Yet in his discussion of Stanislavsky’s use of physical actions in rehearsal, he acknowledges Stanislavsky’s desire of “transmitting to the audience the ‘spiritual condition’ of the character” (45). Meyer-Dinkgräfe concludes this discussion with two important questions that highlight the importance of the actor-audience relationship:

Will the spectators feel the difference between genuine and substitute emotions, and does the use of substitutes make acting easier for the actor, does it require less technique, less skill, less art, than a ‘through-line’ of emotion? (50)
Stanislavsky's inspiration is identified as Leo Tolstoy who argued that art communicates felt experiences, not knowledge (Carnicke 2000: 17). Sharon Marie Carnicke proposes that an important assumption behind the System was the belief that successful acting places the creative act itself within the presence of the audience. She stresses that for Stanislavsky there cannot be drama without interaction between fellow actors and between actors and audience. Subtext becomes crucial as a means by which actors communicate non-verbally their desires and intentions towards each other. Stanislavsky's interest in Yoga is cited as the foundation for his belief that communication involved the transmitting and receiving of rays of energy. Furthermore, it was the actor's breathing that enabled this sending and receiving of energy. Carnicke reinforces this tenet by giving examples of several practical exercises in training this sensitivity, and in a footnote she records that such energy practices still continue in Russian theatre today (22).

For Appia, theatre is understood as an object and means of communication in which the actor is to be lit by a 'living' light (Milling and Ley 2001: 32-33). Milling and Ley argue that Appia's practice is to reveal or express the latent, hidden world of secret longings, through art (theatre), directly to the audience. Therefore there is a crucial inter-relation between the actor and audience in such a creative project, especially through the use of music (34). Appia also predicts that theatre will be a social act

[...] in which each of us will assist. And who knows, perhaps one day we shall arrive, after a period of transition, at majestic festivals in which a whole people will participate, where each of us will express our feelings, our sorrows, our joys, no longer content to remain a passive onlooker. Then will the dramatist triumph! (37)
Milling and Ley suggest that such a vision was inspired by Appia’s own frustrated experience as an audience member. As a consequence, the audience is always a factor in his theorising, especially as he appeals to the Greek ideal of a ‘harmony’ between people and their surroundings (38).

Brecht’s approach to acting offering a different kind of actor-audience relationship in that the spectator is not invited to ‘identify’ with the actor/character. Instead, Meyer-Dinkgräfe notes that the audience is encouraged to intellectually observe and criticise the character portrayed. However, it was Brecht also believed “the aesthetic assumption that emotion can only be stimulated through empathy is crude and inaccurate” (65). His practice consequently was motivated by the intention to make events and actors unfamiliar to the audience so that they would notice them in new ways with a critical judgement (66).

*Acting as transforming others*

What Diderot, Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Brecht and Strasberg had in common, argues Meyer-Dinkgräfe, was their exploration of acting techniques that would use emotion onstage using pre-written texts to communicate to and affect the audience. In contrast, Artaud is exemplified as a revolutionary who looked for other languages of theatre than dialogue to confront and transform society. For Artaud, a trained actor would affect the actual physicality of the audience and expose them to their “own secret crimes and obsessions” (67-68).

Milling and Ley value what they recognise (or is it re-territorialise?) as Artaud’s use of analogy as a literary device, especially in the notion of the *plague* of theatre as a psychic entity, “the materialisation of a thinking power” (102). Like the plague, the theatre is “made to drain abscesses” that are elsewhere identified as life that is both ethically and socially corrupt (103). This dramaturgical agency of actors, according to Artaud, justifies the prescription for cruelty in “every show” that turns words and gestures into a more “tangible objective theatre.
language” (111). In a complementary manifesto, Artaud regards the mind as being “affected by direct sensual pressure” by actors trained to direct its magical means towards the “nerves” of the audience (112). Milling and Ley appreciate Goodall’s contention that such cruelty may be “homeopathic” but they express concern that such a thesis has “allowed the construction and validity of his theory of a theatre of magic to remain unexamined” (114). Although Artaud makes several references in his writings to the dynamic interaction between actors and audiences, using what may be translated as either mind or spirit, Milling and Ley make no comment about what Roach would identify as yet another troublesome vitalist resurgence.

Roach notes Artaud’s desire to replace text with spontaneous utterance (222). Artaud’s motivation was to engage fully with the immediate and continuous physical presence of the actor and spectator. The bodily expressiveness of Artaud’s actor was to have a physical impact in the form of vibration on the spectator, much like the early Greek belief of physical effects in the actor affecting the audience (223). Artaud mistrusts improvisation and advocates the automisation of the actor’s expression attaining the perfection of “fatality and the most precise predetermination” (ibid). Improvisation may often evoke only what is familiar rather than learning, through rigour, what is strange until it becomes habitual and automatic. Nevertheless, Roach sees that Artaud’s practice for achieving such affects is contradictory. Yet, such automisation could be interpreted as a means of breaking the habits of one cultural practice that precludes the possibility of actions outside of what is considered ‘artistic’ and ‘cultured’.

Roach also does Grotowski a disservice by simplifying “Poor” theatre to “the body of the actor” when other crucial elements were to be the space of performance and the presence of an audience, two critical factors in the performative experience (224). However, he does concede that, for Grotowski, the audience is an integral part of his vision of theatre, as much as the audience was part of the consideration of the effectiveness of the actor’s craft in the writings of G.H. Lewes a century earlier (225).
However, in Hodge’s compilation, Lisa Wolford (2000) identifies Grotowski’s performance style as valorised by his assertion that theatre was set apart from other forms of representation due to the “closeness of the living organism” (196). Wolford argues that a central concept of Grotowski’s dramaturgy is the “total act” through which the actor “reveals” what is most secret and essential to him or her self, in the presence of an audience (197). However, Grotowski was cautious not to end up ‘flirting’ with the public by catering to the audience’s desires. Instead the actor must find a balance between using the audience as a point of orientation or else ignoring the audience’s presence, which would be a denial of the context of performance (198). Therefore Wolford concludes that Grotowski’s desire for theatrical communion emerges out of a complex dialectic of presence and absence, “since both actor and spectator perceive one another obliquely, through a mediating veil” (ibid). Wolford concludes that Grotowski’s psychophysical work allowed the actor to exercise not only the body but also exercise its responsiveness and receptivity to contact. During his final period of work, he wrote that a

[...] performer must develop not an organism-mass, an organism of muscles, athletic, but an organism-channel through which the energies circulate, the energies transform, the subtle is touched. (Grotowski in Wolford 2000: 205)

In another contribution, Franc Chamberlain (2000) makes much of Michael Chekhov’s intense study of Rudolph Steiner as “a means of liberation from his self-indulgent and self-destructive tendencies” (81). Steiner’s “higher ego” is interpreted by Chekhov as “the artist in us that stands behind all creative processes” (ibid). This becomes the key, Chamberlain argues, to enable, among other skills, “the sensitivity to the audience’s perspective on the play in performance” (ibid). An extension of this idea was the concept of atmosphere (although Chamberlain notes that this had been a concept discussed by
Meyerhold and Bryusov earlier in the twentieth century). Chekhov considered *atmospheres* the equivalent of musical keys. *Atmospheres* could be regarded as the dominant tone or mood of a place, or relationship, or even an artwork. Therefore sensitivity to *atmospheres* and the ability to create them onstage became a key skill for the actor as a means to forge a connection between actor and audience (87). The next phase, Chamberlain observes, was to speak and move in harmony with these and “begin to radiate the ‘inner life’ stimulated by the atmosphere back into the space, thereby setting up a kind of feedback loop which amplifies both the atmosphere and the inner response” (88). With regard to interpretation of text, Chamberlain notes that Chekhov trained actors to look for key climatic moments and “the rhythmic ebb and flow of energy” to guide the composition of performance. Repetition in the structure of a piece could also be used to have different effects on the audience’s perception (91).

The core of Chaikin’s sense of dramaturgical agency is that

[w]hen we as actors are performing, we as persons are also present and the performance is a testimony of ourselves. Each role, each work, each performance changes us as persons. (Chaikin in Hulton 2000: 151)

Dorinda Hulton (2000) comments that Chaikin’s move towards a new relationships between actor, character, audience and text was no longer about “giving all my attention to pleasing, seducing, and getting applause from the audience ... all because of flattery, one flattery after another” (152, 153). She notes one particular training practice known as the ‘chord’ exercise in which the actors “allow their own energies both to feed and to respond to the contribution of others” (162). Another significant practice developed by Chaikin was to discover the *emblem* of a character in breath. The actor might start with a breathed sound into which the sense of the energy or inner rhythm of the character at a particular moment is fed. This rhythm and energy would then be taken into the body, transforming the emblem into a gesture so that “the
spectator completes the action from the part of it that is being performed. The emblem becomes a meeting point for the actor and the spectator” (166).

Milling and Ley’s chapter on Boal and his text, *Theatre of the Oppressed* exposes how much misinformation can be propagated through appeals to a performance practice that aspires to social transformation. They cite Boal’s Forward that asserts “all theatre is necessarily political, because all the activities of man (sic) are political and theatre is one of them” (Boal in Milling and Ley 2001: 146). Furthermore, although theatre is associated with an original unity, freedom and openness for the people, its purported history of appropriation by the aristocracy and subsequently, the bourgeoisie, has created divisions and separations, producing the roles of actor and spectator (146-147). Yet while insisting on the continuity, since Aristotle, of a division between art as *pure contemplation* and art as *political*, Boal shifts the division to a distinction between art as information, organisation, education and influence and art as an object of pleasure. Milling and Ley question that if all theatre is political in one sense, how is it that some theatre can be excluded from the political as an object of pleasure or contemplation. Boal’s overall appeal to the political efficacy of theatre seems to simultaneously negate any hope of liberation from the historically established ‘laws’ that govern how theatre has been produced within society (149-150).

Milling and Ley expose at great length the historical and hermeneutic errors in Boal’s appropriation of Aristotle, Machiavelli, Shakespeare, Hegel, and Brecht as he seeks to argue a case for the inevitability of his various manifestations of a “theatre of the oppressed” (150-169). It would appear that whereas Grotowski’s *project* became the removal of the audience as integral to the context of theatre, Boal’s *project* requires the removal of the actor as integral to theatre. In his ideal theatre all the members of the audience are transformed to become *agents* in their own right as “spect-actors” (171).

Across diverse times and cultures there are practitioners who advocate that something transformative can or should take place between actors, their peers
and the audiences that witness them in performance. Yet it may be felt that all these cases are still predominantly dependent on text-based forms of theatre. How do those who regard themselves as contemporary performance practitioners understand or recognise dramaturgical agency?

*Contemporary performance and actor-audience interaction*

Tim Etchells, of the contemporary theatre company *Forced Entertainment*, writes that performers and artists should be “on the line” in their practice – “To be bound up with what you are doing, to be at risk in it, to be exposed by it” (1999: 48). This seemingly alternative dramaturgy posits a direct confrontation between performer and audience, without the mediation of character. However, such performative events are not necessarily created for cathartic purposes. Meyer-Dinkgräfe cites Mehta’s claim that the performing artist’s aims are to both “seduce” the audiences out of a realist expectation towards dreams and the subconscious, and to “intensify the spectators’ receptive faculties” by unsettling them “out of perceptual ruts” (92). In a quoted interview with Gautam Dasgupta, when Barba sets a priority of investigation into the actor’s presence, it appears that he also puzzles over perceptions between actor and audience:

I am interested in a very elementary question: Why, when I see two actors doing the same thing, I get fascinated by one and not by the other. (Barba in Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 144)

Barba’s ultimate *project* of the “theatre’s body” that Meyer-Dinkgräfe envisages will “allow the actor to radiate energy and establish ‘presence’, thus attracting the spectator’s attention” (Barba in Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 147). However, this seems to move back to an account of an actor’s givenness necessarily preceding an audiences’ disposition.
Disposition of actors and audiences

If agency is about what actors and audiences do with and to each other then disposition is an acknowledgment of the bodily enculturated habits that enable actors and audiences to practically recognise or intercorporeally experience their sense of inter-agency. An actor’s habitual set of dispositions – performative embodiment – may be recognised and subsequently legitimised by a dependently and habitually pre-disposed audience, in terms of vulnerability, vitality, authenticity or certain aesthetic qualities. These qualities are not exclusive of each other though some may be privileged over others through a particular cultural expectation or normative practice.

Vital dispositions

There is a collection of essays in Zarrilli’s compilation that examine the disposition of the “neutral” body state of the actor. “Neutral” is often misunderstood as relaxation rather than its intentionality towards dynamic readiness and what Zarrilli refers to as the “flame” that is “under the stewpot” (81). In these essays, there are allusions to this “flame” in terms of a hyperawareness of the body and its internal energies. Zarrilli touches on these concerns in his own contribution concerning how, in the traditions of Asian systems of health and, in acting, these systems inform certain relationships between breath, energy and the body in space and time. There is reflection in his and other essays about assumptions concerning the material, psychophysiological basis of acting as a dynamic, “vibratory” process that may prompt a change of consciousness (82).

2 In a footnote, Zarrilli comments that this notion of ‘flame’ is taken from the writings of Etienne Decroux in Mime Journal and is not to be confused with the ‘flame’ used metaphorically by Ryszard Cieslak, Grotowski’s leading actor.
I Wayan Lendra, writing on the "Motions" of Bali performance training, claims a hyperawareness through which he would "feel the vibration of my energy through my body and I feel the pulses of my heart in my feet" (Lendra in Zarrilli 1995: 82). However, Zarrilli notes that such an understanding of the actor’s internal process is not exclusive to Asian traditions but has also been present, according to E.T. Kirby’s essay, in melodramatic acting and Delsarte’s codified systems (82). Finally, Zarrilli frames the essay of Susan Bloch and her associates’ research into training actors in emotional expression as establishing a "scientific basis for understanding how the "flame" ... can be modulated in a neuro- and psycho-physiological way by the trained actor” (84). Interestingly, it is expressly presumed that such dynamic affects will also be produced "in an audience enculturated to a particular mode of emotional expression” (ibid). Here is identified a need for the audience to be similarly disposed in order to experience/recognise the energised disposition of the actor.

Roach acknowledges that in spite of a desire to shake off the vitalism of past acting models, there were concessions in Diderot’s model to vitalist ‘moments’. Diderot believed that the creation of theatrical illusion required the two interlocking functions (or what we might identify as dispositions) of memory and imagination. In one chapter of the Eléments de physiologie, he writes that, "Imagination is a colorist, memory is the faithful draughtsman. Imagination excites both the orator and the auditor more than memory” (143). However, this is qualified by the belief that the vividness of memory and imagination should only overpower the actor in rehearsal, while, before an audience, the actor should recreate a dispassionate imitation of his rehearsal experience (144). Diderot’s overall scheme is that of the actor who rehearses his actions until his emotions appear to be spontaneous to the audience’s conventional understanding of that word. He identifies spontaneous as that proceeding from "natural feeling, produced without being planted or without labour" whereas, according to Diderot, it may also have been produced through an acquired habit (152). Nevertheless, in either expectation, the audience finally sees an illusion of reflexive vitality, responding to circumstances as if for the first time. The actor’s
real experience is that of working through a plan so that by the time the rehearsal process ends, according to Diderot, it is meaningless to call the results *spontaneous expressions* (*ibid*). It is evident how the audience’s engagement and disposition towards the relative illusion or reality of the actor’s craft is crucial to how live theatre is anticipated and experienced.

However, for Copeau, improvisation in the training of actors meant the opportunity to “give back to the actor the ... true spontaneous life of the word and the gesture ... the true contact with the public ...” (Milling and Ley 2001: 58). A feature of both Copeau’s and Meyerhold’s writings was their desire to move from the centrality of the text to the centrality of the actor, and the actor’s relationship to the audience (59). However, Milling and Ley make the significant proviso that these published theoretical writings stood at a critical distance from and sometimes in contradiction with their actual theatrical practices. The strength of Milling and Ley’s text, which is lacking in other assessments of actor training, is an acknowledgement of the impact of specific economic and social contexts upon both the writing and practices of theatre artists (60).

Milling and Ley’s discussion of Meyerhold acknowledges that the audience not only interprets the theatrical work, but that “in the theatre the spectator’s imagination is able to supply that which is left unsaid” (63). In several essays, Meyerhold stresses the need for an actor with skills in diction and plasticity in order to adequately communicate the core of the drama to its audience, such that they “participate in a corporate creative act” (63). In Meyerhold’s study of *Don Juan* he acknowledges his awareness of how Japanese Noh stage and conventions take into account the role of the audience. The audience is regarded as a mirror for the performer who is altered through the contribution of the audience towards the performance event (65). However, although Meyerhold aspires to a popular theatre, it is noted that he does not envisage a different audience that had not attended the theatre before. It was still a literate audience that he wished to appeal to (66).
What makes Meyerhold’s text book for his acting school, *The Love of Three Oranges: The Journal of Doctor Dapertutto* especially significant for Milling and Ley is its use as both a resource for existing students and as a publicity tool for the wider, theatrically-initiated world (68). They make special note of Meyerhold’s contribution to the defeat of the fallacy of the ‘inspirational’ actor, with his focus on forestage, presentational acting. Moreover, they find another link between Meyerhold and Copeau in the belief that apprentice performers should experiment in performances in front of an audience as part of their training (69).

However, Milling and Ley also trace the necessary shifting of values by Meyerhold as he tried to stay true to his vision of theatre and what he perceived was the political direction of the post-Revolution Russia. In a lecture *On the Actor of the Future and Biomechanics* he proffers a version of biomechanics as the development of thinking of artistic performance as labour. His focus on the citizen audience-member and the assumption of the effectiveness of theatre in society become his justification for theatrical investigation in the newly formed society (72). The ideal audience is now constructed as the worker, who will find artistic inspiration in the theatre, and may also be capable of improvised performance during leisure periods (73). Meyerhold advocates the Russian model of leisure that trains a man “in flexibility” (75). Yet, when Socialist Realism is expressly established as the only acceptable form for theatre and fiction, Meyerhold’s experiments, including the theatrical training of amateur groups and workers, were dangerously marginalised (75-76).

Clive Barker (2000) observes that the English director Joan Littlewood is insistent about the power of the ensemble of actors, directors, writers, and other crafts people, working and playing in a co-operative manner (114). He notes one quality that characterised Theatre Workshop performances was “high energy” as an internal energy that emerged from the strong engagement with the rehearsal process. This energy, Barker argues, gains a greater response from an audience than the “externally applied kick energy ... when the performer goes out to ‘sell’ the show” which often “pushes the audience back” from engaging.
with the performance (124). Littlewood constructed the units of action in performance so that there was a continuous overlap which heightened the concentration and stimulated energy in the actors, keeping the audience continuously engaged (125).

Alison Hodge believes that, through Staniewski’s practice, Theatre is returning to the idyllic communal ‘origins’ that of “the singer/dancers of the dithyramb – the earliest configuration of the Ancient Greek chorus” (Hodge 2000b: 239). It is Staniewski’s belief that both practitioners and audience can no longer afford to ignore the nature of such a sensitive, interactive relationship in which perception is highly valued:

To perceive means to be able to absorb with all the senses. This is no longer part of our education, nor is it allowed. The result is that the most fundamental human relationships become aseptic, sport-like, quite banal … What does it mean, this desperate will to isolate ourselves from wholeness, from the world? (Staniewski in Hodge 2000b: 225)

Hodge observes that within a performance the trained actor strives to achieve “multiple states of presence, in order to deal with many realities simultaneously … to realise a heightened state of performance consciousness which Artaud had reached for as an ideal” (242). Furthermore, she claims (without giving any references) that commentators who have witnessed the performances of the Gardzienice company have found that “it manages to reconnect the actor with instinctive processes and invites the audience to experience the work, not solely intellectually, but through all the senses” (ibid). She concludes that others have recognised “Gardzienice’s re-connection with everyday life, with actors and their environment and, in performance, reality with transcendence” (ibid).
The vitality of the performance experience for actors and audiences is regarded as the ‘Holy Grail’ of a ‘true’ Theatre. The various accounts of training and performing practice are all attempts to either rekindle what has been ‘lost’ or to generate what is potentially present and available. It is one mark of the authenticity of the performance experience, but authenticity is also associated with more than just a sense of intercorporeal energy and vitality.

*Authentic dispositions*

In Roach’s account of the history of Western actor training, the discipline of science proves to be a particularly potent authenticator of the ‘truth’ of effective acting. Diderot’s theory of sensibility anticipated three issues in the ‘new’ science of biology that were seen to have relevance to a particular disposition in acting. Firstly, evolutionary theory would position emotion as an involuntary phenomenon. Secondly, mind and body are regarded as an organically inseparable continuum. Thirdly, the concept of the unconscious is introduced to account for the interactions of feelings and actions in human life (161-162).

Roach positions an ongoing dispute between those who believe that the actor should be best treated as “a biological machine ... whose receptivity to reflex behaviour determines its behaviour” and those who still believe “in the actor’s bodily instrument as a spontaneous vital organism whose innate powers of feeling must somehow naturally predominate” (161, 162). Although, elsewhere Roach problematises terms such as *biological, spontaneous,* and *natural,* he fails to explicate himself from reinforcing such polarisations as *normal* and by implication, *necessary.* This polarisation allows Roach to locate and account for two emerging theatrical schools of practice – one that desires to create a disposition in the body so that its behavioural unpredictability is eliminated; the other, desires to create a disposition towards spontaneous impulse via the rejection of text and conventions of the theatre event itself. Roach proposes that
most modern opinions on acting "follow Diderot in mediating between the two camps, wary of both, yet borrowing from each in turn" (161).

Furthermore, he asserts that Diderot’s *paradoxe*, supported by scientific psychology, has become the enduring paradigm of all subsequent Western theories and practices of acting (216). Although this claim is posited as an inevitable scientific development, it is also acknowledged that Diderot’s "materialism, atheism and revolutionary science seemed smartly in step with the new order" of the Russian revolutions of the early twentieth century (196). Science authenticates contemporary acting practice, and yet it’s own authentication is not subjected to deconstruction in the way that *vitalist* claims are interrogated by Roach.

However, Meyer-Dinkgräfe offers another positioning of *spontaneity* in opposition to emotion in the programs of the Dada movement that is not discussed by Roach. Performance practices in Dadaism, Futurism and Surrealism are evaluated in relation to their intentionality towards the audience. In these social and artistic contexts, spontaneity is equated with the authenticity of the actors not playing characters but being themselves. Yet Meyer-Dinkgräfe problematises this approach to ‘authentic’ performance and its subsequent manifestation in "happenings, environmental theatre, psychophysical theatre, performance art and theatre of images" by questioning if the performer "gets more out of the performances than the spectator" (62).

He identifies Grotowski’s *paratheatrical* activities as an ultimate blurring of the Western cultural distinction between actor and audience (78). This loss of separation is associated with Byrski’s claim that Grotowski was influenced by Indian theatre practices that strive for non-ordinary states of consciousness in both actors and audiences, such that audiences also require ‘training’ (79). However, he argues that Grotowski didn’t present work for mainstream audiences, but for those who wished to improve themselves by self-analysis through "confrontation with the performance" (76). Further more, Meyer-Dinkgräfe identifies in Grotowski’s *project* a different kind of encounter between
actor and audience that doesn’t deal explicitly with emotional identification or empathy. Instead, the intention for both actor and audience is accorded as a state of consciousness known as translumination. However, Meyer-Dinkgräfe acknowledges that there is much scepticism towards such concepts. He cites part of a letter from the French mystic and novelist, Romain Rolland, criticising Freud’s uneasiness with and failure to account for “spontaneous religious feelings or sentiments” (Rolland in Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 76). Meyer-Dinkgräfe concludes that the paradoxes of acting implicit in the theories of Diderot, Stanislavsky and Brecht prepare the way for Grotowski in that his practice claims to function through “the creative co-existence of two elements that appear, at first sight, to be opposed and mutually exclusive – spontaneity and discipline” (77). These two poles may be compared to Roach’s two poles of vitalist spontaneity and physiological/psychological mechanics.

While Milling and Ley regard Copeau’s desire for a new authenticity between actor and audience as naïve, there is an acknowledgment of the crucial intersubjectivity between acting practitioners and the social groups for which they perform:

There is a professional public (in the pejorative sense) in the same way that there are professional actors and professional authors. They have lost their sincerity. Theatre needs sincerity, authenticity on its stage. It needs no less in the auditorium. A Factitious public engenders factitious acting. We play with the public and the public plays with us ... (Copeau in Milling and Ley 2001: 82)

Apart from Copeau’s acting school, what was relatively unusual in Western theatre practice was the idea of an ensemble of actors who both worked and trained together. This method in the 1960s proved attractive to those “who were interested in collective activity, counter-cultural communities and a deeper examination of spiritual experience” (123). At the same time, Grotowski’s
writing proved palatable both to the Soviet censors in Poland and counter-culturalists as he articulated that his theatrical aim was to shock or influence the audience and therefore provide a kind of social therapy and provoke a vicarious self-examination (123).

Lorna Marshall and David Williams (2000) frame their discussion of Peter Brook (influenced by Grotowski’s writings and practice) through two interrelated dispositions for performers: a state of “openness and immediacy” termed “transparency” and a state of “connectedness and responsiveness” termed “the invisible network” (174). They identify the 1960s as a period of significant development in Brook’s approach to the training of actors and quote Brook’s advocacy of actor’s creativity through tapping of energies so that a director will “concentrate on discovering the source of energy in the actor from which all true impulses can arise” (Brook in Marshall and Williams 2000: 176). Brook advocates that work-in-progress be presented in unconventional spaces to unfamiliar audiences. The intention, Marshall and Williams suggest, is to destabilise the actor’s habitual responses and “open them up to different energies and qualities of exchange”(177). At the moment of transparency, Brook believes that actors become a conduit for the manifestation of the spirit or life of words, song and dance so that “it speaks/sings/dances them” (179; italics in original). Performers are also encouraged to develop and exercise a tripartite attentiveness to their inner impulses to their fellow performers and to the space of performance (ibid). Furthermore, Brook also works for a deep connection or ‘invisible network’ between the actors both on and off stage. One of Brook’s actors, Yoshi Oida describes how, during performances of The Mahabharata, the actors would stand in the wings, watching and listening to the way a sequence was unfolding in order to sense how to adapt their entrance and performance to “keep the ‘ball’ in play’” (189).

David Krasner (2000) understands Meisner’s approach to Method acting is about the authentic impulses of the actor’s behaviour in character. Meisner believed that “your instinct picks up the change in {the other actor’s} behaviour and the {repetition} dialogue changes too” (Meisner in Krasner 2000: 144; braces
in original). In this way, Krasner observes, the actors are compelled to deal with observed behaviour which “fosters ensemble interplay, or communion, rather than words” (145). However, he stresses that Meisner did not intend that this relationship became fixed, as was criticised by the commentator Michael Quinn. Rather, the practice of such performance is based on an evolving, dynamic relationship whether between actors or between actor and audience. Krasner regards this form of acting as relational, dialogic and alive to immediate and spontaneous human communication and interaction so that the actor, especially in directly addressing the audience, gauges the responses of the spectators and responds accordingly (146). He cites Brestof’s observation that “Meisner felt that the connection between actors was vital to the life of a scene, and that when that bond was broken, the acting lost its special quality and power” (Brestof in Krasner 2000: 146).

Ian Watson (2000) writes of Barba’s training of actors to perform ‘real actions’ that Barba believes produce “a change in the tensions of your whole body”, rather than simple gestures or movements (Barba in Watson 2000: 222). It is these ‘authentic’ actions that will generate a significant and embodied change of perception in the audience (ibid). Barba’s concept is that of extra-daily behaviours or techniques, which are learned, that establish a pattern of performance behaviour different to daily behaviour (walking, standing, sitting). He argues that this extra-daily technique is a primary source of actor presence during performance in that codified expressions dictate the body’s use of energy (216-217). Barba’s emphasis is on an individualised and autonomous training through which actors learn to create their own practices that acknowledge what is referred to as their personal temperature. This is a recognition of each actor’s personal rhythms, boundaries, abilities and unique qualities as a performer (220). Furthermore, one must also must take into account the variables of the audience’s reaction, the actor’s psycho-emotional responses to events both on stage and in the theatre space, and the actor’s personal associations with the rehearsal process that preceded the production (221).
Aesthetic dispositions

In the eighteenth century, a trend in French painting was appropriated as a new model for the actor’s habitual disposition in the context of performance. Recent art-historical scholarship has highlighted the prominence of what has been termed absorption in that figures are depicted as totally absorbed in their actions. Roach argues that it is very evident that Diderot conclusively breaks with the rhetorical theory of acting and its “inspiring pneuma” when he advises the dramatist to write the play as if the curtain had not risen and as if the audience did not exist (154). This aesthetic ‘attitude’ of absorption in the role by the actor, Roach observes, can still be practised by actors who function either by habit or instinct, irrespective of Diderot’s persuasive ‘scientific’ argument for the former. This accounts for the ongoing crisis in the mid-eighteenth century of form and freedom in actor training (155). However, Diderot’s extensive writings and ideas mark a critical shift in the relationship between actor and audience. The actor, in Diderot’s model, now works to create an aesthetic illusion of appearances for an audience while simultaneously being so absorbed in his illusory reproduction that he is oblivious to the audience for whom he performs.

Roach notes how William Archer credited G.H. Lewes with the introduction of the word psychology into the vocabulary of dramatic criticism although it is never quite clear what Archer, Lewes, or, for that matter, Roach, intend by the term. Lewes, in his 1875 text On Actors and the Art of Acting, reinstates the disposition of artistic craftsmanship as involving more than just the autonomous actor. He refuses to support “impulsive” or “inspired” acting as a way to communicate emotion: “It is not enough for an actor to feel, he must represent” (Lewes in Roach 1993: 184; emphasis in original). By implication, an audience’s disposition is anticipated as one of aesthetically responding to such ‘representations’. However, Lewes also distinguishes between actors who embody the emotions they convey and those actors whose symbols (voice, looks and gesture) lack vividness: “Either because in truth there is no strong feeling moving him, or because he is not artist enough to give it genuine expression” (Lewes in Roach 1993: 184). Thus, Lewes identifies such performance as
mechanical because of the absence of texture and “supple gradations of real life” (185). There appears to be a requirement for an aesthetic as well as an affective disposition.

Meyer-Dinkgräfe’s discussion of Meyerhold notes an intention in which ‘correct postures and moves’ through biomechanics will “lead naturally to an emotional state in the actor and, by extension, affect the audience” (52). However, his discussion of Expressionistic acting proposes a stylistic shift from attractive or realistic presentation to personal self-revelation in order to communicate with an audience – a shift from the aesthetic to the authentic (58).

A more embodied rather than sublime aesthetic is evident in Staniewski’s Gardzienice project. The focus of training is on externalised, direct vocal and physical actions in relation to the space and other actors rather than about what could be imagined or explored within the actor’s cognitive processes. There is a strong commitment to the given or immediate so that the training, rehearsal and performance all recreate both the “intensity of human contact” and a sense of environmental place (Hodge 2000b: 229). Philip Arnoult is quoted as describing the company’s work as a “ritualistic, almost religious experience” (Arnoult in Hodge 2000b: 229).

Hodge identifies what may be regarded as two fundamental aesthetic dispositions in Gardzienice’s training: “musicality, with its complex relationship to the actor’s physical and vocal technique; and mutuality − a particular way of perceiving” (231; emphasis in original). She goes on to claim that Staniewski regards musicality as having a spiritual significance although no definition or clarification of spirit is made in this context (232). The importance of singing and moving together, according to Mariusz Golaj, Gardzienice’s movement director, is that “You are not controlling yourself by your dreams but by concrete situations; through music, your position in space, your relationship with your partner and with energy” (Golaj in Hodge 2000b: 233). The intention of musicality is to enable the actor to find “an inner melody which can lead their
work" which is believed to heighten their sensitivity towards other performers and so lead to mutuality (232). Mutuality is practised, according to Hodge, as a way of perceiving, absorbing or dialoguing with a fellow actor without neglecting the environment in which the actor works. The reading of the acting partner is not exclusively psychological but an attempt to "absorb the wholeness of the person" (233). This is quite a different understanding of absorption to that of the eighteenth century approach of denial and isolation from the audience. Hodge believes that the disposition of mutuality disallows the training process to become a system for as Staniewski argues "Training as I understand it, is necessarily a mutuality of two live presences. It is sharing energy, warmth ... How is it possible to make a method or a catalogue out of that?" (Staniewski in Hodge 2000b: 233).

Vulnerable dispositions

In this final section, I want to return to that disposition of vulnerability advocated by the three sites of formation I participated in. Roach does address this, by default, in his discussion of the very phenomenological nature of the actor stepping onto the public stage. This inevitable event is described as a "trauma that impinges upon this free-flowing continuity of stimulus and spontaneous response" (207). There is almost the sense that if it wasn't for the presence of the audience, then the actor could really get the job done properly without distraction or fear of judgement or failure.

He illustrates how Stanislavsky addresses this occupational hazard through the practice of "concentration of attention" (208). In Diderot's terminology, this would be about being absorbed within a space from which the audience was excluded (208). However, it is open to contention as to whether Stanislavsky's "public solitude" was ever intended to completely exclude the audience. Various chapters in An Actor Prepares go into great depths about the various practices by which the actor must be, not only aware of the audience, but also actively seeking to commune with the audience. Neither of these features is
mentioned in Roach’s summary of Stanislavsky’s theory of acting. It is only in the final paragraphs of the chapter that Roach acknowledges what he describes as a “paradox in all Stanislavsky’s writings” (217). He finds it difficult to reconcile how Stanislavsky could legitimise much of his practice through scientific precedent, and yet also seek to “create a religion of art, in which the theatre was a temple, the audience worshippers, and the actors celebrants at a mysterious rite” (ibid). Roach reports how Soviet psychologists expressed uneasiness with some of the more “unscientific passages in his writings” and that the State censors removed a number of “sentimental animisms” out of the Russian edition of My Life in Art (217). Yet he concludes this marginal discussion with a quote from Sonia Moore who repositions Stanislavsky’s System firmly within the psychophysical paradox that would “define man as a machine who remembers and dies” (ibid).

Vulnerability, as I argued in the Introduction, is associated with the ability to affect and be affected by the other. Meyer-Dinkgräfe notes Barba’s identification of a paradox in the actor’s interaction with his role and the audience, in that the performance becomes a dialectic between the playing of fiction and the fiction of playing. It is acknowledged that much of what an actor does has been finely tuned and rehearsed so that it can be economically reproduced in performance (145). However, the actor must also be able to adapt the performance to the unique social and physiological influences of each performance where actor and audience necessarily interact. Barba notes this meeting between actor and audience may vary due to

[...] the audience’s reaction to the piece, the actor’s psycho-emotional responses to events on stage as well as in the theatre, and the actor’s personal associations with particular actions and/or situations in a work s/he has developed with his/her colleagues over a period of some eighteen months to two years. (Barba in Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 146)
Furthermore, Barba seems to also recognise the cultural capital inherent in the developing this disposition of the actor when he writes that

[…] it is not the exercise in itself that counts – for example, bending or somersaults – but the individual’s justification for his own work, a justification which, although perhaps banal or difficult to explain through words is physiologically perceptible, evident to the observer. (Barba in Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 146)

Peter Thomson (2000) draws special attention to a shift, in Brecht’s practice, from the purported isolated individual life, to the social world of relationships and interdependency, for “the smallest social unit is not the single person but two people. In life too we develop one another” (Brecht in Thomson 2000: 105). The actor is trained to both present and interrogate the behaviour of the character in order to elicit the audience’s interrogation and consideration of how social circumstances might be altered. Thomson notes that the aim of the ‘not … but’ exercises of Brecht are to train not only the actors, but in turn, the audience to ask why not as well as why (107). This value, Thomson argues, emerged as Brecht set about changing the social status quo of the theatre that rendered the audience passive (109). Now both actor and audience become vulnerable towards each other.

Grotowski sought in his early work to “abolish the distance between actor and audience” in both the physical and philosophical sense, through physical proximity in the performance space (Milling and Ley 2001: 132). However, by the time of Toward a Poor Theatre, he was advocating the actor’s development of an internal audience as a “secure partner”, as a prelude to abandoning the distinction of audience in favour of participant in his paratheatrical ventures (132). What stands out in Towards A Poor Theatre is the theatre producer’s function as
pedagogue, especially in relation to the audience, via the actor – “Even though we cannot educate the audience – not systematically at least – we can educate the actor” (Grotowski in Milling 2001: 127). Grotowski’s role as pedagogue is framed as observing or reacting rather than teaching, similar in concept to the *via negativa* of his actor training (128). Yet there are diagrams in his text that suggest idealised interactions for actor and audience configurations (131). When Grotowski went into exile in America in 1982, his application for funding purported to be aiming to find a type of performance “before the separation between art and rite, and between the spectacular and the participatory” (Grotowski in Milling 2001: 138). If both willingly become vulnerable towards the other little distinction remains between them by the end of the performance.

I have only given examples from texts where the vulnerability of actors and audiences is acknowledge as, simultaneously, a pleasure or privilege and a discomfort, such as the loss of identity or control of performance outcomes. But vulnerability is also evident in the accounts that privilege the vital, the authentic or the aesthetic. As I indicated at the outset of this section, the habitus of actors and audiences functions as a collection of dispositions that both produce and are produced by other dispositions. Bourdieu speaks of individuals’ practical relation to the world as defined in a relationship between their habitus “with its temporal structures and dispositions” and “a certain state of the chances offered … by the social world” (1990: 64). The vulnerability of actors may enable vitality in their interactions with each other and the audience which, subsequently, is recognised as authentic in an aesthetic way.

**Conclusion**

At times, these relational modes of encounter and interaction appear so natural that they are taken for granted and are not, therefore, made subject to analysis and reflection. As some of these authors have noted, *training* itself is a culturally and historically specific means to address what are perceived as *needs* by those who ascribe a cultural/economic value to theatre, as a range of cultural
practices. Those who act, whether trained or untrained, are still involved in a process of habituation and formation in varying nuances of collaboration with the audiences they encounter within society.

Foundational to any dramaturgical agency is what is regarded as theatre’s social purpose. Its purpose may be complex and probably contradictory but it is the assumptions of purpose that drive and sustain subsequent practices within the social context. As a cultural practice, theatre has been variously appropriated by different groups in society – social leaders, religious communities, craft guilds, commercial patrons, intellectuals, outcasts, and so on. Each group may be said to have a particular social and political agenda, for as Foucault proposes, all people participate in the circulation of power. It should be noted that these groups provide the social context for a particular expression of theatre even before any of those associated with the craft of theatre (writers, actors, directors, set builders, etc.) are empowered specifically to make the drama work. Yet even though those associated with the craft may need and indeed crave times of solitude in the practice of their skills, the intended outcome is always social, and therefore relational in nature.

When one reads or hears of accounts of the actor training the self or seeking out private moments or public solitude as their givenness, the social and relational aspects – dramaturgical agency and habitual disposition – should not be taken for granted and therefore forgotten as integral to the performance event. This applies even to the actor who may be working in the studio, with a blue screen, imagining interactions with digital characters. Even in this context, the actor has his audience through the director and crew who support his ability to believe in what he is creating as a performer. What I have hoped to illustrate by an analysis of these texts is how the various authors, contributors and practitioners themselves perceive the significance and affects of the embodied relationships between actors, and between actors and their intended audiences.

The texts I have analysed all record expectations of life, energy, flow, authenticity, creativity, inspiration, wholeness, revelation and truth, dependent
on related beliefs about the nature of human existence in terms of consciousness, mind, body, soul and spirit. In those dramaturgical views of the efficacy of performance that acknowledge the intercorporeal encounter between human beings in theatre practice it is very evident that there is a desire to find some metaphoric expression to capture or convey a sense of relatedness – in terms of exchange, or interchange, transformation, transcendence or encounter. Many of these expectations have become attributed to Western theatre experience and therefore have gained, in Bourdieu's terms, a certain either cultural or symbolic capital (dependent on how one may judge their independent meaning/status). Yet in each site, that I participated in, the only reference made to any of the practitioners that have been evaluated in this chapter was in the RE:ACTOR course concerning aspects of Stanislavsky's System and David Mamet's development of Meisner's approach to the Method.

Furthermore, it has been very apparent in this review of actor training that expectations of intercorporeal interaction have been more problematic for Western theatre than non-Western theatre. A narrative has emerged in many of the texts of a polarisation between practices that affirm or nurture spontaneity and practices that inculcate discipline, reflex, habit, or technique. Such a polarisation has not been recounted in non-Western accounts of training.

A related issue is the apparently inevitable circumscription of theatre practices initiated in the United Kingdom, Europe, Soviet Union, North America (and possibly Australia and New Zealand) as Western and distinct from the other or non-Western, unhelpfully circumscribed as African, Asian, Pacific and South American. Whatever has resulted in the cultures of Greece and Rome becoming what is now understood as Western is a consequence of a complex array of political and ideological histories rather than any biological/genetic inheritance. A lack of critical reflection on these simplistic cultural categories only reinforces a tendency to polarise Western and non-Western/Eastern acting and theatrical practices.
Forming (in) Vulnerable Bodies

Attempting to interpret these three relational modes as being either natural or cultural imposes a paradoxical polarisation. Hodge and many of her contributors, along with Meyer-Dinkgräfe, may subscribe to a 'natural origin' for their particular accounts of these modes. However, Roach, Milling and Ley, and Zarrilli would more likely affirm the cultural construction of these modes.

Therefore it will be fruitful to analyse each site in which I have participated and attend more closely to the presuppositions, or doxa, and self-legitimating polarities that circulate. How do audiences – as assessors, teachers, fellow performers – perceive such relational modes in the performance of actors? What criteria do they assume for an actor's givenness, agency and disposition (including recognition of their own dispositions as audiences) when seeking to recognise and affirm talent or 'It'? This will be examined in Chapter Six where I track the dynamics of specific events through the contexts of speaking, recognising/legitimising and producing intercorporeality and vulnerability in each site. However, before proceeding to such an analysis, I will, in the next two chapters, establish the circumstances, conditions and constraints of my field research method in each institutional site.
CHAPTER FOUR:

Embodying an ethnographic method

in sites of actor formation

In this chapter, I will discuss the research ideals with which I set out and the field realities I encountered in establishing an ethnographic method for researching three sites of actor formation. Although much of my field research practice will be recognisable as a process of note-taking and transcription of teachings and conversations, I will also highlight the primacy of the transformations and shifts in 'recognition' that occurred through my embodied participation in each successive site.

In the Introduction, I proposed that an ethnographic approach would be used in the investigation, in sites of actor formation, of discourses about and practices predicated upon what I have identified as the 'It' factor. While this chapter serves to outline a particular set of ethnographic procedures and values as a research method, it also acknowledges that ethnography as a discipline is an inexact 'science'. As an inexact science, ethnography makes no naïve claims about the potential replication or generalisation of results. Indeed, Geertz comments that "[c]ultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete ... It is a strange science whose most telling assertions are its most tremulously based ..." (1973: 29). He concludes that to meaningfully study the dynamics of social action is "not to turn away from the existential dilemmas of life ... it is to plunge into the midst of them" (1973: 30).

By 'being there and participating in' these sites under enquiry, I assert the primacy, in this research, of embodying an ethnographic practice. From a phenomenological perspective, embodiment is not just a particular method of study, but is rather the only way any method of research has meaningful value. In evaluating how I entered, participated in and withdrew from each site, I will
briefly outline the various merits and limitations of three thinkers – Geertz, Stewart and Bourdieu – whose work on critical ethnographic practices I have applied.

Research method and Geertz

Clifford Geertz regards ethnographically “thick” description and analysis as “sorting out the structure of signification … and determining their social ground and import” (1973: 9). The embodied action of ethnographic documentation is, simultaneously, a practice of description and inscription – it alters social discourse from a passing event into an account that can be re-consulted and further interpreted (19). Further, ethnographic de/in-scriptions are “not privileged, just particular” (23). Geertz identifies three characteristics of ethnographic description:

- It is interpretive
- It is interpretive of the flow of social discourse
- It endeavours to ‘fix’ the flow in ways that can be useful for analysis (20).

Geertz’s approach to ethnographic analysis privileges the immediacy and specificity of encounters with difference; it acknowledges difference, without any endeavour to construct generalisations or universal claims as a response to that difference.

Geertz’s approach is particularly useful in that it affirms the value of every encounter during the research process. My participation, perception and interpretation evolved through involvement in each successive site. I could not enter participatively into more culturally dominant sites such as NIDA due to practical reasons of competitive entry and ethical reasons of my presence as a researcher. However, I did not regard my specific participations (Ensemble, RE:ACTOR, VCA) as ‘incomplete’ but different. Geertz’s acknowledgement of the inherently interpretive character of ethnographic documentation also produces a recognition that my accounts will be shaped by my interests and
Forming (in) Vulnerable Bodies

expectations. I therefore adopt this approach of de/in-scription and interpretation in the next chapter as I engage with my 'beginnings' with each successive site.

Research method and Stewart

Alex Stewart, in his 1998 discussion of ethnographic method, acknowledges that many ethnographers have been reticent to outline how they went about their research. He interprets this reticence as a reaction to a number of concerns. There may be a reluctance to formalise the necessary flexibility and uniqueness of each research situation. Alternatively, some researchers believe that only research outcomes can be evaluated, excluding method, or, as Stewart cites Geertz, "like poems and hypotheses, ethnographies can only be judged ex post, after someone has brought them into being" (Stewart 1998: 3, 4). However, Stewart suggests there are significant reasons why method needs to be made more explicit. First, it allows for the reader to make informed judgements about which aspects of the study may be accepted, rejected or qualified. Second, where illustrations from the field are used in discussion, the context of the research can be made more persuasive as support for such contentions. Third, an explicit discussion of method can act as a guide to those new to the practices of ethnographic research (1998: 4-5).

Such reticence in providing detailed accounts of ethnographic research methods has, Stewart argues, produced an absence of standardised methods criteria. To redress this absence, Stewart draws upon the work of E. G. Guba. Guba proposes substituting a set of alternative terms, paralleling aspects of statistics-oriented and quantitative research. Thus, where "'hard' science is epistemologically grounded in criteria of validity, reliability and generalisability, Guba suggests that ethnographic knowledge frame itself within conceptions of veracity, objectivity and perspicacity, and that to do so by no means compromises the qualitative nature of those investigations (1998: 14).
Where, for example, the rubric of validity raises the question of effective measurement, Stewart suggests that the pertinent question for ethnography is how effectively a study succeeds in its depiction of the field under interrogation (15). Reliability, in conventional quantitative research, raises questions of stability, consistency and replication that Stewart acknowledges are considered at odds with ethnographic contexts. However, the underlying value of "stepping back" and becoming alert to previously unacknowledged dynamics at work does offer a possible equivalent. The question therefore becomes one of how the research transcends the perspectives of those immediately engaged in the contexts studied (16). Finally, generalisability suggests that the findings of research from samples and populations could be extrapolated to comparative contexts beyond those specific to a study. Again, Stewart regards such an application in ethnographic contexts as futile. However, if the underlying concern is about "the applicability of insights elsewhere", then Stewart sees that the term perspicacity opens a space for new interpretations to emerge from the research that may have relevance (16, 17).

In "working toward" veracity, objectivity and perspicacity, Stewart advocates a reporting process acknowledging the challenges or limits of qualitative research, as well as offering practical 'tactics' to address these limitations. Thus, Stewart's approach to writing up a research method offers a way in which "obstacles are linked to tactics that help, albeit, imperfectly to overcome the challenges"(17). I will apply Stewart's ethnographic approach in the latter section of this chapter as a means of outlining the logistical and methodological considerations of my research process in each site.

**Research method and Bourdieu**

Pierre Bourdieu, on the other hand, draws attention to the indeterminacy of the relationship between the "constructs (diagrams or discourses) that the observer produces to account for practices" and the practices of the participants themselves (1990: 37). Bourdieu regards that this uncertainty is exacerbated by
the "interferences of the native discourse aimed at expressing or regulating practice" (*ibid*). What can result is that naïve attempts at construction of what occurs in practice, however, well intended, become reified "as realities endowed with a social efficacy" (*ibid*).

Bourdieu challenges the ethnographer, in the midst of practice, to practice a reflexivity that

\[
\text{is the means of submitting to scientific scrutiny everything that makes the doxic experience of the world possible, that is, not only the preconstructed representations of this world but also the cognitive schemata that underlie the construction of this image. (1992: 247)}
\]

Bourdieu calls for scholarly rigour in that the tests applied to the field should also be applied to the researcher. In contrast to Geertz and Stewart, who draw attention to ways of refining how certain research tools and techniques can be applied to the field, Bourdieu criticises such a preoccupation with these tools, arguing that it is

\[
\text{liable to make researchers forget that, in order to observe certain facts, they should not so much refine the observing and measuring instruments as question the routine use that is made of the instruments. (1991:62)}
\]

Thus Bourdieu calls upon the researcher to acknowledge that the choice of tools and techniques actually shapes the kinds of knowledge that can be produced from inquiry. My primary interest in discourses and practices predicated upon the 'It' factor directs me to consider tools and techniques that might make such discourses and practices more accessible and transparent. However, I should
not be deluded that, in refining my research process, I have come any nearer to the ‘true’ nature of these discourses and practices, given that I have already set my focus in a particular direction to the exclusion of other possible directions.

In the pages that follow I want to develop an ethnography of my early encounters with each site of actor formation, and to do so with reference to the methodological insights afforded by Geertz, Bourdieu and Stewart. By doing so I will illustrate my own methodological engagement of my own status as a researcher, the inherent impossibility of constructing a pure object of research in such a project, and my own regard for the epistemological categories about which Stewart writes.

**Participant observation or particip/ation**

In response to Bourdieu’s caution of a preoccupation with the refinement of research “tools”, my own ‘instrumentality’ as an apparent ‘participant observer’ has become subject to critical reflection. Participant observation is recognised in ethnographic study as one primary ‘instrument’ for gaining entry in order to study a specific cultural group “who were once called *natives* – but let us style them here as *actors* or *insiders*” (Stewart 1998: 6). The presumption is that the researcher *as* participant observer or “outsider” enters into an existing and culturally coherent gathering of “insiders”. However, Nick Couldry (2000), in his discussion of cultural coherence, cites the Swedish anthropologist, Ulf Hannerz, as one who questions such a belief that cultural cohesion exists within any particularly identified cultural ‘entity’. Hannerz argues it is not a matter of shared perspectives but of “more people’s perspectives mak[ing] sense of other people’s [different] perspectives” (Hannerz in Couldry 2000: 102).

Therefore, the distinction between ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’ – observer/researcher and participant/actor/native – proves indeterminant, given that, in many social contexts, all that engage in an ongoing social practice come into a group as observers *and* participants, *at the same time*. Each individual may act as a loyal
and unquestioning participant in some of the group's activities while becoming 'distant' and 'removed' from other activities that other members embrace without reservation. In these latter occasions, such individuals may experience their bodily engagement as more observational than participative, even though they are still recognised as members of the group.

In the light of such commentaries, I have come to understand my actions of research in the sites of actor formation as those of a participant, rather than a participant observer. I did not enter a pre-existing community of actors-in-training. I approached each institutional setting with as little or as much prior knowledge and experience as any other student who, presumably, intentionally sought out how each of these institutions might benefit their interests. What perhaps made a difference in each institutional site was that many of the students knew that I was participating as a student and as a researcher. But I also do not know how the other 'agendas' or dispositions that these other students brought with them may have affected how they engaged in the discourses and practices of a particular institution.

However, as a participant who is also a researcher, Bourdieu's model of reflexivity requires me to apply the same research 'tools' or 'indicators' of formation, recognition and misrecognition to my own embodied engagement with each site and with the subsequent writing up of my research.

*Forming and being formed by the 'object' of research*

As I argued in the Introduction I have appropriated each institutional context as, what I have called, a site of formation. This is founded on my understanding that there is constant formational activity between teachers and students even when there is no explicit formal instruction. Thus, in the events of the audition process for VCA, 'students' and 'teachers' encounter each other in a formational process that was just as significant as any more formally and explicitly constituted class on how to participate in the profession.
However, as I moved from site to site, I became more conscious of just how profoundly I was being *shaped* through my participation in each successive site. In the Ensemble course, in spite of my conscious intentionality towards observation and tacit questioning what seemed familiar or ‘normal’ to the teacher and my fellow participants, I still experienced a ‘culture’ shock of difference when I began my training at RE:ACTOR. I experienced a similar ‘culture’ shock when I participated in the VCA audition process. I will bear out this constant formation and re-formation in my discussion of comparisons between the three sites over the next two chapters.

*Recognising and misrecognising the ‘object’ of research*

In my ethnographic practice, I wrote down as much detail as possible of the dynamics in the process of each formational encounter as it was happening. However, over the weeks of participation and note-taking, I became aware that there would be moments when I would cease to write and just listen – and other occasions when I would be writing frantically, trying to note almost every word and action of others. Such inconsistency in recording revealed my own complicity in the field.

I came to understand my particular and embodied practice as an attempt to resolve the conscious paradox that I was attempting to, simultaneously, participate in and critically reflect on actor training. I perceived some events as ‘normal’, ‘familiar’ or just assumed knowledge, and therefore not worth noting, while other events attracted my attention as significant to record. I found that I wrote most intensively when I perceived and interpreted the action or discussion in the institutional setting as “interesting” or “unusual” or “strange”. In hindsight, it may be that many of the “normal” or “natural” conversations in each setting are actually the most frequently recurring patterns of action in a particular institution. So subsequently, I was much more conscious of my own

139
disposition towards each site and my complicity, as a researcher, in attending to what I understood to be relevant to the focus of inquiry.

In Chapter Six, as I apply Foucault's genealogical approach to each site, I will continue to be critically reflexive about my own engagement and participation. However, in the remainder of this chapter, I will adopt what I consider to be relevant aspects of Stewart's checklist for veracity, objectivity and perspicacity in research, as a means of outlining how I practically approached and managed my participation as a research method.

**Veracity of research: Effective depiction of sites**

First, Stewart highlights the value of extended time spent in the field as conducive to the effective depiction of the sites under study. It takes time for the researcher to undergo the process of learning about the dynamics of the field (21). Second, he sees value in recording the extent and nature of involvement by the researcher in engagement with other participants in the field (22). However, Stewart also stresses that there are two inevitable limits on veracity: limits to learning in the field and limits to learning in the researcher (19). By accounting for the interplay between extended involvement and the constraints of what can be learnt over such a period, researchers can legitimately depict sites for subsequent analysis.

**Prolonged field work**

On Saturday January 29, 2000, I read an advertisement in the Arts section, "Spectrum", of the *Sydney Morning Herald* (S21) for the Orientation day for the Ensemble Studios acting course. I saw this as a potential opportunity to place myself in the field. The Ensemble Studios is a private drama school that offers a three-year part time actor training program. I attended the Orientation Day on Saturday February 5, 2000, taking notes at the time, and adding additional
recollections after the day. Having decided to enrol for an initial ten weeks of actor training and fencing, I made a practice of keeping detailed written notes of all that transpired in each class. I also engaged with my fellow classmates in a regular coffee break on the Friday nights where I carefully engaged in discussion with them about how they saw the course fulfilling their own ambitions as performers.

The first Saturday morning commenced at 9:00 a.m. on March 18. The pattern for the next ten weeks was to attend Saturday mornings from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon without a break, and Fridays at Crows Nest Baptist Centre, 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. followed by an hour's break and then a fencing class from 9:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Nearly all the other students also did a speech class, a movement class and a dance class each week in addition to the classes I attended. The class initially consisted of approximately thirty participants, between the ages of nineteen years and forty years, with one sixty year old women as well. There were ten males and twenty females. I completed the first ten weeks of part time training at the Ensemble Studios.

Having experienced a training program through a private school, I was interested to see how Government funded acting schools might approach training. Realistically, however, I could not enter into a fulltime program with one of these institutions solely for the purpose of my research. This limitation confronts the qualitative researcher's desire to enter deeply into the experiences of a community and yet produce an account of the experience for reflection and analysis.

However, I did take into consideration another advertisement in the paper for a course that offers aspiring actors the opportunity to develop audition skills that could enable them to secure a place in one of the Government funded training institutions, namely, NIDA, VCA, WAAPA (Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts) or UWS (University of Western Sydney – Bachelor of
Performance, Theory and Practice). This second institution, RE:ACTOR Acting Services, offers a range of short term courses in screen testing techniques and a special course in audition techniques for those who wish to audition for a full time place in one of the Government-funded actor training programs (NIDA, WAAPA, VCA, UWS). (Both Ensemble Studios and RE:ACTOR Acting services are commercial enterprises. Therefore, entry into these institutions is a relatively straightforward exchange of money. However, the VCA is a government-subsidised institution).

The specific course, in which I was interested, was known as RE:ACTOR Monologue Audition Course: a ten evening course for monologue and auditioning techniques. This course was just one of several industry training courses offered by RE:ACTOR, which was itself created by several NIDA graduates as a means to support their own practice within the industry. I commenced this course at 6:30 p.m. on June 7. Classes were held on subsequent Wednesday evenings, commencing with Master classes at 4:00 p.m. for smaller workshop groups, before combining everyone for a 6:00 p.m. class. Twenty-five students participated in this course.

As I enquired about the nature of the course, I became intrigued by the concept of a course that offers to train actors how to audition so that they can get into Government institutions so that, in turn, they could train to be actors. I found that the distinction between being trained to 'act' and being trained to 'audition' became blurred – 'acting' and 'auditioning' emerged as synonymous activities. My ten weeks' experience at the Ensemble had alerted me to the diversity of people who want to train as actors for many reasons. It seemed relevant to my research of the various processes that affect the training and formation of acting practice to encounter how potential students are prepared for further professional training prior to seeking work in the industry.

142
As an outcome of this course, I now had a distinct experience of audition preparation. However, I knew I could not ethically present myself to audition for one of the tertiary acting institutions as a candidate. I also now had the experience of at least a mock audition in the style of NIDA as understood by its graduates.

Fortunately, during the mid year break, I had taken the opportunity to make contact with the teaching staff of the School of Drama, Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) in Melbourne and indicated to them the research in which I was interested. The School of Drama offers a three-year fulltime actor training course, alongside courses in direction, design and production management. At that time, the Dean of the School, Lindy Davies was preparing a performance in Sydney. I sent her a copy of one of my earlier papers on actor training and formation. In response, she e-mailed me, suggesting that we meet when she was next in Sydney. During that subsequent meeting I asked her if I could sit in and observe the audition process of the VCA Sydney auditions in November of that year and she agreed to my request.

All the auditions were held in the workshop space of Opera Australia in Surry Hills, NSW, commencing on Wednesday, November 22, at 10:00 a.m. I learnt that auditions would take place twice a day over a period of five days prior to a full day of Call-backs to select the five or six successful Sydney and NSW country applicants. Many of these were also auditioning for NIDA at this same time of year so they would face the challenge of perhaps having to decide between two schools, or waiting to see which one would offer them a place. I ensured that the convenor for each audition introduced me, as a researcher of the audition process and not part of the adjudication panel, to all those auditioning. In that way, they would hopefully not be distracted by my note-taking as they presented their audition pieces to the panel and the rest of the audition group.
Therefore, I participated in three consecutive sites of actor formation over a period of nine months in 2000.

*Good participative role relationships*

Perhaps the most striking impression from my participation was how much of the actual teaching was oriented towards practical example and application of technique, rather than theoretical ideas and concepts. In each site, the practice was often to invite students to attempt a certain task with their bodies/minds with minimal or absent preparation or rehearsal. For example, in an Ensemble class, a student would be asked to perform a complex task of movement, with no prior guidance or experience, on the main stage of the theatre in front of the other students. Subsequent to the experience of ‘success’ or ‘failure’ (as determined and recognised by the teacher), there would be a more detailed and explicit discussion to account for such success or failure.

In this way, my fellow students and I learnt to recognise success or failure for ourselves. This had the powerful effect of producing a self-legitimating knowledge in my body, as a student, while concurrently reinforcing the status of the teacher as authoritative *guide* to that self-knowledge. Such self-knowledge was validated by practical experience as it was *produced* in the bodies of teachers and students as we interacted with each other.

The significance of my being identified by other students as a participant as well as a researcher became more pronounced when I indicated that I would not be able to continue the course. The most evident effect was that some of the students tended to withdraw from me. I became conscious that a degree of trust develops within the learning community over time as participants share common challenges and shifts in values, beliefs and experiences. A deepening sense of vulnerability emerges as teachers and students negotiate these changes with each other.
There was a marked difference of feeling when I began my participation in the RE:ACTOR course. Unlike the Ensemble course, a much more demanding and committed program, I wasn’t as conscious of a need for group trust and loyalty. If anything, it was more likely we could feel that we were all competitors for the few privileged training places available in the elite institutions.

In my participation in the VCA auditions I was interested to realise that sometimes my experience and ‘reading’ of auditionee’s performances differed significantly from the panel’s assessment. This occurred even though there were set written agenda for assessment of suitability for consideration. This difference in judgement was also evident between panel members when they clearly disagreed with each other about what they perceived in the potential of the auditionee.

Certain expressions and phrases circulated in this site, as in previous sites, that would establish what was recognised as good performance. We judged each performance in terms of ‘energy’, ‘connection with the text’, ‘engagement with the character’, and the quality of either authentic or constructed performance. However, there were sometimes occasions when, after the auditions had concluded, we would remark to each other how a particular auditionee had ‘something special’, something beyond the more obvious signs of competency as an actor, and most significantly something that words failed to capture. Could it be said that we had participated in an experience of ‘It’?

*Limits caused by the researcher’s personal and role constraints*

From the outset I could not be as fully immersed in the Ensemble practice as my fellow students could, largely because of my own practical financial circumstances as a fulltime postgraduate student. This meant that I could not participate in the voice, movement and dance classes that may have also
contributed in subtle ways to my grasp of the overall ethos of the training regimen. In hindsight, it may also be a factor that I did not come into the course with the same kind of drive and motivation that many of the students came to the course with. On one occasion over coffee between classes, I spoke with a young female student, an office worker and occasional model, who spoke with great urgency about her longing to complete the three year course at the Ensemble, and then to leave her day job and become an actor. This was her intention in spite of the very clear advice of Zika that it was strategically advisable to have another source of income support in light of the financially precarious nature of the acting industry.

The students in the Ensemble course were interested in my motivations as a performer and researcher of performance training. I never initiated conversation concerning my research, except on the occasion of a class discussion about the “paranormal”. On this occasion, I indicated my interest in the experiences of actors, my previous preliminary Postgraduate research thesis and my particular interest in participating in the course. This, reflexively, is not a limitation on research, according to Bourdieu, but rather an important register that a researcher is not disinterested and never can be disinterested. My interest in the experiences of actors helps form the knowledge I make through interaction with those training to be actors.

Another limitation I encountered at the Ensemble was in regard to Zika’s open invitation, in the first week of class, for people to challenge or question her at any stage of the course. Both Zika and her deceased mentor, Hayes Gordon, worked within a modernist theatrical paradigm, in terms of their commitment to the unity of character, the objectivity of observation, the civilising value of the performing arts, the revealing of ‘Truth’ through personal sacrifice and dedication to the arts. However, I felt that I could not easily take up this invitation to challenge such views as I already had an awareness of many philosophical issues around the nature of theatre and acting that were ongoing points of contention between practitioners and academics.
In fact, no one took up Zika’s invitation. For example, no one openly questioned Zika about her demand for “total objectivity” in observing performance. I felt that it would be counter productive for me to start dismantling Zika’s teaching practice by publicly challenging her on various claims about unity, truth and objectivity. I did, however, talk with some of the students to see whether they all accepted Zika’s claims without question. Some did have doubts about “objectivity”, as they had seen a performance from a different part of the room to Zika, and knew they couldn’t have observed things that Zika could see, and, in fact, claimed were objectively observable. However, they didn’t feel they could challenge her authority in the class context.

It perhaps became apparent that I was not as fully committed to engage in the practice, as I never made any active contribution of my own experience to the learning context as others did. Was this because I felt I would betray my critical disposition if I challenged the ideas circulating or was I just like many of the others who wanted to just ‘go along to get along’?

Yet not all the students were in full agreement with the paradigm of high culture espoused at the Ensemble Studios. There was one student who was frequently outspoken about her desire to get into acting because she wanted to “be a star and make money”. She wanted to get the skills that would get her the jobs in what might be considered popular culture (film and TV) rather than ‘high art’ (theatre).

When I commenced the RE:ACTOR course the question of my age surfaced when the time came to select possible monologues to prepare for the auditions. We were offered texts that had been nominated by NIDA and VCA over the last five years. None of these were suitable for a person of my age. Where a monologue for Biff, from Death of A Salesman, was suggested by NIDA and would be accessible for my fellow younger male students, I was probably closer
to playing the role of Willy. So in discussion with John Mildren, the principal tutor, it was agreed that I should find a piece for myself, appropriate for my age.

As in the Ensemble course, I didn’t challenge or express any disquiet in regard to the values that were being advocated in the course. I did, however, sometimes query the teachers to see how far they would argue for their particular beliefs, without revealing too much of my own position. It was starkly apparent that teachers made no reference to the theories or historical practices of theatre practitioners such as Stanislavsky or Strasberg. The only ‘authority’ that they referred to was *The Practical Handbook for Acting*, a text written by David Mamet’s acting students about his acting methodology (itself clearly influenced by, and a reaction to ‘Method’ appropriations of Stanislavsky).

Due to my primary commitment as a researcher, I could not ethically audition for the VCA School of Drama. However, as I have noted earlier in this chapter, I arranged for permission to observe their audition process in Sydney when they were interviewing potential students from NSW and the ACT.

Objectivity of research: Transcendence of perspectives

Ethnographers may seek out objectivity, according to Stewart, through “the values of alertness, receptivity to the views of others, empathy, and open-mindedness” (16). Therefore, he regards the accounting of the “trail” or ‘journey’ of the ethnographer as an important tactic in striving for a transcendence of perspectives beyond that of the researcher and the participants in their interaction with each other. The limiting challenge is that such research is highly situated in specific contexts and conditions and so there must be sensitivity towards considering results in their emergent contexts (31).
Interactions with other participants during the ethnographic 'journey'

While at the Ensemble, I became a source of intrigue to many other participants. It was apparent that my primary intention – that of researching actor training – set me apart from those who were motivated to train in order to get experience, and hopefully, acting work. Those with whom I regularly had coffee became more inquisitive about my special interest in training. When I indicated my interest in experiences of 'flow', 'connection', 'energy' and 'spirit', many of them wanted to share their experiences of these phenomena with me. Later when the subject of the paranormal and the spiritual came up in class discussion on a Saturday morning, several other students I knew made a point of later asking me how I felt about having my topic of research brought up in class discussion.

As I did form several friendships, I found some of them expressed significant disappointment that I could not continue to share in the 'journey' of the course with them. I consequently recognised another feature of communities in training. There was the desire for group solidarity and a growing trust and respect for each other. As each person stepped out into new and risky activities in the course, they came to depend more on an unspoken yet pervasive trust. There was always a sense of loss when a student dropped out of the course, even if not everyone felt the student 'fitted in' to the group ethos. I would argue there was an unspoken movement towards highlighting and acting out common values and marginalising differential and potentially conflicting values. This movement emerged as prerequisite for the newly formed group to create and sustain a sense of common identity. It was assumed that trust and respect were nurtured by minimising awareness of difference.

After the idealism of the Ensemble, I found the pragmatism of the RE:ACTOR tutors very confronting. It became clearly apparent that 'industry' expectations and standards were the primary influence on all aspects of training as advocated by RE:ACTOR. More significantly, where moments identified as
exemplifying 'connection' and 'talent' had only been encountered very occasionally within the Ensemble course, this became more important in the training practice and reflections of the tutors during the nurturing of our monologues. Throughout the RE:ACTOR course, there were frequent references to energy, flow, embodied connection and even an encouragement to "consider what spirituality feeds you", alongside professional practice. This appeared to be what we were all working towards – preparing our monologues and investing ourselves in them until someone witnessing our performances recognised that we had 'It'.

On the final day of the class, when we all participated in a mock NIDA audition and Call-back, I was regarded as a bit of an enigma. The feedback I received for presenting my audition pieces was that although I "demonstrate an excellent attitude to acting work", the teachers were "not sure if you’re really committed to acting". They did however feel that "at your age" there would be good opportunities in film and TV work. I began to wonder whether they had sensed somehow that I didn’t have sufficient desire – the 'It' factor, perhaps – to be chosen as suitable for further professional training. It would appear I had the craft skills and maturity, but not the drivenness or urgency to extend myself as a performer in that context.

Having recently completed my own audition pieces, I found myself initially judging what I observed at the VCA auditions through the criteria I had been taught by the RE:ACTOR course. It soon became apparent that the RE:ACTOR model was based primarily on understandings of what NIDA wanted (rather than the VCA), even though during the course they had claimed to prepare us equally for all the schools. Therefore, over the days of the VCA audition process, I had to 'let go' of my old expectations of recognition and try to view the auditions through what I gradually embodied as 'VCA' eyes. However, I did also make my own assessment of each auditionee based on my own 'reading' of performance, and what I felt affected me phenomenologically and culturally in response to the auditionee's work.
One of my lasting impressions of the final Call-back day process at the VCA auditions was the embodied sense of a privileged, even sacred space as Lindy and Richard directed all the final auditionees in what I judged as some fairly personally vulnerable work. The quality of the experience was almost seductive because of the heightened sensuality and loyalty developed between the students and teachers over an intense period of focus on text and performance. It was hard to be critical and questioning of the philosophy and practice of the VCA School of Drama after such a powerful experience of what might be considered an instance of Victor Turner’s spontaneous communitas – “a direct, immediate and total confrontation of human identities” (1982: 47).

*Sensitivity to context*

In each site, I sought to be appropriately transparent about my intentions in participating in each course. In each context, I was actively interested in any discussion that would develop around the kinds of experiences of flow, energy, connection, and spirit. However, I also sought not to impose my expectations on those with whom I interacted.

Until I attended the courses and VCA auditions, I hadn’t appreciated that most of those who apply for any further training were already significantly shaped in their acting practice by their experiences of drama in High School, or amateur companies, or private youth theatre courses. During my participation in the RE:ACTOR and VCA audition processes, the assessors expressed concern that many of those auditioning were already significantly formed by their prior experiences.

In particular, the VCA assessors commented to each other that they would have to spend time seeing if such habits could be altered through the training
approach of the School of Drama. The Call-backs at the end of the two weeks of auditions were used partly to see if certain auditionees could be shifted from former habits that were regarded by the VCA as problematic. Therefore, I came to regard this third context as another place of formation, or perhaps reformation, even though the audition process was not considered formally part of the School of Drama course.

Perspicacity of research: Value of insights

Finally, Stewart argues that effective ethnographic studies must not only offer new insights but that these insights should be valuable and potentially applicable to other places in human experience. For Stewart, a study’s ‘perspicacity’ refers to its revelatory insights that may be applicable in different times and places in human experience (16). He believes that Geertz’s prescription of “thick description” may often result in a perspicacity that is “overdetermined” and therefore restricted in its application to other sites (62). One tactic Stewart advocates is that researchers report “all the contingencies that inhere in or affect their proffered constructs and theories” enabling potential reconstruction or disconfirmation by other scholar’s reinvestigations (63). As I have indicated in my earlier evaluation, Stewart fails to take into account the unique embodied interaction between a specific researcher and specific participants who, together, produce meanings that cannot be reconstructed or disconfirmed. Nevertheless, I believe it is useful for me to identify in this section a particular frame of exploration I adopted, and which certainly influenced how I perceived and recorded my process of participation.

One limitation in the pursuit of perspicacity that Stewart identifies is the absence of an agreed classification of terms and experiences. Ethnography lacks the taxonomies that have enabled other ‘sciences’ such as biology to advance knowledge through a shift from common-sense classifications to delineated systems more useful to research. He believes that insights derived in one context may fail to “travel” across what he perceives as cross-cultural boundaries in
order to be compared elsewhere. Ethnographic comparisons tend to depend on inferred rather than verifiable similarities, and there are no particular properties that can determinately fix the boundaries of a particular category (50).

However, as I have indicated earlier in this chapter, Couldry (2000) et al. have challenged such notions of cultural cohesion and exclusion. Further, I have argued in Chapter Two that any attempts to classify experiences are subject to an ongoing process of deteritorialisation and reterritorialisation. Therefore, it may be more valuable to seek to describe and interpret the myriad embodied ways – gestural as well as verbal – that participants use to make meaning together in a culture, rather than attempt to ‘fix’ any particular categories of experience.

_Exploration of different ‘schools’ of formation_

There was a very strong sense, in Zika’s teaching approach, of the educational model of the classical Greek school of ‘penetration’, of the empty vessel being filled. One of her opening declarations that provoked a strong reaction in me was the statement that “we prefer to seduce you rather than rape you” – a statement that recurred frequently, in various forms, over the ten-week period of the first block of the course. The willingness and desire of the students to place themselves in this environment was evidenced by their articulation to me that they were willing to do whatever it took to become a successful actors. In the context of the Ensemble, it seemed the teacher desired to seduce her students, and in turn through her students, seduce the audience in order to civilise them. There are many students who desired to be initiated/seduced into the ‘powers’ of acting so they could also become ‘seducers’ on behalf of whoever will employ them. There was also an ongoing discipline/desire to shape the body into the habitus of the professional actor – the actor who could focus for three hours without a break, who could _see_ objects that aren’t there, who could adapt their physical and vocal patterns to the requirements of a constructed ‘character’.

153
The teaching approach was different at RE:ACTOR possibly because there is different cultural capital at stake in comparison to Ensemble and VCA. The teachers' reputations were dependent on the success of their graduates getting places in training institutions. Yet at the same time, the teachers were all graduates of the NIDA and were passing on those specific practices to the next generation of actors, irrespective of which institution they may eventually train in. The students' desire was to hone the skills that would convince the various acting schools that they have 'It' and that they are suitable candidates for further training to nurture and promote 'It'. Much of the training was about how to effectively commoditise the self so they could trade in symbolic capital to make a living. The 'It' factor was located in the practice of preparation and energetic commitment, but other factors that would affect selection were equally recognised – age, gender, background, attitude, market needs.

At times, I also sensed that John Mildren and the other teachers were acting out their own past experiences of being on the recipient end of training. During each monologue 'master class', John would position himself behind a small desk to take notes as he 'played' the role of assessor of our audition pieces. He would step 'out of character' to advise us on how to improve our monologues but saw his role was to judge us as we might be judged by NIDA or one of the other acting schools. In the first week of group games and improvisation exercises, John asked us to form a circle and gave us a ball to pass to each other. As we each threw the ball, we had to call out a consecutive number (from one to twenty). The aim was to develop concentration by never dropping the ball. One person fumbled the ball and dropped it. He giggled and apologised. John chastised him immediately: "Don't apologise! – Get over it!" As the game continued, others called out their numbers with little energy or confidence. John criticised them because their attitude would be judged in the games as well as in the monologue auditions. They must change their behaviour if they wanted to succeed.
In the context of physical interaction, required for ‘playing’ a scene, potential actors were confronted by their social and personal vulnerability with regard to social etiquette or taboo. For example, in one RE: ACTOR classes, John directed a male and female student to rehearse an action – “I shove you” – but they hesitated about touching each other. John immediately identified this as a hindrance: “Get over it! – Touching is a part of acting ... you can touch any part of the body excluding breast, penis and crotch ... When you do (and say) the action, you must mean it. Acting is not about pretending”. Over the duration of the course, the repeated challenge to the participants by John and the other instructors was to “get over it”. The implication appeared to be that any personal or social vulnerability was to be tolerated and accepted as part of the territory of being in the acting business.

During the VCA auditions, the most important material to record was the way in which the panellists interacted with those they thought had potential. At the end of one set of auditions (which I de/in-scribe more fully in the next chapter), a female auditionee was called back for further consideration. Richard asked her to present the monologue again as a person experiencing the character’s struggle rather than as “a performer”. As the monologue was performed, Richard actively ‘side-coached’ her. She was then asked to wait outside while Richard and his assessing colleague conferred. Their discussion of her ability concluded “... it’s all attitude ... she kept seizing up, tensing up when she was asked to ‘connect’ with the text, the character ... a lot of anger there ... she wont make it”. Richard then went outside to inform the auditionee that she would not be invited to the final Call-back.

On another day, during the reconsideration of auditionees, Lindy Davies side-coached several auditionees through their monologues. They left the room as she conferred with Richard. When two were invited back, she asked what they “found out.” One responded “… when you [Lindy] said, let the text advance, I
just stumbled all over it ... it seemed fake – but then I felt I could change (from how I had done it previously) and this whole new thing ... and then everything I did before felt false ..." The other commented "... hearing that you don’t have to do anything – that had a profound affect on me to be fresher with what I do ... finding a new way felt very different ..." Lindy added her affirmation "It is bravery ... how do you know where you’re going unless you know where you are? ... the language will reveal stuff to you ..." Both these auditionees were invited to the final Call-back.

In these sessions, I observed that the panellists were most interested to see if these potential students were willing to be shifted in their practice. The auditionees were physically separated from their peers [they would be invited back into the auditioning room] as having potential. Yet, in the room, that potential must include a willingness to be moulded by the teacher/practitioner. This was legitimised in that these potential students had the opportunity to see if they felt comfortable being shifted in this way. It also allowed the teachers to see if the students would be appropriately compliant and willing to take direction. However, what was most striking was the way in which the auditionees began to pick up on the discourses of the teachers and play with these in order to demonstrate that they shared the same values and aspirations as the school they desired to study at. It was also evident if they didn’t know what ways of speaking would get them a second chance to be considered. Some clearly floundered for ways to articulate certain experiences. Yet, subtly, it was when some floundered in trying to describe their experience in terms of flow, energy, connection and transcendence, that this inability to articulate was regarded as an authentic awareness.

Throughout the VCA auditions, the teachers sought out students who could be moulded into a particular practice of “autonomous acting” (this specific VCA term will be elaborated on in the next chapter). These could then be successfully marketed out into the industry as valuable graduates from VCA. The VCA is
conscious that it does not have the same symbolic capital as NIDA and its long history of successful graduate capital. Instead, VCA currently locates its value in terms of the particular system of training that Lindy Davies has instigated that is believed to produce actors who can produce a particular quality of work (i.e. not recognisably NIDA). Unlike the Ensemble, there wasn’t a sense of ‘penetration’ by the teacher but rather a disciplining of the actor’s body towards a particular habitus. The VCA incentive was that of finding the impulse and, according to Lindy, allowing the self to “listen to your body, be affected by the words, the movement, the stillness, the quiet, the light, the shadow…”

Conclusion

I have outlined what has been ‘at stake’ for me as a researcher as I have participated in and endeavoured to make new meanings out of my enquiry into sites of actor formation. Ethnographic practice is an inexact science and yet it is also primarily an embodied and interactive practice involving participation rather than participant observation. Through a consideration of the different research methods of Geertz, Stewart and Bourdieu, I have demonstrated how I systematically, practically and critically approached the task of research. In particular, I have discussed how Stewart’s concerns for veracity, objectivity and perspicacity have been addressed in my research practice through prolonged fieldwork, effective relationships in each site, careful tracking of the research process and a reflexive acknowledgement of the primary frame of exploration. In the next chapter I will provide a de/in-scription of my initial participation in each site as a prelude and siting for a detailed genealogical analysis of the sites in Chapter Six.
CHAPTER FIVE:

Inscribing participation

in the siting of actor training

Over the preceding four chapters, I have outlined what I regard as the interpretive enablings, constraints and strategies in my research into experiences of the ‘It’ factor in sites of actor formation.

In Chapter One, I argued that in such sites, dispositions of vulnerability and experiences of intercorporeality are significant components of what is at stake in the ‘game’ in which actors and their teachers are engaged – Bourdieu’s illusio. Particular understandings of the world and the place of human bodies become the presuppositions or doxa that sustain these illusio. I identified three modes of being – givenness, agency and disposition – as elements of the doxa that circulate in the field of acting. I argued that through recognitions, misrecognitions and formations of givenness, agency and disposition, the field of actor training was reproduced as natural and normal. I proposed that an application of Foucault’s archaeological and genealogical analyses could usefully track the discourses and ‘events’ of embodied practices that tend to reproduce the struggles for cultural capital inherent in the field.

In Chapter Two, I offered various phenomenological and genealogical readings, rather than solutions, to invoke challenges in the doxa of talent circulating in the field of actor training. In particular, I problematised the belief that teachers and students are self-contained, self-sufficient and self-determining human beings. Throughout, I suggested how insights from phenomenology and Foucault’s archaeological and genealogical approaches may be used as an interpretive framework or Deleuzian re-territorialisation for each site in which I participated.
In Chapter Three, I drew specifically upon Foucault's archaeological approach in a review of the discourses of embodied formation and interaction that have circulated in actor training scholarship. I illustrated, by an analysis of these scholarly texts, how various authors, contributors and practitioners themselves recognise and misrecognise the significance and affects of the embodied relationships between actors, and between actors and their intended audiences. It is these discourses that teachers and students draw upon, in their meaning-making together, and that contribute to the illusio of givenness, agency and disposition. At times, these relational modes of encounter and interaction appear so natural that they are taken for granted and are not made subject to analysis and reflection. In retrospect, I would argue that it was my complex participation as student and as researcher that resulted in my preoccupation to 'make strange' such formational discourses and practices while trying to fit in with the formational process of each institutional site.

In the preceding chapter, I 'took a step back' to reflect on what may be at stake in embodying ethnographic method in sites of actor formation. I compared the relative merits of Bourdieu, Stewart and Geertz's approaches to research method, noting the valuable interactivity of critical reflexivity, veracity, objectivity, perspicacity, description and interpretation. The remainder of the chapter focussed on an application of Stewart's checklist to my emerging research method. This was done in recognition that subsequent chapters would interweave practices and insights of Geertz and Bourdieu as I offer an account and interpretation of my participation.

Hence, I offer this chapter as a means of de/in-scribing my 'sheer' and emergent 'beginnings' in each site, with a particular focus on the theatrical agency proffered by each institution. As I endeavour to 'site' each set of experiences, my emerging interpretation and/or awareness of what may be 'at stake' in terms of the illusio of agency will factor more significantly as I move from one site onto the next. My experience and responsiveness to each site informs how I consequently recognise and misrecognise each subsequent site. In the next two chapters, I will draw upon Foucault and Bourdieu, 'making strange'
each site as I seek to reflexively produce 'new' or 'innovative' meanings from my participation.

'Sheer beginnings' with the Ensemble Studios

Orientation Day, Ensemble Studios: February 5, 2000

The Ensemble Theatre is located on the Sydney harbour front at Milson's Point. As I enter the reception area a young woman warmly greets me and hands me a copy of the Ensemble Studio syllabus and application form. As my eyes adjust to the low-lit interior, I observe several young people standing, leaning against a wall, or sitting on chairs, or sitting on the carpeted floor, all carefully reading their copies of the syllabus. They all seem to be avoiding eye contact betraying a certain anxiety with others that pass through their space. How are we to view our fellow, potential student colleagues? Are they the competition? Do they 'look' talented? Will I fit in here? I decide that until more is revealed, as the social dynamic unfolds, that I would be best advised to adopt a poker face – an attitude, I note, that is adopted by several others attending this Day.

In the foyer, I notice several young individuals with their parents. These are probably senior high school students or just out of high school, yet I find it significant that their parents are here with them. I wonder if this is to ensure protection? To safeguard against getting “ripped off”? Or have they come so that they know, firsthand, what they are about to invest in? I feel slightly relieved to also see a few more mature individuals entering the theatre foyer with their syllabuses. Some young students, that I suspect are already studying at the Ensemble Studios, greet each other and those handing out the syllabuses. They are buzzing about classes, rehearsals, the latest Ensemble Theatre production – lots of 'theatre energy'! I consider that this sense of excitement is what draws many into opportunities like this private school. I find a place near the entrance to the theatre space and begin to read the syllabus ...
Soon, a young man announces that we should all make our way into the theatre, as the session is to commence. We enter the theatre space. The house lighting is subdued as though a performance will shortly commence. The theatre space consists of fairly steep seating surrounding the stage space on three sides, with an apparently solid wall as the backdrop for the fourth side of the stage. It is set with props for a current Ensemble Theatre production of a play entitled "How I learnt to drive", which features several Ensemble graduates. The furnishings in the theatre are contemporary and comfortable.

Zika Nester and her celebrity graduates sit together about half way up the third section of seating furthest from the theatre entrance. We, as potential students, sit on the other two sections of seating and face towards them. There appear to be between 40 and 50 people attending the session. Among her celebrity graduates, I recognise Lorraine Bayly, Lenore Smith and Max Cullen – all known for their performances in Australian television and theatre. They observe us as we file into the space. I contemplate who will perform for who?

Zika indicates that she will deal with general questions about the Studio, its program and vision. She expresses appreciation that so many of the celebrity graduates have shown support by being there "at such an early hour" – 9:00 a.m. – when "normally actors are sleeping between their hectic schedule of performance and rehearsal at night." Zika would like these graduates to contribute and answer questions first so that they may leave earlier. After they have gone, she will answer specific questions about course logistics.

Zika asks if there are any questions – what would people like to know? Silence. The graduates and Zika look at us. We look at them. Silence. Then Max Cullen stirs to life with a story of his early days training at the Ensemble. It could be said that he 'steals the limelight' – he 'breaks the ice' – he entertains us with his laconic, dry manner. Is he acting or is he being himself, I wonder?
After his story, Zika explains that the Ensemble (Studio) doesn’t hold auditions for selection into the course. The reason cited is that the evidence of natural talent is not the predominant industry requirement to make it. The Studio offers a wide range of techniques that could be applied to a variety of acting requirements. All teachers at the Studio have trained under the guidance of its founder, Hayes Gordon [who died in late 1999]. Zika distinguishes among other approaches to actor training in the past – how they prepare a role by working from the outside in. She observes, “Hayes taught that the actor should start on the inside.”

The following comments taken from this Day reveal key values and beliefs about actor training at the Ensemble:

Zika explains that “The Studio is about how to solve acting problems, and equally about how to become aware of what the problems are in acting. The Studio, the graduates enthuse, provides a ‘toolbox/toolkit’ to solve all acting problems.” Lorraine Bayly supports this necessity for the toolbox because “directors often don’t have time to point out/suggest what may be the problems in the performance.” She stresses the importance of the Studio teaching techniques that enables the actor to “reproduce over and over again.” In this context, another graduate tells the story [which may be more mythical than factual] of Lawrence Olivier locking himself in his dressing room after a particularly successful performance. When colleagues expressed concern over why he was upset over such a brilliant performance, he was claimed to have responded, “I know it was – but I don’t know how I did it.”

One graduate praises the Studio for the structure and discipline evoked in the course in that it shapes the whole person: “Through the course you will not just become a better actor but a better person.” Another graduate observes that “the Studio enables you to have control – what choices to make, what techniques to help the character emerge – so many tools at your disposal.” And just as we are feeling overwhelmed by the technical intensity and disciplined devotion of acting, one younger graduate alters the tone of the meeting by saying “And it’s fun!” Everyone in the room laughs with apparent relief at this point. Yes, that’s why we were here to learn to act – we want to have fun!
Zika proposes that the course “unlike other courses” is not one where the actor is “gradually moulded into a saleable commodity.” All who train are encouraged to “develop your own unique capabilities.” She confidently reaffirms that no other course has as many techniques to create an effective “toolkit” for the actor. The Ensemble is concerned with training “good craftspeople.” The first half of the course provides the actor with the tools – the second half of the course allows opportunity to put it all together through active involvement in at least five in-house productions.

At this point in the Orientation day, Zika speaks of the revitalising of the Ensemble Repertory Theatre – an ongoing theatre company for the further development of Ensemble graduates. In case there was any confusion, she reiterates that the founder of the Ensemble was Hayes Gordon – “a genius” – who died in late 1999. He developed an acting program, drawing on the work of Stanislavsky, Strasberg and Gordon Craig, amongst others, allowing for a great variety of acting choices and levels. She also mentions Gordon’s published biography and acting text – both “sadly out of print.”

Drawing on such a foundation, Zika highlights some of the attitudes that the Ensemble would nurture among its students – “a love of theatre”; “that actors are servants of the public”; “that acting is a humbling process”; “that you will be taught how to manipulate yourself and the audience”; “that you will become a good critic of actors who are faking it”; “that you will learn to govern your own performance.” Max Cullen adds to the discussion on acting values. He recalls the metaphor that “acting is like carrying a loaded gun”; that “plays affect the community.” Max observes that it was the “sense of responsibility” for the actor’s craft that drew him to a career in acting.

A young woman in the audience asks a question about how training at the Ensemble would help her get a job in acting? Such a question immediately shifts our thoughts from the idealistic to the pragmatic.
Lorraine Bayly reiterates the value of the course in encouraging uniqueness:

“everyone is unique … when a particular quality is required for a job the work will be there. What keeps you committed to acting when there is so little ongoing work is ‘the fire in your belly’ … the unquenchable desire. But desire alone, is insufficient – acting is also about 90% perspiration and dependability (such as turning up on time to classes, rehearsals and auditions).”

Zika assures us of the Ensemble’s integrity in that individual progress would be assessed every ten weeks:

“The Ensemble is a safe, confident environment where you can learn through the mistakes that you will inevitably make – if you don’t have the guts to be a fool, you don’t belong here.”

One of the graduates affirms the supportive atmosphere and that one grew as a person, and not just as an actor. This leads to a question about the vulnerability of the actor. Zika counsels: “You need both the heart of a dove, and the hide of a rhinoceros.” The actor, she observed, needs to be able and open to be vulnerable to the emotional dynamics of the work, but also needs appropriate protection. At this point in the Orientation session, Zika excuses her graduate ‘stars’ and we applaud them as they depart.

Zika outlines the mechanics of the Studio. The program consists of five semesters of 30 weeks each semester. The first 30 weeks (one semester) deals with the senses, the imagination and the intellect. The next 60 weeks (two semesters) deal with the feeling function and motivational techniques. These 90 weeks make up the content part of the course. The remaining 60 weeks are concerned with “packaging the content to sell to an audience, so that a performance is always interesting.”
After the first 60 weeks, a course in acting for the camera is included in recognition that actors need to be able to use techniques in all acting mediums – radio, TV, film, corporate video, etc. Zika notes that “acting is the only profession where you are the raw material” so there are special classes for body and voice, including movement and dance, because “you are both the instrument and the player.” She reiterates that “acting is a very difficult profession – it is also incredibly rewarding – it is the ability to affect an audience, to change people, to civilise an audience.”

There are both theory classes [consisting of lectures and demonstrations] and workshop sessions. The course requires a major commitment, but it is designed to accommodate fulltime work to support the student during the three years of study. Zika acknowledges:

“This is also the demanding reality of acting as a vocation – when you’re not acting, you’re working a job to pay the bills – at night, you rehearse. Very few people make a living from acting alone. All your paying jobs need to be flexible jobs, to accommodate the various demands of auditioning, rehearsing and performing.”

At the conclusion of the Orientation Day, a current student of the Studio expresses her passion for the course, in spite of her initial uncertainty at the start, “... at times you’ll leave the class crying, terrified ... but they’ll get results out of you!”

Siting the Ensemble Studios

The founder of the Studios, Hayes Gordon, was frequently invoked throughout the Orientation Day and subsequent course. A biography on Hayes Gordon by Lawrence Durrant (1997) gives not only biographical insights into Gordon but also into those, most influenced by him, who remain integral to the Studios: people such as Zika Nester. The genesis of certain values and attitudes that were presented in the Orientation Day can also be located in this account of his life and influence.
Hayes Gordon arrived in Sydney on January 1, 1952, from America (79). He went to Melbourne to perform in *Kiss Me, Kate* and got special mention from critics for his versatility. It was while Gordon was working in Sydney during the brief season of *Kismet* in 1956 that Doris Fitton, founder of the Independent Theatre invited Gordon to talk to her acting class (102).

Durrant suggests that Gordon’s experience of psychotherapy helped him refine his teaching method. He claims that Gordon was “impressed by the way a good therapist guides you, not providing ready-made answers but leading you into making your own discoveries of truths previously hidden from you” (136). One actor, Henri Szeps, describing his reaction to a 1962 Ensemble production, is quoted by Durrant as saying “I could not believe what I was looking at. It had nothing to do with what I’d seen until then. It was totally different. It was not acting; it was behaving, existing” (137). But at the same time, Szeps found the actual training process very demanding:

We went through this long, tortuous process, breaking down every ounce of self-confidence you had as a performer, then rebuilding it, gradually. Hayes is a perfectionist and he saw the wrong ways of thinking about acting, the wrong ways you were going about the craft, and was simply fixing that. If you’re very insecure – as most actors are – then taking away those supports was devastating. You end up with nothing. Of course, some people never picked it up again. The road was strewn with bodies. But, if you could hack it ... (Hayes used to say, “If you can’t hack this, you shouldn’t be in the business, because it’s a lot tougher than I am.” He was right.) If you could hack it, the grounding he gave you was extraordinary. (138)
Zika Nester, the current Registrar of the Ensemble Studios, joined the classes in its early days. She recalled to Durrant that Gordon could be so harsh! He used to give us what we called The Treatment. I was in tears so many times! ... The point is, he knew. He’s a good psychologist. He knew which people could take it. And it was never unwarranted. The reason I kept going back was, I knew what he was saying was right. But I would take short cuts ... So I used to argue. I needed taking down. Some people would say he robbed me of authority. But he gave me the real authority: the authority of knowing one hundred per cent, not just having superficial knowledge. (139)

It is striking that the rubric of vulnerability appears in each of these accounts. For Nester and Szeps, rather than simply being a desirable quality, vulnerability is predicated as the prerequisite for a life on the stage – although re-reading the quotes, they actually do not talk about vulnerability so much as about resilience, and a willingness to survive, having been ‘wounded’ in the practice of performance. Szeps, reiterating Gordon, claims that you need to learn to ‘hack it’; Nester implies that she had to let go of ownership of her judgements in order to ‘receive’ full authority. Unlike some other acting schools the Ensemble Studios never auditioned applicants because it was believed that the ultimate determinant of success was not some innate gift but the “grittiness of character” (230).

This apparently harsh treatment, intended for the students’ ‘own good’, is also validated by a higher humanistic ideal of working for social change through theatre. Durrant suggests that the core of the teaching was an idealism about the theatre’s place in human society and, consequently, the actor’s moral
responsibility as the theatre’s primary agent (139). Gordon often quoted an aphorism attributed to playwright Clifford Odets: “in theatre, words are bullets”. Durrant argues that, for Gordon, the Theatre came to represent a weapon he could use to assert his ideas. As Gordon told interviewers, “We would like to leave the audience a little bit richer, more endowed and a little bit more civilised because of the show” (Durrant 1997: 228). Yet he also identified the process of entertainment as the seduction of the audience:

What we try to do is bring issues to the surface so they can be discussed, weighed up, argued. We don’t say “This is the way to think” ... Theatre doesn’t rape; it seduces. (Gordon in Durrant 1997: 229)

This was one recurring metaphor of vulnerability that surfaced frequently during my experience of the course. However, it must be acknowledged that this institution never hides this demand for vulnerability and risk. It is repeatedly spelled out at the Orientation Day, and the printed syllabus available that day.

The School for Actors syllabus consisted of an 11 page, black and white glossy brochure (Ensemble brochure 2000) giving details pertaining to the history, professional philosophy, course curriculum, workload, enrolment and attendance requirements, including commendations from several ‘celebrity’ graduates (Jack Thompson, Lorraine Bayly and Henri Szeps).

In it is noted that “acting is one of the most alluring, seductive yet difficult occupations ... you should be aware the actor’s life is a tough one: disciplined, competitive, gruelling and insecure. But the rewards are great and can come to you in different ways and at different times” (Ensemble brochure 2000: 2). Under the heading, For those who aspire to be professionals there was a warning that
This course is not for the faint-hearted wanting to learn how to ‘express themselves’ or ‘meet people’. It is a rigorous, strenuous and at times, emotionally demanding course. It is designed to train the student’s mind and body to enable them to pursue a successful career in the professional arenas. (Ensemble brochure 2000: 4)

In a similar vein, students were discouraged from taking any professional work opportunities for the duration of the course as

[ll]earning a new approach to acting can be a disconcerting experience to those who have a pre-conceived notion of what acting should be. This means some students with strongly reinforced ideas may find themselves caught between two theories. Their old approach may be unsatisfactory but readily available. The new one may seem better but untried (Ensemble brochure 2000: 9).

The course would introduce the student to the actor’s unique “tools of trade”. Acting was the only profession where the professional actor was

at once the raw material and the final product for consumption. So our tools are designed to manipulate every part of ourselves. That includes all personality traits that we are prepared to draw upon to create a wide range of characters and relationships. (Ensemble brochure 2000: 5)

Reading of any theories of acting was not requisite. According to the syllabus, the required reading for the course consisted of only two listed texts: Audition by
Michael Shurtleff and Roget's *Thesaurus* (Ensemble Brochure: 10). This appeal to the primacy of the mind and body of the actor as the practical tools to be honed through practice was evidence of the predominantly practical and psychophysical nature of the training. As indicated, during the course of the Orientation Day, classes were designed to develop or form techniques that became the tools of the actor.

By comparing the Orientation day and the accompanying syllabus with Durrant's biographical account, it can be seen that Gordon's ideological and even pedagogical presence looms large in the practices of the Ensemble Studios. Further, Durrant tracks those graduates and proteges who continue to reproduce the ideological and practical elements of the course.

In de/in-scribing and siting this initial engagement with Ensemble Studios I wish to draw attention to how I came to 'distance myself from' or 'make strange' the teaching emphasis on "breaking down" in order to "rebuild". This intentionality towards shaping students with "the heart of a dove, but the hide of a rhinoceros" emerged as a recurring motif over the ten weeks I participated in the course. I, however, became more wary and alert to any class discussions or bodily practices that might produce such an outcome.

Yet, at the same time, I was also strongly drawn in by the emerging sense of 'community'. Drawing on my initial experience of Orientation and my subsequent research into the history of the Ensemble, I came to recognise the sense of 'family' that was invoked by the ongoing presence of successful graduates at the Orientation and, as teachers, in aspects of the course. As I indicated in the previous chapter, there was an unspoken nurturing of group loyalty within which one could perhaps feel safer in order to be broken and rebuilt as a performer who would have the power to "civilise" audiences. As Zika highlighted at the Orientation day:
"The Ensemble is a safe, confident environment where you can learn through the mistakes that you will inevitably make – if you don’t have the guts to be a fool, you don’t belong here."

Now I will introduce you to my beginnings with RE:ACTOR.

‘Sheer beginnings’ with RE:ACTOR Acting Services

Orientation Evening, RE:ACTOR Monologue Audition Course: June 1, 2000

The venue for the classes is a small office unit in an inner suburb of Sydney. There are nine young women and four young men in attendance as I arrive. The only more mature participants are a woman [in her forties] and myself [42 years old]. The youngest woman is doing her Higher School Certificate in the year of this course [2000]. Upon arrival, each person is asked to complete a detailed application form that includes the question: “why do you want to do this course?” I indicate that I want to prepare for the possibility of auditioning for various drama schools, as I am researching places of actor training.

The director is John Mildren who describes himself as a NIDA graduate who started RE:ACTOR with fellow graduates in 1994.\(^3\) John informs us that the chief aim of the monologue course is to help us either get into one of the acting schools or to get acting work. He stresses that RE:ACTOR wants to “stay small” in order to ensure they look on everyone with “personal interest.”

RE:ACTOR seeks to be very realistic to the industry. John observes that “wherever you are on one rung, we help you get to the next rung.” Any practical questions we may have will be directed into our skills development over the duration of the course, and therefore any feedback they give is intended to further our careers. For example, they might suggest that we do further work through classes at the Actors Centre or Pulse [a private drama school based on the practice of Meisner]. Every one of RE:ACTOR’s

---

\(^3\) Subsequently, when writing up this account, I learnt that Mildren was not an acting graduate from NIDA, although he had studied at NIDA and assisted at many NIDA Audition events.
tutors was already out and active in the industry, performing, auditioning, and casting. But John also acknowledges that there is nothing wrong with teaching of crafts that require many years of focussed skill. RE:ACTOR predominantly calls upon NIDA graduates to assist with teaching. At this point, he mentions the other tutors who assist him: Helen Dallimore [NIDA graduate, 1995] who had been teaching at RE:ACTOR for 4 years, Paul Barry [NIDA graduate, 1996] who also taught Camera technique, Blair Cutting [NIDA graduate 1995] and Jason Clarke [VCA graduate].

John outlines the format of the RE:ACTOR Audition/Monologue Course:

Week One consists of basic theory and language associated with auditioning, script analysis into beats, actions analysis into beats, the journey of the character, the turning points in the journey and finding the right piece to audition. John comments that the right piece shows acting schools our “marketing range” because at the end of three years training the schools will have to “try to sell you.”

Weeks Two to Five consist of Master Classes to help us with our “contemporary” piece “on the floor.” In addition each week, there will be a 45-minute improvisation workshop to introduce various warm-up games that are used by the various acting schools as part of their auditioning process.

John comments “I have spies everywhere (in all the acting schools).” That, he explains, is why he can teach what are the likely improvisation games to be used. He will also advise us about the do’s and don’ts of auditions and application processes, as he and the other tutors have all been through the audition process as applicants or as acting school graduate assistants at auditions. At this point in the evening, John emphasises that “whether you get in or not, depends on how much work you put into it.”

Weeks Six to Nine will be Master Class workshops on the Shakespeare monologues with Blair Cutting.
Finally, Week Ten will be a Mock Audition of nine hours duration that simulates a “good NIDA audition” plus the recall process, together with individual feedback by the RE:ACTOR tutors.

John observes that in the last term at the end of 1999, RE:ACTOR had a 60% success rate of its students auditioning for schools. If any students of our group are actually successful to the Call-back stage of NIDA, RE:ACTOR will also give free advice for selecting a contrary piece for the NIDA Call-back. John asserts that film, TV and especially theatre acting doesn’t “pay the bills” so therefore RE:ACTOR also prepares actors for TV commercials and corporate castings “where you may feel like meat on a hook.” He acknowledges that personal appearance is very important in “getting the gig.”

The Orientation session concludes with a short dialogue scene being handed out. In contrast with my experience at the Ensemble, we are required to give a brief audition to John and Helen to assess if we would benefit from the course they offer. So, one by one, each of us auditions in private with them. They have set up several portable dividing walls in one part of the room, with a table, three chairs and a video camera on a tripod. This is the ‘private’ audition space. In each audition, either John or Helen observes, takes notes and records the audition on video, while the other acts opposite each applicant with the same audition piece. The rest of us waited outside this space, reading over the audition piece, completing our application forms and looking at possible monologues we might prepare if we are successful in getting into this course. We are told, prior to this process of video auditions, that we will be contacted by phone if our audition has been successful. When contacted, we would then be able to nominate whether we prefer a late afternoon or evening workshop. The improvisation workshop would occur for the combined larger group between the two smaller Master Classes. After each applicant auditions in ‘private’, they leave the meeting space.
Siting RE:ACTOR Acting Services

I had seen an advertisement in the Sydney Morning Herald on Saturday May 20, 2000. The advertisement appeared in the “Auditions” section of the Spectrum supplement (a section dealing with arts and entertainment) rather than the “Courses and Private Tuition” section, possibly to attract the attention of aspiring performers who are constantly looking for a “break” into the industry, and read as follows:

Applications open for RE:ACTOR FINAL CALL

Our next courses, taught exclusively by NIDA graduates and industry professionals, operate 1 session, 4 hours weekly. Continued proven results in all areas of the industry.

1. Monologue/Audition Course for actors auditioning for NIDA, VCA, WAAPA, etc.

2. On Camera Screentest Technique Course, specifically relating to TV/Film casting.

3. Showreel Production Course, for actors requiring fully professional shot/edited showreels.

Brochures, appointments ph.9665 6965, 12 – 4 p.m. Mon – Fri


The range of courses on offer are intended not so much to train actors in a general sense but specifically to get either into a competitive training course or, through a coaching in specific marketing skills such as producing a showreel or performing for screen tests, into the industry directly. This emphasis on preparation for auditions, casting and showreels gave RE:ACTOR a distinct
market separation from the many private and Government-accredited acting schools listed in the same newspaper under “Courses”. As I had learnt from the Orientation evening, RE:ACTOR advocated that not all people find that acting school suits them and that they may ‘have the talent’ to get work without formal training.

The heading for the advertisement, RE:ACTOR Final Call, conveys a recognition of what is always at stake in the industry. The way actors gain employment is predominantly through series of eliminative auditions until a ‘final call’ secures a job. The next statement in the advertisement locates this course as run by “NIDA graduates” (read ‘industry’ standard) and “industry professional” (read ‘working’ professionals). This pragmatic, business-like approach to acting was quite removed from the humanistic ideals of the Ensemble and the desire to “civilise people”.⁴ There is also a web site at http://www.reactor.com.au offering details of all the courses on offer plus costs, times and dates. The following appears on their homepage, highlighting the competitiveness of the field and RE:ACTOR’s commitment to preparing people for work in an industry⁵:

Every year approximately 3,600 people audition for NIDA, VCA, WAAPA and Nepean. Of these, collectively, only 125 are accepted by these schools. This represents only a 4% success rate.

---

⁴ Since I completed the Monologue Audition Course, RE:ACTOR Acting Services has begun a partnership with Prototype Casting, and moved to Fox Studios in Sydney. The course I did is now referred to as the Drama School and Theatre Audition course.

⁵ I have taken the liberty of quoting the document in toto, so as to accurately capture the ambit of RE:ACTOR’s claim.
RE:ACTOR'S success rates over the last 5 years of our clients accepted into these schools average at over 50%. 75% progress through to a recall situation, which increases their likelihood for success the next year.

As actors who met while studying their acting degrees together at NIDA, the partners of RE:ACTOR were inspired to start a learning centre which would meet the specific needs of actors in Australia, as opposed to general acting classes that are high on rhetorical advertising and low on actual delivery.

Class sizes are kept to a minimum, to ensure maximum hands on time for each client with their tutor. Our determination is to provide actors with various courses that are directly aimed towards a particular goal. We make a genuine and determined effort to view each and every client as an individual, with individual needs.

In demonstrating our commitment to this, we undertake the following:

We individually interview every new client who applies for our courses to ensure we have appropriate clients working together within classes, and to ensure the class suits the client.
We provide individual feedback sessions with each client at the conclusion of all courses with a senior RE:ACTOR partner/tutor, where we give the client practical suggestions as to what they can do next to advance themselves within the industry. With all our current and ex-clients, backup support and advice is given to all, free of charge, regardless of whether they are currently enrolled in a course or not.

Access to the RE:PRODUCTION database, a completely free and ongoing service for ex-clients. See "RE:PRODUCTION" in the "services" section of this brochure.

Classes are run at Beginners, Intermediate and Advanced levels. We cater for all actors, from those starting out who need guidance in taking practical and effective steps to enter the industry, through to professional actors who need help with particular areas of their craft, individual coaching for screentests [sic], showreel editing, and so on.

**RE:ACTOR courses are designed to deliver exactly what our clients expect** (bold type as per web site)


This made the course very attractive to anyone who thinks they could have the talent to make it. There was the sense that once in the 'network' provided for all "clients" of RE:ACTOR, that a 'lucky break' could come. There is also a significant degree of cultural capital at stake in the way the courses are run.
predominantly by NIDA graduates. NIDA is considered the premier acting school in Australia. Yet there may also be a cynical questioning of why Mildren and his fellow NIDA graduates need to establish RE:ACTOR SERVICES if they have been so well trained. However, any lingering doubt is put to rest by the implication that these graduates are working professionals in touch with industry trends and requirements.

As is evident in my siting of RE:ACTOR, I was already much in-formed by the 'culture' of the Ensemble. I found myself repeatedly responding to the 'differences' of RE:ACTOR by comparison to the training at Ensemble throughout my time of audition training. The strongest initial impression I had of RE:ACTOR was that the teachers were committed to helping us, as upcoming actors, find our 'places' in the industry. There was no question of 'if' but only 'where' we might find our unique 'niche' in the marketplace – "getting the gig". Although, I initially felt very out of place among so many younger auditionees, I was quickly persuaded by the teachers that I might have a unique place as well, "especially in film and TV" – as a middle-aged male with a thoughtful demeanour. This was certainly an incentive for my participation in the course alongside the others.

These participatory experiences of in-forming, mistrust or questioning of practices, and sensitivity to difference would become more apparent as I negotiated my participation in my final site – the Sydney Auditions for the VCA School of Drama.
‘Sheer beginnings’ with the Sydney auditions for the School of Drama, Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne

Sydney auditions: November 24, 2000

The venue for the auditions is the main rehearsal room at the Australian Opera Centre in the inner-city suburb of Surry Hills in Sydney. There is a sign outside the room that reads: VCA Auditions: You are being auditioned by Lindy Davies and Richard Murphet. The rehearsal room is located on the first floor and the windows on one side of the space face out onto the main street. There appears to be no air-conditioning available in this space and, being a hot day, the windows are opened, letting in intermittent traffic noise that the auditionees have to contend with. There are two tables, located in front of the windows, with the documentation of all the auditionees for each day. The VCA assessors sit behind these tables. To the right and left of these tables are single chairs, in a single row, facing into the space. This is where the auditionees sit as they watch each other perform for the assessing panel. There is a large wall of mirrors on the left-hand side of the space and another table on the right hand side of the space with disposable cups, bottles of water and brochures about the VCA. Auditionees have been entering the space since 9:00 a.m.

The warm-up begins at 9:30 a.m. and is led by two VCA first year students. There are seven male and five female auditionees who are attending this audition. When they applied to audition they each received a booklet with all the set monologues – Shakespeare and contemporary [including Australian texts] – to choose one of each. They are all wearing loose clothing – T-shirts, jeans, track pants – and most have bare feet for the warm-up process.

I sit near the desk with the assessors as this warm-up commences. The assessors, Richard Murphet [Head of Theatre Making] and Lisa Sheilton [Head of Movement], are busy organising the applicants’ forms for this session and discussing how they will proceed, paying little or no attention to the warm-up process. I am surprised by this lack of
interest having just completed the RE:ACTOR course in which I was told that the adjudicators would be watching everything about the auditionees from the moment they entered the space.

The warm-up begins with a name game to help ‘break the ice’ between the auditionees. The VCA students then invite them to form a circle in the space and lead them through the following warm-up:

“Focus on your breathing below the navel
Chill out, relax
Lift up your arms to extend your body above your head,
Then drop your arms and body down with a release of any sound you wish
Then slowly roll up your spine to an upright position – slowly roll up the vertebrae,
Deep breath in,
Release the breath.”

The students now invite them to move around the space and become more energised:

“Focus on your breathing – release your breath/presence into the space – give yourself a massage on your face – hum – vibrate your lips/voice – keep walking – brush your teeth with sound – keep breathing – continue moving around the space – shake out any tension – make any sound – explore the space.”

After the auditionees had done this, the VCA students ask them to stand still where they now find themselves:

“Grab your hands together and shake out any tension in your body – do shoulder rolls – keep focussing on your breath – deep down into your abdomen – close your eyes – focus breath right – clench your jaw – release – feel the release at the back – clench your hands into fists – release – breathe – tense arms, shoulders – let it go – tense legs, bum, stomach – feel the breath drop right down – release – feel the breath, how it releases from your body – make a chewing action, get your tongue involved as well – finish with a
slow spinal roll – then a minute to run through your pieces, a minute for yourself of quiet … [all the auditionees do this spinal roll down] … when you’re down there, we’ll give you a bit of a shake … [as the auditionees are each shaken by the VCA students, they then roll back up] … find your voice in the space … [the auditionees start vocalising bits of their audition pieces] … there’s water over here, and there are toilets down the corridor.”

As the auditionees prepare themselves in the remaining quiet, Richard asks them, by name, to call out their choices for their Shakespeare and contemporary monologues. He arranges these so that, as far as possible, there are minimal repetitions of the same piece.

Richard invites them to take their seats (on either side of the audition tables) and he steps from behind his chair into the space in front to welcome them. He introduces himself, Lisa and explains that I am there as an observer, doing doctoral research into the process:

“Auditions are an unreal situation … you’ve learnt the texts as audition pieces, but now (you need to) find a space for yourself to contact the reality of the piece … give yourself time to get involved … use the (VCA) students as support (for your audition) … we’ll then take a break, and then go through your contemporary pieces … (we’ll) call back those who we’re interested in making further … [inaudible – the outside traffic, at this point, made it difficult for me to hear what was the word he used here] … (then there’ll be a final) Call-back (on Friday week) and (then you) become a star! … [everyone laughs at this point] … don’t do the audition to us (the adjudicators) … take the centre space … if you ‘dry’ ask for the line from one of the VCA students (who will be following the text).”

There is now a time of silent preparation. Once everyone is seated, facing the empty performing space, Richard calls out the order in which the auditionees will present their Shakespeare monologues. The auditionees then proceed to present their monologues in turn.
At 10:20 a.m., all the Shakespeare monologues have been presented – the auditionees are asked to step outside the rehearsal room and take a five-minute break. After they have all left, with the VCA students, Richard and Lisa confer as I watch on. Richard makes a general comment that “there’s something there.” He also observes that the audition group is a little older that the previous morning’s group – most are in their early twenties.

At 10:30 a.m., the auditionees are called back into the room to present their contemporary monologues. After they have all auditioned, Richard instructs them to take all their bags, etc and wait outside until they are called back or dismissed. Once they have all left, Richard and Lisa discuss the following auditionees and consider whom they may call back for further consideration:

One male auditionee “has size, bravery, great voice, great energy, [he is] out there, 19 years old … needs to not be so conscious of himself … worth trying him …”

One female auditionee “… needs to consider why the character (the monologue she presented) is saying this … she understands the oddness in the person, as more fascinating than funny …”

Another male auditionee “… didn’t feel the text … there was a shield … seems quite shy, a whole facade, possibly …”

Another female auditionee is assessed as “… clear, simple, not cluttered”

Richard and Lisa decide to call back these four and talk to each of them first, before doing any work with them. They invite the second male auditionee in for an interview and ask what he will do if he is not successful in getting into VCA. He responds that he has auditioned for other schools. They invite him to come back to the Call-back. However, it

---

6This particular auditionee’s encounter with the assessment process was of special interest and will be addressed specifically in Chapter Seven
appears that the auditionee is part of the Higher School Certificate Art Express touring company and therefore may not be able to come to the Call-back. Richard advises that the auditionee will have to make a choice as there will be no other opportunity.7

The first female auditionee is called in to be interviewed. She informs them that she has only applied to VCA. She also indicated that she was specifically interested in the way VCA approached training, as she had done a workshop with Richard and read a lot about the course. Richard asked her to talk about how she decided on the characterisation for her contemporary monologue. He then asks her to do the monologue again, just sitting in the chair, without trying to 'perform' it – just to recount the character's story:

The female auditionee starts her monologue. Richard interjects:

"... the need to say it is important ..."

The auditionee starts again. Richard stops her:

"... tell it, remember it ..."

She starts again. Richard interjects half way through her monologue to get her to be more definite with the story.

"... where did 'you' (the character) say it?"

The auditionee completes the monologue. Richard asks her to wait outside, while he and Lisa confer. Richard observes:

"... it's all attitude [her presence] ... (she) kept seizing up/becoming tense when she was asked to 'connect' ... a lot of anger there ... she won't make it ..."

7 In the subsequent Call-back day, this male auditionee doesn't return for the final audition process.
Richard calls in the other female auditionee for Lisa, while he goes out to speak to the first female auditionee.

After initial discussions, during which Richard returns, Lisa asks this second female auditionee to present another monologue that hasn’t been presented before [auditionees are asked to bring additional, prepared monologues in case they are called back for further consideration].

This female auditionee presents her monologue without interruption. She is thanked and asked to wait outside. Richard and Lisa confer:

“... constricted voice ... New Zealand accent ... she’s going to the NIDA audition as well ... she’s just ‘there’ ... she lets herself get taken [there] ... she can’t breathe, but maybe its where she’s at, as a person ... let’s encourage her to keep working at her craft ...”

Richard goes out to speak with her. During the subsequent lunch break, Richard recounts his experience outside with the first female auditionee. He observes that she became defensive when he asked her “Are you willing to be changed?” He encouraged her to come and visit the VCA and see it to get a sense of it with the invitation to “come and allow yourself to be changed.” The discussion over lunch between Lisa and Richard continued along this line of thought:

“... are students open to change?...”
“... are students teachable to learn techniques that will open them up to themselves in interaction with the text and each other?...”
“... there are no right or wrong theatre solutions ... only an open, inviting, responding praxis...”

After lunch, the three of us return to the rehearsal room for the afternoon audition group.
Siting the School of Drama, Victorian College of the Arts

I didn’t come to this third site naïvely, either as unaware of the values of VCA or of the particular context of auditions as a privileged event to be privy to. I had been able to secure this access through prior discussions with Lindy Davies, Dean of the School of Drama since 1995.

I e-mail my paper on Actor Training and Spiritual Formation, which I have previously presented at a Departmental post graduate seminar, to Lindy Davies. I receive a very enthusiastic e-mail response from her, indicating that “we must talk” when she will be in Sydney for the direction and performance of “A Month in the Country” by Turgenev at the Drama Studio, Sydney Opera House for the Sydney Theatre Company (STC). I phone her to make a time and she strongly indicates that I should see one of the performances before we meet so that I would “understand” her approach when we speak together. I agree to this condition and see a performance.

The program for Davies’ production of “A Month in the Country” offers her own detailed account of her approach to rehearsal and acting in general. Davies’ process is based upon the belief that actors “have the gift of revealing the complexity of language.” She sees the need to reclaim language and acknowledge that it has the power “to dislocate our complacency, invigorate our minds, dissolve our lethargy and restore our hope.” Her role as director is to create a clear framework of meaning whilst providing the space, time and atmosphere for actors to embark on what she describes as “a true organic investigation of the text.” “Organic”, on this account, means, “characterised by connection or coordination of parts in one whole, organised.” Actors ‘naturally’ translate words into experience in that their work is a fusion of intuition and the form of language and action. The actor’s gift lies in this ability to reclaim language. Davies believes that this practice allows the actors to “empower the audience by expanding their consciousness and understanding of the world” (Davies 2000b).

In the program, she describes how she prepares actors by teaching them to create a state of active readiness, “by finding a point of stillness, and through active meditation achieving a state of dynamic receptivity.” She uses the metaphor of a still pond into
which small pebbles are dropped. In a similar way, actors learn to “drop language into the stillness of themselves and the meaning resonates through them until they find the impulse to speak.” Any actions are also developed spontaneously in the here and now. She challenges the actors to work off impulse to “advance meaning whilst creating and sustaining an imaginary world.” What is of dramaturgical significance is that she sees this practice creates an event where an audience “may experience the inexpressible and comprehend the inexplicable” (Davies 2000b).

Several weeks after the performance I visit Lindy at her temporary home in Surry Hills in Sydney. There is little furniture but she offers me coffee and some biscuits and we sit down on her lounge setting to talk. I begin by asking her some of her background that has led to her particular approach to theatre-making and training.

Lindy informs me that she first arrived at the concept of “the autonomous actor” in 1979, although her formative theatrical experiences had been in the context of the political theatre scene at Monash University in the late 1960s. Although she never trained as an actor, Lindy was concerned to find ways that would make an actor free from stage fright, and experienced what she describes as a “breakthrough” when she encountered Transactional Analysis and the concept of “negative voices”. Lindy explains to me how she understands that an actor’s experience of stage fright may be attributed to an accumulation of negative ‘voices,’ from the past of the actor, diminishing a sense of self-worth. She set about to develop what she describes as “creative positive self-regard”. Lindy was already familiar with the practice and writings of Dorothy Heathcote on drama in education, and identified that a key learning was that “empowerment came through people changing their (existing) state.”

The “miracle”, as she referred to it, was her subsequent experiences with Odin Teatret, Yoshi Oida, Peter Brook’s “Mahabharata” at the Festival of Adelaide, South Australia in 1988, as well as her enquiries into Buddhism, Shintoism, Aikido, Kendo and Eastern meditation practices. All these experiences contributed to her initiating a practice of impulse at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), initially from 1979 to 1982. She describes impulse work as “bypassing the rational self towards realising an egoless state.” Lindy observes that it takes this period of time to “crack the work of realising the
egoless state through the physical” but she found that “language was still a problem.” Her developing practice of “dropping in” text was influenced by Cecily Berry whom she regarded as “not sentimental about language.” However, another crucial factor in developing a satisfactory approach to the integration of language had been the application of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP). Such practices recognised connections between the various senses of the body in relation to skills development.

In considering how her unique practice would be passed on to subsequent generations, Lindy explained that she had tried developing apprentice teachers but that this “hadn’t worked – because it’s not a dogma – the work comes through me.” She concluded that she must continue to “articulate the work (because) it can’t be passed on to other teachers – the “work” has nothing to do with me, but once it is passed on to actors it becomes dynamic – I don’t understand it – it keeps passing on.” Lindy described the actor–training model as “training you in the inexpressible, training you in the invisible, training you in the ephemeral.” There was also, she noted, an important kinaesthetic component to the training. However, her policy through VCA was that she only trained people “who will make a contribution to the industry.” This was her goal in setting professional standards as “vocation entails sacrifice.” Her greatest challenge was helping students become egoless and autonomous when they were very often “products of negative parenting and materialism.”

Although, I indicate I could not participate in any significant short-term training as part of my research, she invites me to attend their Sydney auditions towards the end of the year for the 2001 VCA Drama School intake.

Reflections on the first day of auditions

The decision by the VCA to invite some of its first year students to assist in the audition process suggested the confidence with which the institution believes its pedagogical values are already ‘embodied’ in those it trains. The use of warm-up exercises before every audition conveyed a recognition of the embodied nature of the work (unlike the absence of regular warm-ups in either the
Ensemble or RE:ACTOR courses). The VCA first year students demonstrated both a warm-up practice and discourse through which the auditionees could find recognisable ways to make meaning together with those who were assessing them.

Richard’s formal acknowledgement of the audition process as removed from the context of performance demonstrated an awareness of some of the limitations in which potential ability was recognised. However, he was ready to articulate that “there’s something there” when the auditionees had their break after the Shakespeare monologues. This articulation of such intangible experiences re-appeared in many discussions relating to the potential of auditionees to gain benefit from the course.

Most significantly, the initial Call-backs allowed both teachers (in this case, Richard and Lisa) and potential students (the auditionees) to test if they would be able to work together in a particular pedagogic style (though it is not formally presented in this way). Usually, auditionees with ‘potential’ would be ‘coached’ through their prepared monologues to see if they could “be shifted” in order to “open them up to themselves in interaction with the text and each other”. The physical practice of breathing (as modelled in the warm-ups) was combined with focussed side-coaching to engage with the text – two techniques from a broader pedagogic practice specific to the VCA.

Lindy Davies has developed this practice in conjunction with her colleagues. In the School’s publication, The Autonomous Actor: The Performance Handbook for Actors 2000 (which was available for perusal over the two weeks of the Sydney auditions) the method of approach includes the note:

It is a transformative model rather than a transmissional model. In other words, the principals are embedded in skills classes and then disembodied as the actors participate in an ongoing dialogue with their work. They continue to develop
their skills through the process of practice: rehearsal and performance. This model demands that the students fully engage with the process of experiential research while gaining a mastery of their skills. They must develop accountability through self-awareness and eventually achieve artistic autonomy. (Davies, et al. 2000a: 6; emphasis in original)

Autonomy is positioned as a crucial feature in the philosophy of the School in the belief that it "fosters vision and originality in performance-making and production" (Davies, et al. 2000a: 1). Artistic autonomy is proposed as achievable through the development of "an internal evaluative mechanism that enables them to claim their independence and power" (Davies, et al. 2000a: 7). However, while autonomy is to be nurtured, it is also to be monitored and recognised through continuous assessment. Throughout the course, they will be assessed, not only in terms of attendance and participation, but also in terms of:

[...]  
5. **Authenticity:** students are expected to work truthfully (emotionally, physically, psychologically, imaginatively, and vocally) in a variety of forms (eg. the class, the project, improvisation, with text).  
6. **Commitment:** an ability to act with conviction and commitment in the class and performance situation.  
7. **Risk taking:** there must be evidence that the student accept challenges in the work and are willing to work in areas that are personally outside their usual range: – physically, emotionally, and vocally.  
8. **Transformation:** an ability to transform – there must be strong evidence that students have the
ability to transform themselves into other characters.

[...] (Davies, et al. 2000a: 16)

It is significant, in this section of the Handbook that “[s]tudents are also required to have submitted their self-assessments before they are entitled to receive staff assessments” (ibid), in the light of the complex dynamics of recognition, misrecognition and formation that will be explored in the next two chapters.

My own experience of the first day of auditions was again a ‘culture shock’, as a result of comparison to my experiences at the Ensemble and RE:ACTOR Services. I would therefore imagine that this was also the case for the majority of those auditioning who had trained in other places prior to this audition. Possibly, like the auditionees, I found myself taking critical notes about whether each auditionee had evidence of ‘It’ in their monologues. However, until I got to know what the assessors were ‘looking for’, I had to rely on my previous training from RE:ACTOR for what to look for in a performance – my own and others. Questions of recognition and misrecognition, without any consideration of Bourdieu, seemed of paramount importance in securing a place in the field of acting.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have de/in-scribed the beginnings of my participation in each site. Each subsequent site provided a context for the in-forming of how I would consequently recognise and misrecognise each site’s advocacy of a particular notion of agency. Each institution is committed to a distinct ideology – a set of beliefs concerning dramaturgical agency – regarding the role and authority of the actor in relation to an audience, and in relation to the market. Yet they all make claims to develop skills or abilities latent in students, their givenness, that will be recognised by the industry and thus lead to professional employment.
In the context of my research, the agency advocated by the Ensemble Studios is that actors are to be trained to civilise audiences for the development of a just and equitable society. RE:ACTOR Service’s sense of agency is about training actors to give the public what they want in, what is identified by the institution as, a consumer culture. The School of Drama’s vision of agency is more transcendent than these other institutions in that the actor is invited to be transformed by the process of performance, thereby setting in motion the transformation of the audience.

The givenness and latent talent that is recognised in students by each institution evokes a sense of purposefulness in the institution’s agents. It is the teachers who recognise the potential and it is therefore they who know how to nurture or ‘draw out’ what is purportedly ‘in’ the student. The Ensemble will equip its students with a “toolbox” – the tools already exist ‘in’ their embodiment – the body as instrument – but this instrument requires shaping and habitualising. RE:ACTOR Services will compel its students to make lots of choices and take action on those choices – choices about who they are (as actors and as their characters), what resources they have and how they might most effectively display and ‘sell’ them. The School of Drama will persuade its students to alternately drop ‘in’ the text and drop ‘themselves’ in the text. This purportedly will produce what the teachers will recognise as transformative, authentic and risky ‘in’ the student.

The leading stakeholders in these institutions (i.e. administrators and teachers) see part of their function is to locate those individuals who already can demonstrate that they have certain qualities – ‘It’, spirit, flow, vulnerability – an observation repeatedly borne out by my experience in each site. Their concurrent role is to assist students in unlearning poor or counterproductive practices. Furthermore, they must prepare students for their professional place in an unpredictable and volatile industry. The Ensemble Studios, RE:ACTOR Acting Services and School of Drama, VCA all make the claim that “we’ll get you in” (to the Industry).
However, having begun to track givenness and agency in these sites, I do not want to neglect the most 'taken-for-granted' aspect of what I have postulated as the doxa in sites of actor formation – disposition towards others. The mutually constructed nature of such dispositions is difficult to discern. In each institutional site, teachers and students enable and constrain each other by their actions and responses to each other. In their interaction, they produce a particular habitus through the patterning effects of communicative actions towards each other that are performed as enduring, yet potentially transformable, bodily dispositions (Stacey 2001: 130). The way Zika, John or Richard interacts with the students will tend to produce certain responses that will usually tend to reinforce what they believe to be the circumstances at hand. It may only be if a 'difficult' student produces a 'surprise' in the awareness and experience of the teacher, that dispositions towards each other and performance practices may shift. It is dispositions that enable and constrain the reproduction of a collective cultural history for each site.

At the time of my participation, the predominant discourse in each site appeared to negate its own potency, by directing the search for knowledge and skills away from cognitive reasoning and towards bodily experience (guided by the teacher/facilitator). Knowledge and skill were seen to be in the body of the student, rather than in the teacher, yet the experience of the body was understood as validating the wisdom of the teacher as the guide to the student's body. Students and teachers, together, are looking for recognition of what appears to be a knowledge and skill beyond words – 'It'. In Chapter Six, I will argue that it is the gestural and nonlinguistic as well as discursive habituations, that I have participated in, that in-form the practice of teachers and students as they endeavour to recognise 'It' in their experiences with each other.
CHAPTER SIX:

Offering a genealogical account of

sites of actor formation

Returning to the 'living present' of social contexts

In Chapter Three, I advocated Foucault's genealogical strategy as a tool for tracking the dominant presuppositions and practices that undergird and produce, simultaneously, certain forms of givenness, agency and disposition through actor formation. Therefore, this chapter will address how ways of speaking of, recognising/legitimising and producing bodies in practice have the tendency to reproduce themselves. I will draw attention to specific events in sites of training I have participated in where relations of power between teachers and students are manifested. Through an analysis and review of interactional discourses, negotiations of power/knowledge and various bodily techniques in actual pedagogical practices and experiences, I will now offer readings of site-specific dispositions towards intercorporeality and vulnerability.

In the first collection of events, I will consider how, as apprentice actors, we learnt to converse about our perceptions and experiences of intercorporeality and vulnerability. As an actor, a new way of being (in)vulnerable and sensitive to the intercorporeal required new ways of thinking and therefore speaking of what one could know and experience. Concomitantly, what could be spoken of, was what could best be known, and understood as that which could be known. Those experiences that would be difficult or awkward to articulate, for fear of conflict or confusion, would be left unsaid. Through this implicit practice, we were being taught to re-think how we should know and experience the world and each other. In review of these sites, I offer an alternative dynamic for the
way in which discourses of experience may be re-configured and extended to a broader range of interpretations.

Second, I will examine events from each site in which we learnt how to gain access to the knowledge/power required for performance through indicating, in our discourse and our bodies, signifiers of vulnerability and intercorporeality. Each institution disciplines how qualities of performance would be and should be recognised as effective and 'authentic' through actions of approval and correction. We were to learn ways of embodying a recognisable intercorporeality and vulnerability as purportedly self-contained and self-determined. Through a review of how knowledge/power is recognised and legitimised, I introduce a consideration of Foucault's observation that resistance inevitably appears alongside the exercise of disciplinary power. Although there will never be emancipation from sites of discipline, I argue that there is a potential for renegotiation of relations of power.

Third, I will recount my own experiences of bodily formation through which, in hindsight, I perceive I was shaped and habituated into the specific practices and techniques of each site. These techniques were not articulated as such during the process of formation/habituation, but, were rather experienced and embodied. In this way actor training institutions are formative of bodies not just through conscious and often articulated discourse but through the continuum of persuasion-coercion, or enabling-constraining, between the bodies of teachers and students. It becomes a question of the quality of ethical interactions between bodies in the process of maintaining and sustaining particular power relations. In review, I will offer readings of this persuasive-coercive behaviour that may be also interpreted as manifestations of dependency along a continuum of culture and cultic. Such dependency is an inevitable outcome of the embodied belief of "belonging to the field", as Bourdieu describes it (1990: 67).

Finally, I offer an account of how the renegotiation of the relations of power between teachers and students is actualised though never formalised. It was evident that, as teachers and students recognised and misrecognised their
interdependencies, how they became together, was what was at stake in the three cultures of actor formation in which I participated.

Speaking the intercorporeal in actor formation.

"I’d rather leave that alone": Ensemble Studios

During the sixth week of my participation in the Ensemble Studios Acting Course, Zika Nester observes in our Saturday morning class:

"... our mind can make us do incredible things ... there are certain things that actors have known that science now knows ... experiencing in our senses, things that are actually not there ... so many things have not yet been proven ... for example, telekinesis ... most people don't believe it, but I could move the opponent's bowls (when I played lawn bowls) ... I became known as a 'witch' ... I would practice putting a pen down (on a flat surface) and moving it along with my mind ... after I'd done it I was exhausted ... I believe in telepathy because things have happened. I believe a lot in parapsychology ... I'm sure telepathic waves will be explained (as science has explained other phenomena eventually) ... nobody knows how to tap the resources of the mind ... there are spiritual people who say the world isn't ready for it ... we are in a crazy world because people kill in the name of religion ..."

A student mentions that she thinks of people and 'knows' things are happening to them.

Zika responds:

"That's intuition."

Another student shares that she has visualised hitting another car, while driving, and that later on she did hit a car.
Zika responds:

"If we function (as actors) purely on our intellect (that's not enough) ... if we function (as actors) purely on our intuition (that's not enough)... we have to hone them both ... this course is predicated on opening up the passage between the conscious and unconscious ... if you can affect one person in an audience, you've done your job... actors have that power in front of people ... one by one, you actors become the force that civilises people ..."

The following Saturday, a student asks Zika about spirituality.

She responds:

"I'd rather leave that alone – it's such an individual scene ... at this point, it's nothing that can be learnt from and therefore we leave it alone – we let you do your own thing ..."

First, in this event, Zika spoke of purportedly paranormal experiences using, what may be considered, contractions of power, connection, energy, awareness, and control. She makes one reference to “spiritual people” but concludes, “it's a crazy world when people kill in the name of religion”. It's worth acknowledging that this comment was made before the event of September 11, 2001, in New York. Subsequently, she discouraged discussion of any of these experiences under the contraction of spirit, as she appeared to equate spirituality exclusively with religion. I, however, was left wondering why these contractions, paranormal and spiritual, were apparently polarised in Zika’s discourse? Why was she unaware of, or resistant to, possible deterritorialisations of such contractions or categories? Instead, the spoken use of contractions of energy, flow, and connection were regarded, within this site, as preferred and legitimised accounts or representations of intercorporeal experiences. Speaking of the contraction of spirit was problematically tied to one particular discourse, religion. Such spiritual conversations were therefore marginalised or excluded from ways of speaking within the Ensemble Studio. We learnt it would be more
comfortable and appropriate not to bring matters of religion and the spiritual into our classes.

Second, there was a reaffirmation of a particular givenness for the actor – a series of distinctions between mind and body, between conscious and unconscious, between intellect and intuition. Zika claimed that "... our mind can make us do incredible things ... this course is predicated on opening up the passage between the conscious and unconscious ..." She also spoke of the actor's agency in that "... if you can affect one person in an audience, you've done your job ... one by one, you actors become the force that civilises people ..."

Yet there was no conversation about how the actor actually affected the audience – was it physical, emotional, semiotic? Her examples of her own psychic powers and reference to telepathic waves implied that she was appealing to some form of radiating power or force to use in performance. What was significant was that her conversation of these experiences became implicitly an invitation for the students to share their experiences without fear of judgement or ridicule. There was an emerging sense for us, as students, that we were being given affirmation, insight and access to a larger, mysterious range of experiences. Zika indicated the desired disposition for the professional actor was having power – "... actors have that power in front of people ..." This would be achieved very much within the self-determined and owned 'mind' (and presumably, body) of the actor. Through our loyalty, obedience and belief in the practices we were being trained in, we could eventually possess this 'secret' knowledge and access to special powers to affect an audience.

"Take a risk, get over it!": RE:ACTOR Acting Services

In RE:ACTOR's first class, in the bare office space, there is a workshop on warm-up games that may form part of the audition process at drama schools. As we play a ball
game there is some awkwardness and embarrassment. When one person drops the ball, he giggles and apologises.

John Mildren reprimands such behaviour:

"Don’t apologise – get over it!"

Later that evening, John introduces us to how to approach a monologue:

"... how do you bring it (the monologue) to life? ... after selecting your monologue, you need to read the play, to understand what has happened before this monologue, and what happens as a consequence of this monologue ... there is only one crime in acting – not making a choice ... making a choice about how you will work with a monologue reveals that you have prepared, but, if you come in saying “I don’t know” or asking someone else to decide for you, it’s no good ... you need to break it down into ‘beats’ or sections or thoughts of the character. Acting is not about what you’re feeling ... this requires no connection with the scene ... but every beat is about what you are doing to the other person ... feelings come as a by-product of the action; they arise out of the actions, out of the thoughts of living ... acting, without exception, is about the portrayal of real life. Therefore, when you rehearse ‘seeing the event’ you play the actions and not manufacture the emotions ... in a monologue, you are talking to someone, you are trying to affect that person ..."

In the following week, John reminds us to:

"let the body embody the journey of the psyche ... the only thing that stops you is fear – so take a risk, get over it – get over the fear of foolishness or failure ... listen to your body and where it leads you ... don’t internalise – give out."

In the monologue workshop, John helps a shy man, in his mid to late twenties, develop his piece. It transpires that this man has done this course before and been unsuccessful in auditioning for drama schools. He has asked to do the course again.
John advises him in his monologue:

"The only thing that stops you is fear – so take a risk, get over it – get over the fear of failure and foolishness … every action you play has the quality of 'victim'"

At this point, the man explains that he is currently in a court case for compensation.

John continues:

"Stop apologising at every beat; whining at every beat … these are hard things to hear, I know, but otherwise the future is all down hill – so take a risk, do it – you can, on camera – because I know you can do better – I like you as a person – don’t give up."

The givenness of the RE:ACTOR-trained actor was more immediately holistic towards mind and body than that of the Ensemble – "… let the body embody the journey of the psyche …" However, we were being taught that such a ‘journey’ should be about making choices and embodying actions in which "… you are talking to someone, you are trying to affect that person …" The focus of dramaturgical agency was on doing vulnerable things rather than being or feeling vulnerable. Any choices we made about the attitudes and intentions of the character (that we interpreted from the monologue text) should be demonstrable through embodied actions. However, these actions should always be accessible to assessment through specific articulation of objectives. Therefore, when asked in an audition why you behaved as you did you should be able to give a verbal justification for your choices. Such choices purportedly could be based on reality because it was strongly asserted that "… acting, without exception, is about the portrayal of real life”.

Our sense of self, as embodied, was the crucial site of vulnerability. It became apparent that certain manifestations of vulnerability were not things to be embarrassed about or spoken of. John’s frequent reprimand was “Don’t apologise – get over it!” This became a recurring statement throughout the course. John also repeatedly spoke of the value of risk-taking advising students
that "the only thing that stops you is fear – so take a risk, get over it – get over the fear of foolishness or failure ..." In this claim, we found ourselves encountering the paradox of vulnerability/invulnerability as a requirement for the proficient actor. We were constantly advised and encouraged to take a risk and "... listen to your body and where it leads you ... don't internalise – give out". Yet, an apparent polarity emerged between reasoned choices for action and 'gut' choices to bodily impulses, though this was never articulated as such. Perhaps, John's alternating advice of making choices while letting the body "embody the journey of the psyche" was intended to allow us to experience rather than talk about the validity of these recurring paradoxes.

"Listen to your body, be affected by the words": School of Drama, VCA

A male auditionee is called back after the group auditions. Lindy Davies coaches him as he again presents his "Mark Antony" monologue.

Lindy advises:

"... let go of the way you (first) did this ... don't achieve anything emotional with this piece ... go moment by moment and be really aware of allowing the language to advance you"

The young man begins his monologue with occasional interjections by Lindy as he works through the text.

Lindy:

"... where are the "butchers", who are they?... where's the "blood"? ... I want you to experience the blood ... you are feeling you need to do something – don't decide – give yourself time to see the blood ... have you ever touched blood? ... tell me about it ... tell me about the word "costly" ... why "costly"? ... I need you to reveal it to me ... I need you to reveal by experience – not by emphasis ... the relationship (with Caesar) is
expressed by the words, so let yourself experience the relationship … the task is to find the impulse to speak – allow the reality of the scene to drop into you … breathe … where are the wounds? … ah, right, OK, so … go back to the “wounds” … you’re going to what? … eat?, meditate? – oh, I see, thank you very much … OK, terrific, thank you, next …”

After this coaching session, as Lindy and Richard confer privately, Richard says he believes that the auditionee “seemed lost” but Lindy “feels there’s something else (there).”

Lindy senses:

“He shifted, but he may not survive, physically.” [The reference to physicality may be due to the fact that he is of a stocky build and slightly over weight.]

Richard responds:

“I didn’t [see the shift]… what would he be like to try and shift (once he is in the VCA course).”

They invite the young man and another auditionee back into the room to talk further with them. Lindy asks what he found out in the process of being coached.

Male auditionee:

“… I started to focus more on what, word by word, was the relationship to Caesar.”

Lindy:

“… what effect (did it have)?”
Male auditionee:

"... a personal one? ... I think it made me look more introspective ... I don’t know how it looked …"

Lindy:

"... I’m not asking about performance …"

Male auditionee:

"... made me concentrate on order (of the journey), less on lines …"

Lindy:

"... you need focus, concentration, rigour, breath, centre of the moment and letting it happen to you ... the language working on you ... be willing to let anything happen ... use any technique ... breathing, meditation, go for a long walk, make yourself sit, breathe, focus, get clear, be still."

Subsequently, the young man is invited back to the Call-back day. In the afternoon, Lindy introduces the remaining thirteen auditionees to impulse work, as one of two final tests. As she begins the impulse work, she makes reference to a meditation exercise they did at the beginning of this day about creating a sphere of golden light to work from.

Lindy directs them:

"... Walk around the space ... recall the golden beams of light creating a golden sphere around you ... experience the reality of being in the centre of that sphere ... follow two impulses – to walk, to stand still... be true to yourself ... be in the centre of the action of walking... be in the centre of the action of stillness ... listening with your body, seeing with your body ... find the distinction between the impulse and your decision ... the impulse is where you find yourself walking ... deciding is where you choose to walk ..."
allow yourself to be affected by the sound of silence ... by the sound of movement ... by the sound of stillness ... in a moment, I'm going to start someone working on their Shakespeare ... allow yourself to be affected by the words, as well as by the movement, the stillness, the sound, the silence, the light and the shadow ... find the impulse to speak, let the reality of the play to drop in ...”

During the impulse workshop, Lindy coaches the young man as he works, yet again, through his “Mark Antony” monologue,

Lindy:

“... listen to your body, be affected by the words, the movement, the stillness, the sound, the quiet, the light, the shadow ... find “gentle”…”

Later on, Lindy again coaches the young man:

“... not word by word ... find the sweep (of the text), you’re the greatest strategist in the world ... that what? ... that “lived” ... of what? of what? ... I’ve got “tide” ... move on, move on, come on, ... move it, go, go, go! [Lindy starts clapping her hands with a regular beat] ... double speed time! ... run, run, run [Lindy claps her hands again] ... oh, clearer, clearer ... that upon what? ... “limb”! ... which part? ... all the parts? ... not some? ... OK, just remember, stay in there, use modern references ... Lebanon, Israel, tell us what sort of strife it is ...”

Again, further on, Lindy coaches him:

“... below the earth? ... so it is not buried, so what is it going to do? ... what are you going to do? ... start again ... not adjusting, beginning from where you are ... basic principle ...”

During the debriefing discussion, the young man makes a contribution as to how he felt during the process of the impulse workshop in that he was “always looking for rules ... scared of freedom ...”
Lindy asks others about their inner state in the work.

One candidate says: "... a strength of stillness ... coming back to breath, calm ..."

Another says: "... like a meditation, but the drop can happen so quickly ..."

A VCA graduate says: "the 'state' gives you energy ... the other actors give you energy ..."

The young man is not offered a place.

Having participated in the Ensemble and RE:ACTOR courses, I felt I could negotiate how to speak of making choices to affect the other or to listen to the body. However, it was like a culture shock for me to witness auditionees, at the VCA auditions, being counselled to "... go moment by moment and be really aware of allowing the language to advance you ..." This approach seemed to invoke a new demand of vulnerability. The VCA assessors carefully advised that auditionees 'let go' of all that they had consciously prepared and 'trust' their bodies to be affected by the text, rather than 'master' the text - "... I want you to experience the blood ... you are feeling you need to do something - don't decide - give yourself time to see the blood ..." In hindsight, I can acknowledge that choices were still being invoked. However, in the moment of the audition process, it seemed that a qualitatively different manifestation of vulnerability was being produced. This was possibly to help the assessors with their doubts about the dispositions of actors towards formation, such as when Richard queried "I didn't (see the shift) ... what would he be like to try and shift (once he is in the VCA course)?"

Over the two weeks of observing auditions for the VCA, I also encountered some potent metaphoric expressions inviting actions of the auditionee. Phrases such as "allowing the text to drop in", "coming back to the breath" and "find the impulse" were crucial to this final audition stage. By the end of Call-back
day, it was apparent that several auditionees had learnt how to converse knowingly about what is required and recognised. One auditionee could speak of the experience in terms of "... a strength of stillness ... coming back to breath, calm ... like a meditation, but the drop can happen so quickly ..." However, it left me wondering about the failure of the young man to get into the course. Was this because he didn’t pick up the appropriate disposition and experience these special qualities, or was it because he didn’t know how to talk about whatever it was that he did – or didn’t – experience?

**Review: Articulating the intercorporeal**

The way language is used in these sites of actor training, in my understanding, suggests that teaching and learning are never neutral or objective in relation to the formation of knowledge as purportedly discrete data. Instead, teachers and students participate in the exercise of power in determining what is to be recognised as legitimate and socially useful knowledge and how that knowledge is to be legitimately represented through language (on the dominant presupposition that language functions as a ‘representation’ of knowledge). Language is used as the action of social discourse to shape experience and interpretation concurrently as we “make sense” of and interpret what we experience and perceive.

As I outlined in Chapter One, Stacey argues that knowledge is always a relational process that cannot be located in individual minds or stored and shared as an institutional *asset*. Rather, *knowledge assets* only emerge in the patterns of relationships between members of an organisation or institution (98). What Stacey wants to emphasise in such relationships is the primacy of individual bodies:

> [T]he human mind is not separate in any way from the body, but neither are the processes of mind located in the body ... The action of walking is
performed by a body and that action is neither separate from the body, nor is it located in the body. (100, 101)

It is the public and private actions of individual bodies that enable cooperative and repressive activity, by communication, through the medium of symbols as gestures *thrown together*. Stacey suggests that action as communication, including the operational use of tools such as language, can only be reproduced and potentially transformed, rather than stored. However, some territorialisations of gestures for communicative action are recorded and ‘stored’ in artefacts such as concepts, words and books. It is only in the contextual actions of using these and other artefacts that knowledge is created or reproduced and meaning emerges (101). In Deleuze’s terms, it is in the interactions between people that artefacts are constantly *determinational* and *reterritorialised*. Stacey concludes that meaning or knowledge, itself, cannot be stored as it is an interaction of the private and public, symbolic gestures of bodies. At the same time, all actions are also affected by history. Therefore, any current *action*, as either a symbol or tool, is simultaneously enabled and constrained by actions preceding it. Current context and previous history concurrently pattern the actions of the body (*ibid*).

However, as gestures can be *thrown together* in varying ways, Stacey proposes certain distinctions, in conditions and outcomes, among *protosymbols*, *significant symbols* and *reified symbols* (102):

Protosymbols are expressed in the medium of bodily rhythm as the throwing together of the rhythmic body pattern of a gesture by one individual body (A) with that of a response by another individual body (B) to constitute a meaning:

bodily gesture (A) – bodily response (B)

= symbol = meaning (105)
Stacey suggests that protoconversations (in which protosymbols are constituents) are, simultaneously, present in all other forms of conversation because all conversations involve bodies, and therefore involve feeling dynamics. This dynamic is understood in terms of bodily resonance as an account of the empathy and attunement that two or more people can have together without anything being shared or transmitted from one to the other (104-105). For example, there were many events in each training site where we all participated in activities. Nothing was said but a sense of coming together was produced through our gestural intentionality towards each other. Frequently, such moments unfolded into significant symbolic actions:

Significant symbols throw together a gesture by one individual body (A) with a response by another individual body (B) and a similar response in individual body (A) at the same time to constitute a meaning:

\[ \text{bodily gesture (A) – bodily response (A)/(B)} \]

\[ = \text{significant symbol = meaning (107)} \]

Another layer of meaning-making is added, according to Stacey, through the inclusion of significant symbols. Significant symbols are the consequence of actions where one body calls for a similar response from another body. It is in this context that the vocal gestures associated with language come into prominence. In the context of the sites that I participated in, such language would include the everyday conversations by which we sought to socialise with each other in order to go on together. However, Stacey stresses that these vocalised and silent conversations simultaneously take place as actions of the body to make meanings, uniquely in-formed by each body’s history. The significant symbol also indicates potential future actions between the bodies. This simultaneous meeting, between two or more bodies, of historical past,
living present and potential future allows each to reflect-in-action over the meanings that are emerging as they interact (106-107). At the same time, much of this reflection-in-action may be further negotiated through reified symbolic actions:

bodily gesture (A) – abstract framework – bodily response (A)/(B) = reified symbol = meaning.

[...] A reified symbol throws together the gesture with an aspect of the context, that is an abstract-systematic framework, and in the process comes to represent and refer to it in a way that is identified or fused with the phenomenon being explained as though it were that phenomenon. (108, 109)

Where human communication is simultaneously most profoundly enabled and constrained is in the interactions that emerge through reified symbols. Stacey suggests that the usage of language, which emerges in significant symbols, also opens up the possibility of the creation of abstract-systematic frameworks as particular ways to talk about assumed, shared meanings (ibid). In the context of sites of actor formation, the discourses that circulate are exemplar forms of reified symbolic actions. Reified symbols, Stacey suggests, are "gestures that point to, or stand for, abstract-systematic frameworks of explanation. They represent a reality in an abstract way and then refer to that abstraction as reality" (109). However, this slides into a cognitivist definition that identifies the symbol with the word as having a specific meaning. It becomes a misrecognition that does not acknowledge the gesture-response structure and, concurrently, the proto and significant forms of the symbol through the interactions of feeling, reflecting, conversing bodies (ibid).

Therefore, in considering the various misrecognitions in formational contexts of actor training and assessment, I have come to consider the complex interweaving that takes place between students and teachers as they negotiate
these communicative interactions. If, as Stacey argues, symbols are bodily interactions, then a communicative act, simultaneously involving proto, significant and reified aspects, is highly unlikely to call forth a single, simple response. Each gesture will call forth many contradictory and even conflicting responses at the same time. Nevertheless, Stacey concludes that

it is the complex nature of symbols, their responsive, relational features, that impart pattern-forming and novelty-producing capacities ... the emergence of knowledge in the bodily, symbolic relating of people. (111; emphasis mine)

Thus, in the sites I participated in, certain reproductive patterns of articulation, or discourse, may have contributed to shaping further conversations about vulnerability and the intercorporeal. However, concurrently, each individual body introduced new gestures and novelty-producing capacities into the circulating conversations. The gesture to introduce the spiritual into the discourse may have been constrained at the time, but who knows how it may have reverberated since then? Sites of formation may be understood more fully as sites of struggle and resonance through the enabling and constraining gestures between teachers and students.

Recognising/Legitimising the intercorporeal in actor formation

"Find the 'moment before'": Re: Actor Services

During an improvisational game on the second evening, a female student takes a strong leading role in the activity. John stops the game and criticises her behaviour.
John warns her and us:

“Acting schools don’t want students who show too much leadership potential”

He goes on to explain that the concern of acting schools is that some students might dictate where the class goes, away from the intentions of the tutor or teacher.

In the first monologue workshop of six students, each of us tries out our monologue in front of John, who acts as auditioner and coach. In this open office space there is a small lounge plus some single chairs where the students sit and watch the process. John sits to one side of the room, behind a desk, with the relevant monologue texts. He invites each student to present his or her piece to the other students as an audience. He interjects, as necessary, to tease out how the student has prepared their piece.

John advises us:

“Turn your back on them (the audience at the audition) ... find the “moment before” (the moment before, for the character in the context of the scene) as it allows you to imagine something and feel a response to this, turn around when you are ready to be there, but don’t show the placing of the mask ... the entries into monologue pieces are important ... you have ten to fifteen seconds to grab them (the assessor) ... the beginning of the monologue, the beats and choices you make, and the moment before preparation are all important ... feel the moment in your body as well as in your psyche ... every time you perform, you’re doing it for the first time ... the more you can vary the actions, the more it adds to the dynamics of the piece ... transitions are very critical so make choices for the reason to change your intentions and, again, use your imagination in great detail ... the transitions between(each shift in intention) are the most interesting moments for the audience to watch so take your time ... the minute you start to delay or deny your physical impulse, you disconnect your body from the intent ... don’t think, don’t plan just react …”

A student attempts to incorporate these practices in his audition piece.
John interrupts him:

"I'm still not reading what's going on in your head ... think again about your object, your motivation – to be or to feel, and your action on the other person – I ... You ... you can't play an action you don't understand or know ... captivate them (the audience) ... it's your time, your moment on stage ... always make choices – choices are usually not wrong but what's important is that they are engaging ... the given circumstances (of the character) can be read in your work ... you need rich detail in the moment before ... as long as you're there and you're captivating them (the audience) with where you are."

In the very first group class, we learnt that certain actions or behaviours, if recognised, would actually be counter-productive to what acting schools were looking for. According to John, "acting schools don't want students who show too much leadership potential". Subsequently, when being taught how to complete an audition application form for the acting schools, we were advised that acting schools don't like people with backgrounds in teaching or tutoring of any kind. I was left wondering if such a background inferred that our bodies and minds would be more resistant to any new formation.

We had to learn to find a moment before that we could experience but not show the process of our own imaginative formation when performing in front of others. This led us to understand that those who would judge our potential skill were looking for the moment before, the transitions, and the choices of interpretation of text. These would be 'seen' or 'perceived' somehow on our bodies. In fact, John, as an assessor, suggested he should be able to recognise what's going on "inside your head". This moment before becomes an intercorporeal act that exerts agency upon the audience – "... as long as you're there and you're captivating them (the audience) with where you are". Yet we were also left with an enigma that although acting was about truth, the construction of a 'truthful' performance needed to be invisible.
"(I’m not sure if it’s just) surface or something in her …": School of Drama, VCA

Among the twenty applicants in one of the morning auditions, a female auditionee presents “Helena” from A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Afterwards, Richard Murphet and Sarah Ducker, representing the VCA, specifically confer on her audition,

Sarah:

“… (I’m not sure if it’s just) surface or something in her …”

Richard:

“… I can’t see it…”

Sarah:

“… I see a larger life, a complex imagination … I’m only responding to what she presented to me …”

Richard:

“… wasn’t it in her neutrality that you invested meaning?”

They decide to invite her back. On Call-back Day, for her “Helena” piece, the comment from Lindy Davies, Head of the Drama School, is “clear”. In her contemporary piece as “Carol”, the comment is “enlivened”. During the final impulse workshop, the auditionee, during her monologue, receives coaching from Lindy,

Lindy:

“… use your voice, not in a whisper …”

Later on …
Lindy:

"... find "again", "again", find "again" ... ah, that's clearer ..."

Afterwards, Lindy and Richard note that she is "alive, overdramatic". During the group debriefing, the auditionee says that, during the impulse workshop she felt "safe, supported" and that she also appreciated the "physical connection, how it makes you feel, respond, instructive, intuitive ..."

She is subsequently offered a place at VCA.

On another day, a male auditionee selects the role of "Helena", to contrast with his portrayal of "Alan" from Equus.

Richard's first assessment:

"... he has size ... bravery ... great voice ... great energy ... out there ... nineteen years old ... needs to be not so conscious of himself ... worth trying him"

Afterwards, he is called back to present "Angelo", from Measure for Measure.

Richard explains:

"I would like to see a simpler (presentation of the piece), a bit less conscious of 'performing' it ... focus on what the person (the character) is saying and where it takes you ... all the emotions (at the moment) don't have a chance to shift you ... it affects the audience to see the lines take the actor somewhere, rather than (see the actor) controlling the delivery, the 'package'."
Richard interrupts his monologue to coach him:

"... you’re dropping into what I didn’t want ... imagine he (Angelo) is in his room, thinking to himself ... it’s a private moment ... we want to see it ‘not rehearsed’ ... we’ve seen the largeness (of your performance), ... now we want to see your connection ... I don’t want to see blocking ... think to yourself aloud, wait until you find that reality ..."

The young man starts again from the beginning of his monologue.

Richard:

"... so you want it right down ...think about what it means, try to find it (in your body) ... slow it right down ..."

When the auditionee concludes the monologue he is thanked and asked to wait outside. Richard and his co-assessor, Lisa Sheilton, confer.

Lisa:

"... all he is trying to do is find out where you want it placed ..."

Richard:

"... physically, he’s fine, that’s not the problem ... (we need to) test if he’s taking in the words ... what is he getting from the line (so that) he’s not constructing (his performance) ... can he be shifted... will the Call-back check what he hasn’t got?... call him back and we’ll have a bit of a talk."

The auditionee is called back.
Richard:

"We have a bit of a dilemma ... something very strong there ... but ... you talk about it"

Auditionee:

"... it feels like histrionics, moving, using the floor space, I don't connect emotions to
movement ... (I) rehearse rigidly (but I) recognise its limits."

Richard:

"... try to find the progress (of the text) in doing it ... people speak because they are
driven to speak ... I'm getting articulation but not what is internally pushing him to
speak ... unless that comes through the words (it is meaningless) ... (I'm not talking)
about histrionics ..."

On Call-back, the initial comments by Richard and Lindy are "still constructed" and
"imagination". During the impulse workshop, he is called upon three times to work
through his monologue but no coaching is given. The assessment afterwards is "good".

During the debriefing, the young man admits:

"... impulse work freaked me out, but then (it) became liberating, but first, so terrifying
... our bodies were rubber ... no sense of time ..."

He is subsequently offered a place at VCA.

In these and other events of the auditions, I witnessed the attempts of
auditionees to demonstrate they have 'It' or prove they can find 'It' through a
concurrent negotiation of expression and behaviour. I would contend that this
wasn't about just discursive protocol. Something phenomenological was always
happening. Possibly, in the case of those who were rejected, it was not being
perceived, even if it was being offered. It was how these experiences of energy,
flow, 'It', connection, spirit were known and recognised between student and practitioner that became highly crucial and powerful in this context. The VCA assessors were 'looking' for that energy, connection, spirit and simultaneously they were seeking to draw 'It' out. It was as if there was an object to be found, released, or willingly extended back in response. Alternatively, they may have been trying to invoke a different disposition in the actor towards the assessing audience that would either convey or produce a certain vulnerability or corporeal connection.

In the first of the events I recounted, the conversation between the two assessors tends to suggest they expect a givenness of some object either on or in the auditionee. This is problematised by the suggestion that ability was to be recognised in the agency of the auditionee towards her audience – “I'm only responding to what she presented to me”. However, their practice of assessment was made further transparent by the possibility that “... wasn't it in her neutrality that you invested meaning?” There was a shift that the recognition of ability may lie, not in the auditionee, but possibly as a result of certain interpretive readings and even productive investments in certain manners of performance. In this one brief exchange between two assessors I became aware of the multiple misrecognitions operating in what is referred to as ability or talent. Yet, on the Call-back day, this auditionee had learnt either the experience and/or the language to participate in her own recognition and validation of bodily vulnerability that was valued by the VCA – “physical connection, how it makes you feel, respond, instructive, intuitive ...”

In the second event outlined, through the discussion between Richard and the auditionee, audience and assessor recognition were regarded as synonymous. Richard was looking for signs on or in the body that indicated that the text and emotions were shifting the auditionee. He legitimised this personal expectation with the claim that “... it affects the audience to see the lines take the actor somewhere, rather than (see the actor) controlling the delivery, the 'package'”. Richard was also looking for corporeal connections between auditionee and text rather than what he perceived as a construction of a performance. However,
again it was significant in the exchange between Richard and his colleague that the dynamics of power (in this assessment context) were made transparent in the observation about the auditionee that "... all he is trying to do is find out where you want it 'placed' ..." Richard’s concern was to see evidence that this auditionee could be affected by the text, a certain shiftability or vulnerability, but this was also 'located' in the auditionee as a givenness rather than a disposition – "... will the Call-back check what he hasn't got". One procedure repeatedly used was to have the auditionee articulate his own assessment of what was or wasn't working. By the time of the debriefing after the impulse workshop for the finalists, this second auditionee had certainly learnt what to take notice of and talk about. The auditionee could now converse in a genuine, inarticulate manner, in that the genuineness of the experience could be determined by the struggle to use appropriate metaphors – "... impulse work freaked me out, but then (it) became liberating, but first, so terrifying ... our bodies were rubber ... no sense of time ..."

"I'll know who's done it ...": Ensemble Studios.

Zika introduces a theory class on "Sense Memory":

Zika:

"Sense memory is not in your head but in your senses and muscles – you see something that isn’t there ... remember, our definition of acting is ‘the ability to respond to imagined stimuli’ ... you need to know how to turn this ability off and on ... we are not talking about performing (and motivational techniques) at this stage of the course ... the practice of sense memory requires a specific time for practice ... do 10 minutes a day... if you don’t practise it, you won’t be able to use it effectively ... it’s a very boring exercise (so if you have been practising your perception exercises it helps)"

[Zika has spent the last four weeks giving us various sensory exercises in perception of sight, sound, taste and touch]
"... here is the exercise ... you put a pen on your knee – observe it closely – then pick it up, experiencing its weight and its tactile sense – then put the pen to one side – then, try to visualise the pen on your knee, then go to pick it up – can you feel it in your fingers? – then check again with the original object ... you can do this alternatively with a jug of water and a cup – look at the jug – pour water into the cup – pick up the cup and taste the water – now put these objects to one side and recreate the series of steps with your body and your sense memory ...

"... every one hates 'sense memory' exercises – they're boring ... more plays are written today that require the skill to imagine props, etc ... if you can see it, the audience will see it ... some actors believe mime is enough ... the difference between doing a sign language (of mime) and believing in what you are doing is what produces an empathy-making performance ... once you know what it is, you can feel it ... there are so many things that depend on sense memory ... if you do it religiously every day for 6 months, I'll know who has done it."

In this brief but powerful teaching event, Zika argued for a practice of 'knowing' that she claimed would produce an "empathy-making performance". It was a knowing constructed, at the same time, by habit and imagination until the student believed they knew the object they were interacting with in all its sensory detail. Furthermore, Zika claimed that she would know if they had developed this skill or know by how they performed at the end of six months. The premise for this specific practice of knowing was based on the understanding that acting was “the ability to respond to imagined stimuli”. Zika’s claim to recognise or know this ability in her students was indicated elsewhere in her teaching. She commented that skilled actors so believe in what they perceive and respond to with their bodies, that the audience believes as well. Belief becomes something that is extended from the actors’ bodies to the bodies of audience members.

She validated this with a story from an Ensemble performance. Apparently, audience members, in the theatre foyer after the show, discussed how the
Ensemble managed to get a car onto the stage during the performance. Zika took great pride in informing us that there was no car, but that the actors had so believed in the car that the audience perceived it there as well. We were invited to also believe in the power of sense memory and its effect on actors and audiences.

Review: Experiencing the intercorporeal

Foucault wrote in Discipline and Punish (1979) that

The chief function of the disciplinary power is to ‘train’, rather than to select and to levy; or, no doubt, to train in order to select all the more ... Discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and instruments of its exercise. (170)

However, in his latter writings, he suggested that the social exercise of power, simultaneously, forms and fails to sustain docile or teachable bodies. In fact, the social actions of power create apparent short-term success and inevitable long-term failure. The conditions that allow power to be most effective are also the conditions that create the most potent resistance to the sustaining of a particular power dynamic.

Usher and Edwards suggest that the modern world is constituted in the never-complete attempt to replace coercion by discipline. It is discipline that reconstitutes the exercise of power around different relations of enablement and constraint. In order to be regulated, the person first has to be constituted as an active subject through a process of observation and surveillance. The criteria and methods that both constitute the subject and the processes of observation and surveillance are provided by the disciplinary knowledge of what are known as the human sciences (93). Such disciplinary knowledge, largely nurtured from
within the institutions of higher education (and validated as 'truth' on the basis of adherence to scientific method), provides the legitimation for a range of practices that have extended regulation into the body.

However, Usher and Edwards argue that here emerges the paradox of Foucault's work with regard to liberal-humanist ideals of education. If education is to be viewed as an emancipatory practice, how should one interpret the production of knowledges generated in the disciplines of psychology and sociology? These disciplines really only offer new ways for the active subject or learner to be framed for educational intervention. As J. Marshall (1989) suggests, rather than being emancipatory, humanistic progressive forms of education may represent

[ever and more subtle refinements of technologies of power based upon knowledge which has itself been produced within or used by the discipline of education. This knowledge, constituted in practice, comes in turn to legitimate practice ... Power is still exercised in the search for normal and governable people. If it is more humane, it is more subtle; if it is less overt and involves less violence to bring power into play, it may be more dangerous because of its insidious silence. (108, 109)

As subjects there is no transcendental position from which people can become empowered. There may only be partial discursive positions within power-knowledge formations. Emancipation and oppression, enablement and constraint are not transcendental states. They are active practices between people situated within power-knowledge formations. Therefore, while subjects may locate themselves within ever-present alternative discourses, these cannot simply express an emancipatory potential, but rather can give expression to on-
going and changing resistance – the ability to disrupt, challenge and change contexts of enablement and constraint (Usher and Edwards 1994: 98).

Resistance, for Foucault, involves continual forms of transgression. It is a process without end rather than a transcendental state of *emancipation*. Furthermore, he argues that resistance is immanent in power in that “where there is power there is resistance; and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (1980: 95). Resistance can be interpreted as a reluctance or refusal to engage in a process of change. In the case of students in both the RE:ACTOR course and the VCA audition there was a sense that any resistance was really *the sign of a lack* – a lack of insight, experience, ability, vulnerability. One RE:ACTOR student seemed unwilling to risk going against whatever restrained him from “looking foolish”; in the VCA auditions, one young male auditionee stepped back from the apparent offer of “freedom” in the impulse workshop on Call-back day.

However, the practice of resistance may also refer to actions of refusal to accept, comply or participate in actions offered or determined by an *other*. In the prologue account of the Ensemble Studios, the persistent young woman would not let Zika sidestep describing what seemed a ‘secret technique’ of seduction/rape that would produce the required vulnerability in *lacking* students. Resistance by students has often been judged as a negative quality because it impedes what an *other* (such as the authoritative teacher) may determine is a desirable or inevitable forward movement or progression. Yet resistance is also a useful quality because it enables a degree of control to be applied to otherwise unimpeded movement.

Wittgenstein (1958b) acknowledges the usefulness of resistance, arguing that the imperfections of language in our relationships actually do us a great service. He illustrates this with reference to the quality of resistance that is missing in the frictionless perfection of *ice*:
We have got onto slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a
certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that,
we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need friction. Back
to the rough ground! (107)

Foucault proposes that power and resistance are not only constructive but also
ubiquitous. All participate in the circulation of power. Thus many participants –
practitioners, students, teachers, audiences, professional associations,
government infrastructures and social classes, sustain the emergence of the
performance discipline. All help create, sustain and, at the same time, resist the
ongoing momentum of the discipline of performance practice. It may be through
resistance or what Reid understands, in Deleuzian terms, as “free action” (2000).
“Free action” is the inherent potential to try out different bodily habits of
perception and interaction with each other, so that students and teachers
encounter new ways of recognising what was formally misrecognised (9).

Producing the intercorporeal in actor formation

Embodied formation at the Ensemble Studios

On Saturday April 1, 2000, the focus of the morning was on spatial relationships
on the stage. As was usual, the students sat on two sides of the semi-lit audience
space in the Ensemble Theatre, while Zika was situated about half way up the
third side. The stage below us all was well lit for the practical tasks that Zika
would assign us.

Zika would often say “another guinea pig, please” as, one by one, each of us
was required to ‘volunteer’. Each individual would be asked to walk various
numbers of steps between chairs that had been preset. We might be asked to
walk between the two chairs using ten steps, then seven steps, then nine steps.
This task was combined with the attitude of remaining "open to the audience" by always "leading with the upstage foot and upstage hand". It was emphasised that theatre is an aesthetic art business and that we had "absolutely no reason for not looking good" in terms of "being happy in your own body". Therefore, an important sensory skill was to be able to gradually adjust, habitually, to the varying demands of moving between objects and people in a space with a minimum of effort.

However, this task produced anxiety in many of us as we were not given any opportunity to try it out in private beforehand. We were being asked to perform before our teacher and our peers with the real alternative of either success or failure. There was no room for compromise. When I did not succeed with the first task, I was immediately asked to do it again until I got it right. Then, I would be set a variation of the task to demonstrate that I had embodied a better sense of the spatial relationships involved.

While the initial task was anxiety-producing for each student, the successful achievement of the task earned spontaneous applause from the class. So although I felt negatively about the lack of preparation, I was rewarded with a sense of accomplishment and respect from my peers for having remained vulnerable and mastering the task. This dynamic of public and authoritarian surveillance of success/failure in learning each new skill would form the pattern of the teaching of practice each week. Subsequently, I thought it significant that such training happens with the recognition that performance is produced by the interaction of actors and audiences, even if they are one's peers.

A more positive experience of this dynamic happened unexpectedly on one of the evening practical workshops on Friday, April 8. The objective for the evening was to develop our sense of hearing. The specific task was for two people to face each other in the centre of the room as everyone observed. One person would start to talk about anything continuously while their partner, simultaneously, had to repeat all that was said back to them. This produced a
vocal and aural *mirroring* effect for all who watched. Several pairs struggled to
keep up with each other.

However, I found that I was able to fulfil the task with comparative ease as I
found I was able to get into the *flow* of what my partner was vocally producing,
while we were speaking at the same time. I received an enthusiastic round of
applause from my peers for my efforts. Such positive experiences of affirmation
gave me a sense of recognition in my ‘ability’ to *tune in* to my partner, at least in
this kind of exercise.

Yet during these weeks of training, I also became aware of the *group body* that
emerged over our time of training together. The group body was most apparent
whenever Zika isolated certain individuals who might be late to class or who
dropped out or who resisted her instruction and her silence (as in the example
in the Prelude of this thesis). By affirmation of our predominant compliance, we
felt that we were ‘chosen’ in having paid (A$700 non-refundable fees for ten
weeks) to choose to study at the Ensemble Studios. Any who didn’t demonstrate
either self-discipline or respectful compliance were quietly yet physically
marginalised by the others, even in terms of who sat next to who in the sessions

*Embodied formation at RE:ACTOR Acting Services*

In the first session on Wednesday, June 7, 2000, I was initially physically
confronted by my age in relation to those who were also doing the course.
However, apart from John acknowledging my age as a potential difficulty, it
was more the fact that all the monologue texts on offer in the course were
intended for those much younger than I was. There were also the comments
made that the *industry* functions on the basis of *type* in the creation of *product*, so
I would need to identify what my *embodied type* was and how it could be ‘sold’.

The group workshop activities were predicated on the articulated
understanding that drama school assessors would be watching our every
behaviour from the moment we arrived at an audition. Therefore much of our
time was spent practising how to perform the audition day experience of group
improvisational games and individual improvised tasks, alongside the
monologue pieces. I learnt how to show energy and focus for each task as a
‘team player’ (I had already learnt, from John’s scolding of the assertive female
auditionee, not to show any leadership ability).

As I first noted in Chapter Four, risk-taking and “getting over it” were
behaviours that were highly rewarded so each of us looked for opportunities
where we could exhibit these virtues. In one early exercise about “doing the
action” – “I shove you”, a male and female student hesitantly played opposite
each other. John interjected:

Get over it! – Touching is a part of acting ... you can
touch any part of the body excluding breast, penis,
crotch ... when you do (and say) the action you must
mean it. Acting is not about pretending. Make the
words drive through with the action. Use the word
with all its phonetic power ... we all love it ... when
an actor takes a risk ...

There was a certain feeling of privilege in being given one-to-one attention
during the monologue workshops that commenced on Wednesday, June 14. I
had prepared a monologue from the play Shadowlands when the central
character, C. S. Lewis, discovers that the person he loves is dying of cancer. I
had been taught, in this course, that practising the technique of the moment before
requires imagination and a certain foolishness. I was conscious of my peers
knowing that I was endeavouring to place myself in a set of fictional
circumstances that they knew was not factual for me. I was trying to fool both
them and myself into being there. Yet when I participated in this vulnerability I
found that they were also engaged by some shift in my presence before them – I
could also feel when I lost the moment, though sometimes it was only after John had indicated that I had lost his attentiveness.

On Wednesday, June 21, when John was unavailable, I worked in the other audition group with his teaching colleague, Helen. However, before I presented my monologue, she, unlike John, invited the rest of the class to “direct your energy and focus towards the person doing the monologue”. This gave me a very different experience of playing to the audience. It also elicited a different quality of feedback from Helen about what was working or not working in the piece.

On Wednesday, August 9, the final “mock” NIDA audition produced three memorable experiences for me. The first event, which we had never practised throughout the course, was to follow and duplicate a basic dance routine led by a choreographer who was brought in for the day. We were informed that our ability to follow direction and “make the dance your own” was what was under scrutiny. After we had gone over the routine a few times with the choreographer, John and Blair, role-playing as NIDA assessors, asked us to perform the routine as our own, without assistance from the choreographer. As we did so to the energetic music, they called out “Come on! – sell the dance! – Get sexy! – Sex sells!” Immediately, I faced choices of either mimicking how I had seen other dancers get sexy or looking for sexual feelings within myself to evoke a more sexually arousing embodiment. It seemed also about becoming more sexually interactive with each other as fellow dancers rather than just playing to the audience.

The second event was to present my prepared Shakespeare monologue (a comic piece from Much Ado About Nothing) and the excerpt from Shadowlands. During the first monologue, I felt a good engagement or connection with my audience of fellow auditionees. I found myself a little more rushed in preparing the moment before in the second monologue and felt I wasn’t really in it until a third of the way through the monologue. However, I found/felt a strong sense of inner feeling and conviction towards the end.

226
The third event at the conclusion of the audition was the feedback by John and Blair, now out of their roles. They confirmed my positive experience of the "Shakespeare". However, they were critical of my Shadowlands monologue, explaining that it appeared “up in the head, not in the gut”. I was affirmed in my “excellent attitude to acting work, but you should do the work in order to forget the work ... you need to push your buttons”. I was also praised for my “energy”, “good movement” and “attitude” in the dance piece. However, as for their conclusion overall to my potential for acting:

[...]You should take a risk – all the time ... you’re a bit of an enigma – we’re not sure if you’re committed enough to acting. At your age, there are however, good opportunities in film and TV work. Perhaps you should consider doing the RE:ACTOR Screentest course, rather than try out for NIDA, as you are probably too old ... NIDA tends to select women between nineteen and twenty seven years of age ...

It was interesting to hear them make this distinction, in terms of risk and commitment, between the work of theatre and that of film and TV. Did they regard vulnerability and intercorporeal experience as more critical to a successful theatre career because of the immediate interaction between actor and audience?

I concluded this course with a strong sense of what to look for in an effective performance – a performance where I could recognise if the actor was “in the moment”, “taking a risk”, being vulnerable. However, I also questioned whether I was looking for such recognition in the other or rather in my own embodied experience of the other.
**Embodied formation at the School of Drama, VCA Auditions**

I experienced a kind of *culture shock* as I participated as an observer in this third site of formation. This was a marked departure from my previous involvement as an active student/participant in two diverse training courses.

Due to being misinformed, I arrived late to the first day of auditions on Monday November 22. Fortunately, they were having a short break between Shakespearean and contemporary pieces, so I was able to reconnect with Richard Murphet (who I had met briefly in Melbourne). He introduced me to the two VCA graduates who were assisting in the audition process for the day and explained my observer role to them and the context of my research. The female graduate expressed an interest in my area of research but the male graduate repeatedly intimated, over the next few days, that he would like to see me audition as well. I wondered if he wanted to see if I really knew what I was researching.

Without being able to, at this early stage, discuss with Richard and his VCA colleague what they were looking for, I made the choice to note my own responses to the auditions, based on the training and experiences I had accumulated through the Ensemble and RE:ACTOR. However, I noted that I was aware that these two institutions themselves propagated divergent values.

It soon became apparent that I had been trained to look for talent with different eyes, ears and body to the VCA assessors. Consequently, based on a mix of my own experience of being judged and recognised by Ensemble and RE:ACTOR, I constructed critical notes of each audition. I looked for where the actor "indicated" (an Ensemble concern for actors who had not embodied the role),

---

8 When I later reported to Richard and his colleague that I had completed the RE:ACTOR course, which claimed to prepare students for the VCA auditions, neither of them were aware of this training practice for auditioning.
where there was a lack of the “moment before” (a RE:ACTOR term), and my sense of the actor’s energy, connection and vulnerability towards the text and the character being played.

I also encountered differing perceptions when the assessors considered whom to invite back for further consideration – auditionees whom I felt didn’t have it. They selected one young man, who they believed had a lot to offer, but the question remained – “Can he be disciplined to just sit and focus his energy?” Richard invited the auditionee back to do his Shakespeare monologue again:

We’re seeing a fair bit of construction in the work …
but your intelligence is not sitting in the word …
warm walk around the room, feel ready, don’t worry about planning the audition – we want to see it, not as an audition.

As the young man began his monologue, I witnessed Richard apply the VCA practice of ‘impulse’ work (that I had read and spoken about with Lindy). Richard got up and moved around the rehearsal space with the man, directing and encouraging him to explore the experience of the text, with various prompts to excite meaning and interpretation, as well as physical counsel, such as breathing and using the whole room. Richard’s colleague observed this process and remarked

I just want to see you and the words … don’t embellish or create character … I’m looking for the speech in you, rather than you in the speech … breathe, slowly allow each thought to come to you.

However, the man did not alter his breathing as he was encouraged and seemed caught up in the rehearsed rhythms of the speech as he had prepared it for this audition. Yet I felt there was a better connection with the text, as it was no longer
being performed as it had been previously rehearsed. They asked the man to wait outside and discussed his situation. This was the first session of two weeks of auditions and they didn’t want to create false hopes, not knowing how many others may also have some potential for the Call-back day. They called the man back into the room to talk further. Richard ask him if he noticed any differences in the process of “allowing yourself to be shifted by the speech ... shifted by the character ...” However, it became apparent that as the young man responded, he didn’t ‘understand’ what was being asked by the way he struggled to articulate his response. I was left to ponder to myself whether it was the experience that was unrecognisable or was it the discourse that he was being asked to participate in. Nevertheless, the young man was invited back to the Call-back day.

After this first audition session, I was shown the School of Drama Assessment for Selection form that is used as a guide for the assessors. However, the auditionees are not shown these criteria. The two principle criteria helped me readjust my bodily perception to know what should be recognised. The form notes that

Applicants must show evidence of:
1. ability to make sense of the text
2. ability to make direct emotional connection with the text

IF ABOVE CRITERIA ARE NOT MET THE FOLLOWING WILL NOT BE ASSESSED

3. a vocal ability that shows potential for development
4. a physical ability that shows potential for development
5. an ability to take direction and use the material in many different ways
6. an ability to work constructively with others
7. an ability to work with initiative
8. commitment to the course

230
I have listed these criteria because there was another significant event I experienced when, seemingly, these criteria were apparently bypassed. On the morning of Wednesday, November 24, the second day of auditions, a young man auditioned with the role of Helena, from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (I have already referred to this auditionee in my VCA example of recognition and legitimisation). I noted his initial audition as “a ‘big’ performance … very ‘constructed’ … no sense of direction … very entertaining”. The young man’s contemporary piece was the character, Alan, from *Equus*. Again, I noted his performance as having “detailed body control, like a dancer … a ‘performer’ … lots of energy and intelligence, but no vulnerable connection … a good conclusion”. An afterthought I noted was that I felt he was “trying too hard” to impress. I was therefore surprised when Richard invited him back for consideration. I had judged that he had not made direct emotional connection with the text, but that he had rather *constructed* the performance in a very marked way. When he came back to work through another prepared piece from *Measure for Measure*, with side-coaching from Richard, I still noted that he “is still rushing, not connecting to it personally, not showing any sense of the feelings associated with death or affection”.

Lisa Sheilton and Richard debated whether this young man could “be shifted” while he waited outside. It was possibly that in subsequently talking with him about the side-coached experience, they were persuaded to have him come to the Call-back day. I asked Richard why he had been invited back when his work had appeared constructed and lacking “direct emotional connection” (which I understood was a priority required for VCA). Richard acknowledged these failings but said that he was still very impressed by the young man’s physicality and imagination evident in the *construction*. From this event it would appear that even the assessment form was a guide – what really mattered was the engagement between bodies in the space of performance.

A final lingering event occurred on the Call-back afternoon as Lindy facilitated a major *impulse* activity for the final thirteen auditionees. As I witnessed these young people so willingly submit – running, falling, crawling, walking
Forming (in) Vulnerable Bodies

throughout the space, reciting their text as they interacted with each other, and with the coaching of Richard and Lindy. I was moved by their vulnerability. This openness and willingness to give their bodies, voices and emotional engagement to the texts created a great intensity of what I can only describe as energy, focus and connection in the moment. I felt I had been privileged to see this and afterwards thanked Lindy for what, for me, had been an intimate and sacred experience. At the time, I came away from this final experience, very much a believer. Such is the significance I placed on my embodied experience of this practice, in spite of having doubts about the veracity of the attendant discourse of the VCA assessors.

Review: Producing the intercorporeal and the vulnerable

In each site, the circulation of power (produced in the bodies of teachers and students) may be understood as a mutual though not necessarily equitable inter-dependency. We always looked to the teachers for guidance, approval and recognition. They looked to us to be willing, vulnerable and self-disciplined. Within these pedagogical relationships, most interpersonal experiences between teachers and students were predicated as natural and normal – the teachers taught us and we were there to learn. Yet this was only because of what was seen to be at stake. Both our teachers and we were located in a continuum of formation and habituation – a logic of practice.

However, what to me seemed extreme as a discourse of training – for example, in the Ensemble course, the choice of seduction or rape – was interpreted by my fellow students as a metaphor for the necessary struggle to make it in the industry. As long as talent was predicated as givenness within certain individuals, a necessary misrecognition was that this givenness be either impregnated or possessed. In the same moment, the student actor and the training institution believed that talent needed to be located, identified and shaped into a mutually useful and marketable cultural capital. Such doxa enabled, in the midst of struggle, the constancy of natural positions in the field.

232
Each site had its own style of producing bodies that could perform appropriately and willingly.

At the Ensemble, Zika was the one we looked to for any advice on how things are in the industry. She advised us, in developing a professional attitude, that “discipline will prepare you for the harsh world and for the wonderful world. It takes a drivenness, a ‘fire in the belly’, talent and discipline or you don’t belong here! You have to learn to take rejection and always be ready”. She illustrated this by praising the attitude of a former student, an “excellent actor” (who hadn’t worked professionally for 7 years), who said to Zika “I'll be ready when my turn comes”.

Zika also commenced the first class by indicating each session was of three hours duration. She proposed that we should be able to concentrate for this duration without a break, because when we are in a show we will need to be able to concentrate this same period. Therefore, in order to develop this discipline for theatre production, we would not be allowed to smoke, have a coffee or toilet break. A frequent contrast was made between what “we at the Ensemble do” in comparison with what others do and how “our graduates” are equipped with the tools that other actors want to learn about. While Zika welcomed any questioning or challenges, these could only be articulated in the ‘theory’ classes on Saturday mornings. We were not, however, allowed to question or challenge anything that happened during the ‘practical’ classes.

In the context of RE:ACTOR Acting Services, John Mildren was the dominant figure in the teaching program. Any resistance or awkwardness we had towards the RE:ACTOR teaching and practice required us to “get over it” if we wanted to get into the industry. Having been told that RE:ACTOR had a 60 percent success rate gave me the impression we were part of an elite that would be prepared for entry either into an acting school or alternatively, directly into the field. But this was also, in some ways, a ‘secret’ society. We were advised not to acknowledge in writing that we had prepared by doing the RE:ACTOR monologue audition course when we made our applications to acting schools.
Above all, we were at RE:ACTOR to be taught what works and how we could commodify ourselves for the marketplace.

At the VCA auditions, Lindy Davies and Richard Murphet provided the core leadership and mentoring of the auditionees. They made a point of reframing the context for each auditioning group by telling them “don’t think of this as an audition for you – you are auditioning us (VCA)” . Yet when auditionees were called back for possible short-listing they were subjected to specific discourses and practices intended to see if they could be shifted towards the ethos of the VCA.

Although each auditionee was considered as an individual, a group dynamic was established through a group warmup by fresh graduates of the School at the commencement of each audition session. The graduates would introduce various techniques, specific to the training at VCA, to the group as part of their initiating experience into VCA discourse and practice. During each audition piece, the other auditionees would sit in judgement alongside the assessors, watching and waiting. A further sense of group identity was forged on the Call-back day when the remaining ‘chosen’ were given a more intensive preparation into the VCA practice of impulse which some had already had a taste of in their individual Call-backs. In this hothouse environment it became much easier to find the language and the behaviour if you wanted to fit in. At the conclusion of this last day, I recall feeling strongly convinced by my experience that the School of Drama really had a powerful and authentic approach to acting.

Embodying and negotiating power relations and interdependencies

By comparison to everyone else desiring to become actors, I had a different investment in belonging in each site, as a participant observer. Therefore, I sustained a nomadic status in each site, never fully in or out, and this meant, perhaps, that I could attend to particular dynamics of dependency more readily than my fellow students could.
Yet while I regard many of these discourses and training practices as requisite, I do not believe them to be predetermined. Any formation is necessarily contingent, as bodies of teachers and students are "indeterminate constancies" and may interact in divergent and non-linear ways. What sustains a culture and may allow it to transform itself is that within it there are resistances that provoke a reorganisation and redistribution of powers of various stakeholders. The resistances are experienced as a threat and discomfort but they actually provide the impetus for a revision and reframing that allows the participants to explore new ways of being and interacting within a culture and in relation to other cultures. This struggle provides for its sustainability and an acknowledgement of its dependence on other coexistent cultures. Hence, I argue that just as power and resistance are ubiquitous, according to Foucault, so are dependency and habituation. It becomes a matter of negotiating and re-negotiating power between bodies that can never be independent of each other.

Nick J Fox (1999) offers a "politics of embodiment" with reference to Deleuze and Guattari's "Body-without-organs" (123). He uses this metaphor to acknowledge that while the construction of the self (and thereby, the body) is a continuing project of the social, the process of inscription is dynamic rather than passive. This social process of construction is framed by Deleuze and Guattari as a territorialisation, and consequently the BwO may be regarded as a territory constantly contested and fought over (127). However, meanings are also capable of transformation with the possibilities for deterritorialisation. Leder proposes that perceptual shifts in experience necessarily produce new meanings to account for and accommodate such experiences. Therefore, territorialisation, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation are all potential outcomes of the dynamic relations between physical and psychosocial forces (129).

Various patterns of thought, or what Foucault understands as discourses, produce authoritative actions that, simultaneously, deterritorialise and reterritorialise how animate and inanimate objects interact (130). Territorialisations usually involve some action of ascribing meaning to an other's
actions, but any territorialisation of the other necessarily results in some reterritorialisation of the BwO of the social agent who seeks to act upon the world. In this dynamic of deterritorialisations and reterritorialisations the BwO is inscribed, at the same time, as it ascribes the forces of the social (130-131).

However, Fox argues that Deleuze and Guattari also identify the potential for resistance through concepts such as the rhizomatic and the line of flight. Fox understands the rhizome as "subterranean and subversive, multiple and diverse in form" (131). I believe this may be a useful way to consider the dynamics of the visceral body as it intertwines, undergrads and sustains the perceptual and conscious, meaning-making, territorialising body. Fox also regards the actions of others as they intersect with a person as the "line of flight" by which the BwO escapes from a particular territorialisation. He concedes that often this deterritorialisation may be momentary and apparently inconsequential, but at other times it may be substantial and carry the BwO to new possibilities and "becoming-other" (ibid). Such lines of flight enable what Deleuze and Guattari describe as a nomadic subjectivity in which each movement is experienced as a becoming rather than having a fixed meaning (132). Fox notes that in the very act of flight that deterritorialises there is always a tendency towards reterritorialisation so one is only ever becoming-nomad (133).

For Fox, normalcy may be defined, usually at its limits, and particularly at the points where deviances are perceived to begin. In this way, professions define themselves by excluding routine or 'unskilled' labour. Similarly, subjectivity is the outcome of a strategic limitation, because, as a territory, it is experienced as meaningful because it is bounded and in relation to what is excluded from it (135). However, the chiasmatic dynamics of Merleau-Ponty and Leder that blur and transgress such apparent boundaries function in a similar way to acts of conscious and articulated deterritorialisation. I would argue that even as the intercorporeal may be reterritorialised through tools of language, knowledge/power and bodily discipline, the intercorporeal also eludes direct and sustained territorialisation due its inherent intertwining, its betweenness and becoming, its indeterminate constancy.
Margaret Shildrick takes up both Merleau-Ponty’s chiasmatic model and Leder’s supplementary acknowledgement of the visceral in her own project of what is at stake in “the relational economies of self and other” (103). In her discussion of the vulnerable self, Shildrick observes that

in the specular economy, such intertwined relations cannot be acknowledged, and the ethics of modernity are predicated on the separation and independence of subjects. (104)

In my participation in sites of formation, I witnessed the struggle to determine, predominantly through sight and sound, whether a student’s performance displayed signs of an inner vulnerability or whether it was merely surface. Shildrick argues that

[the value put on the clarity and distinction implied by clear sight, the lack of affective engagement, and the minimisation of interconnection are all aspects that could flourish only when the materiality and voluminosity of the flesh is reduced to a surface phenomenon that ideally reflects back the unity and completion of the viewing subject. (102)

It would appear that the agenda of an institutional account of the field, the Performing Arts Scoping Study, is similarly oriented towards determining what is normative in terms of ‘talent’. Yet Shildrick comments that any urgent desire for the reclarification of the normative embodied self evokes the gap that allows for other ways of being and relating to others:

In place of seeing material contact as a risk to be averted, we might instead begin to understand it as a
promise that our embodied vulnerability and lack of closure signals not insecurity but rather an openness to new forms of becoming and to new relational economies. (117)

However, Shildrick also acknowledges that not all tactile contact is benign. The crossing of boundaries may not be about the participation in a shared vulnerability, but rather "a kind of corporeal colonisation that exploits the specific vulnerability of the less dominant partner" (118). Therefore the responsible ethic of Levinas calls for a sensitivity to interact with others that does not erase the specificity on either side. Shildrick suggests that it is "the strange(r)ness of embodiment, and the differential ways in which each of us lives our body that must be preserved" (118). Similarly, as Oliver (2001) noted, Irigaray insists that we should acknowledge the radical differences that are irreducible and yet not absolutely other.

In conclusion, Shildrick proposes that

[i]n the move away from the phantasy of the wholly unified and self-complete embodied subject, we may lose the illusion of autonomy, but gain access to a more sustaining mode of becoming with others. (119)

It is how that becoming was acknowledged and facilitated that was at stake in the three institutional contexts of actor formation in which I participated.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have returned to the things themselves to trace how meaning-makings of vulnerability and intercorporeality circulated and were predominantly reproduced between students and teachers in sites of actor
formation. Teachers and students interacted in these three sites through actions of speaking, recognising/legitimising and producing bodies that maintained and sustained certain forms of givenness, agency and disposition. Misrecognitions multiplied through the self-organising dynamics of actor formation that simultaneously enabled and constrained the actions of teachers and students. Although powerful experiences were encountered in the interactions between participants in these sites, these experiences were constantly reframed and misrecognised as objects to be acquired and exchanged, subject to particular economies of givenness, agency and disposition. Furthermore, many paradoxes of practice and attitude such as embodying “the hide of a rhinoceros and the heart of a dove” were not negotiated between teacher and student. Such mysteries contributed to the assymetrical relations of power that ensured teachers seemed always ‘in possession’ of knowledges. Students implicitly understood that they must submit and become vulnerable in order to be recognised. They would thus gain the cultural capital necessary to establish themselves in the professional field.

However, I also noted, alongside the reproduction of the field, the presence of ‘problem’ students and ‘troublemakers’ as a consideration of Foucault’s observation that resistance inevitably appears alongside the exercise of disciplinary power. Furthermore, I took account of my own paradoxical experience as a participant observer – never fully immersed in and yet fully committed to the process of actor formation. Possibly because of my own personal history, I found I became sensitive to the dynamics of dependency that could alter relations between teachers and students.

In the final section of this chapter, I began to explore ways to account for the willingness of students to put themselves at risk. I discussed how students might engage (through various techniques or practices) in relations of power with their teachers, in order to make it and gain the recognition they desire to belong to the field. I returned to the possibility advocated by Shildrick that we are always already constituted as vulnerable and intercorporeal. Given the complexity of diverse bodies interacting, there could be no way to predict or
determine more equitable and sustainable outcomes for teachers and students. However, I proposed that what continues to be at stake is how all participants (students, teachers and other stakeholders) might become more aware and conscious of the actions/choices that they can make towards meaning-making and knowledge creation, through the field of actor training and practice. Some of these options of becoming with others will be outlined in the Epilogue of this thesis.
EPILOGUE:

This thesis is offered out of my experiences and critical reflections concerning encounters between students and teachers in specific sites of actor training. I have primarily researched how these encounters are variously recognised and misrecognised through a process I have identified as formative. In these sites, the requirement of openness and vulnerability understands the process by which human beings affect and are affected by each other as being predicated upon bodies that are variously permeable, adaptable, even penetrable. Through the discourses of vulnerability and permeability, the bodies of actors and audiences alike are troped as barriers to be pierced in order to then be transformed and/or transcended.

I have drawn upon the theoretical ideas of Bourdieu, Foucault, Merleau-Ponty, Irigaray, Deleuze, Casey, Leder and Stacey to produce an account of my experiences of three specific sites of actor training. This thesis has proposed an alternative discourse with which to account for the range of possibilities for the exchange between actors and their various ‘audiences’, that of ‘intercorporeality’; with this idea, we are able to pursue an understanding of affective accessibility without recourse to what I have argued are dis-abling, or at best, counter-productive ontological assumptions. In this epilogue, I will identify what has become significant to me over the duration of my research and where I believe further research and assessment of teaching and learning practices in acting are required.

What is spoken and who may speak

When I began my research, I expected to demonstrate the prevalence of language that alluded to spiritual experiences or phenomena. I certainly found many intangible experiences being spoken of in language that invoked notions of connection, energy, flow, breath, communion – all terms that have been
appropriated in various spiritual discourses (cf. Stanislavski 1937, Artaud 1958, Grotowski 1969). I also witnessed the territorialising and subtle marginalising of the discourses and what I have theorised as the contractions of such experiences. It became apparent that no discourse was able to make authoritative claims about the definition and nature of these intangible, yet very real, experiences. At the same time, the marginalising of such discourses meant that certain accounts of the dynamics of such intangibles were not being made available for conversation and the emergence of new knowings. Certain discourses dominated – discourses that attributed contemporaneous scientific (radiating energy), medical (combustible humours), psychological (unconscious transference) or linguistic (visual signs) accounts to these intangible experiences, thereby creating and maintaining certain discipline-specific authenticities, values and ideas.\(^9\)

However, during my time as a participant, I became aware of the inter-relatedness of language, knowledge and power in the shaping of beliefs, experiences and practices. The actions of others, through complex systems of significations, affected how my assumptions determined, to a large extent, my capacity to interpret these worlds. As I left each site, I was also conscious of leaving a newly-formed community as well as an institutional course. In my more limited participation in the third site, I realised how powerful it was to be known and recognised as a potential actor, as I listened to the conversations between the assessors and the auditionees. The focus of conversation circulated around who had ‘It’ – potential students who were affected by their acting practice as much as they affected others – who could also articulate such experiences to the satisfaction of those assessing them.

What is known/recognised and who may be known and recognised

It was evident from my experience in each site that the learning in actor training was premised on a practical knowledge-in-action (cf. Schön 1983). However, in my subsequent analysis, incorporating Foucault, Newman and Holzman, and Stacey, I re-interpreted these experiences as ‘knowing-through-action’. Beliefs and ideas were validated through the embodied experiences of students as they were concurrently scrutinised and affirmed through the embodied actions of teachers. We were not being informed and validated by a text or a system. Rather our formation emerged through our inter-actions with our teachers who would tell us when we “got it” and when we didn’t.

In spite of the prevalence of texts on both acting techniques and the field of actor training, such texts were either peripheral or dismissed as being irrelevant to the practice of engagement between teacher and student on the floor. Yet it is also apparent that enacted reproductions of certain ideas and beliefs continue to circulate and mutate from texts into the field in an uncritical and unreflective manner. This meant that specific beliefs and logical practices of givenness, agency and disposition were generative of – or reproductive of – systematic, sustaining misrecognitions.

Across all three sites, the notion of vulnerability emerged as the quality most valued and required as gestural symbol of commitment to the discipline of acting. This quality was always placed in the context of some form of interaction: interaction with the audience, other actors, or the text. For example, I recall receiving feedback from John Mildren after the RE:ACTOR mock audition: that I had “rushed the moment before”, that there was “a lack of emotional connection” with the character I was playing, that I was working “in the head, not the gut” and there was the “need to push your buttons” which I understood as the requirement to trigger emotional feelings that would emerge without restraint or self-censorship? This sense of connection and emotional vulnerability was something that needed to be known and recognised by teacher and student alike.
However, the conversations accompanying such events in training tended to displace what I understand as the generative in-between directly back into the body of the student. This suggested a failure to acknowledge the body of the teacher as integral to the production and recognition of any experience. Against this I would want to suggest that if, as Stacey argues, knowing can only take place “in the living present” through the actions and conversations of bodies (230), then the bodies of teachers and students both contribute to the formation of the vulnerability that is to be known and mutually recognised: the process is not somehow something that happens exclusively within the body of the student. The resultant vulnerability, then, cannot be simply understood as a personal attribute, but as an ongoing, intercorporeal accomplishment.

**What is embodied and who is produced in/between**

Each site produced particular experiences in and through the bodies of the students and teachers. As I became immersed in the culture of each institutional setting, I came to feel in my body the truth of many of the claims made by the teachers. In the Ensemble Studios and RE:ATOR Acting Services courses, each practical exercise was positioned as an invitation to risk and vulnerability, an opportunity to experience success or failure through the attempt to ‘use’ my body in unfamiliar ways. Through the VCA warm-ups and ‘impulse’ exercises, the auditionees learnt how to locate their embodied experiences in particular practices and associated discourses. They would learn how to breathe and move in ways that evidently displayed self-awareness and openness to new patterns of behaviour.

The rhetoric of each site sought to ensure a consistency of interpretation of experiences. While questions were always welcome, the answers were couched in terms of experiential validation in keeping with the particular account proffered by the teachers. The embodied acting skills, developed over time,
became ‘true’ because they were experienced as being real and authentic. This was especially evident in the conversations elicited by Lindy Davies and Richard Murphet during the Call-back day. Having embraced the techniques proffered by the VCA, auditionees spoke enthusiastically of their new sense of embodiment in their audition pieces:

“... a strength of stillness ... coming back to breath, calm ...”
“... trust a genuine impulse, not manufacturing one ... so much easier ...”
“... more honest, coming from the gut ...”
“... physical connection, how it makes you feel, respond ... instructive, intuitive”

There were also occasions in each site, when someone would perform in an unexpectedly powerful and moving way that affected everyone, including the teachers. Such bodily experiences seemed hard to account for, especially as these students were purportedly beginners. In each case, the teacher asked the student, either in front of the class, or in the presence of teaching colleagues, whether the student had had any training before. The response was that they had previous experience as a performer although no formal training. The teacher, other than an acknowledgement of the significant dynamics of their work, said little more. Those present had all felt something powerful that was, apparently, ‘outside’ of formal discourses and practices. Our experiences as bodies together exceeded the boundaries determined by these institutions of actor formation.

**Formation, misrecognition and vulnerability**

The VCA assessors, on one occasion, noted that they would have to see whether certain auditionees could be “shifted”. The implication was that earlier training
or experiences had sedimented, within the actors in question, certain, by-now-fixed dispositions, and so this speaks to the assumed power of formation of acting bodies from an early age. The assessors understood the work they would embark upon with prospective students would be set against the cumulative effects of a range of educational, societal and familial formations.

However, the assessment process also illustrated how talent and ability tended to be judged as aspects of the givenness of the auditionee. Similarly, the conversational use of associated discourses in training and in the general culture, manifested through contractions attributing energy and connection to the auditionee created ontological expectations of the actor and audience, respectively. These, in turn, resulted in the other ‘requisite misrecognitions’ analysed in this thesis in terms of givenness, agency and disposition. In each site, teachers and students conversed and acted in ways to produce certain ontologies as well as certain expectations of the efficacy of the Theatre in society.

I came to realise that, in these three sites, formation is predicated upon requisite misrecognitions. These misrecognitions are sustained by what is at stake, in terms of status, authority, capability and effectiveness, for the parties involved – whether actors, teachers, the industry or the culture. The field of cultural production is, itself, premised upon necessary misrecognitions of existing formations such as the autonomy of the artist and divergent functions of artistic practice. Any recognition of the arbitrariness of these purportedly natural or normal values in the field is likely to disrupt how stakeholders perceive their struggles for cultural capital.

At the VCA auditions, Lindy acknowledged to the final auditionees that “the industry is about approval ... we spend three years fighting those demons of approval that otherwise lead to very unhealthy dependency ... we nurture inner strength, meditation ... to feel powerless in a state of nakedness requires discipline ... (part of the teaching of the VCA is) to train the mind to stay where it is not a demon to you”. Lindy also claimed that their training program was constructed as a collaborative, rather than hierarchical, model. Over the three-
year course, they would actively challenge the students' tendencies to variously deify/demonise the teachers and the institutional setting, rather than claiming their own power. Yet, it was also acknowledged that the VCA still had the right to prevent students from completing their degree if they were not seen to be developing in a particular way. Furthermore, which approvals were deemed appropriate seemed be determined by the institutional authorities rather than through conversation and negotiation with the students. The relations of power in the institution were still requisitely differential as, indeed, they would be when these graduates would be looking for work out in the industry.

Thus, necessary habits for establishing the requisite effective vulnerability in performance also facilitated dependencies between students and significant individuals of the institution, primarily, their teachers. These dependencies were ultimately generalisable as embodied dispositions (i.e. habitus), of the actor towards the various stakeholders in the market-place (including casting agents, directors, producers, and audiences).

**Intercorporeality and the vulnerability of performing and witnessing bodies**

In producing an ongoing awareness of the powerful interplay between actors, as performing bodies, and audiences, as witnessing bodies, there are three important responses that need to be made through further research, and through changes in learning and knowledge creation practices.

*Conversation: Performing meaning-making and knowledge creation together*

The practice of teaching in each site was oriented towards a very active and practical agenda, leaving few structured or systematic opportunities for conversations about the process of working together. Where there were opportunities for conversation, they were oriented towards finding the right answer rather than interacting with a potential multiplicity of outcomes.
The teachers' coaching—"don't think about it"; "don't talk about it"; "just do it"—implied that any innovations in performance practice or new possibilities of interpretation inherently came about through a spontaneity, inhering in the body, and realised through that body's liberation from an autonomous mind. This Cartesian dualism functions as a misrecognition—once more splitting consciousness from embodiment. Such a dualism, however, does not adequately account for the experiences of power and vulnerability encountered and shaped in these sites. In Chapter One, I drew attention to Leder's discussion of the intertwined indeterminacy of the natural and cultural in the formation of bodily habits. With reference to this dynamic, I have argued that there are constant blurrings between the conscious engagement of new skills and the subtle reorganisation of the visceral substructures that allow a learnt skill to become natural and normal. New conversational practices are needed that acknowledge that such interplay occurs between what is experienced as mental and physical.

Similarly, as actors are trained to be critical thinkers about the texts they perform, perhaps they should also be encouraged to be critically aware of the embodiments of the discourses by which they are in-formed. Further exploration needs to be undertaken to better understand how critical embodiment, as a practice of bodily-sustainable consciousness, might function in these institutional contexts.

One of my ongoing concerns was with the frequent marginalisation of discourses of spirituality. In the last chapter, I recounted an event when a student in Zika's class tried to talk about the place of spirituality and was discouraged from further conversation. Encouraging conversation as a conscious practice acknowledges the divergent personal histories and reproductions of experiences. Such conversations offer an alternative to either fixing experiences into inflexible categories (in Zika's case, categorising spirituality as a subset of religion) or misrecognising particular experiences as definitive.
Conversation offers the possibility of encountering and producing, at the same time, connections and fragmentations. The practice of initiating or participating in such conversations is about inquiring into and potentially transforming presuppositions rather than justifying or defending them. José Fonseca, in his analysis of the conditions that support the emergence of meaning and innovation (2002), notes that, where there are relations of power, conflicts and resistances will inevitably surface often as a result of a perceived threat to existing status and identity. So, as shifts in presuppositions produce shifts in identity and relationships of power, conversations require, in the same moment, a willingness to live with anxiety and trust (115-116). Teachers of acting, to whom I have suggested this practice, have expressed concern that providing a space for such conversations could undermine their authority, and therefore harm their effectiveness as teachers in equipping students with skills for employment in the industry. I believe such responses warrant a good reason for further exploring what is at stake and how it may be renegotiated. This research needs to be developed in conjunction with an acknowledgement that introducing conversation into formational practices would produce significant anxieties about the differential identities of teachers and students.

*Experience: Honouring a diversity of embodied dispositions through phenomenological practices*

The potential strength of the VCA assessment process was the inclusion of two assessors. When opinions about the talent of the auditionee diverged, conversation gradually developed. However, as a conversation, it was directed toward working out who was right, rather than the possibility that both assessors were producing different encounters with the auditionee. The divergent experiences of the assessors didn’t mean that either one of them was necessarily mistaken. It could now be interpreted that each person, simultaneously, responded and contributed distinctively to what was being offered by the auditionee. Nevertheless, the language used in evaluation still tended to attribute talent onto the givenness of the individual.
Consistent with an intercorporeal perspective, I would want to actively acknowledge that misrecognitions of talent are, inevitably and paradoxically, indeterminate. Students and teachers (and other stakeholders in the field) need to develop an appreciation of the phenomenological dynamics of perception as an embodied disposition that can alter under divergent and emergent conditions. The intentional de-territorialising of the normal hierarchy of the senses, by, for example, a bracketing out of sight or sound, is one way of re-learning how to perceive the world, or of creating new habits of perceiving. Therefore, I would argue for a review of assessment practices and associated discourses that would take intercorporeality into account.

A very clear enactment of an intercorporeal disposition can also be made through the consideration of what is understood as acting skill. I have argued that any meanings and recognitions made of ability or talent are produced as a consequence of interactions *between* participants, rather than being misrecognised as *residing only in the body* of one or other of the participants. In recognising performance as meaning-making together, assessment then becomes a process of suspending judgement and remaining open to what is offered, alongside determining what is recognised and produced *in-between*. This reterritorialisation draws attention to the teacher’s and student’s dispositions towards any assessment process. Patricia Shaw, in addressing actions that, simultaneously, acknowledge and produce changes for performance (2002), proposes a series of conversation-starters:

‘Who are we realizing we are as we gather here?’

‘What kind of sense are we making together?’

‘What are we coming to talk about as we converse?’

‘How are we shifting our understanding of what we are engaged in?’

‘What kind of enterprise are we shaping?’ (172)
These questions, I believe, could be useful for opening up perceptions in audition and training processes. They invite stakeholders to consider the arbitrariness of the habits of knowing and legitimising a person’s performance.

*Embodiment: Becoming response-able in the formation and sustainability of vulnerable bodies*

Above all, I have argued for a greater accountability between teachers and students in actor training practices. In no small part, such a call is a response to the extraordinary potential actor training has to profoundly affect students. There needs to be a conscious acknowledgement that teachers and students participate in the circulations of desire, power and resistance. Although all practices are formative and may feel true and appropriate in the short term, not all forms are going to be sustainable or renewable over the long term.

I have argued that the experiences that are understood as vulnerability are not only a necessary disposition for actors but are also necessary for those for whom they perform in that they affect and are affected by each other. The issue, as observed by Shildrick, is how to negotiate appropriate degrees of vulnerability and intimacy so that they do not develop the potential to violate either oneself or others in damaging ways (118). Further research could be conducted into

---

10 In “Plurality, Dialogue and Response: Addressing Vulnerability”, Fiona Jenkins provocatively reasons: “[I]f we only address the sources of social vulnerability by redressing them, by finding ways of interacting which protect those aspects of ourselves exposed to violation and exploitation, then perhaps we risk refusing a form of interaction for which our vulnerability serves as a channel ...” (2002: 90) Such a challenge pushes us to reconsider how an ethically motivated ‘duty of care’ and ‘tolerance’ can be effectively practised because, as Jenkins argues, “if ‘others’ are to touch us, affect us, live with us in relations of mutual openness and vulnerability – we cannot defend ourselves from the outset against them” (96).
the practices in which professional actors have negotiated the performance of roles and relationships that are personally confronting and violating. In ten years of research into links between mental illness and creative achievement, Arnold M. Ludwig (1995) has documented numerous accounts of artists, including actors such as Richard Burton, Frances Farmer, James Dean, and Judy Garland, who have not managed the impact of their creative working lives on their social and relational lives. He comments:

Those who delve inward and use emotional experiences as the raw material for their creative output are more likely to experience the double-edged sword of creative activity. While the creative process lets them master and channel their painful experiences through the power of their expression, they sometimes cannot contain the emotional forces unleashed through their probing. (175)

This emotional volatility is often celebrated and recognised, anecdotally, as part of the eccentricity of the profession that gives it its cultural status. However, there are actors who question whether the personal and social toll justifies patterns that are not sustainable for the actors and the lives of people with whom they have ongoing relationships and responsibilities. In 1998, Carole Zucker asked the Irish actor, Stephen Rea, if acting had the potential to damage the actor. In his reply, Rea commented:

I do believe that the work we do is not meant to destroy the participants; it’s meant to explore and enhance people’s lives. And I think that if people are getting into it on a level where it’s damaging them, there’s something wrong with the process. I understand that any artistic process is a difficult undertaking, and painful in many ways, but art is
meant to redefine, and to turn the bad into the good
... Because acting is not just about expressing pain
and emotion, it’s about a view, it’s about an
understanding of a piece, it’s about having a
panoramic vision of a piece as well as having a
subjective view. (Rea in Zucker 1999: 118, 119)

I would argue that any attempt to manage the intense, embodied experiences
required of performance will paradoxically produce this simultaneous feeling of
“in control/out of control”. How an actor handles the anxieties associated with
this paradoxical state has the potential to determine whether their working
practice, and even their broader life circumstance, is sustainable. A clue lies in
Philip Streatfield’s The Paradox of Control in Organizations (2001), in which he
argues that the notion of being in control needs to be distinguished from the
sense of coherence in experience. The tendency he sees is that people move too
easily from a perception of order in the world to the belief that they can control
some part of it. This is done in an attempt to keep anxieties associated with
disorder and unpredictability on the margins of consciousness. This may have
even been part of the motivation for people to connect with each other and
produce meaning together. So, Streatfield concludes, it is the capacity to live
with this paradox of order/disorder, and have the courage to continue, in spite
of not being in control, that enables a person to creatively participate in life (139-
140).
Coda

Having introduced this research with a Prelude, I complete this work with a Coda. Making these suggestions for further research and practices would, I anticipate, have the potential to affect the doxa and illusio that preserve and sustain the current field in all its manifestations. If teachers and students are, together, vulnerable partners in the production of meaningful performances; if the audition process predicates the ‘existence’ of talent in individuals though talent doesn’t exist in individuals; if vulnerable and energetic performance is produced and variously recognised and misrecognised through meaning-making interactions between bodies – then how are the identities of stakeholders and their relations of power, as they currently function in the field of acting, to be reconfigured? As a consequence, acting as an accepted and institutionalised field of struggle may encounter a crisis of identity and escalating anxiety.

This, then, is the challenge I leave with teachers, students, scholars, practitioners and all who are stakeholders in the field of performance – that we continue to participate creatively, interactively, with trust and courage in our common, yet divergent, vulnerability, so that new and valuable meanings will emerge out of our performing intercorporeally towards each other.
References

Books and Journals


255

Carnicke, Sharon Marie 1998 Stanislavsky in Focus Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers


Colebrook, Claire 2002 Understanding Deleuze Sydney: Allen and Unwin


Danaher, Geoff, Schirato, Tony and Webb, Jan 2000 Understanding Foucault Sydney: Allen and Unwin


Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix 1987 A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia translated by B. Massumi London and New York: Continuum


Durrant, Lawrence 1997 Hayes Gordon: The Man and his Dream Sydney: Hale and Iremonger
Falzon, Christopher 1998 Foucault and Social Dialogue: Beyond Fragmentation London and New York: Routledge
Fonseca, José 2002 Complexity and Innovation in Organizations edited by R. D. Stacey, D. Griffin, and P. Shaw London and New York: Routledge
——— 1998 “Boundary riders and claim jumpers: the Australian theatre industry” in Our Australian Theatre in the 1990s, edited by V. Kelly Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 20-37
——— 1972 The Archaeology of Knowledge translated by A. M. Sheridan-Smith London: Tavistock
——— 1973 The Birth of the Clinic: An archaeology of medical perception translated by A. M. Sheridan-Smith New York: Pantheon
——— 1984a “Nietzsche, genealogy, history” in The Foucault Reader, edited by Rabinow New York: Pantheon Books, 76-100

Fraser, Tony and Phillips, Keri 1982 *The Management of Interpersonal Skills Training* Aldershot: Gower


Geertz, Clifford 1973 *The Interpretation of Culture* London: Hutchinson of London


Grotowski, Jerzy 1969 *Towards a Poor Theatre* edited by E. Barba London: Methuen Drama

Hagen, Uta with Frankel, Haskel 1973 *Respect for Acting* New York: Macmillan


258


Meisner, Sanford and Longwell, Dennis 1987 Sanford Meisner on Acting New York: Random House

259
Forming (in) Vulnerable Bodies

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice 1968 *The Visible and the Invisible* Evanston: Northwestern University Press


Merlin, Bella 2001 *Beyond Stanislavsky: The psycho-physical approach to actor training* London: Nick Hern Books

Meyer-Dinkgräfe, Daniel 2001 *Approaches to Acting: Past and Present* London and New York: Continuum

Milling, Jane and Ley, Graham 2001 *Modern Theories of Performance: From Stanislavski to Boal* Hampshire and New York: Palgrave


Morris, Eric 2000 *Acting from the Ultimate Consciousness: A dynamic exploration of the actor’s inner resources* Los Angeles: Ermor Enterprises


Oliver, Kelly 2001 *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press


Racovskis, Karlis 1983 *Michel Foucault and the Subversion of Intellect* Ithaca: Cornell University Press


Schön, Donald A. 1983 *The Reflective practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*
New York: Basic Books

Shaw, Patricia 2002 *Changing Conversations in Organizations* London and New York: Routledge

Shildrick, Margrit 2002 *Embodying the Monster: Encounters with the Vulnerable Self*


Stacey, Ralph D., Griffin, Douglas and Shaw, Patricia 2000 *Complexity and Management: Fad or Radical Challenge to Systems Thinking?* London and New York: Routledge

Stanislavski, Constantin 1937 *An Actor Prepares* translated by E. R. Hapgood
London: Methuen Drama


261


Webb, Jen, Schirato, Tony and Danaher, Geoff 2002 Understanding Bourdieu Sydney: Allen and Unwin


Reports, Handbooks, Programs, Brochures, Newspapers, Web Sites


Davies, Lindy 2000b "From Lindy Davies, Director" in A Month in the Country by Brian Friel after Turgenev, edited by R. Hennessy Sydney: Playbill/Showbill
Ensemble brochure 2000
Ensemble Studios advertisement, Spectrum/Sydney Morning Herald, January 29, 2000, S21
RE:ACTOR Acting Services advertisement, Spectrum/Sydney Morning Herald, May 20, 2000, S21