***Actor Training: A Reader -* Edited by Mark Evans**

**Technique: *Training the Actor’s Voice and Body***

Jonathan Pitches, University of Leeds

*Empty (and full) technique*

Questions of technique in twentieth century actor training are not as cut and dried as the pragmatism of the word implies. Whilst all the practitioners represented in this section recognise the importance of ‘good technique’ in maintaining a rigorous and responsive acting profession, the term is nevertheless haunted by a concern that proficient technicality is only the first step towards that goal. This ambivalence is reflected in different ways in the practitioner voices featured here. For Vsevolod Meyerhold, for instance, technique is viewed as a necessary foundation for the work of the actor, set in productive tension with the more chaotic forces of creativity. He equates the set of techniques that make up his training in biomechanics with the technical studies or ‘études’ of a pianist. Indeed, he used the same word for his own acting exercises. Thus in his formulation: ‘technique arms the imagination’ - and mastering technique is the only way to master art (Schmidt 1996: 41). His roll call of ideal performers personifies this celebration of what he calls ‘technical mastery’: Duse, Bernhardt, Grasso, Chaliapin and Coquelin (1969: 199). Dario Fo, on the other hand, is far more cautious about the virtues of explicit technique. For him, demonstration of technique is tantamount to creative vacuity, a problem caused, not solved, by the training institution:

There are very important drama schools which train you in gesture. I know them and have given lessons at them. And what I have noticed is that the young people there have taken on only the technique of a given exercise. In the end they are just like empty eggshells. I ask you!

(Fo 1983: 23, emphasis in original)

Never frightened to go against the grain, it is hardly surprising that Fo was critical of institutionalised training, but that aside, his observation raises important questions for this essay: if technique can be disappointingly ‘empty’, what is a *full* technique and how might it be achieved?

This conundrum has been occupying Phillip Zarrilli for nearly four decades (since at least 1976) and his writings on psycho-physicality signify a shift in the way the debate between external technique and the actor’s inner processes is expressed. Describing the gradual impact on himself of his training in India in the 1970s, specifically in kalarippayattuand kathakali, he records a change in his experience on stage:

I was moving from a concern with the physical, external form to awareness of the subtler internal (psycho-) dimension of how to fully embody an action. My body and mind were beginning to become one *in practice*.

(Zarrilli: 2009: 24, emphasis in original)

Zarrilli coins the term ‘bodymind’ (ibid) for this phenomenon, a neologism designed to conflate the distinction between inner and outer work and an attempt to eliminate what is frequently referred to as a Cartesian divide or dualism. Like Fo, he is concerned with metaphors of emptiness and fullness and sees the integration of the physical and psychological as a pre-requisite for a dynamic creative practice. Such a concern is a running theme in the writings in this section but it is worthy of note that the *expression* of these ideas changes as we move through the last century and into this one. Vakhtangov, writing in 1918, clearly divides inner creative processes (both conscious and unconscious) from what he terms the Organic Outer Technique (Vakhtangov 2011: 120), echoing much of the Russian psycho-physical tradition of training begun by his teacher and mentor Stanislavsky. Zarrilli, almost a century later is consciously shifting the agenda away from such brute distinctions of body and mind, even if he is searching for a cognate organicity. In fact, all the practitioners represented here struggle with this fundamental problem: how to express a holistic view of the performer’s task, valuing the rigour and craft associated with physical technique, whilst celebrating the ineffable spark of inspiration.

*Principles of taxonomy: organising the practitioners*

Before proceeding to a consideration of how this core theme of psycho-physicality relates to the other themes in this section, let us pause and consider the practitioners themselves and, specifically, how we might organise them - a complex and political task in itself. The passage above already assumes some knowledge of existing principles of organisation for training regimes that perhaps need making explicit. I have referenced the Russian tradition, without explaining that different countries come with varied histories and lineages and fascinating connections between practitioners passing on ideas within a culture. I have suggested that thinking chronologically might raise an awareness of *changes* in perception and expression that operate across these geographies – from inner-versus-outer to the idea of ‘bodymind’. I have also implied that practitioners have their own reference points (Meyerhold’s wish-list of ideal performers, for example) and this, itself, raises interesting questions of how practitioners borrow ideas and practices from other traditions as well as from their own. This latter phenomenon might be simply expressed as the difference between horizontal (synchronic) and vertical (diachronic) transmission.

In addition to these points is the important consideration of gender, too often overlooked in writings on training and on practitioners. There are thirteen practitioners describing their understanding of technique in this section and only one of them is female, Kristin Linklater. This fact accurately expresses the depressing balance of power in actor training over the last century – Alison Hodge’s first edition of *Twentieth Century Actor Training* (2000), featured only two women out of fourteen practitioners, for instance. But it does not represent the current state of actor training criticism. The second edition of Hodge’s book (2010) included six female actor trainers – Monika Pagneux, Stella Adler, Anne Bogart, Joan Littlewood, Maria Knebel and Ariane Mnouchkine – and we might immediately add to that list recent documentation of the training practices of: Lorna Marshall, Katie Mitchell, Mary Overlie, Litz Pisk, Uta Hagen, Viola Spolin, Joanna Merlin, Rena Mirecka, Cicely Berry, Niamh Dowling, Pina Bausch, Anna Halprin, Dorinda Hulton, Patsy Rodenberg and Alison Hodge herself[[1]](#footnote-1). Second, third and fourth editions of this Reader will no doubt capture this shift.

So, to return to the question of organisation, I would like to suggest three complementary taxonomies for this section: i) grouping by historical context, ii) by tradition (geographically and culturally) and, iii) by the system-individual dialectic suggested by Ian Watson in *Performer Training: Developments across Cultures (*2000). Watson argues that:

[The] expansion of interest in training has led to a shift in concern that in some ways rejects the very notion of systematized training… Experimentalists like Grotowski and Barba especially…have moved away from the idea of developing a system of training consisting of skill development and perfected techniques. Their concerns are with the individual actor.

(Watson 2000:7)

In many ways the historical context is the most straightforward, notwithstanding the problems of periodisation that dog all theatre historiographies[[2]](#footnote-2). The writings here span over 90 years of theatre practice from Vakhtangov’s ‘On consciousness’ (1917) to Zarrilli’s ‘Beginning with the Breath’ (2009). The majority of the work was written after the second world war but Meyerhold (1922) and Artaud (1938) offer significant additions to Vakhtangov’s pre-war statements and St-Denis’ *On Training* is a synthesis of ideas formed first with his uncle Jacques Copeau in France in the 1920s and then solidified with his founding of the London Theatre Studio and Old Vic Theatre Studio (1935 and 1947, respectively). Laban’s work on *Effort* was published just after the war in 1947. The remaining examples span the 1960s (Grotowski, 1969; Feldenkrais 1966), the 1970s (Linklater, 1976), the 1980s, (Lecoq – first published in French in 1987; Suzuki, 1986 and Barba, 1986) and finally the 1990s (Boal’s *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* was first published in 1992).

Considering these practitioners in terms of the traditions they both inhabit and exemplify is more problematic but arguably still worthwhile. Indeed, the problems one encounters in attempting this kind of categorisation are instructive: no tradition is entirely sealed off from its neighbours and never more so when the focus is on embodied traditions, such as those represented here. There are three ‘clear’ training traditions in this section: Russian (Vakhtangov and Meyerhold), French (Artaud, Lecoq, St Denis) and Polish (Grotowski and Barba[[3]](#footnote-3)). It might be argued, given the work done in the UK by both Feldenkrais and Laban, more or less at the same time (i.e. the mid-late 1940s) that a British theatre tradition is also reflected in these writings, a space which Scottish-born practitioner and expert in voicing Shakespeare, Kristin Linklater, might also occupy.

That leaves the Brazilian Augusto Boal, the Japanese Tadashi Suzuki and American Phillip Zarrilli. Are these representatives of their native country’s traditions too? Well, yes and no. Boal’s work grew out of a very specific context of political struggle in Brazil in the 1950s and 1960s, but he was forced into exile in 1971, first in Argentina and then in Europe. Since then his work in the Theatre of the Oppressed has impacted on a truly global scale to the extent that ‘there is scarcely a country it has not touched’ (Babbage 2004: 30). It is misleading to say, then, that Boal’s work is representative of any one tradition of training. To suggest Tadashi Suzuki’s practice is exemplary of the long-standing tradition of Japanese theatre is equally problematic. As he makes clear in the *Way of Acting* below, the ancient traditions of Noh and Kabuki are central to his understanding of training and specifically in the celebration of the actor’s feet as ‘the basis of a stage performance’ (Suzuki 1986: 6). But European Classical Ballet and the ancient Greek theatre are also fundamental reference points for the Suzuki Company of Toga, and famously the training forms ‘half’ of the international, cultural collaboration project, SITI Theatre Company, alongside fellow co-founder, Ann Bogart and her Viewpoints training[[4]](#footnote-4). Again, there is much more to Suzuki training than its claim to a place in the lineage of classical Japanese theatre, rich though that tradition is. For Zarrilli, the training is consciously hybridized as suggested above. An American practitioner, who has worked for many years in the British Higher Education system, Zarrilli draws on yoga, kalarippayattu and taiquiquan practices, equipping his actors with skills for contemporary theatre: a process he likens to ‘transposition’ rather than ‘synthesis’:

When the contemporary actor trains in non-Western psycho-physical disciplines there is a necessary process of transposing the underlying psycho-dynamic elements and principles into a new key.

(Zarrilli 2009: 82)

Zarrilli is clear in *Psychophysical Acting* that even the so-called vertical, indigenous practices of South Asia (such as kathakali) are undergoing significant change. What was once training in a fixed repertoire of physical and dramaturgical conventions, passed on from master to student over several years is now responding to rapid globalization, recognizing that ‘young people do not have the time to devote hours to a traditional training’ (2009: 81). Viewed from the point of view of tradition, then, the collection of practitioners represented here exemplifies many of the realities of cultural transmission – it is complex, non-linear, porous and consciously or unconsciously eclectic.

Finally, it might be possible to organise the readings in this section in terms of Watson’s deceptively simple model of system-versus-individual. In doing so we can test his argument that the last century witnessed a move from big picture, grandiose, systems thinking - the grand narratives of modernist actor training - to a far more localized and specialized focus on individual actors. This suggestion echoes another much-debated cultural shift in the twentieth century – from modernism to post-modernism – and develops a healthy line of skepticism about training practices that claim some kind of universal applicability and, by extension, cultural dominance. Such claims might have been defensible in a context of national revisioning – in early Soviet times for instance – but are much less sustainable in a world of global mobility and technological connectivity.

Perhaps unsurprisingly the Russian tradition of training is one which is clearly underpinned by a systematizing urge – not just because Vakhtangov’s teacher Stanislavsky called his whole regime, *the* System, but also because his contemporaries were pursuing similarly utopian and all-encompassing projects. The key principles of Meyerhold’s biomechanics, for instance, were expressed in the universal language of mathematics: ‘N = A1 + A2’ (1969: 198) where N is the actor and A1 + A2 represent two halves of the creative process, conception and execution. Barba and Grotowski, as Watson argues, are at the other end of the spectrum, developing bespoke training approaches for each of their actors, an idea embodied in Barba’s term for his actor-collaborators: ‘auto-didact’ or *self*-teacher. But where does one place the remaining practitioners along this continuum and does this tally with the chronology of publication dates outlined above? Again the answer is an ambivalent yes and no. Many of the practitioners here developed systems of a kind – in the form of a carefully designed training curriculum (St-Denis, Lecoq or, speculatively, Linklater) or in Laban’s case in the form of a new notation scheme to record movement (Labanotation). Others, such as Boal, established set techniques to deliver their aims: forum theatre, invisible theatre and image theatre for instance. But the application of these techniques could never be divorced from the individual (socio-political) contexts and sites of power where Boal’s ideas are applied, be that in Rio or Rochdale. One might argue that the most systematized of all the regimes represented in this section is the work of Feldenkrais, the only practitioner here whose training has a specific accreditation system and a formal qualification framework. But that would be to overlook the highly individualized approach Feldenkrais teachers adopt with their students. One of the most difficult practitioners to consider along a system-individual continuum is Antonin Artaud, perhaps an indicator in itself of his visionary iconoclasm. Even with his fascination for highly codified forms of training from South East Asia, and specifically Balinese dance, Artaud’s emphasis on the *affective* possibilities of the actor and their visceral impact on the spectator must suggest that his is a theatre rooted in the individual, as he suggests in his essay below: ‘the actor is a heart athlete…The affective area is *his own*’ (1970: 88, my emphasis).

So what is there to conclude from this summary application of Watson’s model to the range of practitioners in this section? Firstly, that the system-individual dialectic operates more readily *within* the practices documented here, rather than on a larger historical scale, even if the respective ends of that scale (Vakhtangov/Stanislavsky and Barba) seem to be secure. Secondly, and more generally, that all organising principles are themselves constructs and must be treated with a healthy dose of caution - none more so than history and tradition. Such critical caution will help as we move now to identifying some more localized thematic connections.

*Habit, neutrality, mechanics and organics: some training themes*

The habitual in training references a number of key ideas: a daily practice, a lack of consciousness and a responsiveness resulting from intense and lengthy training processes. As such, habit is a double-edged sword in training. In many ways it is the cornerstone of technique, as the formation of habits is dependent on repetition and training is all about repetition. But several practitioners address the flipside of habit in their writings - the *unconscious,* thoughtless element of habitual movement or behavior – and identify practices designed to break habits, or at the very least defamiliarise them for an actor. For Moshe Feldenkrais the individual’s habitual body (the ‘self-image’) is often misconstrued on a grand scale:

Close your eyes and try to represent the width of your mouth with your index fingers. It is not unusual to discover an error of up to three hundred percent in exaggeration or underestimation. (1996: 115)

Anything more than a one hundred percent deviation between the self-image and the objective real facts is problematic for Feldenkrais because in those circumstances: ‘the behavior of that part of the body is generally defective’ (1996: 116). The only way to remedy this is to relinquish the habitual body attitude ‘by choice’, that is to divest oneself of the learnt and accustomed habits inscribed in the body by one’s own unique past. In his interview with Schechner, two of the terms for this rethinking of habituated movement are laid down: i) the potential reversibility of gesture and ii), the maintenance of a state of action or readiness. These apply to all of the actor’s abilities beyond just movement, including the voice, the breath, the eyes – the ‘total body organism’, in fact (1996: 117).

Boal raises a similar concern about habituation and repetition but his focus is on the emotional dimension of this problem. Identifying the influence of Stanislavsky, (rather than the oft-cited Brechtian inspiration for his theatre), Boal describes the challenge he faced when directing in Sao Paolo in Brazil, working with actors whose freedom to express emotions had been stymied by a history of overtly external approaches to directing. Drawing on Stanislavsky in a ‘methodical study’ of his works, Boal sought to undermine what he considered to be a fundamental block for Brazilian actors:

A newly discovered emotion runs the risk of being canalised by the mechanised patterns of the actor’s behaviour; the emotion may be blocked by a body already hardened by habit to a certain set of actions and reactions. (1992: 40)

Boal accepts that there are benefits to this habituation, which shields humankind from the overload of sensations we would otherwise experience on a daily basis. Our senses are protectively selective, he argues, to ensure that the complexity of each operation we undertake is not overwhelming – a process Drew Leder has articulated as the body’s capacity to engineer its own absence or disappearance (Leder 1990). But such sensory deafness is not the stuff of creative practice. As Stanislavsky (2008) had recognized with his observation exercises[[5]](#footnote-5), an actor needs to be dynamically sensitive to her own emotions in order that they may be communicated with freshness and surprise. Like Feldenkrais, the approach Boal advocates is one of ‘detuning’ so that the actor can ‘relearn to perceive emotions and sensations he has lost the habit of recognising’ (1992: 41).

Kristin Linklater uses another metaphor for this process, but she is demonstrably pursuing the same aim. In her ‘hypothetical four year actor-training program’ and in common with many conservatoire programmes, she envisions the first year as ‘an undoing process [which] begins to break down physical and vocal habits’ (1976: 202). Her simple formula is the principle of ‘release then development’, in which each individual actor is gently taught to forget any previous ways of working, to become sensitive to the ‘interior world of self’ (1976: 203) and then to approach making work with others in combinations of growing complexity. Her writing thus suggests a model of training based on subtraction and addition; an actor needs ‘de-conditioning’ (1976: 203) before reconditioning, a delicate process that can be upset by entering the industry prematurely. Whilst her focus is on physical and vocal habits and her aim is to ‘free up’ the voice, as the title of her book suggests, it is worth noting that critics have questioned this line of thinking, at it assumes that emptying the actor - or in other terms pursuing ‘neutrality’ - is achievable in the first place[[6]](#footnote-6).

Jacques Lecoq’s work (and also Michel St Denis’s) operationalizes the idea of neutrality though the agency of the ‘neutral mask’. But whilst the term may be part of the same questionable idea of a psycho-physical ‘blank slate’, in practical terms neutral mask work also reveals the individuality of the actor. Lecoq’s description in *The Theatre of Movement and Gesture* draws an important distinction between the mask *as concept* and the mask *as agent*. Conceptually, Lecoq argues, ‘the neutral mask is a sort of common denominator for both men and women’, archetypal rather than typical in function as: ‘you can’t have a neutral mask called Albert who wakes up in his bed’ (2006: 105). But an important part of the experience of neutral mask work is to move beyond the habits of everyday expression, to engage the body far more directly in communication and ‘to discover a new freedom that is greater than the naked face’ (2006: 105). That freedom can only come from what are considered to be the suppressed creative capacities of the individual actor, released, perhaps counter-intuitively, by the mask with ‘no particular expression or characteristic’ (2006: 105).

Pursuing this theme of neutrality further takes us to Jerzy Grotowski and his notion of *via negativa* or ‘process of elimination’ (1969: 101). He too sees the untrained actor as a site of negative impediments that need to be pared back in order to free the performer:

We must find out what it is that hinders him in the way of respiration, movement and - most important of all - human contact. What resistances are there? How can they be eliminated? I want to take away, steal from the actor, all that disturbs him. That which is creative will remain with him. It is a liberation. (1969: 209)

However, it is not through the use of mask work that this liberation is discovered, but through a personalised exercise regime of auto-research, reminding us of the system-individual dialectic scrutinized above. Grotowski recognizes that there are no universals when it comes to corporeal training, only individual discoveries. The actor’s task is to achieve a level of self-awareness, through personal training-as-research. Automatic repetition is to be avoided at all costs, again a common theme in this chapter. Importantly, it is not the forms of the exercises themselves, but the process of what Grotowski calls *investigation* that is so valuable and here he is undoubtedly expressing the influence of Stanislavsky, whose own investigative research into the processes of acting, occupied his entire life.

The last theme to be drawn out of these writings is a two-sided one: training mechanics and training organics, a fitting concluding theme as it returns us to the bigger picture of twentieth century cultural shifts – or more accurately, tensions. I have argued elsewhere (Pitches 2006) that there are two dominant tropes to training in the Russian tradition: a mechanistic or Newtonian strand of activity and a neo-Romantic or organic strand. The extracts below suggest that this particular modeling of the twentieth century extends beyond Russian acting.

The extent to which Meyerhold espoused industrial theories and the rhetoric of mechanics has been outlined above, through his controversial ‘formula for acting’. Later in his lecture on biomechanics he claims, equally controversially, that: ‘the Taylorisation of the theatre will make it possible to perform in one hour that which requires four at present’ (1969: 199). And whilst these words clearly need treating with some suspicion (his own production of *The Government Inspector* was over four hours long!), there are strong resonances between the ideas of the industrial theorist, Frederick Winslow Taylor, and the structuring and physical execution of Meyerhold’s biomechanical études. A similar fascination for the scientific measurement of effort is reflected in Rudolph Laban’s work, although it is fair to say that Laban’s application of these ideas was far more systematic and analytical (and certainly less opportunistic). Laban’s writing on effort here is directly drawn from the application of his understanding of movement principles to industry – in British factories in the late 1940s and 1950s. Laban’s terminology in articulating these meeting points is indicative of the mechanistic theme:

Man's body engine is constructed in a manner that in principle all imaginable effort-combinations can be performed with relative ease and balance. (2011: 224)

There are echoes here with Feldenkrais when Laban elaborates on some of the problems experienced by workers - not due to a misleading ‘self-image’ but to what Laban calls a ‘lopsided effort-habit’ (2011: 224), which just as significantly impedes the individual’s ability to move efficiently. Laban’s analysis of effort, broken down into the four measurable constituents: Time, Weight, Space and the underlying phenomenon of Flow, help him to diagnose in typically forensic terms the characteristics necessary for the realignment of effort and to recognise both physical and psychological domains.

Viewing the training process through the lens of engineering and industry offers one potent metaphor for the development of technique – indeed the dictionary definition of the term cites the meeting point between, craft, industry and dexterity: ‘a particular way of carrying out an experiment, procedure, or task, esp. in a scientific discipline or a craft; a technical or scientific method… a skilful or efficient means of achieving a purpose’[[7]](#footnote-7), reminding us of the close connections between training, making and science.

An alternative, organic perspective is even more prevalent in the writings in this section and generates similarly rich metaphors. Tadashi Suzuki’s stamping practice offers one such example:

In stamping, we come to understand that the body establishes its relation to the ground through the feet, that the ground and the body are not two separate entities. We are part of the ground. Our very beings will return to the earth when we die. (1986: 9)

Suzuki is concerned to re-engage the actor’s body with the environment. Wearing footwear, whether elaborately formal or domestic, breaks the connection between the actor and the earth and shakes the foundation of her creative work. For Suzuki, the feet are a meeting point – between the past and the future, between the actor and her surroundings and between the constituents of the actor’s physical expressivity – voice, rhythm, energy, gesture.

Yevgeny Vakhtangov’s choice of metaphor is in very much the same vein. An actor should not submit her subconscious to training but have it *cultivated*, a subtle distinction lost on the formal training institutions:

God only knows what goes on in theatre schools. The main mistake the schools make is that they take it upon themselves *to teach how to act,* while they should be *cultivating actors.* (2011: 119)

In terms starkly reminiscent of Dario Fo, quoted above, Vakhtangov is suspicious of the deadening influence formal training may have on the actor. Indeed he chose the metaphor of cultivation provocatively to underline the distinction between the heavy-handed didacticism he saw in the theatre school sector and the nurturing rhythms needed for the alternative acting pedagogy he was pursuing alongside Stanislavsky[[8]](#footnote-8). Why ‘cultivation’? Because, Vakhtangov argued, the delicate relationship between the subconscious and the conscious can wither and die as easily as an untended plant.

This organic visioning of the creative processes underlying acting technique is striking in the writings in this section: Artaud’s notion of the actor as ‘affective organism’, Zarrilli’s own ‘cultivated’ bodymind, Michel St-Denis’s total actor, achieving ‘a chemistry that leads to vitality of speech and communication’. All these examples suggest that the practitioners are grasping for a language that expresses some of the very difficult-to-express complexities of acting. But rather than attempting to evaluate the accuracy of the metaphors themselves, it is important to reflect that these choices of allusive terminology are laden with evidence of the practitioners’ own histories, traditions and cultural reference points; it is these we should concentrate on most readily.

*Conclusion*

Cautious of suggesting there is one definitive approach to understanding these fascinating source materials, I have presented a series of methods: chronological, cultural and geographical (tradition), methodological (system-individual) and finally metaphorical and thematic. I have clearly not exhausted any of these approaches and there are undoubtedly many other ways to analyse these writings on technique. I have not addressed in detail questions of psycho-physicality for instance, although all of the theatre artists represented here are concerned with the relationship between mind and body, even those who deny such distinctions. Where each of these practitioners might be located on a psycho-physical continuum is just one alternative mapping exercise. Nor have I considered the extent to which these training regimes may (or may not) be responsive to their immediate political context (a continuum of located or dislocated practice). I have only considered four of the prominent metaphors used in the writings on training but there are countless others. What would emerge from a scrutiny of the terms freedom or constraint, flow, energy, action or *re*action? And how might these ideas be incorporated into practices undertaken today? I have only been able to sketch some of the salient moments from selected practitioners’ lives – Zarrilli’s epiphany of embodying action, Boal’s Stanislavskian experiments in Rio – but all of these artists enjoyed (and some are still enjoying), multi-faceted careers in actor training and theatre making, often with significant changes in their own attitudes to the idea of technique. These materials will doubtless stimulate further research journeys and curiosities.

More than anything my reading of these documents has confirmed in my mind the need for a diversity of techniques, rather than the promotion of any one Technique. This is not to say that a training in any one of the sets of ideas formulated here should be avoided; there is always the danger of dilettantism and cultural cherry-picking. But when any approach to training is raised to the status of a Technique[[9]](#footnote-9), that surreptitious capitalization of the ‘T’ often signifies a conscious, territorial appropriation of the field, one that conveniently forgets the inevitable cross-fertilization of practices that make up all training regimes. Viewed together these thirteen essays celebrate those borrowings, appropriations and transformations either tacitly or directly - a truism that withstands, howsoever we might choose to organise them.

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1. Of course this is not meant to be in anyway comprehensive, simply a snapshot of recent publications addressing the gender imbalance in actor training documentation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Thomas Postlewait is particularly lucid on this point: ‘Whether we refer to large eras, such as the medieval age, or specific ones, such as the 1920s, the period concept is our way of freezing a segment of time, and giving it an identity. We must remember, though, that the concept is located within us, not within history itself. In short, it is a classification that we create and then project onto the past’ (2009:157). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Barba is Italian and his theatre (Odin teatret) is based in Denmark. But he visited Poland in the early 1960s where he met Grotowski and in Jane Turner’s words: learnt ‘what it is to create a tradition and how an actor might then go on to embody and transform that tradition’ (2004: 5). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See <http://siti.org/content/training> for more details. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For instance in the chapter Concentration and Attention: ‘I am talking about ways of giving the imagination a jolt, which would help you stir it when it is inactive. This technique arouses your powers of concentration, it leads you away from the position of coolly observing someone else’s life and raises your creative temperature a degree or two (Stanislavsky 2008: 116). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See, for example, Mark Evans: ‘the concept of the neutral body … has become central to much contemporary occidental actor training; however its complexity as an idea, its association with particular paradigms, and the misunderstandings the concept of neutrality has generated … mean that critiquing the “neutral” body reveals assumptions which underpin several positions which marginalize the body’ (2009: 176). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. "technique, n.". OED Online. December 2013. Oxford University Press. 17 January 2014 <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/198458?redirectedFrom=technique>. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. For more details see Malaev-Babel’s *The Vakhtangov Sourcebook*: ‘Even at the most progressive Russian acting schools or conservatories of the period, students spend most of their time studying parts. The teacher, instead of providing training for specific skills and qualities essential to an actor, would see his or her duty as imposing their own way of acting particular roles on the students’ (2011: 8). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. One example of this phenomenon (evident in the contents listings, at least) is *Training of the American Actor*, edited by Arthur Bartow: ‘LEE STRASBERG TECHNIQUE, STELLA ADLER TECHNIQUE, MEISNER TECHNIQUE, BEYOND MICHAEL CHEKHOV TECHNIQUE, UTA HAGEN’S TECHNIQUE’ (2006: ix-x). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)