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â€œFind Direction Outâ€•: In the Archives of Hamlet

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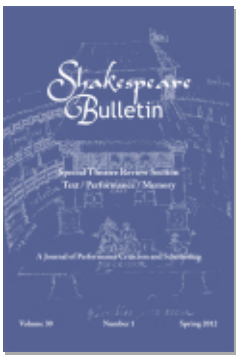

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"Find Direction Out": In the Archives of *Hamlet*

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In 1903, The Moscow Art Theatre set to work to produce *Julius Caesar*. It was a production whose life began, not in the rehearsal room, but in "a combination library-museum-workshop" divided into sections (Vining-Morgan 37). Stanislavski recalled that one dealt with the literary side . . . A second dealt with everything to do, historically, with daily life in Caesar's time . . . A third dealt with costumes . . . A fourth dealt with arms and props . . . A fifth worked on sets . . . A sixth dealt with music, a seventh with purchasing . . . An eighth with rehearsals, a ninth with crowd scenes, a tenth with distributing everything provided by the other nine sections (Stanislavski, 229).

This gigantic archive was then used as the source material for rehearsal. The aim was to follow the "line of intuition and feeling" which was drawn, said Stanislavski, "from Chekhov" (op. cit. 192) and "goes from the outside to the inside to the superconscious" (197) of a play, in other words: to its truth. In preparation for *The Three Sisters*, for example, the actors "went around the whole day in uniform," and so for *Caesar* they "learned to manage the toga, arrange its folds . . . make the right gestures" and "thus created a pattern of movement and gesture, drawn from ancient statues" (230). In this essay, I want to propose practical engagement with archived materials as a model for the director's creative process, a process which also considers the play as a form of archival record. The play-text, that is to say, is an archive of its own world. That archive can be supplemented by historical research and interpreted with techniques and approaches gleaned from the archives of performance practice.

Before I begin, though, I'd like briefly to contextualize myself (I'm a director, sometimes of Shakespeare) and my thinking about *truth*, a question begged by our collective epigraph ("If you have writ your annals

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true") and by my research-led approach to directing *Hamlet*, upon which this essay will draw. Theatre, as we all think we know very well, changes all the time, and so it cannot, by definition, admit of a fixed original (like Stanislavski's "statues") against which to measure truthfulness. Nonetheless, "truth" is a useful name for what we (directors, actors, designers, audiences) are after, provided it is not considered an essential quality, hidden within a text to be uncovered and preserved by a production. It is more useful to imagine a mutable "feeling-of-truth" which is continually re-defined. This is the craftsman's sense of "true": "accurately or exactly positioned, fitted, or formed; correctly balanced or aligned."[1] For it to be "accurately or exactly positioned," it must be considered in relation to one or more other things, and since balance is a dynamic process, it must be achieved by continual adjustments: an "accurate or exact position" that is also responsive and dynamic. This is the truth, I surmise, of the craftsmen who carved Stanislavski's "statues" in the first place, for whom their stone was not fixed but as changeable in its own way as the togas that his actors had to "manage." Thinking of the truth of a play in these craftsman-like terms enables us to reject the idea that, in John Dewey's words, "the office of knowledge is to uncover the antecedently real" (Dewey 14). The director who does depend on this dualistic conception will find himself shackled by it, consistently failing by comparison to the perfection of his idea. Better to consider the relationships of play to production and conception to realization as an ongoing dialogue than as another instance of the opposition between appearance and reality.

As Richard Rorty points out, reading Dewey, "a nondualistic way of thinking about reality and knowledge" puts "intellectuals at the service of the productive class" (Rorty, 30). Pragmatists such as Dewey and Rorty have, indeed, a natural affinity with the productive class, sharing the conception of an idea or approach as a tool whose usefulness represents its only value. Secondly, we share what Rorty calls "a hopeful, melioristic, experimental frame of mind" (Rorty 24), and it is this within this frame that we study the past. Eugenio Barba expresses this kind of attitude admirably, replacing Stanislavski's implicit paradigm of truth as an "ancient statue" with a metaphor altogether more useful. "Theatre history is," he says, "not just a reservoir of the past, it is also a reservoir of the new" (Barba 11). To draw from Barba's "reservoir," I decided to reconstruct extracts from two productions of *Hamlet* which were relatively well-documented: those of Gordon Craig and Stanislavski (at The Moscow Art Theatre in 1911/12) and Michael Chekhov (who conceived and starred in the 1924 Moscow Art Theatre Studio *Hamlet*). I also chose to imagine-in-practice

two productions which were never made: Vsevolod Meyerhold's "lifelong dream" (Gladkov/Law 31) to stage the play, and the film partially planned by Andrei Tarkovsky. In these latter cases in particular, I was working not so much with results or decisions, which are (to my mind) of very limited use to a director anyway, but with processes and methods, by which results or decisions might reveal themselves. This approach owes less to Hamlet's "advice to the players" than it does to Polonius's advice to the spy: "And thus do we . . . / With windlasses and with assays of bias, / By indirections find directions out."[2]

***

The simplest "indirection" to find things out is Stanislavski and Nemirovich-Danchenko's method of using historical research to reconstruct the historical environment of the play. This was a significant part of Andrei Tarkovsky's project in making *Andrei Rublev*, which would, he hoped, "reconstruct for a modern audience the real world of the fifteenth century, that is to present that world in such a way that costume, speech, life-style and architecture would not give the audience any feeling of relic, of antiquarian rarity" (Tarkovsky 2006 78). The Art Theatre's *Julius Caesar*, however, seems to have fallen into exactly the trap avoided by Tarkovsky's film[3]: it felt like a "relic." Stanislavski records that "we dropped out of the line of intuition and feeling into the line of historic naturalism" (Stanislavski 228). Stanislavski had mistaken conforming to historical "truth" (the truth of the "antecedently real") for the kind of truth intended by Tarkovsky: a "real world" that is, (in my terms) "correctly balanced or aligned" for the audience. The gradual solution of this problem represented one of the most significant developments of the Stanislavski system. It set in motion the search for ways of redefining the "superconscious" of a play in terms other than what Rorty calls "correspondence to reality" and Stanislavski terms "the line of historic naturalism."

"Historic naturalism" is, in any case, expressly at odds with *Hamlet*, since the play is not historically naturalistic. It combines the Ghost's armor which, as R.A. Foakes has shown, "was obsolete in battle" at the time of its writing, with a military leader, in Fortinbras, who "belongs to the new age of guns and . . . the new era of diplomacy" (Foakes 35, 47). There is also the usual Shakespearean problem of shifting and/or multiple, simultaneous locations: *Hamlet*'s Denmark is frequently also Shakespeare's England, for example. In this vein, Andrew Gurr has observed that in the famous drawing of *Titus* attributed to Henry Peacham,

a "form of Roman dress reasonably like a toga" is worn by an actor who is flanked by men "clearly dressed as Elizabethan soldiers" (Gurr 198–199). Straightforward historical research is therefore of limited use since, as Gurr says, the depicted actors are wearing clothes "with little concern for historical accuracy." He is right, of course, but his comment half-suggests that early modern plays are simply unconcerned with historical accuracy *per se*, and that would be simplistic. What we find in *Hamlet* is not an *absence* of accuracy but an *excess* of it, or, more precisely, simultaneous accuracy to too many different things. An appropriate response would therefore be to combine historical research with consideration of the play as a product of its *own world*, which must also be researched, and whose rules may differ markedly from our own. This is the achievement of Stanislavski's plan for his second production of *Othello,*[4] where, as Joyce Vining-Morgan has observed, his "use of history is completely transformed. He no longer equates historical truth with archaeological detail, and now uses it to construct a psychological environment" (Vining-Morgan 132). Psychological (as opposed to historical) environments are built, necessarily, on discontinuity and internal contradiction just as much as they are on accuracy and fact. In other words, any complication in the play's world must complicate our approach to (re-)creating it. The logical first move towards such a complication is to supplement material gleaned from conventional historical research with discoveries made by reading the play as an archive of its *own* world, and no other.

We might use these twinned archives to explore the first meeting of Hamlet and Horatio in the play. Horatio has been at court for the funeral and we know that King Hamlet has been dead for almost "two months" (1.2.138). Since we also know that the usual period between the death and funeral of a monarch at the turn of the seventeenth century was about a month[5], it is a fair assumption that the funeral was about a month ago. So, we are led to conclude that Hamlet's closest friend has been in court for at least a month and has not seen the Prince. John Updike, for one, thought that this implication was implausible.[6] In the Afterword to his novel *Gertrude and Claudius*, he dismisses it as "the apparent invisibility of Horatio" (Updike 213), but it might testify to more intriguing circumstances than that. The first would be the depth of Hamlet's mourning, which could have kept him in isolation; the second, the size and/or formality of Elsinore's lay-out, in which it may be entirely possible for the two friends not to meet; the third would be the status of Hamlet's friendship with Horatio. Is there any reason to suppose that they are "best

friends" when the play starts? Hamlet certainly admires Horatio by the middle of the play and Horatio must reciprocate that feeling by the end, but they may only acquire genuine intimacy comparatively late in the action, indeed it would seem to me to be a more interesting story if they do. Crucially, any of these solutions presents the actors with a powerful and play-able "psychological environment," or what Michael Chekhov simply called an "atmosphere" for the scene. "Atmospheres are limitless," he says, "and to be found everywhere . . . atmosphere *deepens* the perception of the spectator . . . The content of the scene will become richer to [their] perception" (Chekhov 48). Shakespeare's apparent implausibility, then, might actually provide a vital key to the content of the scene, which is communicable in performance through Chekhov's method of generating "a score of atmospheres" for the play.

I have found Chekhov's technique to be an extraordinarily efficient and direct route to all of the minute behavioral variations by which situation is communicated. It is also a tool which responds perfectly to the apparent contradictions in the text. It releases us from the laws of "historic naturalism" while allowing us to remain responsive to the lessons of historical research. For example, the Ghost can have the distinctly medieval atmosphere which was clearly imagined in the play's writing without that atmosphere needing to cover the entire play, or even to dominate the scenes in which he appears. In fact, his very incongruity can be woven into the fabric of the production, since Chekhov's technique allows for interplay between the atmospheres or "*objective feelings*" of places and scenes and the "*subjective feelings*" of the individual characters within them (Chekhov, 51). By constantly drawing the actors' attention to the operation of their *feelings*, Chekhov's technique also places situational details front-and-centre in performance. Laertes's pained dissatisfaction with his sister's burial for instance, will be constantly inscribed in his behavior. When we add to that the Priest's evident discomfort with his enforced role in the ceremony (5.1.215–227) and Gertrude's introduction of the news that she'd hoped Ophelia would "have been my Hamlet's wife" (5.1.233), which will be shocking to Laertes and therefore dangerous to Claudius (who has over-swayed "the order" for the burial of suicides to placate Laertes), we find a scene whose objective feeling of funereal solemnity is stretched to breaking-point before Hamlet appears. The explosion caused by his intervention does not therefore arrive out of the blue, and it is clearly desirable that we should feel it brewing. That returns us to Chekhov's insistence that atmosphere is generated first of all by *action* and that, since the two are mutually interdependent, "objective feelings"

Figures 1–3. Hamlet (Carl Cerny & Katerina Watson) instructing the Players (Zoe Roberts, Sita Thomas, Fergus Nimmo, Joshua Roche, Joshua Green) with atmosphere created after Michael Chekhov; *Hamlet* at The CAPITAL Centre, University of Warwick, 2009, directed by Tom Cornford. Photos by Peter Marsh.

are also always contingent. He tells us that "two different atmospheres (*objective feelings*) cannot exist simultaneously. The stronger atmosphere inevitably defeats the weaker" (Chekhov, 51). Thus, "the stronger" atmosphere of conflict "inevitably defeats the weaker" atmosphere of solemnity at Ophelia's burial, indeed so much so that her "maimed rites" (5.1.208) are finally abandoned.

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The study of atmospheres entails a further twist to our consideration of the play-as-archive, in that we must rely on the character's speech as an archive not only of the objects and events from which the play's world is constructed, but also as evidence of the atmospheric nature of that world. At Elsinore, for instance, we find "words, words, words" (2.2.189). Repetition is endemic, sub-clauses unravel loosely around their point and hendiadys, paradox and oxymoron are commonly employed. All these figures of speech move back and forth among the characters[7] (with notable exceptions, such as Hamlet himself), and extend beyond words to people. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are both verbally and constitutionally repetitive: a walking hendiadys, and they represent only one instance of unnecessary duplication in the cast-list, probably the most striking being the *two* ambassadors from England.[8] Polonius balances the "tedious old fool" with the wily old courtier (not so much a moron, we discover, as an oxymoron) and both Claudius and Gertrude are exercises in psychological paradox even, or perhaps especially, to themselves. This movement from the audible to the visible, from the rhetorical to the psychological, is written into the play, and strongly suggests that its language points beyond itself to the "objective feeling" (constructed in performance by time, space, movement, image, sound and tempo-rhythm) of haunted doubleness and inscrutability which permeates Elsinore. Of course it is important that this feeling does not permeate too far. Any consideration of objective feelings must be offset by analysis of the verbal "archives" of particular characters, whose "subjective feelings" may or may not set them apart from the pervasive atmosphere.

Mikhail Morozov (whose literal translation of *Hamlet* Tarkovsky records finding "a great help" [Tarkovsky 1994 121] in preparing for his stage production during January 1976)[9] has written about the particularization of Shakespeare's characters through imagery that

> definite laws govern the images of the characters we have considered . . . these characters speak in their own words and not in the words of the

> author. The metaphors used by each of them have certain definite themes . . . and in these metaphors we have found valuable and graphic material for the psychological characterization of Shakespeare's *dramatis personae.* (Morozov, 106)

Morozov's method is simple: he archives each speaker's imagery, filing it under appropriate headings, and then examines these lists in the light of the character's role in the play. In doing so, he discovers the odd "hidden trait," such as Polonius's "love of money": a significant strain in his speech, which suggests (as does the common observation that Polonius may derive from a portrait of Elizabeth I's Treasurer and first minister, Lord Burghley) that his role in court is likely to be financial (106). Morozov's technique will provide particularly useful material to the Ghost-actor whose problematically in-credible off-stage life can be imagined through his imagery. The Ghost calls Purgatory "my prison-house" (1.5.14), and there was indeed a dungeon in Elizabethan Newgate called "Limbo" (Riggs 251). There are any number of terrifying descriptions of Elizabethan torture for the actor to visualise when he shrinks "in haste away" (1.2.218) to return to them and thereby, to borrow from Andrzej Wajda, "the general becomes specific, the abstract concrete, and the idea incarnate as human drama." (Wajda 9)

These important tools for the actor may seem to have only marginal relevance to the critic, but one of Morozov's discoveries is significant enough to force a substantial re-appraisal of the play's central character: "One would expect Hamlet's role to be full of lofty, poetic comparisons and metaphors . . . On the contrary, . . . Hamlet tends towards substantial, concrete comparisons and metaphors. He resorts to definite objects even to express his most hidden and complex feelings and ideas" (93–94). These objects come frequently from "nature . . . gardening . . . agriculture . . . the life of the lower depths . . . the common ale-houses . . . the popular ballad" (94–99). We find, through Morozov, that "there is nothing delicate about Hamlet, . . . He sees life without embellishments" (101). This is a lead which the actor can follow in at least two ways. He might read this statement as a description of what Michael Chekhov calls the character's "imaginary body" (in this case, the body of a man who "sees life without embellishments") and do the following exercise.

> Observe this body for a while and then just step into this body . . . what will be the psychological result of such a meeting? . . . You will not and do not need to force yourself to speak differently and to move differently and so on, it will just happen by itself because you are within this imaginary body.[10]

A Stanislavskian director might likewise plug the infamous ten-year gap between the age Hamlet the student *should be* and the age he *is*, by imagining a biography for him in which he has spent the equivalent of Prince Hal's "lost years" establishing his "closeness to the common people" (99): a time when he learned to "rough-hew" (5.2.11) timber and sing popular ballads. All of these images would then be grounded in the character's past so that, crucially, the actor will have a precise picture in his mind's eye when he refers to each of them. In training actors, I always demonstrate the importance of these mental pictures and their relationship to physical behaviour by asking students to describe to me two places: one that they know well and one that they don't. The physical difference between the two descriptions is invariably obvious: one is rendered in precise detail by virtue of the actor's unconscious manifestation of mental images, the other is always indistinct. As Tarkovsky says: "Time cannot vanish without trace . . . the time that we have lived settles in our soul" (Tarkovsky 2006 58). The time that has settled in a character's soul can, I suggest, be palpably recovered by the actor and director who bring physical technique to detailed knowledge.

This recovering is archival work: searching for clues in the play-text and knowing which tools and techniques (drawn, themselves, from another "archive": that of a tradition of theatre-craftsmanship) will enable those scraps and relics of the play-world to re-form themselves coherently into a matrix of interdependent narratives from which the drama will be constructed. It is an approach to the play's language which runs counter to the dominant tradition of British Shakespeare, which holds that speech is there to be *spoken* and that through the act of speaking, the character and thereby the play will come to life. The problem of this approach lies in what it fails to unearth from the play's archive. Despite its rhetoric of adherence to the text, it neither absorbs nor communicates the full implication of that text. Horatio's reference, for instance, to the "morn in russet mantle clad" (1.1.165), will be mined for its rhetorical qualities as a figure of speech, but it will not be scrutinized to the same degree as a piece of evidence for, for example, *the time at which Horatio is speaking*, and thereby, the nature of Time in this play.

Time in *Hamlet* is not a constant, but closer to what Tarkovsky calls "a subjective spiritual category" (Tarkovsky 2006 58).[11] In the first scene, for example, Time has been enormously compressed[12] and deliberately so. It should therefore be made palpably (rather than only factually) clear to an audience that this scene begins just after midnight and ends at dawn. While preparing his stage production of the play, Tarkovsky said

that "Shakespeare's genius is in his masterly creation of atmosphere" and gives the example of Laertes and Ophelia's farewell: they "will have been talking all night, she helped him to pack, they drank some wine, laughed, joked, and we come in on the end of their conversation" (Tarkovsky 1996 381). This observation defines time and atmosphere very precisely. We might help actors to achieve a comparable effect in the play's first scene by improvising extracts from the night it represents so that they learn convincingly to embody the varying levels of cold, tiredness, fear and boredom which they would experience during those seven-or-so hours. I would use this process to generate a score for the scene, with gradual-but-accelerated changes in the characters' behavior and symptoms at certain points. The most obvious places for these transitions are the two speeches which are interrupted by the Ghost. There are implicit stage directions for the men to sit at these points,[13] presumably to achieve the maximum change to the stage-picture each time the Ghost appears. I would ask the actors to use the action of sitting to slacken the atmosphere of the scene, so as to sharpen the change in rhythm, stage-picture, action and atmosphere on the Ghost's entrances.

This is the type of effect at which Gordon Craig was aiming in his etchings of three staged "moods" in 1905. "In each design," he says, "I show the same place, but the people who are cradled in it belong to each of its different moods" (Walton 108). In his note to the "Second Mood," he points out that "we see many girls and boys jumping about . . . I have made the earth respond to their movements" (Walton 110). The infamous screens that Craig designed for *Hamlet* were intended to allow exactly this kind of improbable scenic responsiveness and to allow the action to progress gradually from one location to another, sometimes imperceptibly, sometimes suddenly, but always without curtained scene-changes. Of course the screens famously collapsed on the day of the premiere and the production consequently failed to achieve Craig's scenic goals. It seems also to have encountered problems of *human* engineering. The Art Theatre's actors were commonly judged to be unequal to the task of inhabiting Craig's symbolist landscape without bringing it back down to earth: as the Symbolist Valéry Bryusov remarked

> A conventionalized staging requires conventionalized acting . . . A house without windows, doors and ceilings, the monochromatic denuded walls, even the stone graveyard itself . . . would not have seemed strange if we had seen them filled with substantially "conventionalized" creatures, with conventionalized gestures and vocal intonations. (Senelick, 180)

These conventionalized creatures sound close to Craig's much-maligned (and I think frequently misunderstood) "Über-Marionettes," which initially seem to have been imagined as highly sophisticated puppets and appear to have been revised by the time of his 1924 Preface to *On the Art of the Theatre* to mean human actors, but "plus fire, minus egoism", who would be capable of "a new form of acting, consisting for the main part of symbolic gesture" (Craig xxii, 30).[14] The purpose of these ideal performers for Craig was to allow him to create one unified artistic vision on the stage, a vision which depends upon the inter-penetrability of actors and scenic elements.

This inter-penetrability, beautifully and impossibly evoked in Craig's etchings, would find one form of practical expression in the stagings of Vsevolod Meyerhold, and his various collaborators, among them the leading constructivist Liubov Popova. As Norris Houghton observed: "Since Meierhold had long sought unity between actor and setting, he was . . . delighted with the dynamic constructions of this new art [constructivism] which were in closest harmony with his theories of bio-mechanical movement" (Houghton 109). In the abstracted shapes and moving parts of constructivist stage designs,[15] we find a synthesis between the physical discoveries of biomechanics[16] and the abandonment of representation which led the constructivists to focus purely on "the line" (Tupitsyn 160). Aleksandr Rodchenko explained that "the line is the only thing that enables us to understand what has taken place, since it defines the material, and the physical events, in a visually perceptible form" (Tupitsyn 164). If we replace "line" with "actor," this might be Meyerhold speaking. Insistence on the actor's centrality, and specifically the primary importance of his "visually perceptible form" is a common theme of his writing.[17] For Meyerhold, actors' bodies to a great extent *are* the scenery and the lines of those bodies are drawn by exercises in biomechanics. This archive of physical study offers the director the means to translate dramatic and verbal rhythms into scenic and spatial rhythm and gives actors access to an extremity of expression through movement which is grounded in the real, but not limited to the everyday. The artificiality of the training and its insistence on, for example, breaking each gesture down into *otkaz-posil'-tochka* (the preparation or counter-movement—the "sending," action or movement—the fix)[18] leads naturally (I was surprised to discover) to truthful physical behavior, avoiding the codifications of cliché which so often pass for realism. These clichés are often particularly prominent at extreme events, such as the appearances of the Ghost, which are normal-

ized by gestures which seem to say "oh gosh!" rather than manifesting any more profound response. Meyerhold exploited the possibility of biomechanics to move actors beyond such "realistic" clichés when he returned to the "real details" of setting that he had initially rejected. Norris Houghton observed that in his production of *The Inspector General*

> great attention is paid to the sensuous effect of various materials and objects . . . to arouse emotional reactions by their associative power . . . A cigar or a fan in the hand of an actor is no longer simply a cigar or a fan, but a symbol for all the qualities which the observer can associate with those objects and their users. The Moscow Art Theatre, with all its attention to the subconscious in its acting, yet makes its appeal chiefly to the consciousness of the spectator. Meierhold, with all his emphasis on the rational, appeals directly to the subconscious (112).

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It is with this relationship between the rational and the subconscious that I want to close. An extraordinary and often unfathomable balance between the two is to be found in the work of Tarkovsky. He refused to subscribe to a system or to simplify his working process into sound-bites and evidently changed his mind with unpredictable frequency[19]. Yet, in following these changes in his diaries and recorded conversations, it becomes evident that he is always both pursuing and interrogating his instincts in a search for spiritual truth. For example, in his advice to directors for creating a *mise-en-scène*, he instructs us to work

> from the psychological state of the characters, through the inner dynamic of the mood of the situation, and bring it all back to the truth of one, directly observed fact, and its unique texture. Only then will the *mise en scène* achieve the specific, many-faceted significance of actual truth (Tarkovsky 2006 74).

His ideas for a film of *Hamlet* were only sketches, but in them we already see this process of movement through the "inner dynamic of the mood" towards "the truth of one, directly observed fact" at work. Here is a note in his diary, capturing a possibility for the filming of what, in the play, is 5.1.

> They are looking for Ophelia who drowned. They are draining the ponds. People in water, it runs out gradually revealing the bottom of the pond and the crimes of Elsinore. They find Ophelia, her eyes are open.

> A slippery, damp layer at the bottom. Ophelia's dress is white, with lace. Cloth through which all the water in the pond has passed. A fish flutters in the lace mesh — of life!?
> Two fragments; no — three (!):
> 1. draining the water,
> 2. the drowned woman,
> 3. proofs of guilt at the bottom of the pond.
>
> Yorick's skull is not found by the gravediggers but at the bottom of the pond. Yorick was murdered.[20]

Ophelia's open eyes come from Tarkovsky's stage production, indeed Vitali Litviin remembers this as "the most astonishing in the performance . . . The coffin . . . was a little moved out into the auditorium. Ophelia was inside with no coins on her eyes and the dead eyes were slightly opened."[21] The subsequent emphasis on the "proofs of guilt" (or what he called, in his 1983 Royal Opera House production of *Boris Godunov* "the litter of history" [Brown, 358]) renders 5.1's focus on discarded bodies in "the truth of one directly observed fact": the "draining" of "the ponds." That draining gradually reveals the embedded violence of this culture. Likewise, 5.1 shows at least two skulls violently "knock'd about" (5.1.84): Laertes grabs Hamlet's "throat" (5.1.249), holding his head in an image which combines the gravedigger's assault on, and Hamlet's contemplation of, the death's-head of Yorick.[22] The lighting designer Robert Bryan remembers explaining to Tarkovsky, in preparation for *Boris Godunov*, "how we could achieve some of his filmic technique in theatrical terms"[23] and this hastily-captured image from the process of conceiving a filmed *Hamlet* allows us to glimpse that process in reverse. The gravediggers' gossip, the premonition of forgetting in the gravedigger's song ("age with his stealing steps / Hath clawed me in his clutch / And hath shipped me into the land / As if I had never been such." [5.1.67–70]) and the sifting of fragments of Danish history all find their way from the text of 5.1 into "the unique texture" of Tarkovsky's imagined *mise-en-scène*.

Tarkovsky notes that this "unique texture," the director's imprint, must be developed in part through the scrupulous observation of other artists. He complains that whilst at film school "we didn't see enough films" and that the result was that "students are reduced, as it were, to inventing the bicycle. Can one imagine a painter," he asks, "who doesn't go to museums . . . or a writer who doesn't read books" (Tarkovsky 2006 90)? Amongst film-makers, he particularly emphasises his debt to Bresson: "Perhaps only in Pushkin," he says, "is the relationship between form and content

so magical, God-given and organic" (95). The approach I am advocating here is proposed both as a means of beginning this "magical" construction of a living form and as an alternative to mainstream British Shakespeare. The ongoing cultural exchange of the tradition that I have all-too-briefly sketched exposes the parochialism of standard practice in this country, where so little energy is invested in such an exchange. The situation has begun to seem particularly ironic since we have discovered, thanks to the painstaking work of theatre historians, that Shakespeare's writing evolved out of a theatre-business generated by material and cultural exchanges which are dizzyingly complex: the collaboration, re-writing, adaptation and plagiarism which generated play-scripts; the hiring, firing and training of actors which created acting companies; the recycling of clothing, objects, images and ideas which produced plays in performance. We could generate similarly complex and equally practical relationships of our own: relationships between historical research, the archive of the play-text, and the knowledge and tools bequeathed to us by traditions of theatre-making. From these relationships we may learn to discover what Tarkovsky calls "an exact form" for a play: "a form that comes nearest to conveying the author's world, to making incarnate his longing for the ideal" (Tarkovsky 2006 104). However, while we may long for the ideal,[24] we still live far from it.

Notes

[1]*OED*, 'true', 4b. My use of the word 'craftsman' here is informed by reading Richard Sennett's remarkable book *The Craftsman* (London: Allen Lane, 2008). I am currently working on the relationship between his analysis of craftsmanship and various approaches to theatre-direction and actor-training.

[2]*Hamlet*, 2.1.61–3. Subsequent references appear in the body of the text and all are to Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor's Arden edition of the 2nd Quarto (London, 2006).

[3]The production was, however, a notable commercial success, being "shown eighty-four times, as often as five times a week during its first month and always to full houses," (Vining-Morgan, 77).

[4]The first was in 1896. The plan for his second production (which, for a number of reasons, did not fulfil its potential) is published as *Stanislavski Produces Othello*, trans. Helen Nowak (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1948). For information on the production see Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: His Life and Art* (London: Methuen, 1990), pp.328–30.

[5]Elizabeth I died on March 24, 1603 and her funeral was on April 28. See also Antonia Fraser, *The Gunpowder Plot: Terror and Faith in 1605* (London:

Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1996; this ed. London: Phoenix, 2002), p.xxxiv: "it was royal custom for [the burial] to happen a month after death."

[6]He cites Salvador de Madariaga, who claims that "even on important points, Shakespeare does not seem to pay much attention either to his audience or the play," *On Hamlet* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1948), p.115, a clanger if ever there was one.

[7]I am depending partly on R.A. Foakes again here, and his analysis of the play's diction and imagery, see "Hamlet and the Court of Elsinore" in *Shakespeare Survey 9*, 1956, pp.35–43.

[8]There are two ambassadors in both Quarto texts, though not in the Folio.

[9]Tarkovsky struggled with the traditional translations, finding Lozinsky "inarticulate and clumsy" (*Time Within Time* 121) and Pasternak "appalling, opaque" (ibid.) and "staggeringly inaccurate" (380).

[10]I take this quotation from his lecture on Characterization given in Hollywood in 1951 (*On Theatre and the Art of Acting* [The Working Arts Library]), but the exercise is also described in *On the Technique of Acting*, ed. Mel Gordon (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), pp.100–104.

[11]See also *Sculpting in Time* p. 110 for examples of how Tarkovsky sought to alter the quality of time in his films to "bring out a state of mind through means other than acting."

[12]This is, of course, characteristic of Shakespeare, who regularly has multiple time-schemes within the same play, the most famous example being *Othello*. The compression of time is also evident in, for example, *King Lear*, where 2.2/Scene 7, which takes place outside Gloucester's house, goes from morning ("Good morrow" [2.2.298]) to "a wild night" (2.2.480) in under 200 lines.

[13]They are: "sit down awhile" (1.1.29) and "sit down" (1.1.69).

[14]For a clear analysis of Craig's theories of acting, see Charles R. Lyons, "Gordon Craig's Concept of the Actor," in *Educational Theatre Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Oct., 1964), pp.258–269.

[15]See, for example, Tupitsyn pp.124–132.

[16]See *Meyerhold Speaks/Meyerhold Rehearses*, p.72 for information on Meyerhold's theories of acting and movement, as well as Jonathan Pitches, *Science and the Stanislavsky Tradition of Acting* for a thorough analysis of the scientific basis (or lack thereof) for Meyerhold's ideas.

[17]See, for example, *Meyerhold On Theatre*, pp.147–149.

[18]I use the terms as translated (flexibly) by the director Sergey Ostrenko's assistant, Inga Ryzanoff, in his workshops on biomechanics at The London Contemporary Dance School in 2008. There are many other options, see Pitches pp.75–6 for a summary.

[19]This reading is supported by my conversations with the director Irina Brown, who was Tarkovsky's assistant for *Boris Godunov* (ROH, 1983).

[20]From Tarkovsky's diary entry for 20 November 1983 (in the Polish edition of *Martyrolog*, ed. and trans. by Seweryn Kuśmierczyk, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/~tstronds/nostalghia.com/TheDiaries/hamlet.html, accessed on Sept. 9th, 2009).

[21]Vitali Litviin, "Andrei Tarkovskii – Hamlet – a few things that I remember," found and translated for me by Ludmila Anestiadi, see http://stihi.ru/2002/12/16–253, accessed on Sept. 9th, 2009.

[22]The gravedigger also tells his companion to "Cudgel thy brains no more about it" (5.1.52), so, unless he is speaking figuratively, we have at least three heads on the receiving end of violence in the same scene.

[23]Robert Bryan, "Lighting *Boris Godunov* with Andrei Tarkovsky," April 2008. I am grateful to Irina Brown for sharing this piece with me.

[24]Readers sympathetic to my Pragmatist introduction may be dismayed by the echo of Platonic dualism in my conclusion. I would respond that Darwin has taught us that we can have evolution without a specific or unchanging destination.

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